

Guide For Self-Evaluation

Introduction

DEAC’s Guide for Self-Evaluation is designed to provide guidelines, suggestions, and helpful hints as institutions seek accreditation and prepare their Self-Evaluation Report. Institutions should bear in mind that this is a guide and is not intended to measure the extent to which institutions meet or exceed the accreditation standards. Each institution is unique and therefore each Self-Evaluation Report is an individual representation of the institution and its mission. Institutions should focus on communicating how their processes and procedures meet the intent of the accreditation standards and emulate accepted best practices in education.

DEAC requires that one key individual from the applicant institution complete the *Preparing for DEAC Accreditation* tutorial prior to preparing the institution’s Self-Evaluation Report. Completion of the tutorial certifies the key individual as the compliance officer for the purposes of DEAC accreditation. While this is the minimum requirement, DEAC encourages institutions to have all key administrative staff and personnel complete the tutorial to familiarize themselves with DEAC’s accreditation standards. The process of self-evaluation should be an institution-wide effort of self-reflection and improvement.

DEAC publishes all accreditation standards, updates, and revisions regularly on its website. Institutions should regularly check the DEAC website to verify continued compliance.

The Importance of Self-Evaluation

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 the institution an opportunity to critically reflect on its operations, processes, and procedures at regular intervals for continued improvement 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 Self-Evaluation Report tells a story about the institution, beginning with its history and mission then focusing on its evolution and future goals. Institutions have the opportunity to present their passion for serving students and providing distance education 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.

Tips for Self-Evaluation

Institutions focus on telling their story while addressing each accreditation standard in a logical sequence. Below are some initial tips institutions can follow when developing a complete Self-Evaluation Report.

* Institutions should focus on clearly and succinctly connecting how their policies and procedures meet the intent of each accreditation standard, core component, and sub-component. The Self-Evaluation Report should be written in such a way that it avoids speculation or misinterpretation by the reader.
* Institutions should provide detailed information when describing processes or procedures. This is an opportunity for institutions to highlight their operational practices.
* Institutions should use the self-evaluation process as an additional opportunity to analyze their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Institutions should highlight strengths and opportunities while addressing initiatives to improve weaknesses and guard against threats.
* The purpose of accreditation is to provide a structured format for demonstrating educational quality. In a peer-review process, there is always room for improvement through evaluation. Institutions should strive to take advantage of external feedback and suggestions by being truthful, accurate, and transparent in all representations.

Preparing for Self-Evaluation

The process of seeking and maintaining accreditation is an institution-wide effort. Institution-wide participation should be encouraged throughout the self-evaluation process. Seeking accreditation involves a comprehensive look at institutional efforts to provide quality distance education opportunities focused on each institution’s mission and target student population. DEAC’s *Accreditation Handbook* provides the processes, procedures, and accreditation standards that institutions must meet to achieve or maintain accreditation.

Writing a Self-Evaluation Report

It is often easy to underestimate the effort required to write, edit, and format a comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report. Institutions should allow enough time to write a Self-Evaluation Report that best represents themselves and provides sufficient detail to demonstrate compliance with accreditation standards. Below are general guidelines institutions should follow to ensure that they produce a complete Self-Evaluation Report that meets DEAC’s submission requirements.

* Institutions must use the DEAC *Self-Evaluation Report* template. This template is available on DEAC’s website (www.deac.org). Institutions must also complete appropriate companion templates – Federal Financial Assistance Programs, if eligible, as well as In-Residence Program and International Activities, if applicable.
* Institutions must submit primary documents that provide supporting evidence of their compliance with accreditation standards.
* Institutions must follow DEAC’s *Guidelines for Electronic Submission*.
* Institutions should remember that the Self-Evaluation Report communicates a specific snapshot in time of their policies and processes. Institutions must focus on those efforts and processes currently in place when writing their Self-Evaluation Report. The on-site team will evaluate the institution against its current practices when determining whether it meets the intent of DEAC’s accreditation standards. Institutions should avoid describing future initiatives unless specifically requested by the Self-Evaluation Report template (e.g., Standard III.B. Strategic Planning and Standard III.C. Institutional Effectiveness).

Self-Evaluation and Exhibits Submission Guidelines

Institutions submitting their Self-Evaluation Report and associated exhibits must follow the instructions below.

* The Self-Evaluation Report, exhibits, and any other supporting documentation should follow DEAC’s *Guidelines for Electronic Submission*.
* Report templates must not be altered in any way.
* Institutions must submit documents via email (under 2GB) or using a Dropbox link (over 2GB). All submissions must contain an email to appropriate staff that includes an explanation of the contents.
* Institutions must submit one Microsoft Word and one Portable Document File (PDF) version of their report or application. All exhibits must be submitted in PDF, Word, or Excel format.
* Institutions must use electronic bookmarks and hyperlinks placed within the PDF document. Bookmarking and hyperlinking should be completed in a manner that facilitates easy and intuitive navigation and review of the file.
* All exhibits must be submitted in PDF, Microsoft Word, or Microsoft Excel format. ***DEAC will not accept files submitted in Google Doc or Google Sheet format.*** ***Exhibits provided via web link will not be accepted.*** File names should be labeled according to examples provided at the end of this document.

Note: File names must use a maximum of 15 characters. Dropbox enforces a total file path length of 250 characters for each file. If the total file path exceeds a character length of 250 characters, this may result in a loss of documentation.

* Any security features in the PDF file must be disabled.
* Personal or confidential student or staff information (e.g., Social Security numbers or dates of birth) should be removed or redacted as appropriate.
* Incomplete submissions may be returned to the institution for correction and resubmission, which could delay the accreditation process.
* If a fee is required for processing the application, please mail a check directly to DEAC for processing and enclose a cover letter that includes the institution’s name, address, contact information, and an explanation of the submission. Please note that applications requiring a fee will not be processed until the corresponding payment is sent to the following:

Distance Education Accrediting Commission

1101 17th Street NW, Suite 808

Washington, D.C. 20036

DEAC Helpful Hints

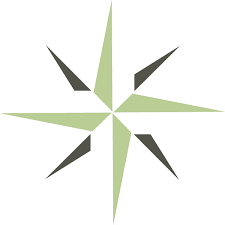
Throughout the Guide for Self-Evaluation, institutions will find “DEAC Helpful Hints” that provide clarification when writing their Self-Evaluation Report and preparing exhibits.

DEAC Helpful Guidance

Following each applicable standard in Self-Evaluation Report template, institutions will find “DEAC Helpful Guidance” that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use these documents as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

DEAC Required Documents

At the end of this Guide are required documents which must accompany the Self-Evaluation Report for institutions seeking initial accreditation and those seeking renewal of accreditation.



Self-Evaluation Report

*Adheres to the DEAC Accreditation Handbook: 32ndEdition*

Institution Name: Insert Institution Name

Address: Insert Institution’s Primary Address

Telephone Number: Insert Institution’s Telephone Number

Website: Insert Institution’s Website

The information submitted is correct

to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I understand that electronically typing my name

in this document is considered to have the same

legally binding effect as signing my signature

using a pen and paper.

President/CEO Name: Insert President/CEO Name

Title: Insert Title

Date Report Submitted: Insert Date

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# Table of Exhibits

Note: When an exhibit and its associated question(s) request both “links and permanent files”, both exhibit forms must be provided, even if they are the same information. A URL link to the requested information serves as proof that the information is publicly available (a private Dropbox or other file-sharing system does not satisfy this requirement. The intent is to demonstrate public availability of the information). A permanent file is required so it can be included in the Distance Education Accrediting Commission’s permanent record of the institution’s Self-Evaluation Report submission.

Note: File names must use a maximum of 15 characters. Dropbox enforces a total file path length of 250 characters for each file. If the total file path exceeds a character length of 250 characters, this may result in a loss of documentation.

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# Self-Evaluation Process – Institutional Assessment

1. Describe the institution’s self-evaluation process and how the owners, governing board members, officials, administrators, advisory councils, staff, faculty, students, and other relevant constituencies contribute to the self-evaluation process.
2. Describe how the institution’s self-evaluation process is meaningful, significant, and ongoing.

# Institutional Profile

1. Describe the institution’s history from its founding date and why it was founded.
2. Describe the institution’s target student population, including information on when it first began enrolling students.
3. Describe and include the dates of significant events in the institution’s history (e.g., development of educational offerings, change of name, new divisions, in-residence training sites, or changes in ownership).
4. For renewal of accreditation, describe any major changes since the institution’s most recent accreditation review (e.g., student services, admissions, staff or faculty, enrollment, curriculum, or marketing).
5. For renewal of accreditation, provide a copy of the institution’s most recent DEAC annual report. [EXHIBIT 1: DEAC Annual Report] For initial accreditation, provide a completed student enrollment worksheet. [EXHIBIT 1: Student Enrollment Worksheet]

1. For renewal of accreditation, list any progress report or enhancement report findings in the institution’s most recent grant-of-accreditation letter and in any other Commission correspondence to the institution since its most recent accreditation cycle. Describe how the institution continues to address these areas.
2. If the institution participates in Federal Financial Aid programs, provide the date on which the institution initially signed a Program Participation Agreement and indicate the programs that are eligible for Title IV. Provide the institution’s Program Participation Agreement renewal date.
3. List all current programs as well as the total number of students enrolled in each program as of the date of SER submission.

# Institutional Organization

1. Describe the institution’s organizational structure. [EXHIBIT 2: Organizational Chart]
2. Describe any institutional affiliations, articulation agreements, or contracts for educational delivery.
3. List and describe any administrative sites or in-residence training sites, including what on-site learning activities occur at each.
4. List and describe any international activities. For physical presence, provide documentation showing that the institution is properly licensed for international activity as needed and that international contracts have been approved by DEAC.

# Legal Form and Governance

1. Describe the institution’s legal status and ownership structure, including all subsidiary structures or entities and individuals within the chain of ownership up to and including the ultimate parent structure or entity.
2. Describe the role of the institution’s governing board or other similar leadership group, including responsibilities and duties.
3. Explain the authority of any agency, other than the governing board, that has power to initiate, review, or reverse actions of the institution’s leadership.
4. If the institution is a stock corporation, provide the list of individuals or organizations who own 10 percent or more of the voting stock.

# State License/Authorization and Accreditations

1. List all states that license or authorize the institution to provide its distance education offerings. [EXHIBIT 3: DEAC State Authorization Form] For initial accreditation, describe how the institution has secured state license/authorization in states where it enrolls students.
2. List any other organizations that accredit the institution or its educational offerings (e.g., all other institutional or programmatic accrediting organizations). [EXHIBIT 3: State Licensure and Authorization and Other Accreditation Documents]
3. Disclose whether the institution has been denied accreditation by another accrediting organization (institutional or programmatic), including the date of the action and the reasons for the denial.

# Access to the Online Learning Platform

1. Provide link to the online learning platform.

1. Provide username for the online learning platform.
2. Provide password for the online learning platform.
3. Provide navigation instructions for the online learning platform.
4. Provide a contact name, email, and telephone number of the individual who can provide assistance if the evaluator is unable to access the online learning platform using the link, username, or password provided.
5. Provide the institution’s catalog for review. [EXHIBIT 4: Catalog]

***Note:*** *if appropriate, provide the access, navigation, and catalog information for each division of study offered (e.g., high school, postsecondary) or program of study (e.g., nursing, law).*

# Accreditation Standards and DEAC Helpful Guidance

## Standard I: Institutional Mission

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### Description of the Mission

The institution’s mission communicates its purpose and its commitment to providing quality distance educational offerings appropriate to the level of study offered. The mission establishes the institution’s identity within the educational community and guides the development of its educational offerings.

1. Present the institution’s mission statement.
2. Describe how the mission establishes the institution’s identity within the educational community.
3. Describe how the mission guides the development of educational offerings.

### Review and Publication of the Mission

The institution’s administrative and academic leadership team, as well as representative members of the institution’s faculty, shall review the mission on a regular basis to determine whether the mission should be amended and how the institution is performing against the objectives set by its mission statement. The published mission statement is readily accessible to students, faculty, staff, other stakeholders, and the public.

1. Describe the procedures followed by leadership and faculty representatives to regularly review the institution’s mission and its performance against mission-aligned objectives.
2. Explain how often the mission is reviewed by leadership and faculty representatives. [EXHIBIT 5: Meeting Minutes (Leadership, Advisory Council, Faculty, and Staff)]
3. Identify who is responsible for ensuring that the mission is readily accessible to students, faculty, staff, other stakeholders, and the public.
4. Describe where the institution publishes its mission, demonstrating that the mission is readily accessible to students, faculty, staff, other stakeholders, and the public.

## Standard I: DEAC Helpful Guidance

Below is helpful guidance related to the contents of this Standard and related exhibits that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use this guidance as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### **Description of the Mission**

Provide a narrative description of and provide all policy, process, and procedure documents, minutes, weblinks, or other evidence that support the narrative related to the following:

1. The mission is aligned with a purpose and commitment to providing quality distance educational offerings.
2. The mission is appropriate to the focus (academic disciplines) and scope (program level) of educational programming.
3. The mission statement establishes the institution’s unique identity to position itself within the larger academic community.

### EXHIBIT 5: Meeting Minutes (Leadership, Advisory Council, Faculty, and Staff)

Meeting Minutes are a crucial opportunity for institutions to demonstrate with written evidence that various processes and procedures are implemented and decisions that must be made on a regular/prescribed basis are documented. Institutions should include minutes in Exhibit 5 that extend beyond demonstration of compliance with Standard I related to review of the mission. Below is a non-exhaustive list of topics that could be included in meeting minutes to demonstrate compliance with DEAC Standards and evidence of narrative responses provided in the Self-Evaluation Report:

* (*Self-Evaluation Process – Institutional Assessment*): Meeting minutes demonstrating owners, governing board members, officials, administrators, advisory councils, staff, faculty, students, and other relevant constituencies contribution to the self-evaluation process.
* (*Legal Form and Governance*): Meeting minutes that corroborate the described roles and responsibilities of the institution’s governing board or other similar leadership group.
* (*Standard I.B.*): Meeting minutes demonstrating that mission review procedures are followed.
* (*Standard II.C.*): Meeting minutes demonstrating the succession plan is reviewed annually and revised as needed.
* (*Standard III.A.*): Meeting minutes demonstrating that mission achievement is monitored, measured, documented, and shared with relevant stakeholders.
* (*Standard III.B.*): Meeting minutes demonstrating that strategic planning input is sought from appropriate stakeholders and the plan and related achievements/progress are reviewed annually.
* (*Standard III.C.*): Meeting minutes demonstrating that institutional effectiveness research and planning is collected, analyzed, and reviewed by appropriate stakeholders, at regular intervals.
* (*Standard IV.B. and C.*): Meeting minutes demonstrating that outcomes assessment planning is conducted, and resultant educational offering and support services improvements are implemented.
* (*Standard V.D.*): Meeting minutes demonstrating that the Advisory Council(s) meet and provide substantive feedback that informs curricular development decisions.
* (*Standard VI*): Meeting minutes demonstrating that any described new program development processes are implemented.
* (*Standard VI.D.*): Meeting minutes demonstrating that described learning resource review and update processes are implemented.
* (*Standard IX.A.*): Meeting minutes demonstrating academic leaders are responsible for and engaged in review of program quality and student outcomes and faculty development.
* (*Standard X.B. and C.*): Meeting minutes demonstrating that any described transfer credit and/or prior learning assessment review meetings are held in practice.
* (*Standard XI.F.*): Meeting minutes demonstrating that any described scholarship meetings are held in practice.
* (*Standard XIV*): Meeting minutes demonstrating that budgets and financial statements are reviewed and approved by the appropriate stakeholders, as described in the SER narrative.
* (*Standard XIV.C.*): Meeting minutes demonstrating the Teach-Out Commitment was adopted by the Board of Directors or equivalent group or individual.

## Standard II: Governance

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### 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.

1. Provide the following information for the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators in EXHIBIT 6: Table of Qualifying Professional Experience using the chart below.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Title | Length of Term | Academic Credentials | Qualifying Professional Experience |
|  |  |  |  |  |

1. Describe how the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators are knowledgeable and experienced in educational administration. [EXHIBIT 6: Owners, Governing Board Members, CEO, and Administrator Résumés]
2. Describe how the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators are knowledgeable and experienced to ensure quality regarding:

* Financial practices necessary to ensure institutional stability.
* Design and delivery of academic programs and student services.
* Educational offerings delivered via distance education.

1. Describe the institution’s processes and policies that clearly delineate the duties and responsibilities of the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators. [EXHIBIT 6: Owners, Governing Board Members, CEO, and Top Administrators Job Descriptions]
2. Describe how the institution verifies that all individuals in leadership and managerial positions are qualified by education and experience, as appropriate to their respective positions.
3. Describe how the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators remain current within the disciplines offered and the educational community.

### 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.

1. Describe how the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators possess sound reputations and records of integrity.
2. Describe how the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators practice ethical conduct in their professional activities, business operations, and business relations.
3. Describe how the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, and top institution administrators comply with the institution’s policies and procedures governing conflicts of interest and other applicable rules of conduct.
4. Affirm that 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.
5. Affirm whether any owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, or top institution administrators have been debarred by federal or state authorities from participating in any funding programs.
6. Affirm that the institution will promptly notify DEAC of any investigative, enforcement, legal, or prosecutorial actions which may be initiated against the institution, its owners, governing board members, officials, and administrators and that such notification shall include an explanation of the circumstances giving rise to such actions and the institution’s response to the same, as well as its explanation of why such actions should not be deemed a concern with respect to the integrity of the named persons or institutions.

### 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.

1. Describe the institution’s succession plan, including what events would initiate a succession of leadership. [EXHIBIT 7: Succession Plan]
2. Identify the leadership, administrators, staff, committees, or boards responsible for carrying out the institution’s operations during the transition period.
3. Describe the institution’s business continuity structure that ensures that students’ education and services are not disrupted during this transition period.
4. Describe how the business continuity procedures are structured for immediate implementation, as necessary.
5. Describe how often the succession plan is reviewed and revised as needed.
6. Identify the individuals involved in reviewing and revising the succession plan.

### 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.

1. Describe how the institution is properly licensed, authorized, exempted, or approved by all applicable state education institutional authorizations (or their non-U.S. institutional equivalent). [EXHIBIT 3: DEAC State Authorization Form], [EXHIBIT 3: State Licensure and Authorization and Other Accreditation Documents]
2. Describe any exemptions from state law that the institution has determined, and provide in EXHIBIT 3, the state-issued documentation or statutory language used to determine its exemption.

## Standard II: DEAC Helpful Guidance

Below is helpful guidance related to the contents of this Standard and related exhibits that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use this guidance as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### Reputation of Institution, Owners, Governing Board Members, Administrators, and Other Officials

1. Institutions are encouraged to provide an integrity policy, as applicable to the leadership described in Standard II.B.

### EXHIBIT 7: Succession Plan

#### Background

All institutions must have a written plan that outlines the process by which the leadership and management succession would be approached and realized. Identify specific people, committees, or boards that would be responsible to carry on the operation of the institution. The plan should be reviewed and revised on an annual basis.

#### Characteristics of an Effective Succession Plan

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Elements** | **Description** |
| **Introduction** | Overview of Plan |
| **Timing of Leadership Transfer** | Include a statement that identifies when and under what circumstances the transfer of leadership would take place. |
| **Process of Succession** | List step-by-step actions by which the search for a successor will take place. Outline the process by which the leadership and management succession would be approached and realized. |
| **Interim Presidential Authority** | State clearly with whom the interim presidential authority should rest in the event of death or disability of the CEO. If it is with more than one person, an order should be clearly stated, and responsibilities clearly identified. Identify specific people, committees, or boards that would be responsible to carry on the operation of the institution. |
| **Business Continuity** | State how the institution’s ongoing operations should be handled during the transition period. |
| **Key Person Insurance** | The CEO should have a life insurance policy, which designates the institution as the beneficiary. It may be decided that only a portion of the policy be set aside to assure the continued viability of the institution. The proceeds should also act as security for any ongoing obligations (e.g., executive search) in the event of the death of the CEO. |
| **Financial Analysis** | State how often and by whom a financial review should be conducted. The financial analysis should show the financial impact of the transition of the CEO. |
| **Search Team Formation** | If a search team will be used to find a qualified successor, state it in your plan. If an outside recruitment firm is to be retained, the firm should be identified. |
| **Identification of Potential Successors** | Identify guidelines that the search team should use when looking for a replacement, including the proposed timeline of actions. |
| **Candidate Qualifications** | The experience, qualifications, and personal characteristics requirement for the position of the CEO should be established. |
| **Candidate Selection and Compensation** | Include a statement describing who makes the final decision and how the final section will be made. Also include who would establish the amount of compensation for the new CEO. |
| **Short-Term Contingency Plan** | You may wish to set forth a general “operating plan” covering six months in the event of the unexpected demise of the CEO. This plan should be reviewed on a regular basis. |
| **Review of Plan** | The plan should be reviewed and revised on an annual basis. |

## Standard III: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### Mission Achievement

The institution plans and implements comprehensive processes with clearly defined metrics and criteria to monitor effectiveness of all aspects of the institution’s operations against the institution’s mission and any initiatives identified in the strategic plan. The institution shares appropriate information from the data gathered with relevant stakeholder groups.

