

## 12. Policy on Readiness Assessment

First time applicants for accreditation are **required** to undergo a Readiness Assessment by an independent DETC-appointed evaluator to assist the applicant in preparing for a full on-site examination.

The first purpose of the assessment is to provide a mechanism for DETC to ascertain if the applicant's Self-Evaluation Report provides sufficient evidence and information for a successful on-site committee review. Another purpose is to provide the applicant with guidance on what actions to take to get the institution ready for an accreditation review. The third purpose is to ensure that the applicant meets a minimum level of eligibility qualification for DETC accreditation that would justify the commitment of Commission resources in carrying out a full accreditation examination.

### Special Review Process for Applicants Applying for Accreditation Pursuant to State Requirements

Where a Readiness Assessment finds that the school is not ready for a full Examining Committee visit, the institution may appeal the finding and submit written material. An individual qualified to interpret standards, typically a former member of the DETC Accrediting Commission, will evaluate the Readiness Assessment Report and the institution's appeal of the decision. If the appellant authority overturns the initial finding, the institution will have its SER evaluated by another Readiness Assessment examiner, except in special cases where an on-site examining team visit is justified. If the finding is upheld, the accreditation process ends and required notifications will be made.

A Readiness Assessment examines whether the basic conditions essential to qualify for the next steps in accreditation are met. It is not a substitute for these steps, which include subject matter specialist reviews, a full visit by an examining committee, and consideration by the Accrediting Commission itself. The Readiness Assessment is not intended to cover all issues that are considered in these stages, any of which may reveal conditions that may result in the denial of accreditation.

### Readiness Assessment Report

The tone of the Readiness Assessment Report is intended to be informal, consultative, collegial, and interactive, and the applicant will be provided ample opportunity to seek advice from DETC on how best to prepare for a visit.

In the Readiness Assessment Report, an applicant will be advised whether or not it has met the minimum threshold eligibility requirements and is ready for an on-site visit by a full examining committee.

As of October 1, 2008, the name of an initial applicant will not be published in DETC's publications or posted on DETC's web site until after it has completed a successful Readiness Assessment.

### Action

An institution should start writing its Self-Evaluation Report (SER) *before* it submits its Application for Accreditation. Before beginning to write the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), at least one key staff member must complete the *DETC Course on Preparing for Accreditation*. Completing this online course qualifies the person as a "Compliance Officer." This must be complete by the time of application.

The Compliance Officer should consult with the Executive Director and/or Director of Accreditation to discuss the accrediting process, purposes, and procedures. At this point, the Compliance Officer should be fully aware of what and when materials are required to complete all the steps in the accreditation process.

The applicant must first submit **two** copies of a Self-Evaluation Report within 60 days of the date the Application for Accreditation is received by DETC. The SER should be as close to the final version as possible, and should include nearly all of the exhibits. The institution **must** use the A.1. Guide to Self-Evaluation when writing its SER.

The fee for the Readiness Assessment is \$2,000 (E.1. Accreditation Fees). The Readiness Assessment will not be scheduled until two copies of the SER and the check for \$2,000 is received by DETC.

Once the Director of Accreditation receives the SER, she will send it to an evaluator. The evaluator will review the SER thoroughly and prepare a written report as to the “readiness” of the institution to proceed. The evaluator and a DETC staff member will also make notations in the draft SER to indicate where changes should be made. The report and the marked-up SER will be forwarded to the institution. The report will recommend whether the institution is “ready” or is “not ready” for a visit by a full examining committee.

If the institution is deemed “ready,” the institution should make the appropriate changes to its SER and start organizing for a full on-site visit. The institution should work with the Director of Accreditation to establish a date for submitting its course materials and final SER. The Director of Accreditation will send the courses to be reviewed by outside subject specialists. The Director of Accreditation will also work with the institution to establish a date for the on-site visit. When an institution is “ready” its name will be posted on DETC’s web site as an applicant.

If the institution is deemed “not ready” for a full on-site visit, it may not proceed to a full on-site review until it has documented to the satisfaction of the assessing evaluator that it has remedied the areas of concern in the Assessment Report. The institution must correct the areas of concern and submit a revised SER before it can move forward in the process.

At this time, the institution may request an in-person consultation at the DETC office. The consultation fee is \$500. It is the institution’s responsibility to cover any of its travel and lodging expenses.

If the institution believes that the assessment evaluator has made an incorrect assessment, the institution has the option to request another evaluation of its draft SER by a different evaluator. The fee for another review by a different evaluator is \$2,000. The fee for another review by the same evaluator is \$1,000.

If an institution is not found “ready” after its second Readiness Assessment, it must undergo an on-site Readiness Visit or withdraw its Application for Accreditation and wait one year before resubmitting it. The Readiness Visit has one evaluator and a DETC staff member. The cost is \$1,800 per person or \$3,600. If after the Readiness Visit the institution is not found “ready” it must withdraw its Application and wait one year before resubmitting it.

Because of the limited purposes of a Readiness Assessment, the report that is produced will not be provided to or considered by the On-Site Examining Committee or by the Accrediting Commission. Course/curriculum reviews will not be done before the Readiness Assessment is successfully concluded.