

**DEAC BUSINESS EVALUATOR’S REPORT TEMPLATE**

# Background

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission requires all institutions to complete a Self-Evaluation Report when seeking accreditation. The process of self-evaluation serves two main purposes: (1) It provides an institution an opportunity to critically reflect on its operations, processes, and procedures at regular intervals and (2) it provides the on-site team with a comprehensive review of the institution, its mission, and its processes that are integral to delivering quality distance education.

The Distance Education Accrediting Commission’s accreditation process is grounded on the fundamental principle of peer review that enables faculty and administrative staff from within higher education to make recommendations essential to ensuring the quality of learning and institutional operations for all students. The process is guided by transparent standards that are established collaboratively by professional peers and member institutions.

The on-site visit provides an opportunity for evaluators to meet with key staff members, faculty/instructors, principal managers, outside accountants, governing board members, and advisory council members. The evaluators verify that the institution is meeting its mission and can demonstrate successful student achievement.

The on-site evaluators’ reports inform the Commission of whether the institution meets, partially meets, or does not meet each of the DEAC accreditation standards and core components. Approximately four to six weeks after the on-site visit, the Chair’s Report is provided to the institution for response. Both the Chair’s Report and the institution’s response are submitted to the Commission for review prior to final decision making.

The Chair of the on-site team is responsible for guiding the completion of the on-site evaluation in accordance with the Commission’s processes and procedures and ensures that evaluators complete their tasks during the on-site evaluation.

**Self-Evaluation Report** **(SER)**
The Self-Evaluation Report tells a story about the institution, beginning with its history and mission and then focusing on its evolution and future. Institutions have the opportunity to present their passion for serving students and providing educational options that will shape future generations. Institutions craft their story using the Self-Evaluation Report template as a guide while demonstrating how their policies and procedures meet DEAC accreditation standards.

# Instructions

It is the business evaluator’s responsibility to make an initial determination of whether the institution meets DEAC’s accreditation standards and to complete the following report template.

Findings guidelines:

* **Meets Standard:** The institution demonstrates compliance with the intent of the accreditation standard or core component.
* **Partially Meets Standard:** The institution was able to demonstrate compliance with some, but not all, of the elements contained in the accreditation standard or core component.
* **Does Not Meet Standard:** The institution was unable to demonstrate compliance with a majority of the elements contained in the accreditation standard or core component.

The evaluator should provide clear and concise descriptions within the “Comments” section of the report to support each determination that a standard or core component is met, partially met, or not met. If an institution meets the accreditation standard, the evaluator may want to consider highlighting within the Comments section the processes and procedures the institution followed that enabled it to demonstrate compliance. If an institution partially meets or does not meet a standard, the evaluator needs to adequately describe why the decision was reached and refer, as appropriate, to narrative sections and exhibits within the SER that support the determination.

The evaluator must also indicate the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate compliance with the partially met or unmet accreditation standard. Each required action must be tied back to an accreditation standard or core component.

For required actions, the business evaluator should begin each statement with, “[Insert Name of Institution] needs to [insert the action necessary by the institution to demonstrate compliance with the accreditation standard.]”

As part of the peer review process, it is important that institutions receive suggestions for improving their business operations and support services. The accreditation process allows the institution to benefit from an external review and perspective. The business evaluator is encouraged to provide suggestions within the report. Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

For suggestions, the business evaluator should begin each statement with, “[Insert Name of Institution] may want to consider [insert the recommendation for improvement.]”

**Report Submission:** The business evaluator emails the completed report to the Chair, DEAC staff observer, and DEAC director of accreditation two weeks following the on-site visit. Once all information is received, DEAC notifies the business evaluator to appropriately dispose of all institutional materials.