1. Describe how the institution monitors and measures operational effectiveness to verify alignment of institutional activities with its mission statement.
2. List the metrics and criteria the institution uses to measure achievement of the mission.
3. Describe how the achievement of these metrics and criteria demonstrates that the institution is effectively carrying out its mission.
4. Identify who is responsible for documenting the institution’s achievement of its mission.
5. Describe the process the institution uses to seek input from relevant groups regarding the extent to which it achieves its mission. Include the types of data relevant to its identified metrics that the institution gathers for review.
6. Describe how the institution shares information on the achievement of its mission with relevant groups and incorporates this information into planning for improvement.

### 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.

1. Describe how the institution’s strategic planning efforts guide the pursuit of goal achievement in support of its mission. [EXHIBIT 8: Strategic Plan]
2. Describe how the institution seeks input from internal and external stakeholders as a means to enhance the strategic planning process.

1. Describe how the input received from internal and external stakeholders is used in the strategic planning process.
2. Describe the institution’s strategic planning process in terms of gathering data to identify areas for improvement or opportunity, via a SWOT Analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) or other similar means of evaluation.
3. Describe how the strategic plan identifies proactive initiatives, priorities, and goals for future performance, in alignment with its identified areas for improvement or opportunity.
4. Describe how the institution’s strategic plan addresses:

* Financial stability.
* Development of educational offerings.
* Integration of technology to enhance its educational offerings.
* Effective and accurate admissions and marketing activities to promote institutional sustainability.
* Professional development of leadership, faculty, and staff.

1. Describe the metrics the institution has identified that guide and measure the achievement of its strategic planning goals and objectives.
2. Describe how the institution identifies the individuals responsible, timelines for completion, and the financial resources required to pursue achievement of each of its strategic initiatives.
3. Describe the institution’s annual strategic plan review process and how it reports achievement of progress to relevant stakeholders.

### Institutional Effectiveness

The institution develops a plan and implements a systematic and ongoing process to evaluate the content and delivery of its educational programs, its provision of student support services, and the effectiveness of its supporting infrastructure and staff operations. The institution engages in sound research practices; collects and analyzes quantitative and qualitative evidence about its effectiveness; and develops and implements action plans that are used to improve operations, academic achievement, educational technologies, and student services.

1. Describe the institution’s ongoing efforts to evaluate institutional effectiveness and implement action plans for improvement. [EXHIBIT 8: Institutional Effectiveness Data and Planning Document]
2. Describe the institution’s research practices and its process for collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Provide examples of the data collected and analyzed.
3. Describe the key indicators the institution uses to measure its effectiveness and to determine if improvements are needed.
4. Describe and provide examples of how the institution improves its educational programs based on the data collected and analyzed from its research studies.
5. Describe and provide examples of how the institution improves its student support services based on the data collected and analyzed from its research studies.
6. Describe and provide examples of how the institution improves its technological infrastructure and staff operations based on the data collected and analyzed from its research studies.
7. Describe how the institutional effectiveness programs and data are reviewed to determine achievement of initiatives.

## Standard III: DEAC Helpful Guidance

Below is helpful guidance related to the contents of this Standard and related exhibits that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use this guidance as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### ****EXHIBIT 8: Institutional Effectiveness and Strategic Plan****

#### Background

Some may ask, “Isn’t institutional effectiveness and strategic planning the same thing?” While they are complementary and related, ongoing assessment of institutional effectiveness and strategic planning are different.

Institutional effectiveness is an ongoing, cyclical process by which the institution assesses its administrative operations, support services, educational offerings, and facilities by gathering, analyzing, and using data on these areas to determine how well it is accomplishing its mission, goals, and outcomes against defined benchmarks. This assessment process is used to inform decisions and continuous improvements efforts based on assessment results. Institutional effectiveness is a comprehensive roadmap used to measure continuous improvement at the institutional level. Outcomes assessment also contributes to this process by measuring course/program level effectiveness through students’ achievement of learning outcomes. Data and results gathered from the institutional effectiveness assessment process are used to inform strategic planning that is monitored annually and reviewed and revised during regular intervals.

Strategic planning, on the other hand, is the integrated planning that links the mission, priorities, people, and institutional operations in a flexible system of evaluation, decision-making, and action. Strategic planning shapes and guides the entire institution as it evolves over time and within its educational community. Strategic planning is critical to an institution’s success, and even long-term survival, within higher education. As the competition in distance education continues to increase, it is important that institutions participate in a dynamic and continuous strategic planning process. The strategic planning process provides institutions with the structure needed to achieve their mission while identifying and committing the resources necessary to achieve strategic initiatives. The process allows institutions to objectively evaluate and plan for challenges and threats while maximizing opportunities and enhancing strengths.

Institutions do not need to produce two plans, but they should demonstrate that institutional effectiveness efforts and data inform the strategic plan.

#### Characteristics of an Effective Strategic Plan

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Institution’s Strategic Plan Elements** | **Description of Elements** |
| **Executive Summary** |  |
| Mission | Why your institution was established. [Why] |
| Vision | Future-oriented direction. [Where] |
| Goals | Indicators of future-oriented direction. [Steps] |
| Strategies | Statements of the method of achievement. [How] |
| Outcomes | Indicators of successful achievement. |
| **Strategies** |  |
| Review Mission | Time to review mission based on previous strategic planning cycle data and results. |
| SWOT | Internal indicators: strengths and weaknesses  External indicators: opportunities and threats |
| Strategic Analysis | Self-examination on enhancing strengths, eliminating weaknesses, maximizing opportunities, and protecting against threats. |
| Strategic Programs | Proposed solutions and methods of execution. |
| Action Plans | Detailed steps for implementing solutions and achieving results. |
| Operating Plan | Overall plan for achieving strategic planning initiatives. |
| Budget | Overall budget to ensure available resources for achieving strategic planning initiatives. |
| Personnel | Identifying individuals responsible for overseeing the achievement of strategic initiatives. |
| Monitoring | Identifying the timeline for achieving strategic initiatives. |
| **Future Plans** |  |
| Goals | Identifying future projects and initiatives for continued growth. |
| **Reporting Results** |  |
| Reports | Identifying the reports necessary to track strategic initiatives and provide relevant data to inform decisions. |
| Committees | Identifying relevant stakeholders necessary for internal and external feedback on achievement of strategic initiatives. |
| **Addenda** |  |
| Supporting Documentation | Data, budgets, charts, feedback, and other documentation that supports the identified strategic planning efforts. |

## Standard IV: Academic Achievement

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes are clearly defined, simply stated, and measurable and define success for students who are reasonably capable of completing the educational offering.

1. Describe how the institution develops student learning outcomes (including program- and course-level outcomes). [EXHIBIT 9: Program Outcomes]
2. Describe how the institution verifies that student learning outcomes are measurable and reasonably attainable.
3. Describe how the institution verifies that student learning outcomes are current and relevant based on research, comparison, subject matter experts, and advisory council input.
4. Describe how course outcomes are mapped to program outcomes. [EXHIBIT 9: Curriculum Maps]

### Direct Measures

The institution evaluates student achievement using student outcome indicators (e.g., completion rates) and other measures that it determines to be appropriate relative to its mission and educational offerings, including post-completion measures. The institution maintains systematic and ongoing processes for assessing student achievement, analyzes aggregated and disaggregated 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. Data on student achievement is collected on a continuous basis and evaluated annually.

1. Describe how the institution collects student outcomes data appropriate to its mission and educational offerings, as part of its outcomes assessment plan. [EXHIBIT 10: Outcomes Assessment Plan]
2. Describe how often student outcomes data is collected and evaluated as part of the institution’s outcomes assessment process.
3. Describe the direct measures (e.g., assignment, examination, or assessment) used by the institution to measure student achievement of student learning outcomes (both program- and course-level outcomes).
4. Describe the benchmarks or standards the institution uses to measure whether students are achieving the stated student learning outcomes.
5. Describe how the institution uses the data results of direct measures to improve and enhance its educational offerings and support services.
6. Describe how the institution monitors student graduation and completion rates.
7. Provide data that shows how the institution meets DEAC’s most recently published benchmark standards (see DEAC Handbook, Part Four: Appendix X) for graduation and completion rates within the context of the institution’s mission and the profile of students being served.
8. Describe how the institution monitors student persistence and retention rates, as applicable to the institution’s program lengths.

1. If applicable, relative to the institution’s mission and educational offerings, describe how the institution monitors post-completion measures (e.g. employment rates, placement rates, professional examination pass rates, or wage increase metrics).
2. For programs that indicate a specific career or other benefit as an outcome or prepares students for state licensure/certification examination required for entering a profession, describe the process for collecting data on student achievement and/or licensure examination results. If stated program outcomes explicitly indicate job placement, include evidence of employer acceptance of graduates of these programs.
3. For programs that indicate a specific career or other benefit as an outcome, describe how the institution gathers and utilizes information from employers about future employment prospects for graduates of these programs.

### Indirect Measures

The institution systematically seeks student, alumni, and employment community input to evaluate and improve curricula, instructional materials, method of delivery, and student services. The institution regularly collects evidence that currently enrolled students are satisfied with the administrative, educational, and support services provided.

1. Describe how the institution systematically seeks student and alumni input to evaluate and improve curricula, instructional materials, method of delivery, and student services. [EXHIBIT 11: Sample Student/Alumni Surveys]
2. If applicable, relative to the institution’s mission and educational offerings, describe how the institution systematically seeks input from the employment community to evaluate and improve curricula, instructional materials, method of delivery, and student services. [EXHIBIT 11: Sample Employer Surveys]
3. Describe any other indirect measures the institution uses to measure student satisfaction (e.g. exit interviews or focus groups).
4. Describe the benchmarks or standards the institution uses to measure student satisfaction.
5. Describe how the institution uses the data results of indirect measures to improve and enhance its educational offerings and student support services.

## Standard IV: DEAC Helpful Guidance

Below is helpful guidance related to the contents of this Standard and related exhibits that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use this guidance as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### EXHIBIT 10: Outcomes Assessment Plan

#### Background

Outcomes assessment is the systematic examination of student learning within an academic program. The primary goal of outcomes assessment is the continuous improvement of an institution’s academic quality. An effective outcomes assessment plan provides institutional structure when conducting outcomes assessment. An outcomes assessment plan is a tool that explains the concepts and processes, provides examples and strategies for measuring student achievement and satisfaction, and offers approaches used in ongoing curriculum reviews.

DEAC and on-site evaluators will apply, and judge evidence presented by institutions to demonstrate acceptable outcomes assessment programs. Evidence includes student satisfaction, program completion/graduation rates, and evidence of achievement of student learning outcomes. Institutions must also demonstrate how student learning outcomes relate to institutional learning outcomes and/or institutional goals and objectives.

Institutions are expected to have in place a formal, written, and actively executed plan for conducting outcomes assessment and satisfaction studies in order to demonstrate compliance with Standard IV. Additionally, institutions must show evidence that this data is analyzed and considered in the institution’s quality improvement efforts at the course, program, and institutional levels (see Table B).

Each institution is required to submit data that demonstrates acceptable student achievement and satisfaction, including data from student learning outcomes assessments that is both direct and indirect. Indirect measures may include student surveys, completion/graduation rates, placement rates (where applicable), and applicable employment rates. Examples of direct measures should include student assessment portfolios, authentic assessment procedures, capstone projects, and test results. Each institution must also demonstrate evidence of how this data drives quality improvement activities and should be prepared to demonstrate how this data is disclosed to the public.

DEAC expects each institution to demonstrate acceptable student achievement and satisfaction based on valid and reliable assessment techniques. To this end, the institution collects and analyzes relevant data and uses the data to demonstrate compliance with Standard IV. Suggestions for the evidence that the institution must provide to DEAC are described below.

DEAC accreditation standards have always required that institutions implement an ongoing procedure to demonstrate that students have (1) attained the required learning outcomes and (2) been successful in achieving the benefits established for a course or program. Institutions have had to show that a high proportion of students are satisfied with the educational services provided and that a satisfactory percentage of enrolled students finish the program, as defined by metrics that are provided by DEAC. This Guide provides a road map of how an institution’s outcomes assessment plan can enhance its internal processes and strengthen its programs to become the best educational provider that it can be.

If an institution feels that it cannot adequately and fairly fulfill the reporting requirements as described in this Guide, it may suggest other ways of providing evidence that it meets Standard IV. DEAC will determine on a case-by-case basis if the institution’s methods of providing evidence are acceptable for meeting Standard IV.

#### The Three Pillars of DEAC Outcomes Assessment

1. **Student Achievement** process for assessing student learning that uses both direct and indirect measures of learning outcomes assessment to show achievement of the program outcomes. A sample degree program outcomes table is available in Table B.
2. **Perceived Student Satisfaction.** In addition to the outcomes assessments indicated above, the Commission will use the overall assessments made by the students taking the program as additional indicators of student success and satisfaction.
3. **Completion/Graduation rates.** These numbers show how many students were able to complete a program of study and pass all assignments and assessments required by the institution or were able to graduate from an entire degree program, and whether the completion or graduation rates fall within the range of comparability with peer institutions.

#### Characteristics of an Effective Outcomes Assessment Plan

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Institution’s Outcomes Assessment Plan Elements** | **Description of Elements** |
| **Overview** | |
| About | Why the plan is written; what it seeks to accomplish or its purpose; who is responsible for implementing the plan; principles of learning assessment; implementation timeline; review of plan. |
| Mission | Why your institution was established. [Why] |
| Vision | Future-oriented direction. [Where] |
| Purpose | Describes the organizational structure of the institution’s educational offerings. |
| Program Outcomes | Indicators of successful achievement. |
| Target Student Population | Describes the typical student the institution serves based on its educational offerings. |
| **Assessing Student Achievement** | |
| Introduction | Overview |
| Identifying Program and Course Outcomes | Define and identify the learning goals and outcomes; identify what the students will be able to do or know; and identify how this is determined. |
| Outcomes Measurement Tools | Lesson exam grades, final exam grades, final course grades, GPA, written projects, projects, internships, transfer of credits; third-party- administered test scores; certifications. |
| Review of Student Achievement Results | Data that demonstrates that students are achieving learning outcomes that are appropriate to the institution’s mission; data demonstrates the rigor and depth of the degrees, diplomas, or certificates offered. |
| Reporting Student Achievement Results | Report any third-party assessment results, such as test scores on industry examinations or certifications as compared to national average scores, etc. |
| Using Student Achievement Results | Revise as needed to improve outcomes. |
| **Assessing Student Satisfaction** | |
| Introduction | Overview |
| Student Satisfaction Measurement Tools | Student surveys, unsolicited testimonials; referrals; repeat enrollments; few student complaints; end-of-course evaluation; graduation survey. |
| Review of Student Satisfaction Results | How often tools are reviewed; who is responsible; what are the benchmarks? |
| Reporting Student Satisfaction Results | Surveys of three mandatory questions must be reported to DEAC in Annual Report each year, due January 31. |
| Using Student Satisfaction Results | What happens when the percentage of “yes” responses to the three questions fall below 75 percent? |
| **Assessing Progress Through the Course/Program** | |
| Introduction | Overview |
| Collecting Course/Program Progress Data | Course completion data, program graduation data, time to complete a course, credentialing. |
| Review of Progress Data | What happens when a completion rate falls below a certain percentage? |
| Reporting Data to DEAC | Report completion and graduation rates to DEAC in Annual Report each year, due January 31st. |
| Using Progress Data for Improvement | Revise or terminate courses with low completion rates. |
| **Improving the Institution Through Outcomes Assessment** | How will the institution use this information to improve teaching and learning, as well as student services, etc.? |
| Instructional and Educational Support Services | Review and revise as needed. |
| Program Outcomes and Curriculum | Review and revise as needed. |
| Course Outcomes | Review and revise as needed. |
| Content and Instructional Materials | Review and revise as needed. |
| Assessments | Review and revise as needed. |
| Institutional Policies and Procedures | Review and revise as needed. |
| Institutional Mission and Outcomes | Review and revise as needed. |
| **Attachments** | |
| Areas Assessed and Methods of Assessment and When They Are Used | Table A below. |
| Methods of Assessment and How Institution Interprets and Uses Results | Table B below. |
| Other Samples | Sample of: Student surveys, instructor course evaluations, non-start survey, graduate survey, alumni survey, employer survey, etc. |

#### Student Achievement and Satisfaction

1. **Achievement of Student Learning Outcomes:** When an institution undergoes an initial or renewal of accreditation, it must provide in its Self-Evaluation Report (SER) both a formal written outcomes assessment plan for regularly conducting student learning outcomes assessments for all of its courses/programs and evidence that it follows the plan. This plan must also include documentation on how data regarding student learning outcomes is used to assess institutional outcomes and/or goals. Each accredited institution must confirm that it meets this requirement by initiating the appropriate statements in “Section II. Certification of Compliance with Commission Requirements” in its Annual Report to DEAC and by providing a narrative on its continuous improvement results.

The institution must demonstrate and document in its SER through results of learning outcome assessments that students achieve learning outcomes that are appropriate to its mission and to the rigor and depth of the degrees or certificates offered. The institution must also describe how its outcomes assessment plan has contributed to the improvement of the institution over time and explain how the plan demonstrates that the institution is fulfilling its stated mission. This is referred to as “closing the loop.” It is an important step in the cycle of outcomes assessment. It is the process by which the institution uses evidence of student learning to gauge the effectiveness of the educational practices and methodologies and to identify and implement strategies for improving student learning. It is not enough to just collect data. The data must be analyzed and put to use.

“Assessment” is an ongoing process aimed at understanding and improving student learning. When developing an outcomes assessment plan, an institution should consider: 1) what it wants students to be able to do or know, 2) how it ascertains that the students can do or know these things, and 3) how it will use the information received to improve teaching and learning. The plan should begin with a solid set of learning goals and outcomes that are quantifiable, realistic, and measurable.

The institution’s outcomes assessment plan should describe the different areas assessed, the methods of assessment and when they are used, and how the institution interprets and uses the results. The tables found at the end of this document are provided to suggest some possible resources for methods of assessment and when they can be used. Institutions should tailor the data shown in the sample tables to fit their method of assessment and interpretations for their institution’s courses and/or programs and institutional outcomes and/or goals and objectives.

The institution must use both direct and indirect measures of outcome learning assessments to show achievement of course and program outcomes and must provide documented evidence that shows that the results are used to improve programs, curricula, instruction, faculty development, and services. The following is a listing of currently accepted direct and indirect measures of learning outcomes assessment that may be used to satisfy the outcomes requirement:

**Direct measures** require students to demonstrate knowledge and skills and provide data that directly measures achievement of expected outcomes. Examples may include but are not limited to:

1. **Capstone Course** (or experience, as applicable): A capstone course, project, or practical experience integrates the knowledge, concepts, and skills associated with an entire sequence of study within a discipline or program. The structure and content of a capstone experience are linked to a discipline/program’s goals and objectives for student learning. Capstone experiences provide students with a forum to combine various aspects of their program/discipline experiences. Capstone experiences provide faculty and programs/disciplines with a forum to assess student academic achievement in a variety of knowledge- and skills-based areas by integrating their educational experiences.
2. **Embedded Assessments:** Assessment practices embedded within courses generate information about what and how students are learning within the programs/disciplines. This form of assessment takes advantage of existing curricular strategies. Common embedded assessments include student projects, papers, and questions placed in course assignments. These projects, papers, or questions are intended to assess student outcomes. Embedded assessments are incorporated into all sections of the particular course or discipline, whether taught by full-time faculty or part-time instructors. Best practices recommend that the student work and/or responses be evaluated by faculty other than the course faculty member or by outside reviewers to determine if students are achieving the academic goals established by programs.
3. **Internship Performance:** Performance in a real-world setting is assessed through the use of a rubric. Students are assessed in their program/discipline-specific job skills, knowledge, and ability to interact professionally.
4. **National Licensure, Certification, or Professional Examination:** These standardized tests are developed by outside professional organizations to assess general knowledge in a discipline. Examples include the Bar Exam, State Medical-related exams, Certified Safety Professional (CSP), CISCO Certified Network Associate exam, and Law Enforcement Academy exam (POST: Peace Officer Standard and Training). In any case, where the outcome of a course or program is demonstrable through performance on outside assessments, such as those required for employment in a profession for which the program trains graduates, institutions will be expected to provide any data available to them that shows this outcome.
5. **Portfolio Assessment:** Portfolios are collections of student work that exhibit to the faculty and student the student’s progress and achievement in a program or discipline of study. A portfolio used for assessment purposes can include research papers and reports, examples of student work, projects, self-evaluations, journals, case studies, as well as other submissions.
6. **Pre/Post Testing:** This form of assessment is used to determine what a student has learned. A test or similar assignment is given at the beginning of a course or program and a similar test or assignment is given at the end. This form of assessment is helpful in measuring both cognitive and attitudinal development.
7. **Standardized Examinations:** There are two types of standardized tests: norm-referenced and criterion-referenced examinations. Norm-referenced exams describe performance in comparison to others, while criterion-referenced exams describe student performance directly and judges that performance by some preset standard.
8. **Outside Assessors:** These are assessments of student pre- and post-work completed by outside assessors who rate student attainment of outcomes as compared to students at other institutions that have completed similar programs.
9. **Approved Thesis or Dissertation:** This category would include approved theses, research projects, or dissertations that have been judged and approved by a committee.

