

18. Policy on Annual Reports

In an effort to ensure that there is *consistent and continuous* compliance with its Standards, Policies, and Procedures, the DETC Accrediting Commission rigorously monitors the activities of each institution during the period of its accreditation.

While DETC accreditation for U.S. institutions is on a five-year cycle, and while institutions must submit for DETC formal subject matter specialist evaluation any new programs developed between five-year reviews, the Commission's continuous monitoring of institutions is also a key component of the overall culture of "trust but verify" that characterizes effective voluntary accreditation today.

In addition to a five-year cycle of accrediting reviews and subject matter evaluations of every course, continuing Commission monitoring occurs on a three-part basis. First, institutions are required to advise the Commission whenever significant changes occur in their operations. Second, they must report any governmental investigations, lawsuits, or major change in financial condition. Third, Commission monitoring and oversight is exercised through submission and analysis of Annual Reports.

Due on January 31st, these Annual Reports follow the format set out in Appendix E.6. of the *DETC Accreditation Handbook*. Institutions report on six different areas concerning current operations: (1) courses and programs offered; (2) certification of compliance with Commission requirements; (3) changes in educational and student services; (4) student satisfaction, as shown by responses to Commission-mandated survey questions; (5) completion and graduation rates; and (6) financial condition. Each year, institutions also report on planned changes in the areas of course offerings, marketing, management, or location.

If an institution is "certified" by DETC to be eligible for participation in Title IV Federal Student Aid programs, it must annually file E.7. Annual Report with Title IV. In addition to the items listed above, the institution must complete section VI on Title IV Participation.

Commission Review and Follow-Up Action

The DETC Staff will acknowledge receipt of each Annual Report and request any follow-up information needed within 30 days of receipt. All Reports will be reviewed and summarized, and any substantive/significant changes that are reported will be noted, and the appropriate follow-up action will be implemented on a timely basis. Examples of substantive changes include changes in location, offering new courses/programs, changes in ownership, management, or control, and changes in financial condition. Staff may also request any missing information, such as financial data.

Staff will also notify institutions of their compliance with Standard V on Student Achievement and Satisfaction. If the student satisfaction rate falls below 75%, or if course completion and program graduation rates are not within 15 percentage points of the mean rate for those in the institution's assigned cohort group, an explanation must be provided and any corrective action described (see C.14. Policy on Student Achievement and Satisfaction).

Failure to submit an Annual Report on a timely basis will be cause for a special accreditation examination being directed.

Annually, at its mid-year meeting, the Commission will consider any significant, salient items that were reported by institutions and initiate any further follow-up actions that may be necessary.

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