

9. Policy on Degree Programs

The Policy on Degree Programs sets forth the Commission’s policies for the accreditation of distance study institutions offering degree programs. In addition, the Policy **expands** on the Accreditation Standards (see Appendices A) for distance study institutions offering degree programs. Institutions offering degree programs must meet the Accreditation Standards **inclusive** of the requirements listed in this Policy. It also may be appropriate to use these standards during a joint accreditation visit with a specialized accrediting body whose scope includes the same degree programs.

Scope of Activity

The Accrediting Commission reviews only programs which have generally accepted and understood objectives and which are offered entirely or primarily through distance study instruction. The scope of the Commission’s accrediting activity recognized by the U.S. Department of Education includes undergraduate and graduate degrees offered by private and non-private distance education institutions. These include associate, bachelor’s, master’s, first professional¹, and professional doctoral degrees.

All degree programs offered by the institution, as well as all other non-degree distance study programs, must be reviewed and approved by the Accrediting Commission. All of the distance study divisions, courses, and subsidiaries of the institution offering distance study instruction must be accredited.

List of Professional Doctoral Degrees Acceptable for DETC Accreditation

The DETC wishes to exercise its scope of activity in the area of professional doctoral degree accreditation in a responsible manner. It also believes that certain professional doctoral degrees **are not** within its scope of activity. It therefore reserves the right to limit its scope of activity in reviewing professional doctoral degrees to the kinds of institutions and the types of programs for which it feels adequate public acceptance exists, appropriate distance education standards have been developed, and which it believes it has the competence to evaluate properly.

DETC defines “professional doctoral degree” to mean a post-master’s graduate level degree that prepares individuals through internships, practical application of training, and/or specialized certifications, for professional practice (such as the Doctor of Business Administration), as opposed to research methodologies that are associated with academic doctoral degrees (such as the Doctor of Philosophy).

The Accrediting Commission **will accept applications for only** the following professional doctoral degrees for DETC accreditation:

1. Doctor of Business Administration (DBA)
2. Doctor of Education (Ed.D.)
3. Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT)
4. Doctor of Occupational Therapy (DOT)
5. Doctor of Arts (specified fields) (DA)
6. Doctor of Science (specified fields) (DSc)
7. Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.)
8. Doctor of Public Administration (DPA)

¹ In 2011, the IPEDS survey discontinued the use of the term “First Professional” degrees in favor of “Doctor’s degree—professional practice.”

An institution may petition the Accrediting Commission to request special waivers for consideration of any other professional doctoral degrees not listed above (see C.29. Policy on Petitions and Waivers). (10/11)

Accreditation of All Programs

The institution must apply to the DETC Accrediting Commission for accreditation of the institution and for **all** of its distance education programs (degree and non-degree).

To qualify for accreditation, each distance study institution that offers programs leading to the award of degrees must be found to be in compliance with the standards for accredited institutions as well as the requirements set forth in this statement policy.

The Accrediting Commission reserves the right to order a comprehensive review of an institution at any time it has concerns that the institution is not in compliance with the DETC's standards, policies, and/or procedures. (10/11)

Licensure

The institution must have a charter, license, or formal authority from the appropriate governmental body to award the relevant degrees by distance study instruction if such authority is available or required.

Standard I: Institutional Mission, Goals, and Objectives

The degree program must be appropriate to the institution's mission, goals, and objectives. The Commission applies its standards and policies in a manner that respects the mission of the institutions, including those with faith-based or religious missions, in ensuring that the educational programs are of sufficient quality to achieve the stated objectives and mission. (10/11)

For each major group of programs or major subject matter disciplines that it offers, the institution (1) establishes an Advisory Council, consisting of practitioners in the field for which the program prepares students, (2) that convenes at least annually and (3) provides the institution with advice on the current level of skills, knowledge, and abilities individuals need for entry into the occupation, (4) as well as the adequacy of the institution's educational program objectives, its curriculum, and its course materials. (10/11)

Standard II: Educational Program Objectives, Curricula, and Materials

There is evidence that the learning outcomes of the degree program are comparable to those of similar degree programs offered by appropriately accredited¹ institutions.