**Indirect Measures** are an indirect assessment of student learning since they measure student, graduate, or stakeholders’ satisfaction and impressions of educational experiences, rather than knowledge and skills acquired. However, when combined with direct measures of learning, indirect assessments can provide a comprehensive pathway to enhancing student academic achievement. Evidence should be available to demonstrate that the institution actively seeks student feedback (and/or stakeholder feedback, when applicable) on its courses and programs. Indirect measures may include but are not limited to:

1. **Student Learning Assessments:** End-of-course student surveys are an example of the indirect measures that can be used to show that learning outcomes are being achieved.
2. **Graduate and Alumni Surveys:** Graduate surveys have assisted in understanding the educational needs of the students. Former students can provide important information about both the curriculum and the co-curricular activities. Information can include student insights on educational experiences, what they like or dislike about different instructional approaches, impressions about the online environment, program equipment and technology levels, perceived benefits from student and instructional support services, and the value of the education to their work experiences and career goals.
3. **Employer Surveys:** Employer surveys provide useful information about the curriculum, programs, and students that other forms of assessment cannot provide. Employers provide information about skill levels of recent graduates, abilities to communicate effectively orally and in writing, specific program competencies, and abilities to utilize current program-specific technology. Employer surveys help institutions determine the relevance of educational experiences and programs.
4. **Advisory Board Feedback:** Information from advisory board meetings, such as recommendations on program improvement, current practices, or curriculum updates, may be used as an indirect measure.
5. **Benchmarking Against Other Institutions:** Results of standardized tests, licensure pass rates, or any number of other measures can be compared to other schools’ performance on the same measures.
6. **Perceived Student Satisfaction:** The institution documents that students are satisfied with the instructional and educational services provided. A standard part of DEAC accreditation has been an evaluation of student responses to survey questions designed by DEAC. Students in DEAC-accredited institutions fit a profile, and most are older and perform roles other than that of student. They are adequate judges of whether the program delivered what it promised.

The following are guidelines for completing the student satisfaction assessment.

* 1. Questions designed to elicit the measure of satisfaction are asked of some students annually. DEAC has developed three questions to be asked of randomly selected students.
  2. A baseline has been established. For each course or program offered by an institution, three of every four students responding to a random survey must answer positively about their experiences.

1. **Progress Through the Course/Program:** The institution documents that students complete their studies at rates that compare favorably with those of courses/programs offered by similar DEAC-accredited institutions or benchmarks set by DEAC.

Although these rates have long been included in DEAC accreditation decisions, the nature of distance education and its students make them a less useful indicator of course outcomes than they may be in traditional education. Where adult students are responsible for their educational choices, they may decide that their personal goals have been reached before completing the course. Open enrollments and “study anytime” opportunities result in noticeably lower completion rates for distance education. Institutions offering identical courses in both resident and distance modes report consistently lower graduation rates from the distance education offerings, and over the years, many fine institutions of unquestioned effectiveness have demonstrated that high student success can exist alongside low course/program completion/graduation rates.

These rates will now have benchmarks designed to identify areas in need of DEAC attention. DEAC members will be assigned to one of several peer groups, depending upon whether the courses are educational, vocational, or avocational; the level of degree or credential offered; and other factors. In order to make the results statistically valid, there must be at least five institutions in a peer group. A benchmark completion/graduation rate representing the completion rate of all programs in the peer group will be determined for each peer group or degree level. Vocational programs with completion rates within 15 percentage points of the mean for the group will be considered to meet the benchmark. Graduation rates within 15 percentage points of the mean for the assigned degree level will be considered to meet the benchmark.

If the DEAC’s analysis does not show that the institution’s data compare favorably with those of similar DEAC-accredited institutions, the institution must provide a written explanation, and the Commission will review the institution’s explanation and take whatever follow-up action it deems appropriate. Such action may include (1) accepting the institution’s explanations and taking no further action, (2) determining that the institution may no longer offer the course/program in its present form, and/or (3) ordering the institution to undergo a full accreditation review if the institution does not make the appropriate changes.

#### Student Satisfaction

DEAC defines “student satisfaction” as evidence presented by an institution that shows that the students and graduates of the institution have expressed their overall satisfaction with the lessons/courses and services as they have experienced them.

Student satisfaction can range from whether the course/lesson materials were current and comprehensive to whether grading services were prompt and fair and if faculty members have performed adequately. Student expressions of satisfaction are normally attained through institution surveys, but an institution can also gather and present data such as unsolicited testimonials, referrals of other students, and repeat enrollments in new or subsequent courses.

The students’ expression of their own satisfaction is another form of evidence used to document outcome achievement. The institution must provide evidence that demonstrates that students are satisfied with the instructional and educational services provided. It must provide evidence in its Annual Report by reporting the required data. In addition, an institution undergoing initial or renewal of accreditation must also provide evidence in its Self-Evaluation Report.

To measure student satisfaction, the institution must survey the students in each of its vocational programs or courses/degree programs. When reporting information to DEAC in its Annual Report, an institution will be asked to report the number and percentage of “Yes” responses to the three questions below from 10 of its most popular vocational programs and/or courses (as defined by number of enrollments). If an institution has more than one division, e.g., vocational and/or degree granting, it must choose 10 courses/programs from each division. The institution should aim for at least a 30 percent response rate to its surveys.

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this guidance on Student Achievement and Satisfaction:

**Degree-granting:** A “**course**” is defined as units of learning that result with the award of a certificate of academic credit when completed. Examples of course titles are, “American History,” or “Business Management.”

**Vocational:** A “program” is defined as units of learning that result with the award of a diploma or certificate (nonacademic credit). Examples of program titles are “Medical Billing,” or “Interior Design.”

The institution **must** include in its surveys the following **three questions** and use the “Yes-No” response (these are referred to in other materials as the three “DEAC Mandated Questions”). The questions are worded so that they apply to students who have dropped out, are still studying, or have completed the course/program:

* 1. Did you achieve, or will you have achieved upon completing your studies, the goals you had when you started this course or program?
  2. Would you recommend these studies to a friend?
  3. All things considered, were you satisfied with your studies with us?

The minimum acceptable “Yes” response rate is that three of four responders (or 75 percent) must answer “Yes” to each of the three mandatory questions. If the institution receives less than 75 percent for those who answered “yes” to the three questions, the institution must provide a written explanation, and the Commission will review the institution’s explanation and take whatever follow-up action it deems appropriate. Such action may include (1) accepting the institution’s explanations and taking no further action, (2) determining that the institution may no longer offer the course/program in its present form, and/or (3) ordering the institution to undergo a full accreditation review if the institution does not make the appropriate changes.

The institution may determine the time frame for collecting the survey data. The institution will be asked annually to provide a sample of the surveys used and a description of how they were conducted. The description should include the names of all 10 courses/programs, the time frame used to collect the data, and the number and percentage of “Yes” answers to questions 1, 2, and 3 above. The institution should aim for at least a 30 percent response rate to its surveys. Evidence should be available to demonstrate that the institution actively seeks student feedback on its courses and programs

#### Example of Survey Data

An institution offers a course in Business Management. During the calendar year 2024, the institution sends a survey that includes the three mandatory questions to the 700 students who enrolled in the course that year, including those students who dropped out (110), those who complete the course (400), and those still studying (190). The institution received 10 surveys stamped as undeliverable, which makes the Survey Sampling 690 (110 + 400 + 190 = 700 – 10 = 690). The institution received 210 completed surveys, which makes the Return Rate 30 percent (210 divided by 690 = .304 or 30%). Of the 210 completed surveys received, 200 answered “Yes” to question 1, 189 answered “yes” to question 2, and 205 answered “yes” to question 3. Along with a sample of the survey, and a description of the survey method, the institution completes 8. Satisfaction on the Annual Report Form.

If the percentage of those answering “Yes” to any of these questions is below 75 percent, the institution must provide a written explanation, and the Commission will review the institution’s explanation and take whatever follow-up action it deems appropriate. Such action may include (1) accepting the institution’s explanations and taking no further action, (2) determining that the institution may no longer offer the course/program in its present form, and/or (3) ordering the institution to undergo a full accreditation review.

#### Progress Through the Course/Program

The institution must demonstrate that students complete their studies at rates that compare favorably with the rates of students enrolled in similar programs offered by similar DEAC-accredited institutions. The Commission defines “compare favorably” as meaning completion rates (for vocational programs) or graduation rates (for degree programs) that do not fall below 15 percentage points of the mean completion or graduation rate for similar courses or programs at similar DEAC institutions. Groups must comprise at least five institutions. A benchmark completion or graduation rate representing the mean completion/graduation rate of all programs in the peer group is determined for each peer group. Vocational programs with completion rates within 15 percentage points of the mean for the group will be considered to meet the benchmark. Graduation rates within 15 percentage points of the mean for the assigned degree level will be considered to meet the benchmark. DEAC will collect, analyze, and compare the data from the institution’s Annual Report or Self-Evaluation Report and notify the institution if it falls below the 15-point limit. The Commission will set the mean completion rate annually. The Commission will review the reported institutional data for accuracy and consider other available relevant industry data and studies.

For an institution undergoing initial or renewal of accreditation, DEAC staff will provide the on-site evaluators with the data from similar programs offered by similar DEAC-accredited institutions in order to help them determine if the institution meets Standard IV. The evaluators will also consider the data provided in the institution’s Self-Evaluation Report when making their determination. For the purposes of calculating the program completion and graduation rates, the term “completion” indicates that a student completed a vocational or non-credit bearing program, while the term “graduation” means that a student completed the entire degree program. The institution must collect completion data on each vocational or non-credit- bearing program and graduation data on each degree program. For the purpose of the Annual Report, an institution will be asked to complete 4. Degree Program Graduation Rate and 5. Non-Degree Program Completion, as applicable.

#### Graduation Rate for Degree Programs

Each institution must collect and report graduation rates at 150 percent of “Normal Time” for its academic programs as defined below:

* **Normal Completion Time:** DEAC has adopted the definition developed by the Joint Commission on Accountability Reporting (JCAR) as a definition of normal time. Normal time is defined as “the time necessary for a student to complete all requirements for a degree according to an institution’s catalog.” This is typically four years for a bachelor’s degree, two to three years for an associate degree, two to three years for master’s degree, and four years for first professional and doctoral programs.
* **Date Range of Cohort to be Measured:** Normally the date range is an academic year as defined by the institution, but it may be an enrollment period within an academic year (i.e., fall semester). Select the most recent academic year in which new students enrolling in that period would have had time to complete, as determined by calculating 150 percent of Normal Time.
* **Number of Students in Cohort:** The cohort should include all new students (not a random sampling) enrolled in the program in the academic year or enrollment period.
* **Enrollments:** Students who remained enrolled after the five-day minimum cancellation period and met all admissions criteria.
* **Exclusions:** Exclusions are categories that fall outside of the definition for enrollments and may include circumstances such as deployment for active-duty military service, medical leave of absence, death, other approved leave of absence, or other reasons for exclusions as determined by the institution. Note - DEAC may request additional information for students reported under "exclusions".
* **Net Cohort:** “Number of Students in Cohort” minus “Exclusions”. The net cohort includes students who have graduated, withdrawn, stopped out, or are still attending.
* **Students Graduating:** Number of students in the cohort who earned their degree by completing all program requirements.
* **Graduation Rate:** Number of “Students Graduating” divided by number of students in the “Net Cohort”.

#### Other Information Considered

In determining whether an institution undergoing its initial or renewal of accreditation meets Standard IV, DEAC also considers the direct evidence of the results of its own mail survey of students using the “DEAC Student Survey Form.” An institution must submit 100 names/labels with its application form. If an institution has more than one division, e.g., vocational programs and academic degrees, it must submit 100 names for each division. The on-site evaluators and the Commission will review the student surveys to evaluate the institution’s performance. The survey results from the Commission-administered student survey will be compared to those of institution-administered surveys to establish the validity of the institution’s survey results. The Commission will also consider evidence from (1) analysis of student complaints received about the institution; (2) information solicited in a survey that the Commission sends to state and federal agencies, consumer agencies, and Better Business Bureaus; and (3) any other data or information it encounters about the institution, regardless of its source.

#### Commission’s Review

The Commission will review the data supplied in the institution’s Annual Report and will compare the completion and graduation rates with similar institutions offering similar courses/programs and degree levels. To make the comparison, the Commission staff will determine which institutions and programs are similar. For institutions undergoing initial or re-accreditation, the on-site evaluators and subject specialists will review the information in the Self-Evaluation Report and make the comparison with Commission-supplied data.

To be considered a “favorable comparison,” a course or program must not fall below 15 points of the mean completion rate for similar courses or programs for the institution’s assigned peer group. The graduation rates for degree programs will be compared with graduation rates for similar degree levels, e.g., associate, bachelor’s, master’s, first professional, and professional doctorate.

If the Commission’s analysis does not show that the institution’s data compare favorably with those of similar DEAC-accredited institutions, the institution must provide a written explanation of its data and how they were gathered, and the Commission will review the institution’s explanation and take whatever follow-up action it deems appropriate. Such action may include (1) accepting the institution’s explanations and taking no further action, (2) determining that the institution may no longer offer the course/program in its present form, and/or (3) ordering the institution to undergo a full reaccreditation review if the institution does not make the appropriate changes.

#### Annual Reporting of Continuous Improvement Results

The institution’s CEO/president is asked to initial that his or her institution had “formal written plans for regularly conducting student learning outcomes assessments and institution self-improvements.” The Annual Report requires institutions to provide a narrative on their activities or improvements that were made during the reporting year based directly on the results of its outcomes assessment efforts. These institutional changes or improvements can be minor or major, depending on the data collected.

#### Conclusion

DEAC judges the acceptability of the case an institution makes for meeting Standard IV by looking at all of the evidence and at the thoroughness, clarity, and adequacy of the documentation presented in the Self-Evaluation Report and Annual Report.

When an institution is undergoing its initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation, the on-site evaluators will review and evaluate the information provided by the Commission and by the institution against the minimum levels of acceptance described above. They will also determine if there are any extenuating circumstances that should be considered in the case of an institution whose performance falls below minimum acceptable levels.

If the Commission’s analysis shows that the institution’s outcomes data do not meet the prescribed minimum acceptable levels, the institution must provide a written explanation, and the Commission will review the institution’s explanation and take whatever follow-up action it deems appropriate. Such action may include (1) accepting the institution’s explanations and taking no further action, (2) determining that the institution may no longer offer the course/program in its present form, and/or (3) ordering the institution to undergo a full accreditation review if the institution does not make the appropriate changes.

Evidence provided by the institution must be relevant, verifiable, representative, and cumulative. It may not be modified to produce a desired outcome. Hence, the burden of proof is always on the institution to show how its evidence meets Standard IV.

When an institution believes that it operates under conditions where assessing outcomes can be achieved more accurately by using standards other than those listed in this policy, it may petition the Commission for a variance. Where DEAC believes that any such variance or reinforcement of the established standard will improve the assessment of objectives and outcomes, it will grant a variance.

#### Table A – Assessment Areas and Direct Measure Methods

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Areas Assessed:** | **Method of Direct Measure Assessment and When It Is Used:** |
| **Basic Skills** (reading, writing, math computing) | standardized tests; pre- and post-test; portfolio at end of course; thesis; pre- and post-examinations; embedded assessments; outside assessments. |
| **Competencies** (critical thinking, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, problem-solving, etc.) | standardized tests; comprehensive examinations; thesis; internships; capstone projects; portfolio. |
| **Disciplinary Knowledge** | standardized examinations; evaluation by outside instructors; capstone project; portfolio, thesis; performance on national, state-mandated, comprehensive, standardized, and/or graduate examinations; outside assessments; national licensure. |
| **Technical/Professional Skills** | national licensure or board examinations; practica, internships; capstone project; outside assessment; portfolios; comprehensive examination; pre- and post- testing; embedded assessments. |
| **General Education or Core** | pre- and post-test; portfolio; review of student input form; capstone project; student survey; course-embedded assessment; outside assessments. |
| **Interdisciplinary Knowledge** | competency examinations; portfolios; capstone project; graduate school admission; evaluation of performance; faculty assessment; outside assessment. |
| **Values** | assessed within context of internship; capstone project; embedded assessments; portfolio; final thesis; pre- and post-exams; outside assessments. |

#### Table B – Sample Program Outcomes Assessment Template

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Degree Level / Degree-Level Guideline: Undergraduate/Associate** | | | | | | |
| **Program: Associate of Arts in General Studies** | | | | | | |
|  | | | |  | | |
| **Program Mission** | |  | | | | |
| The purpose of the AA in General Studies is to provide foundational knowledge and academic experiences in the humanities and fine arts; history and social and behavioral sciences; and natural sciences and mathematics that are responsive to the professional, civic and cultural needs of its diverse student population. | | | | | | |
| **Program Objective** | **Learning Outcomes** | **Direct Measures** | **Assessment Method: Rubric** | | **Benchmarks Results** | |
| PO 1: Students will demonstrate a college-level ability to read and to communicate effectively through speaking, writing, and listening. | 1) Student will be able to employ basic writing skills in order to compose effective and grammatically correct paragraphs. | 1) EH 1010  Unit VI Formal Writing Assignment | 1) Formal Writing Assignment Rubric | | At least 80 percent of students in the sample will achieve at or above competency level 3 for formal writing assignments. | 88 percent of students scored in competency levels 3 or 4 on the rubric. (mean=3.5) |
| 2) SLS 1000  Unit VIII Reflection Paper | 2) Reflection Paper Rubric –  Criteria for Organization and Grammar | | At least 80 percent of students in the sample will achieve “competent” or “exemplary” on the Organization and Grammar Criteria Component of the rubric. | 92 percent of students scored “competent” or “exemplary” on the Organization and Grammar Criteria Component of the rubric. |
| 2) Student will be able to apply effective research and writing techniques for preparing an APA formatted research paper. | 1) EH 1020  Unit VIII Research Paper | 1) Research Paper Rubric | | At least 80 percent of students in the sample will achieve at or above competency level 3 on  the rubric. | 77 percent of students scored in competency levels 3 or 4 on the rubric. (mean=2.7) |
| 2) PS 1010 Unit I Article Critique | 2) Article Critique Rubric – Application of Analysis Criterion | | At least 80 percent of students who major in General Studies will achieve at or above competency level 3 on the Application of Analysis Criterion Component of the rubric. | 75 percent of students scored in competency levels 3 or 4 on the Application of Analysis Criterion Component of the rubric. |
| 3) Student will be able to relate the concepts of planning, writing, and completing reports and/or oral presentations. | *1) SP 1010*  *Informative Speech* | 1) Informative Speech Rubric | | At least 80 percent of students in the sample will achieve at or above competency level 3 on the rubric. | 85 percent of students scored in competency levels 3 or 4 on the rubric. (mean=3.4) |
| *2) SP 1010*  *Persuasive Speech* | 2) Persuasive Speech Rubric | | At least 80 percent of students in the sample will achieve at or above competency level 3 on the rubric. | 85 percent of students scored in competency levels 3 or 4 on the rubric. (mean=3.2) |
| **Note**: This is a sample outcome assessment plan of only one program goal. An actual plan would include two to four program goals and associated learning outcomes. | | | | | | |
| Actions for Improving Student Learning | | | | | | |
| For SLOs 1 and 3, students performed at or above the competency level. However, results for SLO 2 indicate that additional activities should be implemented. The following improvements will be implemented:  ‐ A Success Center specialist will be assigned to students with grades below 70 percent in formal writing assignments in EH1020 and PS1010.  ‐ An APA manual will be provided for all students in the General Studies Program.  ‐ An interactive tutorial on accessing the online library and conducting research will be available for students in the student portal.  ‐ Additional APA activities will be incorporated into EH1020 and PS1010 before the formal writing assignments.  ‐ In order to improve the Application of Analysis Criterion of the rubric, a persuasive paper will be added to the PS1010 course to promote higher level learning. | | | | | | |
| Review Cycle – Direct Measures | | | | | | |
| One goal and corresponding outcomes to be accessed each year. | | | | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Indirect Measures (Instrument Used) | Criteria/Assessment Method | Benchmarks | Results:  5-point Likert Scale (“Strongly Agree” = 5 to “Strongly Disagree” = 1) |
| 1. Alumni and Employer Survey | Survey Question: As a result of my degree from XYZ, I have gained the skills and knowledge required to successfully lead and manage others. | Students will report a mean score of 4.0 for this survey question in 2019. | Mean = 3.8 (vs. 3.6 in 2018) |
| 2. End-of-Program Survey | Survey Question: As a result of my degree from XYZ I possess the ability to think and act creatively both in my personal life and at the workplace. | Students will report a mean score of 4.0 for this survey question in 2019. | Mean = 3.5 (vs. 3.3 in 2018) |
| Actions for Improving Student Learning | | | |
| 1. After reviewing the alumni and employer survey results, we are incorporating collaborative projects to develop characteristics of leadership into the SOC 1234 and PSC 1234 courses. 2. After reviewing end-of-program survey results, we are adding reflection papers to promote student creativity in the EH 1100 and EH1200 courses. | | | |
| Review Cycle - Indirect Measures | | | |
| Each of the above measures will be evaluated by faculty members and academic leadership annually to determine how well students are mastering the material. | | | |