# Helpful Hints

* The business evaluator’s report should be objectively written in third person, narrative format using declarative sentences and simple verbs. The report should avoid broad generalities and speculative views.
* The business evaluator’s report represents an accurate, concise, factual, and thorough presentation of the individual findings during the on-site visit. The business evaluator clearly communicates findings to the Chair by providing evidence.
* When making a determination whether the institution meets, partially meets, or does not meet accreditation standards, the business evaluator must include evidence of documents reviewed on site or analyzed in the Self-Evaluation Report and Exhibits that led to the finding. Include specific examples.
* The business evaluator’s report documents attributes and deficiencies using language found in the accreditation standards and core components. All deficiencies must be documented.
* The business evaluator’s report should not require an institution to implement a new program or procedure in order to demonstrate compliance with a partially met or unmet accreditation standard. The business evaluator’s report states the required action necessary to provide evidence or demonstrate compliance. The institution bears responsibility for demonstrating compliance with DEAC’s accreditation standards.
* The business evaluator’s report accurately presents comments, required actions, and suggestions using direct quotations, references, data, and examples from the on-site visit.
* The business evaluator’s report does not make recommendations to the Commission concerning the overall accreditation of the institution.

# DEAC Business Evaluator’s Report (Confidential)

Name of Institution: Name of Institution

Date of On-site Visit: Date of on-site visit

Submitted By: Evaluator Name

Date of Report: Date of Report

# Accreditation Standards Findings

Standard II: Governance

1. **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. The owners, governing board members, officials, and administrators are knowledgeable and experienced in one or more aspects of education administration, finance, and the design and delivery of academic programs and related student services within a distance learning model. 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 appropriate to their position and have the ability to oversee institutional operations consistent with the institution’s mission and program offerings.

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| **Standard II.A. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

**Comments:** Provide comments to support the finding based on the institution’s responses and evidence provided prior to and during the on-site visit.

**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate compliance with the accreditation standards. Each required action must correspond to an accreditation standard or a core component.

**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Reputation of Institution, Owners, Governing Board Members, Administrators, and Other Officials**

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. 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 mistreatment of consumers. The institution’s owners, governing board members, officials, and administrators shall comply with the institution’s policies and procedures governing conflicts of interest and other applicable rules of conduct.

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| **Standard II.B. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Succession Plan**

The institution has a written plan that describes the process that it follows to sustain operations in the event a leadership succession is necessary. The plan identifies specific people, committees, or boards responsible for carrying out 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 the plan on an annual basis and revises as needed.

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| **Standard II.C. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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1. **Maintaining Eligibility for Accreditation**

The institution maintains its eligibility for accreditation and is properly licensed, authorized, exempted, or approved by all applicable state education institutional authorizations (or their equivalent for non-U.S. institutions). Exemptions from state law are supported by state-issued documentation or by statutory language for that jurisdiction.

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| **Standard II.D. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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Standard III: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

1. **Strategic Planning**

The institution implements a strategic plan utilizing a systematic process for the achievement of goals that support its mission. The institution’s planning processes involve all areas of the institution’s operations in developing strategic initiatives and goals by evaluating external and internal trends. Data is used to identify areas of weakness and opportunities for improvement, development, and growth. The plan helps institutions set priorities, manage resources, and set goals for future performance.

The strategic plan addresses, at a minimum, finances, academics, technology, admissions, marketing, personnel, and institutional sustainability and includes measurable action plans that lead to mission achievement. The plan identifies the individuals responsible, timelines for completion, and the financial resources required. The institution reviews the strategic plan at least annually and reports achievement of progress to its stakeholders.

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| **Standard III.B. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate compliance with the accreditation standards. Each required action must correspond to an accreditation standard or a core component.

**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

Standard XI: Recruitment and Enrollment

1. **Student Recruitment**

The institution demonstrates that ethical processes and procedures are followed throughout the recruitment of prospective students. The qualifications and experience of the institution’s recruitment personnel are aligned to identified roles and responsibilities. Recruitment personnel are trained in the tasks and expectations of their positions. Authorized recruitment personnel are provided with appropriate materials to perform their tasks and are routinely monitored to ensure compliance with laws applicable to the jurisdiction(s) in which the institution operates, the DEAC Code of Ethics, and institutional policy. The institution takes full responsibility for the actions of its recruitment personnel, whether internal or third party.

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| **Standard XI.A. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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1. **Enrollment Agreements**

The institution’s enrollment agreements/documents are in the language of instruction and clearly identify the educational offering and the credential awarded. The agreements inform applicants 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 Checklist.