¹Hereafter, the term "appropriately accredited" shall be used in lieu of "accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), or an accepted foreign equivalent that is listed in the *International Handbook of Universities*. **"

There is evidence that the program being offered is in a profession or subject area in which the institution has demonstrated strength, such as the number of alumni accepted by appropriately accredited graduate and professional schools or hired in the profession for subject-related jobs.

* <http://www.iau-aiu.net/content/international-handbook-universities-%E2%80%932012>

There is evidence that the other degree programs of the institution are recognized and generally accepted by the higher education and/or relevant professional communities.

There are specific policies, procedures, and practices for the degree program.

- **Program Objectives**

Learning objectives for the degree program and learning outcomes for the courses, research projects, supervised clinical practice or fieldwork, applied research exercises, thesis, dissertation, and any other required academic or professional activities must be clearly stated.

The learning objectives will indicate the outcomes and competencies a graduate of the degree program will attain upon successful completion of the program, including expected skills, knowledge, attitudes and insights characteristic of degree holders of similar nature and level at comparable, appropriately accredited institutions.

The program may require a capstone project if the project is consistent with the accepted academic and professional standards of appropriately accredited institutions or programs and the relevant professional body. Learning outcomes for the project must be clearly stated.

Advanced Degrees: For advanced degrees (i.e., First Professional and Professional Doctoral) the learning objectives and outcomes must be advanced, focused, and scholarly, providing the breadth and depth of learning required for advanced degrees. Material and topics in the curricula shall clearly be at the frontiers of knowledge and contribute to competence in the subject areas or profession at an advanced level.

In addition, advanced degree programs' learning activities should include, where feasible and appropriate, seminars, professional meetings, discussions with colleagues, participation in sustained synchronous or asynchronous online conferences at predetermined points throughout the program, access to library services, and access to online chat rooms with fellow students, faculty, and relevant professionals.

Finally, the Professional Doctoral program must require the student to work with a supervisory dissertation committee that is knowledgeable in methods of graduate-level study and research as well as the subject area concerned. The program of study must include coverage of the history and development of the field of study and its foundational theoretical principles.

- **Curriculum**

The curriculum for the degree programs must be comprehensive and comparable to the curriculum offered for similar degrees by other appropriately accredited institutions.

The institution has policies and procedures for determining credit hours (as defined below) it awards for its courses and programs, and how it applies its policies and procedures to its programs and coursework. Its assignment of credit hours conforms to commonly accepted practice in higher education as determined by showing a comparison with other appropriately accredited institutions. (10/11)

The curriculum shall quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the standards in effect at other accredited postsecondary institutions offering a similar degree with due allowance for special objectives of the degree offered on the customs and constraints imposed by the state or nation of domicile.

Instructional procedures, texts, and materials shall be appropriate to the purposes, curricula, and standards of accredited postsecondary degree-awarding institutions offering similar programs.

The institution must have a policy on intellectual property rights (see Glossary).

Advanced Degrees: The program of study must require the graduate to demonstrate the ability to conduct appropriate research in the field of study and to interpret and apply the results of this research.

For first-professional or doctoral degree programs degrees, the institution must demonstrate interaction between faculty members and dissertation advisors and/or practitioners, as appropriate.

The student's faculty advisor or the faculty advisor in consultation with other faculty or practitioners involved in the program must approve the topics of applied research and/or supervised clinical practice or fieldwork, if required.

In addition, the institution must require prior formal review and approval for all research involving humans.

- **Curriculum Delivery**

When technology is used for any part of the program, training and support in the use of that technology must be provided for students, faculty, and involved practitioners.

- **Resident Degree Comparability**

Graduates of distance education degree programs must exhibit skill and knowledge attainment through the demonstrated achievement of educational objectives and outcomes comparable to those of accredited resident degree programs that are similar in nature and level. Where an accredited residence degree typically includes required clinical, classroom or resident experiences as part of the degree program, the institution's program must also include comparable experiences or training.