Additional Examples: Timeline Tables

(These are not required or complete templates)

#### Table C – Assessment of Student Academic Achievement – End of Program

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INSTITUTION NAME | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT  END OF PROGRAM | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT TOOLS | TARGET POPULATION | DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS | USE OF RESULTS | RESPONSIBILITY | IMPLEMENTATION  TIMELINE |
| Capstone courses/projects | Degree-seeking students | Department and program reviews | Assessment of overall student learning in particular program | Individual faculty  member/  learning management system | At the end of each student’s capstone course |
| Exit Surveys | Degree-seeking students | Academic Dean and University Committee | Assessment of program outcomes and student satisfaction | University Committee | Upon graduation |

#### Table D – Assessment of Student Academic Achievement After Graduation

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INSTITUTION NAME | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT  AFTER GRADUATION | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT TOOLS | TARGET POPULATION | DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS | USE OF RESULTS | RESPONSIBILITY | IMPLEMENTATION  TIMELINE |
| Alumni Survey | All Institution Graduates | University Committee | Gauge  students’ self- assessment of student learning experience | University Committee | One year and three  years after graduation |
| Applicable certification exams | Applicable program graduates | University Committee | Measure of student learning outcomes met | University Committee | Per cohort graduating, reported in aggregate annually |

#### Table E – Assessment of Student Academic Achievement Periodically

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INSTITUTION NAME | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT  PERIODICALLY: Other assessment measures are utilized by the institution on time frames independent of the academic process of individual students. | | | | | |
| ASSESSMENT TOOLS | TARGET POPULATION | DISTRIBUTION OF RESULTS | USE OF RESULTS | RESPONSIBILITY | IMPLEMENTATION  TIMELINE |
| Academic  Program Review | All programs on a rotating basis | Faculty, Chief  Academic  Officer,  University  Committee,  Executive  Council, and  Advisory  Committees | For program modification and validation. Program-level accreditation. | Chief Academic  Officer Academic Dean | Every program, every five years, and as required |

#### Table F – Assessment Matrix by Date

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INSTITUTION NAME  ASSESSMENT MATRIX - DATE | | | | | | |
| **Direct Measures of Student Learning** | LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT | TIMING OF ASSESSMENT RELATIVE TO STUDENT ACADEMIC PROGRESS | | | | |
| Course Level | FIRST UNDERGRAD COURSE | WITHIN  COURSE/  SEMESTER | END OF PROGRAM | AFTER GRADUATION | PERIODICALLY |
|  | Pre-Test/Post-Test |  |  |  |
| Capstone Course Projects |
| Competencies |
| Rubric scores on assignments |
| Practice Experiences |
| Program Level |  |  | Capstone Course Projects | Specific certification exam pass rates  Student publications or presentations |  |
| Practice Experiences |
| Competencies linked to industry standards |
| ePortfolios |
| General Education | Proficiency Profile Undergraduate Programs |  |  |  |  |
| **Indirect Measures of Student Learning** | Course Level |  | Student end-of -course evaluation |  |  |  |
| Faculty end-of-course evaluation |
| Program Level |  |  | Exit Survey |  | Academic Program Review |
| Systematic Plan of Evaluation |
| Institutional Level |  |  |  | Alumni Survey | Quarterly and Annual Reports |

## Standard V: Academic Program Requirements

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### General Program Requirements

The institution’s programs are aligned with its mission. Program content, student learning outcomes, and standards of student performance are appropriate to the academic discipline and level of the credential conferred. Entry and completion requirements for each program are clearly defined and consistent with commonly accepted program expectations of the authority for awarding the credential. Program length for degree programs must adhere to the following minimum standards:

1. Associate degree – minimum 60 semester hours or equivalent.
2. Bachelor’s degree – minimum 120 semester hours or equivalent.
3. Master’s degree – minimum 30 semester hours or equivalent beyond the bachelor’s degree.
4. First Professional degree (at any level) – minimum 50 semester hours or equivalent beyond the bachelor’s degree.
5. Applied doctorate – minimum 48 semester hours or equivalent beyond the master’s degree.
6. Research doctorate – minimum 60 semester hours or equivalent beyond the master’s degree.
7. Describe how program offerings align with the institution’s mission.
8. Describe how program contents are appropriate to the type and level of credential conferred (e.g., non-degree, undergraduate degree, graduate degree, and/or doctoral degree).
9. Describe how student learning outcomes are appropriate to the type and level of credential conferred (e.g., non-degree, undergraduate degree, graduate degree, and/or doctoral degree).
10. Describe how program standards of student performance are at appropriate levels of academic rigor that is consistent with the type and level of credential conferred (e.g., non-degree, undergraduate degree, graduate degree, and/or doctoral degree).
11. Describe how the institution verifies that entry and completion requirements (e.g., capstone, thesis, or other culminating project requirements as applicable) for each program are clearly defined and consistent with commonly accepted program expectations at other appropriately accredited institutions. [EXHIBIT 12: Program Comparisons (only for institutions seeking initial accreditation; not applicable for vocational/non-degree programs or high school programs)]
12. For each degree program offered, verify that program length adheres to minimum length per Standard V.A.1-6.
13. If the institution offers a program where the field of study has commonly accepted and established minimum length requirements that differ from Standard V.A.1-6 minimums, describe how the program is comparable to other programs offered at accredited institutions.

### General Education Requirements for Undergraduate Degrees

Institutions set clear expectations regarding general education requirements for undergraduate programs consistent with the level of education and academic discipline. General education content for undergraduate programs conveys broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students that equip them for lifelong learning. General education must include outcomes related to written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, critical thinking, natural and physical sciences, social and behavioral sciences, and the humanities.

1. Describe how the institution’s general education requirements are clearly defined and appropriate to the program level(s) and discipline(s) offered.
2. Describe how general education content conveys broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students that equip them for lifelong learning.
3. Describe how each general education outcome required by this standard (written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, critical thinking, natural and physical sciences, social and behavioral sciences, and the humanities) is addressed in the curriculum for each degree program offered.

### Alternative Program Structures

Institutions may offer alternative program structures appropriate to the institution’s mission. Such program structures may include direct assessment (competency-based) programs, joint degrees, dual degrees, double majors, and advanced standing degree enrollment as defined in the glossary. Alternative degree plans must meet all student learning outcomes and DEAC’s standards of accreditation, including the requirement that the majority of each program be offered through distance education.

1. Separately for each applicable alternative program structure, describe how the program(s) are appropriate to the institution’s mission.
2. Separately for each alternative program structure, describe how the program(s) aligns with applicable DEAC glossary definitions. If the program(s) do not align with a glossary-defined structure, describe the program(s) requirements and include sample academic schedules.
3. Separately for each alternative program structure, describe how the program(s) include defined student learning outcomes that are reasonably achievable in the proposed structure.
4. Separately for each alternative program structure, affirm that the majority of each program is offered through distance education.

### Program Advisory Council(s)

The institution maintains an Advisory Council of individuals external to the institution with expertise for each major group of programs or major subject matter disciplines it offers to inform curricular development decisions and align program content to current practices. Institutional personnel may participate as liaisons to Advisory Councils.

1. Describe how the institution maintains an Advisory Council of external individuals with expertise for each major group of programs or major subject matter disciplines it offers. [Exhibit 13: Advisory Council Rosters and Bios]
2. Describe how the feedback of the institution’s Advisory Council(s) informs curricula development decisions and verifies that program content aligns with current practices.

## Standard V: DEAC Helpful Guidance

Below is helpful guidance related to the contents of this Standard and related exhibits that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use this guidance as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### General Program Requirement

Academic programs at all levels should include coursework at an appropriate level of rigor to achieve program learning outcomes.

1. Certificates – course work is consistent to the level of the certificate (e.g., non-credit, undergraduate, or graduate).
2. Associate’s degree – courses are at the lower division level.
3. Bachelor’s degree – a mix of upper and lower division courses.
4. Master’s degree – all coursework must be at the graduate level.
5. First professional degree – coursework must be aligned to the level of the degree and prepare students for clinical practice.
6. Applied and research doctorates – coursework must be at the graduate level. The culminating experience for applied doctorates must be a research-based doctoral project, a dissertation, or dissertation in practice. The culminating experience for research doctorates must be a dissertation.
   1. There is a handbook for each doctoral program outlining the program structure, student expectations, and an explanation of all deliverables required.
   2. Dissertation, dissertation in practice, and research-based doctoral project culminating activities must be supervised by a faculty committee of at least 3 appropriately credentialed members with at least 2 holding a doctorate in the academic content area.
   3. Non-research doctoral projects may be overseen by a single faculty member.

### General Education Requirements

In the absence of state specific minimums or requirements, general education courses should represent at least 25% of credits required for completion of undergraduate degrees.

### Alternative Program Structures

* 1. All partner institutions in joint and dual degrees must be accredited by an agency recognized by US Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).
  2. All program length requirements in V. A. apply, except as authorized for advanced standing programs.
  3. Dual use credits in advanced standing programs may not exceed nine semester hours or equivalent hours for graduate/graduate degree program or 12 semester hours or equivalent in graduate/undergraduate programs.
  4. Students must meet the entrance requirements of all institutions relating to programs at the same level and all entrance requirements of all institutions at the lower-level degree in multi-level degree plans.
  5. Students must meet the completion requirements for all aspects of degrees conferred.

## Standard VI: Curriculum Development

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### Program Curricula Development

Institutions have a documented process for curriculum development that clearly articulates the principles of learning and pedagogical foundations used to frame the program. The institution’s curricula are supported by reliable research and align with commonly accepted educational practices within the fields of practice. Qualified faculty and academic leadership hold the primary responsibility for all program content and instructional design and supervise staff, third-party providers, or consultants used in curricula development. Program curricula are reviewed on a periodic basis by academic leadership, program leadership, program faculty, and the Program Advisory Council. The review integrates program performance data collected on an annual basis with respect to student progression; student learning outcomes; faculty and student feedback; and content currency, accuracy, and comprehensiveness.

1. Describe the institution’s process for curriculum development. [EXHIBIT 14: Curriculum Development Manual]
2. Describe the principles of learning and pedagogical foundations used throughout the curriculum development process.
3. Describe how the institution’s curricula are supported by reliable research and align with commonly accepted educational practices, as applicable to respective curriculum’s fields of practice.
4. Describe the institution’s qualifications for curriculum content developers (e.g., subject matter experts). [EXHIBIT 14: Curriculum Content Developers’ Qualifications]
5. Describe the institution’s qualifications for distance education instructional designers. [EXHIBIT 14: Instruction Designers’ Qualifications]
6. List and describe any non-faculty staff as well as third-party providers or consultants used in curricula development and how the institution ensures that they are appropriately supervised. [EXHIBIT 14: Contracts for Third-Party Curricula Development Resources]

1. Describe the institution’s program review process, including who is involved; the schedule the institution follows; and the data collected, synthesized, and used to ensure that curricula and instructional materials are current, accurate, and comprehensive. [EXHIBIT 14: Sample Program Reviews]
2. Describe the process used to identify and correct any content errors in curricula and instructional materials between regularly scheduled program reviews.

### Instructional Design and Materials

All curricula and instructional materials are designed for the program’s distance learning delivery modality by qualified individuals and grounded in instructional design principles. Instructional design considers how students learn, the nature and accessibility of the materials, and methods deemed most effective to help students learn in specific delivery modalities. Courses integrate access to learning materials and resources. Courses include instructions and suggestions on how to study and how to use the instructional materials to learn effectively and efficiently. Syllabi are aligned with course content and are structured to direct course learning experiences and activities.

1. Describe how the institution defines its model for distance education delivery (e.g., correspondence, online, or hybrid – a combination of online learning with in-residence components, or an alternative program structure).
2. Describe how curricula and instructional materials are grounded in distance learning instructional design principles, in alignment with the nature of the program and the institution’s specific delivery modalities where students may access learning materials.
3. Describe how the institution’s courses appropriately integrate access to learning materials and resources.
4. Describe how the institution provides appropriate study and resource navigation instructions for students.
5. Describe how the institution provides appropriate instructions for accessing and using instructional materials.
6. Describe how the institution ensures that syllabi are aligned with course content and are structured to direct course learning experiences and activities.

### Academic Units of Measurement

The institution documents policies and procedures used to define and calculate the chosen academic unit of measurement. The framework for academic units must be supported by research and consistent with the program learning outcomes. Academic units are measured by credit hours or competencies. Academic unit measurements for all delivery modalities and program types must clearly show that each program is delivered with at least 51 percent distance education. The institution measures and documents the amount of time it takes the average student to achieve learning outcomes and specifies the academic engagement and preparation time. If academic units are measured in clock hours, the institution documents its implementation and application of policies and procedures for determining clock hours awarded for its courses and programs. A clock hour is one instructional hour. One instructional hour is defined as 50 minutes of instruction in a 60-minute period.

1. Describe the institution’s policy for determining and assigning academic units of measurement. [EXHIBIT 15: Clock/Credit Hour Policy]
2. Describe how the institution’s framework(s) for academic unit measurement is supported by research and is consistent with program learning outcomes.
3. Describe how academic unit measurement verifies that all programs are delivered through at least 51 percent distance education.
4. Describe the process the institution uses to measure and document the amount of time it takes the average student to achieve learning outcomes (as a means for assigning academic units of measurement).
5. Describe how the institution verifies and documents that appropriate academic units of measurement are assigned to its educational offering. [EXHIBIT 15: Clock/Credit Hour Evaluation Chart]

### Credit Hour Definition

Semester and quarter credit hours are equivalent to the commonly accepted and traditionally defined units of academic measurement. Academic degree or academic credit-bearing distance education courses are measured by the learning outcomes normally achieved through 45 hours of student work for one semester credit or 30 hours of student work for one quarter credit. One credit/semester hour is 15 hours of academic engagement and 30 hours of preparation. One quarter hour credit is 10 hours of academic engagement and 20 hours of preparation.

1. For programs measured in credit hours, describe how the institution verifies that its definition and calculations are equivalent to commonly accepted and traditionally defined units of academic measurement, as defined by DEAC Standard VI.D.

## Standard VI: DEAC Helpful Guidance

Below is some helpful guidance related to the contents of this Standard and related exhibits that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use this guidance as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### EXHIBIT 14: Curriculum Development Manual

#### Background

A curriculum development manual is a structured document that communicates the institution’s mission, goals, outcomes, learning experiences, instructional resources, and assessments that constitute a specific academic program. The manual represents an articulation of what the institution has identified that students should know and be able to demonstrate and supports faculty/instructors in achieving these goals through sound curriculum development principles.

#### Characteristics of an Effective Curriculum Development Manual

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Institution’s Curriculum Development Manual Elements** | **Description of Elements** |
| **Background** |  |
| Mission | Why your institution was established. [Why] |
| Vision | Future-oriented direction. [Where] |
| Purpose | Describes the organizational structure of the institution’s educational offerings. |
| Program Outcomes | Indicators of successful achievement. |
| Target Student Population | Describes the typical student the institution serves based on its educational offerings. |
| Documenting Clock/Credit Hours | Examples and rationale for assigning clock/credit hours. Documentation for each course/program for credit hours, hours of study, average time a student takes to complete each course and program. |
| **Curriculum Design** |  |
| Designing a Course | Course outlines, name of course, identifying course numbers, prerequisite courses, outcomes, course materials, format, grading, and creating outcomes. |
| **Course Materials** |  |
| Course Approval | Process for obtaining appropriate internal and external approvals. |
| Course Syllabus | Description of faculty/instructor’s plans for achieving program/course outcomes, recommended resources and instructional materials, course policies, faculty/instructor contact information, study schedule, office hours, etc. |
| Textbooks and Other Instructional Materials | Title, author, ISBN, publisher, date, costs, etc. |
| Reading Assignments | Average amount of required reading, estimated time per assignment. |
| Reading Level and Clarity | Microsoft Word reading level option |
| Comprehension Quizzes | Multiple-choice or true/false |
| Other Assignments and Projects | Short essays, team projects, etc. |
| Grading Assignments | Grading rubrics |
| Journaling | How often, length, other requirements, etc. |
| Examinations | How to create exams, types of questions, length of exams, posting new courses. |
| Research Papers | Formatting requirements, length, footnoting, etc. |
| Learning Resources | Library services, audio and video tools, webinars, PowerPoint presentations, etc. |
| Keeping Curriculum Current | Revision schedule and correction information. |
| Course Modules | Individual courses constitute a degree program. Each module contains an overview of outcomes, list of reading assignments, comprehensive quizzes, accessing quizzes, exercises and projects, and exams. |
| **Appendices** |  |
|  | Syllabus Examples  Course Module Template  How to Take a Course at Our Institution  Academic Freedom Policy  Intellectual Property Policy |

#### Notes on Academic Rigor

A well-designed, rigorous curriculum:

* Requires students to synthesize and apply course ideas.
* Reflects views and content that are relevant to current thought and practice.
* Provides a platform for students to demonstrate mastery of knowledge and engagement in scholarship.
* Requires students to take active responsibility for learning.
* Utilizes Bloom’s Taxonomy or other hierarchical model to classify educational learning objectives into measurable, progressively higher levels of complexity and specificity. Learning objectives should be defined at a single level of abstraction, should reflect a single domain of content, and are at a level of abstraction consistent with the degree level of the program.

The academic rigor of a curriculum is expected to reflect the standards set by the discipline as well as those of comparable programs offered, in alignment with DEAC Standard V.A.

Evidence of academic rigor may include assessment reports, program reviews, or input from the institution’s advisory council. At the course level, evidence should include a combination of examples from the following: learning objectives, course assignments, exams, and/or descriptions of student learning activities.

Highly effective institutions undertake a regularly scheduled curricular review process to ensure an appropriate level of rigor and relevance of curricula at each level and to review curriculum mapping of each course to program objectives and institutional objectives. For example, many institutions use a numbering system as follows wherein rigor increases with each numbered level. Levels 100 to 400 typically indicate undergraduate courses while 500 and above indicates graduate courses (master’s, first professional, and doctoral):

* 100 Level: Courses at the 100 level prepare students for academic success by developing foundational knowledge and skills.
* 200 Level: Courses at the 200 level require students to develop connections between concepts both within their field and between disciplines, expand on ideas central to the discipline, and enrich a student's perspective of the world.
* 300 Level: Courses at the 300 level expose students to specialized concepts and techniques central to the discipline. Students apply knowledge and skills previously learned to unfamiliar topics and problems. Students engage in the craft in a supervised or guided manner.
* 400 Level: Courses at the 400 level require students to synthesize advanced knowledge and master skills in the discipline and/or guide students to independent production and engagement in the craft.
* 500 Level: Courses at the 500 level require students to synthesize advanced scholarly knowledge and master skills in the discipline at the graduate level with independent production and engagement in the craft or discipline.
* 600 Level: Courses at the 600 level require students to study, master, and synthesize advanced scholarly knowledge and theoretical concepts.
* 700 Level and above: Courses at the 700 level and above require students to employ advanced or specialized knowledge and theoretical concepts in scholarly and/or professional settings.