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| **Standard XI.D. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate compliance with the accreditation standards. Each required action must correspond to an accreditation standard or a core component.

**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Financial Disclosures**

All costs relative to the education provided by the institution are disclosed to the prospective student in an enrollment agreement or similar contractual document before enrollment. Costs must include tuition, educational services, textbooks, and instructional materials; any specific fees associated with enrollment, such as application and registration fees; and fees for required services such as student authentication, proctoring, technology access, and library services.

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| **Standard XI.E. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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1. **Scholarships**

Scholarships are awarded either for merit or based on need. Merit-based scholarships must be based on definable achievement at the time of enrollment or within the program of study. Merit-based scholarships are evaluated by qualified individuals using an institution- approved rubric. Need-based scholarships must be based on a discernable and consistent economic standard. Scholarships must indicate the actual reduction in the costs that would otherwise be charged by the institution.

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| **Standard XI.F. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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1. **Discounts**

Tuition reductions other than scholarships are considered discounts. Discounts are permitted for well-defined groups, for specific and bona fide purposes, or for a specified period. Discounts must indicate the actual reduction in the costs that would otherwise be charged by the institution.

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| **Standard XI.G. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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Standard XIII: Fair Practices

1. **Cancellations and Withdrawals**

Institutions maintain, publish, and consistently apply fair and equitable cancellation and withdrawal policies that meet or exceed the requirements of state and federal regulators, DEAC, and such other industry regulators as may have jurisdiction over one or more of the institution’s programs. Students may notify the institution of cancellation or withdrawal in any manner the institution deems appropriate so long as the method or methods available are reasonable and in compliance with applicable state and federal requirements. Policies pursuant to when an institution may administratively withdraw a student or cancel their enrollment are published and readily accessible for review by the student.

1. A student shall have no less than five calendar days following their executing the enrollment agreement or other contractual document in which to cancel the agreement and/or contract and receive a full refund of any monies paid to the institution.
2. Students are notified promptly if they are administratively withdrawn for non- compliance with attendance or other administrative policy.

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| **Standard XIII.C. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Refunds**

Institutions must implement fair and equitable refund policies that meet or exceed the requirements of their government regulators, including consumer rights and protection policies. In the absence of such requirements, the institution follows DEAC’s refund policy requirements in Appendix XIV. Refund policies include procedures for students who enroll but do not start coursework and students failing to persist or make satisfactory academic progress. Refund policies must be clearly stated and transparently disclosed, including the use of sample calculations. Any money due to a student must be refunded within 30 days of the student’s notice of cancellation or withdrawal; refunds due to funding agencies must be returned in compliance with their respective requirements.

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| **Standard XIII.D. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Advertising and Promotion**

The institution conforms to ethical practices in all advertising and promotion to prospective students. The institution’s processes and procedures ensure that all advertisements, website content, and other marketing collateral is truthful, accurate, and clearly stated. The institution complies with DEAC’s Catalog Disclosures Checklist and DEAC’s Website Disclosures Checklist.

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| **Standard XIII.F. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Institution and Course Accredited-Status Recognition**

The institution accurately discloses its accredited status and uses the official DEAC accreditation logo and/or statement of accreditation when publishing its accreditation status in advertisements and 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. Institutions publish a statement of accreditation only as follows:

* Accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission
* DEAC Accredited

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| **Standard XIII.G. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate compliance with the accreditation standards. Each required action must correspond to an accreditation standard or a core component.

**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. **Truth in Lending**

The institution complies with all applicable Truth in Lending Act (TILA) requirements, including those under Regulation Z, and state requirements for retail installment agreements.

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| **Standard XIII.H. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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Standard XIV: Finance[[1]](#footnote-1)

* 1. **Financial Practices**

The institution provides on an annual basis complete, comparative financial statements covering its two most recent fiscal years’ financial statements that are audited and prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) in the United States of America or the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). In the event the operations of the institution are supported in whole or in part by a parent company or a third party, the Commission may require audited financial statements from the parent or third party to demonstrate that the entity possesses sufficient financial resources to provide the institution continued financial sustainability. 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, and inter-company transactions are clearly identified and defined. 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.