- **Resident Study**

The degree must be of such a nature that it can be achieved through distance education or a combination of distance education and residential study. Mandatory residential instruction must supplement the distance education program whenever it is necessary to attain the stated program objectives and learning outcomes. In such cases, the institution must disclose to the prospective student that the program is a combination of distance education and residential instruction and that completion of both is a requirement for the award of the degree. The residential component of any degree program must not comprise more than half of the total credit hours required.

- **Certificate Programs**

Typically, certificate programs contain a collection of credit-bearing courses configured to equip students with specialized knowledge in a subject with content that is less extensive than what is provided in an entire degree program. If the courses are exactly the same (i.e., require proctored exams, the same assignments, the same exam, etc.) as those offered in an already approved degree program, students may be allowed to transfer the credits into the degree program. Note: the approved courses cannot be changed in anyway.

The certificate program must have a disclaimer to prospective students that it is not a “degree” program, but a “certificate” program. The program should be restricted to the appropriate degree level, e.g., Baccalaureate, Master’s, etc. depending on which courses make up the certificate program.

As stated in DETC Business Standards I.B.2, the word “accredited” may not be used in conjunction with certification programs, which are different from “certificate” programs described above. (10/11)

- **Examinations and Other Assessments**

Examinations and learning assessments must be comparable to those employed for similar degree programs at other appropriately accredited institutions. Assessments may address academic requirements as well as other relevant factors, including, but not limited to, attitudes, interpersonal behavior, ethics, and clinic skills.

Advanced Degrees: The program must require qualifying and comprehensive examinations. The qualifying examination must be given by the end of the equivalent of one year of full-time enrollment in the program. The comprehensive examination must be given when all coursework is completed and prior to commencing work on the dissertation or final research project. Students must pass these examinations to continue in the program.

- **Proctored Examinations**

Adequate steps must be taken by the institution to assure that the degree candidate has personally fulfilled the degree requirements stipulated by the institution. The student’s achievement shall be assessed by an appropriate number of proctored examinations appropriately spaced throughout the program of study.

The proctor shall be the institution or a reputable third party. The process for conducting proctored examinations shall be clear and completely stated by the institution. The process shall assure that the student who takes the proctored examination is the same person who enrolled in the prescribed program and that examination results will reflect the student’s own knowledge and competence in accordance with stated educational objectives and learning outcomes. Proctors shall use valid government-issued photo identification to confirm the student’s identity.

- **Transcript Evaluators**

Staff assigned to evaluate academic transcripts or portfolios of experiential learning are properly qualified and trained for their assignments. Their evaluations must reflect appropriate and fair decisions, and transfer credits must be accepted and assigned in accord with generally accepted credit evaluation practices at other accredited institutions.

- **Credit Hour Defined** (See C.23. Policy on Credit Hour)

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. (10/11)

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 not limited to, submitting an academic assignment, listening to class lectures or webinars (synchronous or asynchronous), taking an exam, 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 and laboratory work, externship or internship. Preparation is typically homework, such as reading and study time, and completing assignments and projects. Therefore, a 3 credit hour course would require 135 hours (45 hours of academic engagement and 90 hours of preparation). (10/11)

- **General Education Defined**

General education courses include those that address English, human communications (including, but not limited to, foreign languages and speech), mathematics, natural sciences, social sciences, and the arts and humanities. Courses that are classified as general education may be included in the core requirements of degree programs as appropriate.

- **Degree Requirements**

Associate Degrees: For an Associate Degree, there shall be demonstrated learning outcomes comparable to those achieved during a minimum of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours. Of these learning outcomes (total credits) required for an associate's degree, a minimum of one-fourth of the credit hours shall be general education.

Baccalaureate Degrees: For the Baccalaureate Degree, there shall be demonstrated learning outcomes comparable to those achieved during a minimum of 120 semester hours or 180 quarter hours. Of these total credit hours, a minimum of one-fourth shall be general education.