### EXHIBIT 15: Clock/Credit Hour Policy

#### Background

DEAC conducts an effective review and evaluation of the reliability and accuracy of an institution’s assignment of academic credit hours. As part of its review, DEAC evaluators examine an institution’s policies and procedures for determining the clock/credit hours it awards for its courses and programs, including how the institution applies its policies and procedures to programs and coursework. Evaluators make a reasonable determination of whether the institution’s assignment of academic clock/credit hours conforms to commonly accepted best practices in education.

DEAC’s subject specialists determine whether the institution has properly assigned academic clock/credit hours to its courses/programs. The educational evaluator verifies this determination by evaluating the clock/credit hour assignment during the on-site visit.

#### Non-Degree Institutions

If an institution is required to report courses/programs in clock hours, then the institution must have a policy and procedure for determining and applying the number of clock hours it assigns.

#### Definition of Academic Units of Measurement

DEAC’s definition of academic units of measurement is as follows:

Semester and quarter hours shall be equivalent to the commonly accepted and traditionally defined units of academic measurement in accredited institutions. Academic degree or academic credit-bearing distance learning courses are measured by the learning outcomes normally achieved through 45 hours of student work for one semester credit1 or 30 hours of student work for one quarter credit.2 This formula is typically referred to as a Carnegie unit and is used by the American Council on Education in its Credit Recommendation Evaluative Criteria.

1One credit/semester hour is 15 hours of academic engagement and 30 hours of preparation.

2One quarter hour credit is 10 hours of academic engagement and 20 hours of preparation.

Student work includes direct or indirect faculty instruction. *Academic engagement* may include, but is not limited to, submitting an academic assignment, listening to class lectures or webinars (synchronous or asynchronous), taking an exam, completing an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction, attending a study group that is assigned by the institution, contributing to an academic online discussion, initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course, conducting laboratory work, and completing an externship or internship. *Preparation* is typically homework, such as reading and study time, and completing assignments and projects. Therefore, a three-credit-hour course would require 135 semester hours (45 hours of academic engagement and 90 hours of preparation).

All student work must be documented in the curriculum materials and syllabi, including a reasonable approximation of the time required for the student to complete the assignments. Evaluation of a student’s work must be identified as a grading criterion and weighted appropriately in the determination of a final grade for a course.

#### Documenting Academic Units of Measurement

An institution’s policy on determining credit hours should provide detailed information on how it estimates and documents the number of credit hours for each course. For example, an institution stating that it is using the same “college textbook” that other universities use is not enough to document that the course is worth three credit hours.

The institution must provide concrete evidence that it has provided adequate guidance during the development of a course/program to substantiate the credit hours assigned. The institution should cite other research or studies done in order to document its definitions or formulas for verifying student work.

The following is an example of one way to document the required credit hours for one course. (Note: this hypothetical 10-week course is being presented as three semester hours.)

**Course: English 101** (10 weeks)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Assignments** | **Estimated hours for the average student** |
| Academic Engagement | Listening to or reading course lectures: 25 pages per hour (1 hour per week) | 10 |
| Reading additional website documents: 25 pages per hour (1/2 hour per week) | 5 |
| Audio and video: 22 pages per hour (1/2 hour per week) | 5 |
| Reading discussion forums and making responses (1 hour per week) | 10 |
| Presenting and reading student reports: 1 hour per week | 10 |
| Taking quizzes and exams: .5 hours per week | 5 |
| **TOTAL: should be at least 45 hours per semester** | **45** |
|  |  |  |
| Preparation (outside of class) | Required textbooks, ordinary reading level: 30 pages per hour | 20 |
| Required textbooks, difficult reading level: 25 pages per hour | - |
| Reaction/reflection papers and book reports: 1 hour per page | 10 |
| Case studies: 1 hour per page | 5 |
| Research papers: 3 hours per page | 15 |
| Study for quizzes and exams: | 20 |
| Project, journaling, or other assignments: | 20 |
| **TOTAL: Should be at least 90 hours per semester** | **90** |
|  |  |  |
| Overall Total | **Should be at least 135 hours for a three-credit course per semester** | **135** |

Total Hours per week = 13.5 for 10 weeks.

The average adult reading rate is 250 words per minute with 70 percent comprehension. [Smith, Brenda D. “Breaking Through: College Reading” 7th Ed. Longman, 2004]

Reading for learning (100-200 wpm); reading for comprehension (200-400 wpm); and skimming (400-700 wpm). With an average of 400 words per page, at 200 words per minute a student should read around 30 pages per hour (200 words per minute x 60 = 12,000 words per hour divided by 400 = 30 pages per hour). Therefore, we are using 25-30 pages per hour.

Audiobooks are recommended to be 150-160 words per minute or 22 pages per hour.

Reading on Monitor: 180-200 wpm or 27 pages per hour.

Slide presentations are closer to 100 wpm or 15 pages per hour.

#### Assessing the Appropriateness of Academic Units of Measurement Allocations

DEAC’s subject specialists are asked to use the following when assessing the appropriateness of the credit allocations provided by the institution:

1. Review the institution’s policy and procedure for awarding credit, and consider the following:

* Does the institution’s policy for awarding credit address the amount of instructional or contact time assigned and homework typically expected of a student?
* Does the institution’s policy equate credit hours with intended learning outcomes and student achievement that could be reasonably achieved by a student in the time frame allotted for the course?
* Does the policy comply with DEAC’s definition of credit hour?
* Is the institution’s assignment of credit to courses reflective of its policy on the award of credit?
* Does the institution have any third-party validation of credit hour calculations/recommendations, such as the ACE College Credit Recommendation Service or the National College Credit Recommendation Service?

1. Identify the institution’s principal degree level and the number of credit hours for degrees at each level. The following minimum number of credit hours should apply to the programs (per DEAC Standard V.A. General Program Requirements):

* Associate degree – minimum 60 semester hours or equivalent.
* Bachelor’s degree – minimum 120 semester hours or equivalent.
* Master’s degree – minimum 30 semester hours or equivalent beyond the bachelor’s degree.
* First Professional degree (at any level) – minimum 50 semester hours or equivalent beyond the bachelor’s degree.
* Applied doctorate – minimum 48 semester hours or equivalent beyond the master’s degree.
* Research doctorate – minimum 60 semester hours or equivalent beyond the master’s degree.

1. Scan the course descriptions in the catalog and the number of credit hours assigned to courses:

* At a semester-based institution, courses will be typically from two to four credit hours and extend 8 to 15 weeks. The description in the catalog should indicate a course that meets collegiate expectations for rigor, workload, and measurable learning objectives. Identify courses that depart markedly from these expectations and provide an action plan and timeline for correction.
* Institutions may have courses that are in compressed format, self-paced, or otherwise structured. Credit assignments should be reasonable and remain in compliance with the established policy and procedure for awarding credit regardless of format.

1. Scan course syllabi to determine how frequently students are required to “log in” or “meet” each week and/or what other scheduled activities are required for each course. Pay particular attention to courses with high credit hours completed in a short period of time or with less frequently scheduled interaction between student and instructor.
2. Identify and review syllabi for a representative sample of the courses. When reviewing, consider the following for each course:

Preparation (per term): Reading assignments—

* Textbooks: number of pages in each assignment and the reading level (allow longer for technical information)
* Reaction papers and books reports: number of pages
* Case studies: number of pages per hour
* Research papers: number of pages per hour
* Study for quizzes and examinations: number of hours
* Project, journaling and exams: number of hours

Engagement (per term):

* Reading:
  + Website documents: number of pages and reading level
  + Discussion forums and postings: estimated time
  + Other students’ reports: number of pages
  + Listening to course lectures: number of minutes
  + Audio and video: number of minutes
* Taking quizzes and exams: number of minutes
* Presenting Reports: number of minutes

1. When reviewing a textbook, note that sometimes the textbook may have the same name, but it may not include all the course materials. Conversely, the institution may be using a commonly used textbook but is not including topics that are commonly included in the specific course. In addition, some institutions appear as if they are “covering” the text, but the assignments do not reflect the rigor that may typically be expected in the specific course.
2. If provided, review a sampling of student submissions to see the level of performance of students, along with the instructor’s grading of that submission. It is important to note that the nature and quality of an assessment also have relevance to the validity of both the level of the course and the credit hours that are being claimed.

#### Verifying Student Engagement

An institution must verify that the intended level of student engagement in the distance education course or program is being achieved. One way for an institution to document how many hours students are spending to complete a task is to survey students at the end of each term. Some institutions gather this data from students with each submitted assignment. Another way could be tracking and monitoring the amount of time a student spends in the learning management system. However, the type of data collected by various management systems and the options for working outside the LMS can result in inaccurate time estimates. Therefore, this should not be the only source of verification.

Institutions offering correspondence courses or self-paced online learning must, for each credit-bearing program, use a reliable method for ascertaining how much time students spend engaged in their studies and provide a full explanation of how the method is used to make credit-hour-assignment determinations, along with relevant supporting data.

For example, to document and verify student engagement/study time for a correspondence or self-paced online program, institutions may elect to keep track of the amount of time a student takes to complete a course of study by including a question with each required exam or assignment, such as, “How many hours—including reading, study time and other preparation—did it take you to complete this section/component of this course?

The institution should provide guidance to course developers and faculty on how long students should spend listening to or viewing audio or video presentations, participating in online discussions, preparing student reports, completing quizzes and examinations, reading textbooks, writing papers, and studying for quizzes and exams.

## Standard VII: Learning Materials, Resources, and Research Support

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### General Learning Resources

Institutional learning resources include general materials or resources that are available to students outside individual class environments. Learning materials and resources are designed to adequately support educational offerings in meeting learning outcomes.

1. Describe how institutional learning resources include materials outside individual class environments.
2. Describe how general learning materials and resources are designed to adequately support educational offerings in meeting student learning outcomes.

### Course Level Learning Resources

In-course learning resources for faculty and students are available and appropriate to the level and content of the course within the scope of the program offering. Program designers and faculty use effective teaching aids and learning resources, including educational media and supplemental instructional aids, when delivering courses and teaching students. The institution provides faculty and students with access to all relevant learning resources, materials, or related services that are appropriate for the achievement of course learning outcomes.

1. Describe the in-course learning resources designed to support the educational offerings.
2. Describe how in-course learning resources are available and appropriate to the level and scope of educational offerings and support the achievement of course learning outcomes.
3. Describe how program designers and faculty integrate appropriate teaching aids, learning resources, educational media, and supplemental instructional aids when delivering courses and teaching students.
4. Describe how faculty learning resources are available and appropriate to the level and scope of educational offerings.

### Library and Research Support

Staff or contracted librarians must support the learning, teaching, and research functions of institutions, as well as provide overall support to the institution’s curriculum as applicable to the level and content of the institution’s academic programs. A process is in place to select, acquire, organize, and maintain institutional learning materials and resources for each program.

1. Describe the institution’s library resources and collections available to students.
2. Describe the on-staff or contracted library personnel available for student support and how their qualifications are appropriate to the level and scope of program offerings.
3. Describe how library resources support the institution’s learning, teaching, and research functions, as applicable to the level and content of its academic programs.
4. Describe the process the institution follows when selecting, acquiring, organizing, and maintaining learning materials and resources for each degree discipline and level.

### Evaluation, Review, and Revision.

The quality, adequacy, currency, and accuracy of institutional learning resources, technologies, library resources, and in-course learning resources for each program are reviewed and evaluated at least annually. The review is conducted by institutional academic leadership and program leadership, with input from faculty and students. The process and applicable resources are revised as appropriate, based on each review.

1. Describe how learning resources, technologies, library resources, and in-course learning resources are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that they continue to meet student and faculty needs.
2. Describe how the review and update process is conducted by academic and program leadership, with input from faculty and students.
3. Describe how the review process and resources selected are revised over time, based on lessons learned during prior reviews.

## Standard VIII: Academic Delivery

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### Curricula Delivery

All curricula and instructional materials are developed in alignment with the institution’s mission and delivery modality. Regardless of methodology, delivery supports interactions with faculty in synchronous or asynchronous learning.

1. Describe how the institution’s curricula and instructional materials are developed to align with the institution’s delivery modalities.
2. Describe how curricula are delivered through means that support student interactions with faculty, as appropriate for the institution’s synchronous or asynchronous learning modality(ies).

### Supporting Academic Technologies

The institution uses technology appropriate to its modality and institutional context to support the delivery of its educational programs. This includes not only technology that delivers course materials and content, but also technology that (1) supports communications between students and faculty; (2) monitors student progress and achievement; (3) provides access to other academic resources, such as online libraries and third-party programs; (4) offers readily accessible channels for students to communicate questions, complaints, and concerns to applicable faculty or institutional staff; (5) protects the integrity of academic programs, testing, student work, and student communications; and (6) otherwise supports the collection of data necessary for the institution to evaluate its operations and performance.

1. Describe how students are informed of the institution’s minimum technology requirements prior to admission.[EXHIBIT 16: Technology Requirements]

For this exhibit: Insert Link to Requirements

1. Describe how the institution uses technology appropriate to its modality and institutional context to support the delivery of its educational programs.
2. Describe how the technology in use:

* Supports communication between students and faculty.
* Monitors student progress and achievement.
* Provides access to academic resources outside of individual courses, such as online libraries and third-party programs.
* Offers readily accessible channels for students to communicate questions, complaints, and concerns to applicable faculty or staff.
* Protects the integrity and security of academic programs, testing, student work, and student communications.
* Supports the collection of data necessary for the institution to evaluate its operations and performance.

## Standard IX: Academic Leadership and Staffing

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### Academic Leadership

The institution provides academically qualified and experienced leadership to direct and oversee the effective delivery of its educational offerings using distance learning models. Academic leadership is responsible for the quality of program and student outcomes, as well as for the selection, training, continued quality, and development of faculty.

1. Describe how the institution’s academic leaders possess the academic qualifications and experience to direct and oversee the effective delivery of its educational offerings. [EXHIBIT 17: Academic Leadership Résumés]
2. Describe how the institution’s academic leadership includes individuals who are adequately qualified and experienced in the institution’s implemented distance learning modalities.
3. Describe the roles and responsibilities of academic leadership personnel. [EXHIBIT 17: Academic Leadership Job Descriptions]
4. Describe the processes in place to ensure that academic leaders are responsible for and engaged in review of program quality and student outcomes.
5. Describe the process in place for academic leadership’s selection, training, and ongoing development of faculty.

### Faculty Qualifications

1. The institution provides the appropriate number of qualified faculty to achieve program and course outcomes and provide instruction. The institution maintains faculty résumés, official transcripts, and copies of applicable licenses or credentials on file.
2. Provide the institution’s faculty handbook. [EXHIBIT 18: Faculty Handbook]
3. Describe the institution’s faculty qualifications in relation to the subject areas taught and the credential level of the programs offered. [EXHIBIT 18: Faculty Qualification Policy]
4. Describe how the institution employs or contracts with a sufficient number of qualified faculty to provide individualized instructional service to each student.
5. Provide the following information for the faculty in EXHIBIT 18: Faculty Teaching Responsibilities using the chart below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Name | Qualifying Credential or Degree(s) Earned (Degree title and subject area) \* | Course(s) Assigned (Including course code and title) |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| \*Or the qualifying experience for the course(s) assigned and/or the faculty equivalency information.  Note: This is the minimum information required. Additional information can be provided. | | |

1. Describe what documents the institution requires and maintains on file to demonstrate that faculty are appropriately qualified. [EXHIBIT 18: Faculty Résumés]
2. Describe how faculty are appropriately involved and engaged in the curricular and instructional aspects of the educational offerings.
3. Faculty teaching in high school programs are appropriately credentialed to teach the subject and level of the courses leading to a high school diploma.
4. Describe the institution’s policy on qualifications for faculty teaching high school program courses.
5. Faculty teaching technical courses have practical experience in the field and possess current licenses/certifications as applicable.
6. Describe the institution’s policy on qualifications for faculty teaching technical, non-degree courses.
7. Faculty teaching occupational/technical associate degrees possess credentials, evidence of academic preparation, practical experience, and licensure or certifications that are appropriate to the subject field and consistent with accepted postsecondary education practices in the subject field.
8. Describe how the institution verifies that faculty possess credentials, evidence of academic preparation, and/or practical experience and licenses or certifications that are appropriate to the subject field.
9. Describe how the institution determines that academic preparation, practical experience, and licensure or certification requirements for faculty members are consistent with accepted postsecondary education practices in the subject field.
10. Faculty teaching in undergraduate academic degree programs possess a degree at least one level above that of the program they are teaching and demonstrate expertise in the subject field they are teaching.
11. Describe the institution’s policy on qualifications for faculty teaching undergraduate degree program courses.
12. Faculty teaching in master’s degree programs possess a doctoral or terminal degree and demonstrate expertise in the subject field they are teaching.
13. Describe the institution’s policy on qualifications for faculty teaching master’s degree program courses.
14. Faculty teaching in doctoral degree/first professional degree programs possess a doctoral degree/first professional degree in a related subject field.
15. Describe the institution’s policy on qualifications for faculty teaching doctoral degree and/or first professional degree program courses.
16. Faculty teaching general education possess a master’s degree in the field or a master’s degree and 18 semester hours of education in the general education subject area.
17. Describe the institution’s policy on qualifications for faculty teaching general education courses.
18. All faculty credentials are awarded by an appropriately accredited institution.
19. Describe the process in place to verify that all faculty educational credentials are awarded by an appropriately accredited institution (or accepted foreign equivalent that is listed in the International Handbook of Universities).
20. Faculty may be assigned, in limited and exceptional cases, to teach at the undergraduate or master’s level by documented equivalency consisting of a demonstrated depth and breadth of experience in the content area. An institution that uses experiential equivalency in lieu of the required degree qualifications for faculty and other academic positions must establish and adhere to a clearly stated policy which authorizes the use of experiential equivalency only in exceptional cases and only where equivalency is demonstrated pursuant to published and objective criteria. In such cases, the institution implements:
21. a well-defined policy, with processes and procedures to evaluate the need for and assignment of faculty by equivalency; and
22. procedures that ensure that adequate oversight of teaching and learning is provided by individuals who possess degree qualifications in accordance with faculty qualifications listed in IX.B.4-6 and 8 above.
    1. Describe the institution’s policy for faculty qualification equivalency, including need evaluation and faculty assignment procedures. [EXHIBIT 18: Faculty Qualification Equivalency Policy]
    2. Describe how the institution’s policy ensures that faculty qualification equivalency is only considered in limited and exceptional cases where equivalency is clearly demonstrated in alignment with institutional policy.
    3. Describe what documentation is required to determine that a faculty member has sufficient experience, knowledge, and expertise necessary to substantiate faculty qualification equivalency for the degree qualifications set forth in Standard IX.B.4-6 and 8.
    4. Describe how the institution ensures that adequate oversight of teaching and learning is provided by individuals who possess the appropriate degree qualifications as set forth in Standard IX.B.4-6 and 8.

### Faculty Training

All faculty must be trained in or have demonstrated experience with the principles of distance learning pedagogy. In addition, faculty shall be regularly trained in institutional policies, existing and emerging instructional approaches and techniques, and the use of instructional technology and academic resources. Faculty are evaluated on a regular basis for effectiveness in teaching and responsiveness to student needs.

1. Describe how faculty are trained and/or how the institution verifies that faculty have experience with the principles of distance learning pedagogy in use.
2. Describe how faculty are regularly trained in institutional policies, instructional approaches and techniques, and the use of instructional technology and resources.
3. Describe how faculty are evaluated regularly for effectiveness in teaching and student communication responsiveness. [EXHIBIT 19: Faculty/Academic Staff Evaluations]

### Professional Development and Scholarship

Faculty and academic staff are provided professional development and support for scholarly pursuits aligned to the institution’s mission and level of programs offered.

1. Describe the institution’s professional development and scholarship support policy for faculty and academic staff.
2. Demonstrate that faculty and academic staff participate in appropriate professional development based on their subject area(s) and responsibilities. [EXHIBIT 20: Professional Development Documents]
3. Describe how professional development opportunities and scholarship support align with the institution’s mission and level of programs offered.
4. Describe the internal and external resources and professional development materials provided to faculty and academic staff.