**[Note:** Throughout this Standard,compliance assessment questions refer only to audited comparative financial statements to align with the Standard as written. See the footnote for Standard XIV, regarding continued allowable submission of reviewed comparative financial statements through mid-2026 and adjust findings feedback accordingly].

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| **Standard XIV.A. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Required Actions:** Provide the required actions necessary for the institution to demonstrate compliance with the accreditation standards. Each required action must correspond to an accreditation standard or a core component.

**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

* 1. **Financial Management**

Individuals overseeing the fiscal and budgeting processes are qualified by education and experience. The institution maintains adequate administrative staff and other resources to operate effectively within fiscal and budgeting constraints, consistent with its representations of the scope and quality of its educational offerings as guided by its mission statement and strategic plan. Any risk that exists is adequately monitored, manageable, and insured. The institution has adequate administrative resources for effective operations, and at least one person is qualified and able to prepare accurate financial reports in a timely manner. Documentation protocols and controls are in place to assure that finances are properly managed, monitored, and protected.

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| **Standard XIV.B. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

* 1. **Financial Stability and Sustainability**

Financial statements must reflect that the institution has sufficient resources to meet the institution’s financial obligations to provide quality instruction and service to its students for the full period of each student’s enrollment, consistent with the institution’s program representations.

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| **Standard XIV.C. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

* 1. **Financial Reporting**

Annual 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 report accompanies these statements. At its discretion, the Commission may require additional financial reporting from the institution.

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| **Standard XIV.D. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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* 1. **Collections**

Collection procedures used by the institution or third parties reflect sound and ethical business practices.

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| **Standard XIV.E. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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Standard XV: Facilities and Records Maintenance

1. **Records Protection**

The institution’s financial and administrative records, as well as students’ financial, educational, and personal information, are securely and confidentially maintained in accordance with laws applicable to the jurisdiction(s) in which the institution operates and with professional requirements.

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| **Standard XV.A. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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1. **Record Retention**

The institution’s financial, administrative, and student educational records are retained in accordance with laws applicable to the jurisdiction(s) in which the institution operates. The institution implements a comprehensive document retention policy. Transcripts are readily accessible and are maintained permanently in either print or digital form.

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| **Standard XV.B. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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1. **Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies**

The institution’s primary facility is located in a professional, institution-branded space authorized by local authorities for mixed use or commercial use. The institution maintains a written facilities plan and budget allocations to maintain facilities, equipment, and supplies to support its educational offerings, student support services, and administrative operations on a sustainable basis. Buildings, workspaces, and equipment comply with local fire, building, health, and safety regulations.

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| **Standard XV.C. – Meets, Partially Meets, Does Not Meet, or Not Applicable** | Choose a finding. |

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1. **Protection of Physical Sites and Virtual Infrastructure**

The institution’s physical location(s) and virtual infrastructure are adequate to secure financial, administrative, and student educational records; are reasonably accessible; and are adequately protected in accordance with laws applicable to the jurisdiction(s) in which the institution operates. An adequate disaster response and recovery plan is in place that includes mitigation of risks, i.e., at a minimum, the ability to sustain and support continuing academic operations, the protection of student information consistent with applicable law, and the mitigation of other risks presented by physical, environmental, cybersecurity, force majeure, and other reasonably foreseeable threats.

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**Suggestions:** Suggestions are those recommendations that are not required to meet minimum accreditation standards but are provided to the institution as an opportunity for growth and improvement.

1. The implementation and submission timeframe of Standard XIV.A.’s requirement that institutions provide audited comparative financial statements (reviewed comparative financial statements will no longer be accepted) is as follows: For institutions with fiscal years ending between January 1, 2025, and June 30, 2025, audited financial statements are due by December 31, 2025. For institutions with fiscal years ending between July 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025, audited financial statements are due by June 30, 2026. In both cases, the Commission is waiving the requirement for comparative statements and accepting audits of one fiscal year. Future submissions of audited statements (submitted after June 30, 2026) must be prepared on a comparative basis. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)