Master's Degrees: For the Master's Degree, there shall be demonstrated learning outcomes comparable to those achieved during a minimum of 36 semester hours or 54 quarter hours, or their equivalent, beyond the Baccalaureate degree. Institutions must determine if the courses in a degree program require any prerequisite or foundation courses. The institution must also determine if courses should be offered in a prescribed sequence so as to maximize the student's achievement of the program's educational objectives. Any deviations from the prescribed minimum learning outcomes required for credit hours must be justified by evidence from comparable appropriately accredited degree programs and approved by the Accrediting Commission.

First Professional Degrees: The First Professional Degree signifies both completion of the academic requirement for beginning practice in a given profession and a level of professional skills beyond what is normally required for a Bachelor's degree. This degree usually is based on a program requiring at least two academic years of work before entrance and a total of at least six academic years of work to complete the degree program, including both prior required college work and the professional program itself. Graduates should be competent in their basic discipline and be able to develop and evaluate new therapies and carry out research. Generally no major research project is required. Typically, there shall be demonstrated learning outcomes comparable to those achieved during a minimum of 50 semester hours or their equivalent beyond the Baccalaureate degree.

Institutions must determine if the courses in a degree program require any prerequisite or foundation courses. The institution must also determine if courses should be offered in a prescribed sequence so as to maximize the student's achievement of the program's educational objectives.

Professional Doctoral Degrees: The Professional Doctoral Degree is a practice-oriented degree that signifies completion of advanced academic requirements in a given field comparable to those required at other appropriately accredited institutions offering similar degrees. Typically, there shall be demonstrated learning outcomes comparable to those achieved during a minimum of 60 graduate-level semester hours or their equivalent beyond the Master’s degree, of which a maximum of 15 credit hours may be earned for the dissertation or final project.

If an institution’s entrance requirement is a first professional degree in the same discipline, the number of graduate-level semester credit hours may be reduced to conform to standard practice in the discipline, but may not be less than 90 total graduate semester hours after the baccalaureate degree.

Institutions must determine if the courses in a degree program require any prerequisite or foundation courses. The institution must also determine if courses should be offered in a prescribed sequence so as to maximize the student’s achievement of the program’s educational objectives.

A dissertation requiring basic, original, or applied research—or a research project—must be required of all students. The topic of any dissertation shall be approved by a dissertation committee appointed by the institution.

An oral defense of the doctoral candidate’s final project or dissertation with the dissertation committee is required. This may be conducted in person or at a distance. No degree shall be awarded by an institution unless a majority of the dissertation committee approves the dissertation or final project.

A professional doctoral degree program must be completed in no fewer than two years from the date of initial enrollment and no more than ten years from the date of initial enrollment.

- **Educational Media and Learning Resources**

The institution shall make provisions for the students and faculty to have **access** to educational media and learning resources, including library services that are appropriate to meeting the objectives of the degree programs. Such access may be provided at a distance, through arrangements with local institutions, or through personalized guidance to individual students. Any institution-provided resources must be systematically and regularly evaluated to ensure they continue to meet the needs of students and to support the programs and objectives of the institution.

Access to a collection of professional educational materials should be provided for faculty and administrators to keep abreast of trends, developments, techniques, research, and experimentation. A variety of educational materials must be selected, acquired, organized, and maintained to help fulfill the institution’s mission and support its educational program(s). The collection should support all the programs offered at the institution and should include reference works, periodicals, manuals, and other publications to facilitate the achievement the educational mission of the institution.

Faculty and instructional supervisory personnel must be involved in the selection of resources.

New course offerings and increases in student enrollment should be reflected in added allocations of resources for ensuring student access to educational media and learning resources, as appropriate.

Advanced Degrees: Students enrolled in a first-professional or doctoral degree program must have access to library resources sufficient for the completion of the requirements for that degree program. The institution must

provide library services at a distance or through arrangement with local institutions. Additionally, any research and laboratory facilities needed to complete the requirements for the advanced degree program and to encourage use of these facilities for professional study and achievement must be provided by the institution or by arrangement with a local institution.

Standard III:

See Accreditation Standards.