## Standard IX: DEAC Helpful Guidance

Below is helpful guidance related to the contents of this Standard and related exhibits that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use this guidance as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### Academic Leadership

Provide a narrative description of and provide all policy, process, and procedure documents, minutes, weblinks, or other evidence that support the narrative related to the following.

1. The chief academic leader at the institution (i.e., chief academic officer/education director) holds an appropriate academic degree to lead the institution’s academic mission.
2. Academic Leadership possesses sufficient academic administrative experience to lead and manage all academic functions in the institution’s specific distance education environment and the scope and level of the institution’s programs.
3. The chief academic leader has sufficient autonomy to fulfill the expected academic oversight duties of the position, to include:
   1. direct oversight of faculty performance.
   2. primary responsibility for the pedagogy of teaching and learning in the institution’s context.
   3. overall responsibility for curriculum quality.
   4. responsibility for monitoring and improving student achievement.
   5. primary responsibility for the institution’s research activities involving research of and by institutional stakeholders and constituents.
4. Academic Leadership ensures that the institution’s academic structure is adequate to provide for effective distance education delivery of its offerings.
5. Institutions offering applied or research doctorates are expected to appoint one or more directors of doctoral programs.
   1. Directors of doctoral programs are terminally degreed in an academic discipline relevant to the programs supervised.
   2. Directors of doctoral programs have previous higher education administrative experience in distance learning and doctoral programs.

### Faculty Qualifications

Faculty assigned to dissertation committees are expected to possess a terminal degree from an appropriately accredited institution in the content area or related field and a track record of dissertation committee work, scholarship in the field, and/or significant experience in the practice of the discipline.

### EXHIBIT 20: Professional Development Documents

Internal development examples may include, but are not limited to:

1. required/optional online training courses,
2. professional development events,
3. webinars and courses provided by the institution,
4. faculty academies for new instructors,
5. peer forums,
6. faculty mentoring,
7. support resources (financial, research, personnel), and
8. support policies (sabbaticals, course release).

  External development examples may include, but are not limited to:

1. conference participation and attendance;
2. support for external leadership opportunities;
3. webinars or courses provided by third-party organizations or companies;
4. continuing education opportunities;
5. partnerships with business, organizations, or institutions; and
6. faculty exchange opportunities.

## Standard X: Academic Policies

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### Admissions Criteria

The institution’s admissions criteria align with its mission, program levels, and targeted student population. The admissions criteria are intended to ensure the admission of students who can reasonably be expected to successfully complete the stated educational offerings. Exceptions to admissions criteria are limited and require documentation of a clear and justifiable rationale for the exception.

1. Describe the institution’s admissions policy. [EXHIBIT 21: Admissions Policy and Criteria]

For this exhibit: Insert Links to Policy and Criteria

1. Describe how the institution’s admissions criteria align with its mission, program levels, and target student population.
2. Describe the process followed to develop admissions criteria that verify and document that prospective students can reasonably be expected to complete the stated educational offerings.
3. Describe how the institution documents that students meet established admissions criteria.
4. If the institution enrolls students who do not meet its established admissions criteria, describe (a) the institution’s policies and procedures for determining the basis for admittance; (b) how the institution documents its rationale for exception, showing that students otherwise meet established admissions criteria; and (c) how such admissions are made only under limited and exceptional circumstances. [EXHIBIT 21: Policies and Procedures for Exceptions to Admissions Criteria, Exhibit 21: List of Students Enrolled Under Exception to Admissions Criteria Policy]

1. Non-Degree Programs  
   Applicants possess a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent at the time of admission (e.g., high school diploma, general educational development tests [GED], or self-certification statement).
2. Describe how the institution documents the basis for admissions decisions for non-degree programs.
3. If the institution allows self-certification, describe the policy and process followed for verification.
4. Undergraduate Degrees  
   Applicants possess a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent at the time of admission (e.g., high school diploma or general educational development tests [GED]).
5. Describe how the institution documents the basis for admissions decisions for undergraduate degree programs.
6. If the institution allows self-certification, describe the policy and process followed for verification.
7. Master’s Degrees   
   Applicants possess a bachelor’s degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution.
8. Describe how the institution documents the basis for admissions decisions for master’s degree programs.
9. First Professional Degrees  
   Applicants possess a bachelor’s or master’s degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution.
10. Describe how the institution documents the basis for admissions decisions for first professional degree programs.
11. Professional Doctoral Degrees   
    Applicants possess a bachelor’s or master’s degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution and relevant academic experience. The institution verifies that applicants have completed 30 graduate-level credit hours prior to admission.
12. Describe how the institution documents the basis for admissions decisions for professional doctoral degree programs.
13. Research Doctoral Degrees Applicants possess a bachelor’s or master’s degree earned from an appropriately accredited institution and relevant academic experience. The institution verifies that applicants have completed 30 graduate-level credit hours prior to admission.
14. Describe how the institution documents the basis for admissions decisions for research doctoral degree programs.
15. Dual Degrees   
    Institutions demonstrate that admissions criteria meet commonly accepted practices and ensure that students are adequately prepared to be successful in the educational offering.
16. For each dual degree offering, describe how the institution verifies that program admissions criteria meet commonly accepted practices and ensure that students are adequately prepared to be successful in the education offering.

### Transfer Credit

The institution implements a fair and equitable transfer credit policy that is published in the catalog. The steps for requesting transfer credit are clear and disclose the documentation required for review. Students may appeal transfer credit decisions using published procedures. The institution clearly discloses that the transfer of institutional credits to other institutions is at the discretion of the other institution.

1. Describe how the institution’s transfer credit policy is fair and equitable.
2. Provide a link to the institution’s transfer credit policy.   
     
   For this response: Insert Link
3. Describe the steps followed by students when requesting transfer credit.
4. Explain the type of documentation the institution requires to substantiate the award of transfer credits. [EXHIBIT 22: Sample Transfer Credit Evaluations]
5. Describe the institution’s process for evaluating transfer credit.
6. Describe how transfer credit evaluation is performed by qualified individuals with experience in evaluating transcripts and academic content equivalency.
7. Describe the institution’s transfer credit appeal procedures.
8. Provide the institution’s disclosure that transfer of institutional credits to other institutions is at the discretion of the receiving institution, and state where this is published.

### Prior Learning Assessment

Credit may be awarded for demonstrated learning appropriate for the level, subject, and amount of credit awarded based on the student’s prior professional/military experience, training, credit recommendation services, or other educational experiences outside of traditional academic learning consistent with CAEL’s Ten Standards for Assessing Learning (Available in Part IV, Appendix XV, DEAC Accreditation Handbook).The institution must publish its prior learning assessment policy in its catalog. Institutions maintain official documentation of the evidence of prior learning and the rationale of the instances of awarding credit for prior learning.

1. Describe the processes followed for evaluating and awarding credit for prior learning.
2. Provide a link to the institution’s prior learning assessment policy (on its website and/or in its publicly available catalog).   
     
   For this response: Insert Link
3. For each type of prior learning considered by the institution, describe how students are required to demonstrate/document their prior learning.
4. Describe the institution’s evaluation criteria for awarding credit for prior learning and how the rationale for awarding credit is documented. [EXHIBIT 23: Sample Prior Learning Assessment Credit Evaluations]
5. Describe how prior learning assessment is performed by qualified individuals with experience in the evaluation of prior learning.
6. For educational experiences outside of traditional academic learning, describe how the institution’s policies and procedures align with CAEL’s Ten Standards for Assessing Learning [see DEAC Handbook, Part Four: Appendix XV].

### Student Integrity and Academic Honesty

The institution publishes clear, specific policies related to student integrity and academic honesty. Students acknowledge in writing their receipt and review of the policies prior to beginning their first course. The institution affirms that the student who takes an assessment is the same person who enrolled in the program. The institution implements procedures to ensure that assessments will reflect a student’s own knowledge and competence in accordance with stated learning outcomes.

1. Describe how the institution applies its student integrity and academic honesty policies. [EXHIBIT 24: Student Integrity and Academic Honesty Policies]

For this exhibit: Insert Links to Policies

1. Describe how the institution enforces these policies. Provide examples.

1. Describe how the institution requires students to acknowledge, in writing, their receipt and review of student integrity and academic honesty policies prior to beginning their first course.
2. Describe how the institution affirms (a) that the student who takes the assessment is the same person who enrolled in the program and (b) that assessment results will reflect the student’s own knowledge and competence in accordance with stated learning outcomes.

### Grading Polices

Student academic performance is measured using published grading policies that include prompt return of accurately and consistently graded assessments that are supervised by a qualified faculty member. The institution publishes its grade scale system, policy for course extension, and information on incomplete grades.

1. Describe the institution’s approach to grading. [EXHIBIT 25: Grading Policies and Other Related Academic Policies]

For this exhibit: Insert Links to Policies

1. Describe how faculty apply the grading policy accurately and consistently.
2. Describe who is responsible for ensuring that all grading is conducted accurately and consistently.

### Satisfactory Academic Progress

The institution implements and consistently applies a satisfactory academic progress (SAP) policy and discloses this policy to students. Criteria for measuring satisfactory academic progress include qualitative and quantitative standards used for evaluation of student progress. The institution takes appropriate action if students do not meet the institution’s minimum standards of progress. Students are informed of their academic progress and standing in the program at regular intervals throughout their enrollment.

1. Describe the institution’s satisfactory academic progress policy. [EXHIBIT 26: Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy]

For this exhibit: Insert Link to Policy

1. Describe the qualitative and quantitative criteria used for measuring student progress.

1. Describe the actions taken by the institution if a student is unable to meet minimum standards of progress.

1. Describe who is responsible for monitoring student progress.

1. Describe how frequently student progress is verified.
2. Describe how frequently students are informed of their academic progress and standing in the program.

### Institutional Review Board

Any institution that has students or faculty engage in research involving human subjects implements an institutional review board (IRB). The IRB ensures that such research studies comply with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations under 45 CFR Part 56 and other applicable regulations, meets commonly accepted ethical standards, follows institutional policy, and adequately protects research participants. The IRB is responsible for approving and providing oversight on all research activities involving human subjects conducted by students, faculty, and other academic support personnel.

* 1. Describe the institution’s policy and procedures that students and faculty follow for research involving human subjects to adequately protect research participants. [EXHIBIT 27: Institutional Review Board Policy]
  2. Describe the training that faculty and students receive prior to engaging in research projects involving human subjects. [EXHIBIT 27: IRB Member Rosters and Bios and EXHIBIT 27: IRB Training Certificate Documentation]
  3. Describe how the institutional review board (IRB) ensures that research studies comply with applicable regulations and meet commonly accepted ethical standards.
  4. Describe the mechanisms and processes in place to ensure that the IRB has appropriate oversight over research activities conducted by students, faculty, and other academic support personnel involving human subjects.

## Standard X: DEAC Helpful Guidance

Below is helpful guidance related to the contents of this Standard and related exhibits that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use this guidance as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### Transfer Credit

Best practices for publishing clear policies on transfer credit include statements indicating that requests for transfer credit should not be denied solely based on the accreditation status of the credit-granting institution.

### Student Integrity and Academic Honesty

As part of the institution’s student integrity and academic honesty policies, the institution is expected to:

1. Issue unique secure login and passcodes to students (if an online learning management system is in use).
2. Take appropriate steps to ensure that work submitted was completed by the student. This is commonly accomplished through required proctored exams, using similarity detection tools for written assignments, and/or using authentic assessments and/or oral presentations.
3. Adequately train faculty in effective use of similarity detection tools (if used).

### Grading Policies

Institutions which offer programs at multiple degree levels should use a separate grading scale for graduate students that aligns with the expectation that graduate students must earn a minimum cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 3.0 to graduate from their program, as shown in the following example:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Course Grade** | **Quality Points** | **Caveats** |
| A (100-93%) | 4.00 |  |
| A- (92-90%) (optional) | 3.66 |  |
| B+ (89-87%) (optional) | 3.33 |  |
| B (86-93%) | 3.00 |  |
| B- (82-80%) (optional) | 2.66 |  |
| C+ (79-77%) (optional) | 2.33 |  |
| C (76-73%) | 2.00 |  |
| C- (72-70%) (optional) | 1.66 |  |
| D+ (69-67%) (optional) | 1.33 | Undergraduate only, a D+ or D grade is considered failing for graduate students. |
| D (66-60%) | 1.00 |
| F (59% or below) | 0.00 |  |
| P/S | N/A | Only comp exams, clinicals, or other practical applications |
| F/U | N/A | Only comp exams, clinicals, or other practical applications |

### Institutional Review Board

1. An institution’s IRB typically consists of at least four members of varying backgrounds, including:
   1. At least one scientist member.
   2. At least one non-scientist member.
   3. At least one independent community member.
   4. At least one member from each academic discipline is involved in research activities.
2. Specialists must be appointed to consider vulnerable populations studies such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, economically or educationally disadvantaged persons, or those with mentally disabled persons.
3. All those involved in the research process must be trained to do so:
   1. The IRB members must complete training modules for IRB members through CITI or OHRP.
   2. All faculty serving on thesis and/or dissertation committees or conducting research must have current IRB certification.
   3. All students engaging in independent research projects must have current IRB certification, including thesis, dissertation, or research-based culminating projects.
4. Faculty or other co-investigators may not approve or supervise research activities of students assigned to them as mentors or committee members.
5. Clear published policy, process, and procedures must be in place to guide research activities. Records of IRB approvals and study closures must be maintained.

## Standard XI: Recruitment and Enrollment

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### 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.

1. Describe the process used at the institution to enroll prospective students.
2. Describe how the institution’s recruitment processes and procedures are ethical.
3. Describe the institution’s job description for any individuals authorized to participate in student recruitment, including qualification and experience requirements. [EXHIBIT 28: Student Recruitment Personnel Job Description(s)]
4. Describe the institution’s training process for student recruitment personnel.
5. Describe the materials provided to recruitment personnel to ensure that tasks are performed ethically, consistently, and in compliance with applicable laws, DEAC standards, and institutional policies. [EXHIBIT 28: Student Recruitment Policies and Procedures]
6. Describe how the institution verifies that recruitment materials comply with laws applicable to the jurisdiction(s) in which it operates and DEAC recruitment practice requirements.
7. Provide evidence that all student recruitment personnel sign the DEAC Code of Ethics. [EXHIBIT 28: Signed DEAC Code of Ethics]
8. Describe how the institution supervises and monitors both internal and third-party student recruitment personnel.
9. Describe the process and criteria used to evaluate both internal and third-party student recruitment personnel.

### Verification of Student Identity

Student identity verification processes begin during the enrollment and onboarding of students and continue with respect to the student’s enrollment in subsequent programs/classes.

1. Describe the process followed by the institution for verifying student identity during admission (initial enrollment) and onboarding. [EXHIBIT 29: Student Identity Verification Policy]
2. Describe the process followed by the institution for verifying student identity throughout their subsequent program/course enrollment.

### Compulsory Age

Institutions enrolling students under the compulsory school age obtain permission from responsible parties to assure that the pursuit of the educational offerings is not detrimental to any compulsory schooling.

1. Describe how the institution obtains permission from responsible parties prior to enrolling compulsory school aged students.
2. Describe how the institution verifies and documents that the pursuit of educational offerings by a compulsory school aged student is not detrimental to any compulsory schooling.

### 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.

1. Verify that the enrollment agreements/documents are in the language(s) of instruction, clearly identify the educational offerings, and clearly identify the credential awarded. [EXHIBIT 30: Enrollment Agreement(s)]
2. Describe how the institution’s enrollment agreements/documents verify that each applicant is fully informed of the rights, responsibilities, and obligations of both the student and the institution prior to the applicant’s signature.
3. Certify that the institution complies with the DEAC enrollment agreement disclosures checklist. [EXHIBIT 30: DEAC Enrollment Agreement Disclosures Checklist]
4. Describe the institution’s process for accepting and processing enrollment agreements.
5. Describe how the institution ensures that any payment contract is appropriately incorporated into the enrollment agreement/documents or provided in conjunction with the enrollment agreement completion process. [EXHIBIT 30: Payment Contracts or Documentation]

### 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.

1. Describe how the institution discloses to prospective students prior to enrollment all costs associated with the education provided.
2. Demonstrate that all costs associated with the education provided include tuition, educational services, textbooks, instructional materials, and application, registration, authentication, proctoring (if applicable), technology access, and library or any other required service fees.

### 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.

1. Describe any scholarships awarded/administered by the institution.
2. For any merit-based scholarships offered, describe the scholarship’s defined achievement application criteria.
3. Describe how merit-based scholarship applications are evaluated by qualified individuals using an institution-approved rubric. [Exhibit 31: Merit-Based Scholarship Rubrics]
4. For any need-based scholarships offered, describe the scholarship’s defined and consistent economic application criteria.
5. Describe how scholarship materials document the actual reduction in program costs that would otherwise be charged by the institution. [Exhibit 31: Sample Scholarship Award Documentation]

### 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.

1. Describe any discounts the institution offers.
2. Describe how the institution identifies well-defined groups that receive discounts.
3. Describe the purpose for offering well-defined groups a discount.
4. If the institutions offers discounts for a specific time period, describe such discounts and how students are enrolled in non-discounted courses or programs for a reasonably substantial period of time during each calendar year.
5. Describe how information on discounts is published in the institution’s advertising and marketing materials, including the catalog and website.

### Admission Process

The institution verifies that all admissions requirements are met prior to admission and collects appropriate evidence, such as official transcripts and English Language proficiency documentation, to support eligibility. English language proficiency is verified for applicants whose native language is not English and who have not earned a degree from an appropriately accredited institution where English is the principal language of instruction. Such verification procedures align with DEAC’s guidance on English Language Proficiency Assessment located in Appendix IX. The institution documents the basis for any denial of admission. Official transcripts, if required for admission, must be received within a defined enrollment period not to exceed 12 semester credit hours. Students who do not submit required official transcripts within the prescribed period are administratively withdrawn.

1. Describe how the institution documents that all admissions requirements are met prior to admission.
2. Describe the procedures followed to document the basis for any denial of admission.
3. Describe the procedures followed to inform applicants they have been accepted for or denied admission.
4. List the reasons why an applicant may be denied admission.
5. If the institution allows students to begin enrollment prior to receiving official transcripts, define the enrollment period allowed for receipt (cannot exceed 12 semester credit hours or equivalent).
6. Describe the process followed to verify that official transcripts are received within the defined enrollment period.
7. Describe the process followed when student official transcripts are not received within the defined enrollment period.
8. Describe the institution’s process for evaluating transcripts that are not in English (or other language if the prior educational transcripts are not in the language of instruction).
9. Provide a link to the institution’s admissions requirements for foreign transcript evaluation.

For this response: Insert Link

1. Provide a list of appropriate third-party transcript evaluators approved by the institution.
2. Describe how transcript evaluators possess expertise in the educational practices of the country of origin.

1. Describe the institution’s admissions procedures for verifying published language proficiency requirements.
2. Provide a link to the institution’s admissions policy for verifying English or other language proficiencies.  
     
   For this response: Insert Link
3. Describe how the institution’s foreign language verification procedures align with DEAC’s guidance on English Language Proficiency Assessment [DEAC Handbook, Part Four: Appendix IX] (or equivalent policy if the language of instruction is other than English).

## Standard XII: Student Support Services

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### Student Inquiries and Requests for Assistance

The institution must provide readily accessible methods through which students can submit inquiries, report issues or concerns (whether or not filing a formal complaint), request assistance, or otherwise communicate with institution faculty and/or staff. The institution responds promptly and thoroughly to all student inquiries.

1. Describe the various methods through which students can submit inquiries, report issues or concerns, request assistance, or otherwise communicate with faculty and staff.
2. Describe how these methods are readily accessible for student use.
3. Describe how the institution responds to administrative inquiries (e.g., admissions, enrollment, transcript requests, technology, etc.) and the typical response time. [EXHIBIT 32: Sample Student Administrative Inquiries]

1. Describe how the institution responds to academic inquiries (e.g., assignment submission, assessment requirements, grades, etc.) and the typical response time. [EXHIBIT 32: Sample Student Academic Inquiries]

1. Describe the process followed by faculty for reviewing, evaluating, and grading examinations and assessments and the typical response time. [EXHIBIT 32: Sample Faculty-Graded Examinations or Assessments]
2. Describe the institution’s transcript services. [EXHIBIT 32: Sample Transcript and Diplomas/Certificates]

### Individual Differences

Academic advising and instructional support are readily available to assist students in achieving institutional and program requirements, program outcomes, course learning outcomes, and educational goals as required by laws applicable to the jurisdiction(s) in which the institution operates.

1. Describe the academic advising and instructional support provided by the institution to assist students having difficulties in meeting program requirements.
2. Describe how academic advising and instructional support services encourage students to meet program requirements, achieve program and course outcomes, and attain educational goals.
3. Describe how the institution assists students with their needs as required by laws applicable to the jurisdiction(s) in which the institution operates.

### Student Support

The institution’s policies and procedures optimize interaction between the institution and students. The interaction proactively promotes student completion and success.

1. Describe the institution’s policies, procedures, and time frames for monitoring and encouraging student progress. [EXHIBIT 33: Sample Motivational Comments]
2. Describe the types of contact used to encourage students to achieve stated program outcomes.

## Standard XII: DEAC Helpful Guidance

Below is helpful guidance related to the contents of this Standard and related exhibits that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use this guidance as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### Student Support

Institutions should consider the following regarding Student Support:

1. Student support is aligned with the institution’s mission, academic programs, and student demographics.
2. Student support personnel (i.e., academic advisors, student advocates, financial aid advisors, etc.) receive adequate training to fulfill their student support role.
3. Tutors and academic success coaches are appropriately credentialed and experienced at the level for which they provide service.
4. The institution maintains policies and procedures to support students aligned to their mission.
   1. Support must be both reactive and proactive.
   2. Clear timeframes, metrics, and interventions are established for student support.
5. Proactive outreach and other support are documented in the student record.

## Standard XIII: Fair Practices

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### Confidentiality and Privacy

The institution’s policies, procedures, and systems protect student confidentiality and privacy as required by laws applicable to the jurisdiction(s) in which the institution operates.

1. Describe the institution’s confidentiality and privacy policy. [EXHIBIT 34: Confidentiality and Privacy Policies]

For this exhibit: Insert Links to Policies

1. Describe the procedures and systems in place to protect student confidentiality and privacy as required by laws applicable to the jurisdiction(s) in which the institution operates.

### Complaint Procedures

1. The institution has policies and procedures for receiving, responding to, and addressing student complaints. The policies and procedures should embody the principles of fairness, responsiveness, respect, due process, and proportionality. DEAC requires institutions to have written complaint policies and procedures for the purposes of receiving, responding to, addressing, and resolving complaints made by students, faculty, administrators, or any party, including one who has good reason to believe that an institution is not in compliance with DEAC accreditation standards.
2. At a minimum, the institution’s policy instructs students how to file a complaint or grievance and the maximum time for resolution. The institution’s complaint policy and procedures are available to all students. The institution defines what it reasonably considers to be a student complaint.
3. The institution reviews in a timely, fair, and equitable manner any complaint it receives from students. When the complaint concerns a faculty member or administrator, the institution may not complete its review and make a final decision regarding a complaint unless, and in accordance with its published procedures, it ensures that the faculty member or administrator has sufficient opportunity to provide a response to the complaint. The institution takes any follow-up action, including enforcement action if necessary, based on the results of its review.
4. Describe the institution’s policy and procedure for receiving, responding to, and addressing student complaints. [EXHIBIT 35: Complaint/Grievance Policy]

For this exhibit: Insert Link to Policy

1. The institution’s complaint policy states how complaints can be filed with state agencies and with its accrediting organization.
2. Describe how the institution’s policy provides students with information on filing a complaint with the appropriate state licensing or authorizing authority and with DEAC.
3. The institution will retain the complete files for all complaints that may be filed against the institution, its faculty, staff, students, or other associated parties either for five years from the filing of the complaint or until the completion of the institution’s next cycle of evaluation for accreditation, whichever is longer.
4. Describe the procedures the institution follows for retaining complete files for all complaints filed against the institution, its faculty, staff, students, or other associated parties for five years from the filing of the complaint or until the completion of the institution’s next cycle of evaluation for reaccreditation, whichever is longer.
5. Provide a summary of the complaints received in the past five years and how they were resolved.

### 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. Describe the institution’s cancellation and withdrawal policies.
2. Describe any state, federal, and industry regulatory requirements to which the institution’s cancellation and withdrawal policies are subject and how the institution’s policies meet or exceed these requirements.
3. Describe how students are required to convey their cancellation or withdrawal to the institution, and identify the individual, office, or offices to whom students may submit their notification.
4. Describe how the institution’s required method of cancellation/withdrawal notification complies with applicable regulatory requirements.
5. Describe how the institution’s required method of cancellation/withdrawal notification is not unreasonably difficult for students to satisfy.
6. Describe when (e.g., under what circumstances) an institution may administratively withdraw a student or cancel their enrollment.
7. 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.
   * 1. Describe whether students have a minimum of five (5) calendar days after signing an enrollment agreement or similar contractual document to cancel enrollment and receive a full refund of any monies paid to the institution.
8. Students are notified promptly if they are administratively withdrawn for non- compliance with attendance or other administrative policy.
9. Describe the procedures followed to promptly inform applicants they have been administratively withdrawn and the reasons for withdrawal.

### 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.

1. Provide the published refund policy, including sample refund calculations.
2. Provide a link to where the institution’s refund policy is publicly disclosed:

For this response: Insert Link

1. Describe how the institution implements a fair and equitable refund policy that meets or exceeds applicable government regulations, including consumer rights and protection policies, or, in the absence of such requirements, in accordance with DEAC’s refund policy requirements in Appendix XIV.

1. Describe the procedures the institution follows for refunding students’ tuition if they enroll but do not start coursework.
2. Describe the procedures the institution follows for refunding students’ tuition if they fail to persist or fail to make satisfactory academic progress.
3. Certify that any money due to a student is refunded within 30 days of the student’s notice of cancellation or withdrawal.
4. Certify that refunds due to funding agencies are returned in compliance with their respective requirements.
5. Provide the following information for refunds made in the last 12 months in EXHIBIT 36: Table of Refunds using the chart below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name | Program | Start Date\* | Withdrawal/Drop Date | Enrollment Period Total Charges\*\* | Refund Amount | Date Paid |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| \*\*Start date of enrollment period when the withdrawal/refund occurred.  \*\*\*The total amount charged (tuition and fees) for the enrollment period when the withdrawal/refund occurred. | | | | | | |

### Performance Disclosures

The institution routinely discloses on its website reliable, current, and accurate information on its performance, including student achievement, as well as any other requirements in accordance with state, federal, and other relevant regulatory agencies and in accordance with DEAC’s student achievement disclosure format.

1. Describe the student achievement and assessment performance measures the institution discloses on its website. [EXHIBIT 37: DEAC Student Achievement Disclosure for the Public Form]

For this exhibit: Insert Link to location of the information on the institution’s website

1. Describe how the institution’s student achievement and other disclosures comply with applicable state, federal, or other relevant regulatory agency requirements.
2. Describe how the institution routinely updates student achievement disclosures on its website with reliable, current, and accurate data.

### 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.

1. Describe the institution’s approach to advertising and promoting its programs. [EXHIBIT 38: Sample Advertising and Promotional Materials]
2. Identify who is responsible for the institution’s marketing and advertising decisions.
3. Describe the processes and procedures in place to verify that all advertisements, website content, and marketing collateral are truthful, accurate, and clear.
4. Certify that the institution complies with the DEAC catalog disclosures checklist, and provide the completed checklist. [EXHIBIT 38: DEAC Catalog Disclosures Checklist]

1. Certify that the institution complies with the DEAC website disclosures checklist, and provide the completed checklist. [EXHIBIT 38: DEAC Website Disclosures Checklist]

### 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

1. Provide in the space below the statement(s) that the institution uses when referring to its accredited status in advertisements and promotional materials, as well as on its website and in social media.

### 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.

1. Describe how the institution complies with applicable Truth in Lending Act (TILA) requirements, including those under Regulation Z, and state requirements for retail installment agreements.
2. Identify the individual responsible for verifying compliance with all Truth in Lending Act (TILA) requirements.
3. Describe how the responsible individual remains up to date on Truth in Lending Act requirements.

## Standard XIII: DEAC Helpful Guidance

Below is some helpful guidance related to the contents of this Standard and related exhibits that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use this guidance as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### Advertising and Promotion

The following advertising and promotion practices ensure that all advertisements, website content and other marketing collateral is truthful, accurate and clearly stated:

1. The institution’s processes and procedures ensure that all advertisements, website content, and other marketing collateral are truthful, accurate, and clearly stated.
   1. The website and marketing materials state the programs are offered by distance education.
   2. Occupational opportunities described for programs are accurate and truthful.
2. The website, advertisements, catalog, website, social media accounts, and other marketing collateral and advertisements, identify the institution.
   1. Social media accounts and web advertisements include the URL of the website.
   2. Social media ‘influencers” must conform to standards of ethical conduct and be subject to periodic review.
3. Responsible language is used in all marketing efforts.
   1. The word “guarantee” is not used.
   2. The word “free” is used only when the institution provides evidence that the reference is accurate, truthful, and is appropriate to the mission and purpose of the institution.
4. Any “in-residence” requirements are clearly disclosed on the website, in the catalog, and on all related marketing materials.
5. The institution has a consistent process to ensure that:
   1. any testimonials are truthful.
   2. There is evidence of signed informed consent for every testimonial.
6. Presentation of scholarships, discounts, and special offers comply with DEAC definitions in the DEAC glossary.
7. Institutional policy and processes provide for timely public correction of any misleading or inaccurate information in the public sphere, including accreditation and regulatory actions.

### Institution and Course Accredited-Status Recognition

The following language must be used when referring to accreditation and recognition.

1. The institution publishes a statement of accreditation only as follows:

* Accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission
* DEAC Accredited

1. The institution refers to DEAC’s recognition by the U.S. Department of Education as follows: “The Distance Education Accrediting Commission is listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a recognized accrediting agency.”
2. The institution refers to DEAC’s recognition by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as follows: “The Distance Education Accrediting Commission is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).”
3. The accredited institution publicly corrects any misleading or inaccurate information it releases on its accreditation status, contents of its on-site team reports from accreditation-related visits, and/or actions taken by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission with respect to the institution.
4. All courses and programs of the institution are approved by DEAC before the institution advertises them or enrolls students in them. The institution uses the term “College” or “University” in its name only if it offers academic degree programs.

### EXHIBIT 35: Complaint/Grievance Policy

#### Background

DEAC requires applicants and accredited institutions to have written complaint policies and procedures for the purposes of receiving, responding to, addressing, and resolving, as appropriate, complaints made by students, faculty, administrators, or any party, including one who has good reason to believe that an institution is not complying with DEAC accreditation standards.

#### Institutional Complaint Policies

At a minimum, the institution’s policy must instruct students where and how to file a complaint or grievance and the maximum time for resolution. The institution’s complaint policy and procedure must be made available to all students. The institution must define what it considers to be a student complaint. Student complaints typically are about such items as administrative issues, financial issues, technical issues, faculty performance, grading, program content, program effectiveness/expectations, library services, and misrepresentation of career or placement services for institutions that offer such services.

The institution must review in a timely, fair, and equitable manner any complaint it receives from students. When the complaint concerns a faculty member or administrator, the institution may not complete its review and make a final decision regarding a complaint unless, and in accordance with its published procedures, it ensures that the faculty member or administrator has sufficient opportunity to provide a response to the complaint. The institution must take any follow-up action needed, including enforcement action, if necessary, based on results of its review.

The institution’s complaint policy must also include how it notifies students regarding where and how they may file complaints with state agencies and its accrediting agencies(s), as appropriate.

DEAC will review the quality and reputation of an institution by taking into account the institution’s record of student complaints. DEAC evaluators will be asked to review and assess the institution’s complaint policies and procedures to make certain that the institution is monitoring its quality of education and services.

## Standard XIV: Finance

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### 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).[[1]](#footnote-1) 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.

1. Describe how the institution demonstrates financial responsibility.
2. Describe how the institution maintains sufficient resources to meet its financial obligations and provide quality educational offerings and service to students.
3. Describe how and how often the institution’s financial statements are audited.
4. Certify that the institution submitted its most recent fiscal year end audited comparative financial statements, opinion letter, and letter of financial statement validation. [EXHIBIT 39: Audited Comparative Financial Statements] [EXHIBIT 39: Letter of Financial Statement Validation]
5. Describe whether the institution’s financial statements are prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) in the United States of America or the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).
6. Describe the institution’s budgeting processes. [EXHIBIT 39: Last Fiscal/Calendar Year Budget]
7. Identify the individuals involved in and responsible for the institution’s budget.
8. Describe how the budgeting process documents and verifies that current and future operating results are sufficient to allow the institution to accomplish its mission and goals.
9. If the institution is supported by a parent company or third party, describe how that entity possesses sufficient financial resources to provide the institution with continued financial sustainability. [EXHIBIT 39: Parent Company or Third Party Evidence of Sufficient Financial Resources]
10. Describe the parent company or third party’s commitment to supporting the entity. [EXHIBIT 39: Parent Company or Third Party Financial Commitment Letter]
11. Describe the parent company or third party’s level of administrative and financial involvement with the institution.
12. If the institution’s financial performance is included within the parent corporation’s statements, provide a supplemental schedule which discloses the individual institution’s financial status and clearly identifies and defines inter-company transactions. [EXHIBIT 39: Supplemental Schedule – Institution’s Financial Status]

### 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.

1. Describe how the individuals responsible for preparing the institution’s financial reports and budgets are qualified by education and experience.
2. Describe how often financial reports and budgets are prepared. [EXHIBIT 40: Financial Reports]
3. Describe who at the institution, whether internally or a third party, is responsible for reviewing and approving financial reports and budgets.
4. Describe how the institution maintains adequate administrative resources to operate effectively within fiscal and budgeting constraints.
5. Describe how identified risks are monitored, managed, and insured.
6. Describe the type of professional liability, property, and general liability insurance held by the institution, and provide a copy of the Certificate of Liability Insurance. [EXHIBIT 40: Certificate of Liability Insurance]
7. Provide a list of any significant insurance claims made in the past five years.
8. Describe the institution’s documentation protocols and controls in place to verify that finances are properly managed, monitored, and protected.
9. Describe how the accounts payable (numbers, amounts, and age) reflect sound financial responsibility and management.

### 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.

1. Describe whether the institution’s financial statements reflect sufficient resources to meet the institution’s financial obligations to provide quality instruction and service to its students for the full period of students’ enrollment, as represented to the public.
2. Describe how the institution is profitable. For nonprofits, describe how the institution has an excess of revenues over costs.
3. If the institution is not profitable, describe the institution’s strategic initiatives implemented to achieve a positive operating result sufficient to fund future operations.
4. Describe how the institution is committed to fulfilling all obligations to students in the event a teach-out is required. [EXHIBIT 41: Teach-Out Commitment]
5. Describe how the institution uses cost control and analysis systems to verify that it maintains sufficient current assets to fund a teach-out of students.
6. State whether or not the institution or any owner(s) or governing board members ever declared bankruptcy.
7. If a sole proprietorship or partnership, state whether or not the owner(s), governing board members, chief executive officer, or top institution administrators have ever declared bankruptcy.
8. Describe how the institution maintains reserves for honoring future service obligations, bad debts, and refunds.

### 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.

1. State whether the institution’s annual financial statements are prepared in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) in the United States of America or the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).
2. State whether the institution uses the accrual method of accounting.
3. Describe the qualifications and experience of the institution’s independent auditing firm.
4. State whether the independent auditor identified any deviations while conducting the institution’s audit. [EXHIBIT 42: Opinion Letters]
5. Describe how the institution is addressing and resolving any identified challenges, anomalies, or threats. [EXHIBIT 42: Plan for Addressing Auditor Concerns]
6. Explain how the institution would continue operations if it received a going concern or liquidity footnote opinion from the independent auditing firm.
7. If a going concern or liquidity uncertainty is resolved through continued shareholder support, explain why the independent auditing firm did not accept the support as sufficient to avoid the going concern opinion or liquidity note.
8. Certify that the institution understands that the Commission may, in its discretion, require that the institution deliver additional financial reporting as deemed necessary when circumstances raise questions as to the institution’s financial soundness and stability.

### Collections

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

1. Describe the institution’s collection procedures (both internal and contracted with third parties).
2. Describe how the institution’s collection practices reflect sound and ethical business practices.

## Standard XIV: DEAC Helpful Guidance

Below is some helpful guidance related to the contents of this Standard and related exhibits that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use this guidance as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### EXHIBIT 39: Audited Comparative Financial Statements[[2]](#footnote-2)

#### Background

The purpose of this documentis to provide practical advice to business evaluators who are charged with analyzing the financial condition of an institution to determine if it meets DEAC Standard XIV.

There is no “one-size fits all” approach when evaluating any institution’s financial condition, and it is best to approach this task with the idea of being flexible and creative in analyzing financial statements. The information in the financial statements and supplemental notes provides insight into the financial strength and earnings capacity of the institution.

The management of an institution needs timely and accurate financial information in order to make decisions that will help ensure the future of the institution. The DEAC evaluator needs to see this same information to reach a decision on whether the applicant meets Standard XIV.

The challenge becomes this: There are no one or two financial formulas or off-the-shelf metrics that can routinely tell an evaluator how to make a decision on whether or not an institution meets the standard. It requires careful consideration of dozens of different facts, figures, and concepts, and each financial statement is unique.

What information must the evaluator consider in making a judgment on financial stability? What questions must the evaluator ask? What financial formulas can be used to help reach a just decision?

This document attempts to assist evaluators in answering these questions and helping them make a judgment that is fair to the applicant institution and protects the integrity of the accrediting process. DEAC business standards evaluators should use this information to help them reach a sound judgment in evaluating the financial health of an institution and determine if the institution meets DEAC accreditation standards.

#### What Comprises Financial Statements?

The financial statements of an institution include a series of business activity reports and also the institution’s financial position at a “moment in time,” typically as of the institution’s fiscal year end. The financial statements provide meaningful information on changes in an institution’s financial position over the year and should contain—at a minimum—the following:

* A **Balance Sheet** is a snapshot as of a date certain that shows the asset (owns), liabilities (owes) and stockholders’ equity (for profit) or net assets (not for profit) of an institution.
* The **Income Statement** is an annual report card or score card, indicating the revenues an institution received and expenses it incurred over the course of a 12-month period. The difference between the two is the profit (or loss) for the period of time.
* **Cash Flow** statements indicate the exchange of money between the institution and outside parties over the same period of time. This statement can help in the determination of the cash health of an institution by showing how cash was received and how it was used in operations, investing decisions, and financing arrangements.
* **Statement of Shareholders’ Equity (for profit) or Changes in Net Assets (not for profit)** shows changes in the interest of the institution’s shareholders over the fiscal year (for profit) or changes in the institution’s net assets (not for profit).

Financial Statements must be prepared using the **Accrual Basis** of accounting. This is the format required by DEAC. Accrual basis accounting includes recognizing income when it is earned and recording expenses when incurred. The **Cash Basis** of accounting, a method of accounting that is not generally accepted, records income only when it is received and records expenses only when paid. The cash basis is not an acceptable accounting method for DEAC’s purposes.

When possible, it is recommended that an evaluator request a copy of the internal, unauditedfinancial report for the month prior to the institution’s “year end,” in order to review if there had been any large dollar amounts reallocated or unusual revenue or expense adjustments made to make the institution “look good” at the end of its fiscal year.

#### Questions for the institution to consider when preparing its financial information for DEAC

1. **Do the institution’s financial statements demonstrate overall financial responsibility?**

Are the accounting functions computerized? What type of accounting software is used? Which staff members are involved in the various accounting functions, and is there an adequate segregation of duties among the accounting staff? What are the data security procedures? Are there audit trails? While it is not a DEAC standard that an institution uses any particular accounting software package, this information will assist in demonstrating whether effective internal controls are in place.

1. **Are the statements “audited”?**

This information is found on the opinion letter by a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), typically entitled INDEPENDENT AUDITOR’S REPORT.The audited reports by an outside CPA gives more confidence in the numbers being reported, and an audit is explicitly required by DEAC, as opposed to a “review” or “compilation” report.

In a CPA’s report, the CPA will indicate whether the audit was performed in accordance with generally accepted auditing principles (GAAP), as well as if the financial statements are in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles. A financial statement audit is accompanied by a CPA “opinion” on the overall fairness of the financial statements. You can be assured the CPA firm has gone through the financial and accounting operations in detail, and you can spend most of your time reviewing the statements and reading the notes to the statements to determine the financial condition of the institution. A key item to look for is whether the CPA’s opinion is “qualified”; in other words, is there any concern on the part of the CPA firm that the institution may not be able to continue to operate “as a going concern”? In some cases, the CPA may provide an unqualified opinion, but the financial statements may include a note discussing the institution’s ability to continue as a going concern or describe liquidity or cash flow issues and management’s plans. If there is a qualified opinion or a footnote discussing the entity’s going concern challenges, the institution will need to present compelling evidence for how it plans to continue to operate as a going concern. **NOTE:** A going concern opinion or footnote would be a strong indication that the institution does not meet Standards XIV.B. or XIV.C.

**b. Are the financial statements complete and are they comparative, i.e., do they cover the two most recent fiscal years?**

This is important in order to evaluate what direction the institution is going, noting any substantial increases (decreases) over the two-year period in revenues, profits, cash position, etc. A review of each line item helps to determine what significant changes may have occurred from year to year. Some line items require more information from the institution and/or explanation of possible extraordinary, one-time events, such as a large purchase of equipment or sale of assets.

1. **Are all notes and supplementary schedules to statements included?**

This area provides information about the institution’s accounting practices and detailed account information. Institutions are required to disclose all significant accounting policies and accounting practices, including changes that affect the institution’s financial condition. This area will also note information about the institution’s revenue recognition policies, income tax position, advertising expenditures, and employee benefits programs, including any accrued employee benefits and banking arrangements (loans, lines of credit, repayment terms).

**d. Do the statements include an income statement, balance sheet, statement of cash flows, a statement of changes in shareholders’ equity or net assets, and explanatory notes?**

These reports are required components of the Financial Statements, and each is briefly described below as each part of the financial statement is explained in further detail. No one statement within the financial statement tells the complete story. It is when the various statements and notes are combined and read as a whole that they provide important insights for the business standards evaluator in determining the overall financial stability of an institution.

**e.  Did the institution provide detailed operating statements for institution divisions?**

In addition to the financial statements, many institutions have **divisional statements**, which are specific to a program or division of an institution. These may not be included in the audited report but may be internal reports generated from the institution’s accounting software and/or Excel report writing. These operating statements indicate if the division, independently, is making a profit or loss.

**f. Are the statements prepared using the accrual method of accounting?**

Accrual basis accounting includes revenues when they are earned and expenses when incurred. Cash basis accounting includes income when it is received and expenses when paid. DEAC requires the use of accrual accounting.

**2. Did the institution submit a properly executed copy of the appropriate Teach-Out Commitment form?**

An institution must include a signed and up-to-date copy of its Teach-Out Commitment with its Self-Evaluation Report.

**3. Did the institution submit a properly executed letter of “financial statement validation”?**

An institution must include a copy of the executed letter of financial statement validation with the exhibits to its Self-Evaluation Report. DEAC requires every applicant to submit this letter.

**4. Does the institution use an effective budgeting process?**

Institutional approaches in creating budgets vary greatly, since each institution is unique and diverse in size and mission. Larger institutions may gain input from the various program directors, and divisions of an institution, compiling the proposed budget for approval by a board. Smaller institutions may involve a few management members. It is more important to determine that there is an effective process in place where the top management and/or ownership is involved in the budget development and approval process and accepts such responsibility for this task.

**5. Are current assets sufficient to meet current liabilities?**

This is known as the “current” ratio, whereby current assets are divided by current liabilities. It is used to measure the institution’s short-term ability to pay its liabilities. The higher the ratio, the more solvent is the position of an institution. Current assets are assets that are cash, will be converted to cash, or prepaid expenses to be expensed and used within one year, and liabilities that are due to be paid within a year or less are considered “current.” Non-current assets are assets that would take typically more than a year to use, such as property, furniture and equipment. Non-current (or long- term) liabilities are items due after a year, such as notes payable after one year. It is important to compare the current ratio for the past two years to determine if there is a positive or negative trend (discussed below).

**6. Does the entity have a history of profitable operations (or have an increase in net assets for not- for-profit entities)?**

An entity that has a history of profitable operations demonstrates sound financial operations. An entity that has a history of losses increases the probability that the entity may be unable to meet its obligations in the future and serve its students.

**Other Financial Metrics:** Use these other well-known formulas to help you analyze the financial health of an institution:

1. **Profit** (or excess of revenues over expenses for nonprofits) as a percentage of revenues. Look for the two-year trend. Is it getting better or worse? If it’s worse, have a discussion with president and CFO or highest-ranking financial officer about the reasons why. If a loss isincurred, have an in-depth discussion on the reason why and what the institution is doing to regain profitability.
2. **Cash Balance/Expense Coverage:** How much cash is on hand? How many months of expenses can the institution cover? Look for a two-year trend. Is the institution maintaining that balance? Has it gotten better or worse? Have a discussion about cash management with the president and CFO or highest-ranking financial officer.
3. **Current Ratio** **– Current Assets/Current Liabilities** (see also item 5 above): This will give you a second opportunity to evaluate how the institution is able to cover its short-term obligations. This is similar to cash but much broader because it allows for the fact that some institutions carry a high accounts receivable balance that will be turned into cash as students pay. Look for trends, compare the two years of statements, and have a discussion with the president and the CFO or highest-ranking financial officer
4. **Debt to Assets Ratio:** This is a little more complicated, but overall, you want to take a look at the nature and structure of the institution’s debt and make sure that the institution will be able to repay its debt both in the near term and the long term. The closer the ratio is to 1:1, the more concern the reviewer should have. A ratio of 50 percent or less would be of less concern. The key is to understand the period over which the debt is repayable and the ability of the institution to generate sufficient cash to meet the terms.
5. **Cash Flow from Operations:** This is the amount of cash generated in operations and is contained on the Statement of Cash Flows. Look for consistent, positive cash flows. If receivables are increasing significantly faster than revenues on a percentage basis, this will have an adverse impact on operating cash flow. Is the institution generating sufficient cash flow to meet its obligations?
6. **Tangible Equity:**  This is the amount of the equity remaining after deducting intangible assets from stockholders’ equity or fund balance. A negative balance indicates that the institution’s tangible assets are less than its liabilities. The key is to understand how the institution plans to repay its liabilities over the longer term.

1. **Are the reserves for honoring future obligations and allowances for bad debts and refunds adequate?**

This information is found on the Balance Sheet and footnotes to the financial statements. Allowances for bad debts are deducted from accounts receivable while reserves for refunds are included in liabilities. Bad debts are typically determined based on a historical percentage for uncollected accounts receivables. Some institutions may reserve an amount to cover possible future refunds based on previous experience. Institutions also need to have a sound procedure in calculating deferred (unearned) revenue; this amount will be reflected on the Balance Sheet under current liabilities.

1. **Do the accounts payable (amounts and length of time outstanding) reflect sound financial responsibility and management?**

Do the institution’s accounts payables demonstrate that expenses are being paid in a timely manner?

1. **Does the institution have adequate insurance coverage, and is it properly allocated?**

Determine if the institution has adequate levels of insurance coverage, including liability, property, employee bonding, directors and officers, business continuation, etc. Does the institution have adequate disaster coverage if an earthquake or hurricane should strike? Does it have a disaster preparedness plan?

1. **For an institution with resident training program(s), is there adequate liability coverage for students at resident training sites?**

Given the number of students who are on site each year, does the institution have adequate liability coverage?

## Standard XV: Facilities and Records Maintenance

Contact Person: Name and Title of Contact Person

### 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.

1. Describe student financial, educational, and personal informational records maintained by the institution. [EXHIBIT 43: Sample Student Records]
2. Describe the institution’s procedures for maintaining financial and administrative records, as well as students’ financial, educational, and personal information.
3. Describe how the institution takes proactive steps to safeguard the security and confidentiality of financial and administrative records, as well as students’ financial, educational, and personal information.
4. Describe how record maintenance and protection procedures comply with laws applicable to the jurisdiction(s) in which the institution operates, as well as with professional requirements.
5. Describe how physical records are secured on site.
6. Describe how digital records are secured and backed up to minimize data loss.

### 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.

1. Describe the institution’s process for retaining financial, administrative, and student records in accordance with laws applicable to the jurisdiction(s) in which the institution operates.
2. State how long financial records are maintained.
3. State how long administrative records are maintained.
4. State how long student records are maintained.
5. Describe the institution’s comprehensive document retention policy.
6. Identify the individual(s) responsible for ensuring the proper retention of financial, administrative, and student records.
7. Describe how often records are internally audited for compliance with all applicable federal and state laws.
8. Describe how transcript information is readily accessible and permanently maintained in order for the institution to produce an official transcript in a timely manner.

### 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.

1. Describe the institution’s primary facility, and confirm that it is located in a professional, institution-branded space which is authorized by local authorities for mixed use or commercial use. [EXHIBIT 44: Floor Plan] [EXHIBIT 44: Occupancy Approval/Zoning Documentation]
2. Describe how the institution’s facilities, equipment, and supplies support its educational offerings, student support services, and administrative operations on a sustainable basis.
3. Describe how the institution’s technical infrastructure is adequate to support its educational offerings, student support services, and administrative operations on a sustainable basis.
4. Describe the institution’s plan for the maintenance and upgrade of its facilities, equipment, and supplies. [EXHIBIT 44: Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies Maintenance Plan]
5. Describe how the institution verifies that there are adequate financial resources and budgets to maintain and upgrade its facilities, equipment, and technical infrastructure.
6. Describe how the institution’s building, workspace, and equipment comply with local fire, building, health, and safety regulations. [EXHIBIT 44: Fire, Health, and Occupancy Inspection Licenses]

### 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.

1. Describe how the institution’s physical location is adequate to secure physical financial, administrative, and student educational records while ensuring that they are reasonably accessible for use.
2. Describe how the institution’s virtual infrastructure is adequate to secure digital financial, administrative, and student educational records while ensuring that they are reasonably accessible for use.
3. Describe how records are adequately protected in accordance with laws applicable to the jurisdiction(s) in which the institution operates and in response to foreseeable physical or cybersecurity risks.
4. Describe the institution’s disaster response and recovery procedures based on its physical and environmental location(s).
5. Describe how the disaster response and recovery plan includes contingencies to sustain and support continuing academic operations and protect student information, consistent with applicable law.

### In-Residence Program Component Facilities

The institution provides appropriate facilities for students participating in in-residence learning experiences. The facilities comply with all state and federal requirements. The institution maintains adequate insurance to protect students, faculty, and staff while participating in in-residence learning.

1. If the institution conducts no in-residence program activities, state “Not Applicable.” If the institution conducts in-residence program activities, state, “See In-Residence Program Companion Template.”

## Standard XV: DEAC Helpful Guidance

Below is some helpful guidance related to the contents of this Standard and related exhibits that DEAC member institutions, external reviewers, and staff have compiled over the years. These are intended to be suggestions that institutions can use when developing documents or in meeting DEAC requirements. Institutions are encouraged to use this guidance as samples when creating processes and procedures that meet each unique institution’s needs. Institutions are not required to follow these suggestions or formats, and the extent to which accreditation standards are met will not be based on these samples.

### EXHIBIT 44: Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies Maintenance Plan

#### Background

All DEAC accredited institutions must have a written plan to maintain and continuously improve or upgrade facilities, equipment, and supplies used to support the institution’s goals. The plan must include the resources that will be budgeted to support the institution’s programs and future growth. The plan must identify by name the specific individuals, committees, or boards that are responsible for reviewing, revising, and implementing the plan. The plan must be reviewed and revised on an annual basis, and the institution needs to provide evidence of the review and changes made as a result of the annual review.

#### Characteristics of an Effective Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies Maintenance Plan

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Elements** | **Description** |
| **Introduction** | Overview of Plan – describe how the institution’s overall improvement plan incorporates this plan and supports the institutional goals, objectives, and future growth. |
| **Responsible parties** | Identify by name the specific individuals, committees, or boards that are responsible for reviewing, revising, and implementing the plan, including a schedule for the annual review. |
| **Annual Budget and financial analysis** | Give an overview of the annual budgeting process. Identify the specific accounts that represent expenses related to facilities, equipment, and supplies. Include a detailed explanation of the financial analysis done to determine the amounts allocated for facilities, equipment, and supplies. |
| **Reporting requirements** | Provide details on the reports and information used to review and to decide improvements, replacements, or deletion of facilities, equipment, and supplies. (Reports should be retained to provide evidence of compliance.) |
| **Resources budgeted for maintenance of facilities, equipment, and supplies** | State what resources are budgeted for maintenance of facilities, equipment, and supplies. |
| **Resources budgeted for replacement or upgrade of facilities, equipment, and supplies** | State what resources are budgeted for replacement or upgrade of facilities, equipment, and supplies. |
| **Resources budgeted for future growth of facilities, equipment, and supplies** | State what resources are budgeted for future growth of facilities, equipment, and supplies. Include support for the future growth (e.g. documentation from the institution’s strategic plan). |
| **Inspections of facilities** | Provide a list of safety inspections needed; state how often and by whom, and any costs involved (i.e., elevators, fire alarms, sprinkler systems, etc.). |
| **Inventory and Insurance** | Identify what items need to be held in inventory and define at what stage additional items need to be ordered or replaced. Provide information on property insurance and how often it is reviewed. |
| **Property Taxes** | Identify equipment that requires property taxes be paid; state date taxes will be due and estimate of the amounts. Include in your plan documentation supporting your statements (e.g., a copy of your tax bill). |
| **Emergency Action Plan** | Provide a set of protocols for dealing with emergencies of varying degrees.  Priorities of the plan are to:   * ensure the safety of all personnel. * minimize interruptions to normal. business operations. * mitigate damage to the physical property. * establish alternative means of operation in advance. and * provide for smooth restoration of the headquarters facility. |
| **Functions** | In the event of a disaster, the functions of the administrators are to:   * provide emergency notification as quickly as possible, * provide initial identification and counts of employees, * assign employees to specific emergency tasks, * provide continuous information to emergency personnel, and * communicate with the employees and families. |
| **Authority** | Based on the nature of the emergency, the institution’s Emergency Management Team (EMT) will be led by the president or named designate (also name alternates in case the president is not available). Name who will be responsible for accounting for people, notifying families, etc. |
| **Activation** | Level 1 – minor incident that is quickly resolved with internal resources or limited help. The Emergency Plan is not activated.  Level 2 – a major emergency that impacts sizable portions of the institution’s facilities that may affect life safety. Emergency Plan is activated.  Level 3 – A disaster that involves the entire facility and surrounding community. |
| **Evacuations** | In Level 2 and 3, personnel are notified via alarms, phone paging system, text messages, etc. Everyone should exit the building in an orderly fashion. |
| **Hazards** | Report all accidents, suspected fire hazards, injuries, or exposures to hazardous substances, |
| **Fire** | Provide details on what should be done by employees, e.g., report to supervisory immediately, call 911, etc. |
| **Bomb Threat** | Notify your supervisor immediately. |
| **Workplace Violence** | Try to stay calm, do not attempt to argue. Seek help as soon as possible and take cover. Never attempt to disarm or accept a weapon from the person in question. Report all incidents to your supervisor. |
| **Medical Emergency** | Call 911, designate someone to go for help, provide CPR if needed. |
| **Power Outage** | Assess the extent of the outage in your area. Assign a person to communicate to employees not to come to work or to leave work in an orderly fashion. |
| **Severe Weather Emergency Procedures – Applicable to the institution’s geographic location** | **Severe Thunderstorms:** Do not use the telephone, stay away from windows and doors, keep the use of electrical devices to a minimum.  **Tornadoes**: Tornado Watch does not require taking shelter. If a warning is issued, shut off electrical equipment and take shelter immediately. Do not go outside. Move away from doors and windows, get as close to the floor as possible or under a table or desk.  **Hurricanes:** If a Hurricane Warning is issued (this means winds more than 74 mph are expected to hit the area within 48 hours), contact your supervisor.  **Flooding:** A flood warning means flooding is imminent. Contact your supervisor. |
| **Evacuation** | A building evacuation is mandatory whenever a fire alarm sounds. Emergency exits should be marked and prominently displayed throughout the building. Designate one person to make certain everyone has left the facilities. |
| **Backup Disaster Recovery Plan** | Provide the names, titles, and contact information for remote/off-site personnel who are responsible for backing up and retrieving data.  Provide names of the hardware and software and the order of importance for retrieving data, and provide a contact person, account numbers, passwords, etc. for immediate help. |
| **Compromising data** | Provide the names, title, and contact information for IT personnel if computers have been hacked or data is compromised. |
| **Back-up Procedures** | List who is responsible for backing up data, how often it is done, and where the backups are maintained. |
| **Emergency Response Procedures** | Provide the steps the technology personnel should follow to back up data during an emergency. |
| **Recovery Actions** | Provide the steps for recovering data and notifying personnel, and insurance companies. |
| **Review, Revision, and Implementation of Plan** | Describe who is responsible for the overall review and revision of the plan. Who will do any training needed? The plan should be reviewed and revised on an annual basis. |
| **Review of Plan** | The plan should be reviewed and revised on an annual basis. |

# Required Documents

## Letter of Financial Statement Validation

THIS LETTER MUST ACCOMPANY AN INSTITUTION’S FINANCIAL STATEMENTS.

December 30, 2020

Dr. Leah Matthews

Executive Director

Distance Education Accrediting Commission

1101 17TH Street, NW

Washington, DC 20036

Dear Dr. Matthews:

As a certifying officer, I acknowledge my responsibilities for establishing and maintaining controls and procedures that ensure that I am aware of material information relating to [name of institution].  The attached report discloses (a) all material weaknesses in internal controls that came to the attention of certifying officers, (b) any fraud involving management or employees with significant responsibilities, and (c) any significant changes in internal controls, including actions to correct material weaknesses, during the period covered by this report.        
  
I have reviewed this report. Based on my knowledge:

(1)  This report contains all the facts needed to prevent it from being misleading and it contains no untrue statements.

(2) Financial statements and other information fairly present the financial condition, results of operations, and cash flow.

Certified by:

Chief Executive Officer:

Chief Financial Officer:

## Code of Ethics

**for Student Recruitment Personnel**

**of**

**Accredited Distance Education Institutions**

As a student recruitment representative\* of an accredited distance education institution, I recognize that I have certain responsibilities toward students, the public, and my institution. To fulfill these responsibilities, I pledge adherence to this Code of Ethics.

I will observe fully the standards, rules, policies, and guidelines established by my institution, the Distance Education Accrediting Commission, the State Education Agency (or Agencies), and other legally authorized agencies applicable to the jurisdiction in which the institution operates.

\* \* \*

I will adhere to high ethical standards in the conduct of my work, and to the best of my ability, will:

1. Observe fully the rights of all applicants and commit no action that would be detrimental to any applicant’s opportunity to enroll because of race, sex, color, creed, or national origin.
2. Never knowingly make any false or misleading representation to any applicant nor use any coercive practices in presenting information.
3. Enroll applicants only in the course or program in which they have expressed their interest, provided they meet the qualifications and standards established by my institution for enrollment.
4. Provide applicants only with information authorized by my institution regarding the occupational opportunities for graduates, and never make claims guaranteeing employment, job promotion prospects or income increases to an applicant.
5. State accurately and clearly to prospective students the approvals, accreditation, business and employer recognition, and course acceptance accorded to my institution.
6. Provide only full and accurate information on the transferability of academic credits and acceptance of degrees or credentials by other educational institutions, and disclose affirmatively the fact that the acceptance of credits and degrees is entirely the prerogative of the receiving institution and acceptance cannot be guaranteed.
7. Provide prospective applicants only complete and accurate information on the total financial obligation they will be incurring prior to accepting their enrollment application.
8. Provide students complete and accurate information about financing options and answer any questions prior to enrolling.
9. Never use tuition assistance available from a governmental agency or other source as the primary inducement for enrollment.
10. Refrain at all times from making any statement or inference that might falsely impugn the integrity or value of any other institution, method of training, or profession.
11. Discharge faithfully, and to the best of my ability, all of the duties, obligations, and procedures established by my institution for my position and know all of my obligations as an institutional representative.
12. Reflect at all times the highest credit upon myself, my institution, and the field of distance education and always strive to enhance the reputation of my profession through my conduct as an institutional representative.

\*A recruitment representative is someone who enrolls prospective students, including but not limited to telephone marketers, enrollment advisors, and admissions representatives.

## Student Achievement Disclosure for the Public Form

Accredited institutions are required to complete and publish DEAC’s Student Achievement Disclosure for the Public form in the format provided on its website <https://www.deac.org/seeking-accreditation/applications-and-reports/>. Institutions seeking initial accreditation should prepare a draft version of this form and provide it as Exhibit 37 for review with the Self-Evaluation Report. Only institutions who have already received DEAC accreditation may publish the DEAC’s Student Achievement Disclosure for the Public form on their websites.

1. The implementation and submission time frame 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)
2. The implementation and submission time frame 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-2)