Standard IV: Student Support Services

The institution shall provide students with opportunities to achieve the stated learning outcomes in manners other than face-to-face communication with a student's faculty advisor or major professor. Such opportunities may include telephonic discussions, seminars, professional meetings, library resources including virtual library services, and online bulletin boards/chat rooms for communications with fellow students and faculty.

When technology is used to deliver any part of the program, training and support in the use of that technology must be provided for both students and faculty.

- **Assessment Services**

Students must be informed of their academic progress and standing in the program on an ongoing basis.

Advanced Degrees: The availability of appropriate support staff that is experienced in serving and/or has been trained to serve First Professional and Professional Doctoral degree program students is required.

For students in Professional Doctoral programs, a dissertation or project manual is required. It must contain guidelines that pertain to the preparation for and writing of the dissertation, for conducting a project, and for reporting of results. In addition, the program must include provision for a pattern of scheduled student interactions with faculty and other resource persons throughout the program.

- **Student Records**

Policies and procedures for keeping records on students' academic progress (achievement of course and program learning objectives and outcomes, examination results, etc.) are required; these policies and procedures must also be maintained in accordance with applicable professional requirements and state laws. Records of the students' academic results must be maintained permanently. These records may be in printed or electronic form.

- **Counseling, Employment, and Alumni Services**

Appropriate academic counseling services are available upon request. Any employment in alumni services must be offered as claimed.

- **Program Administration (First Professional and Professional Doctoral)**

An administrator must be appointed for the First Professional and Professional Doctoral degree programs. This person's title shall be consistent with titles currently in use in comparable programs.

The administrator must have had experience in administering programs at this academic level and possess skills and knowledge of distance learning.

For the First Professional degree, the administrator must hold the First Professional degree or a higher degree in a subject area relevant to the degree program that is being offered. The degree must be from an appropriately accredited institution.

For the Professional Doctoral degree, the institution must have on staff a sufficient number of student services staff qualified to support doctoral level students.

For the Professional Doctoral degree, a supervisory dissertation committee of at least three faculty members must be formed for each student. All committee members must have demonstrated appropriate scholarship, experience, or practice in the subject area. In lieu of a dissertation, doctoral degree programs may require a project if the type of project is consistent with accepted practice at other appropriately accredited institutions. The dissertation committee must include at least two members who earned their doctoral degrees from appropriately accredited institutions other than the awarding institution. The committee members must be qualified in the subject area of the student's dissertation or project. At least one member of the dissertation committee must be a member of the awarding institution's faculty. When students reach the point of dissertation, students may have the option of nominating their dissertation members or major professors. However, the institution will make the final decisions.

Standard V: Student Achievement and Satisfaction

- **Achievement of Learning Outcomes and Benefits**

Institutions must have in place an on-going program to assess student achievement with respect to the stated degree program outcomes and must demonstrate how this on-going program has been used to enhance degree offerings and services.

- **Progress Through the Course/Programs**

Measurement of graduation rates, professional placement, career satisfaction, and other outcome measures must be done on an ongoing basis and the results of these measurements must be readily available to interested parties in the institution's research and data files.

Standard VI: Qualifications and Duties of Owners, Governing Board Members, Officials, Administrators, Instructors/Faculty, and Staff, and Reputation of Institution

- **Qualifications of Instructors/Faculty**

For this standard, faculty members are considered to be those who provide instruction, prepare instructional material, evaluate assignments and other assessments, and counsel students in academic selection and progress.

Faculty members are assumed to have full responsibility for the content of the academic program and for determining student achievement.

The educational director as well as all members of the instructional staff must possess academic qualifications of unquestionable merit. There should be on staff a sufficient number of instructors/faculty proportionate to the level of student enrollment to give the degree program(s) long-term stability and academic credibility.

In judging competence of faculty, consideration shall be given to the academic preparation and experience of each instructor and the faculty's comparability to faculty of other appropriately accredited resident institutions.

The minimum degrees that faculty members must possess (as listed below for teaching of the following degree programs) must have been awarded by institutions accredited by agencies that are recognized by the United States Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or, for non-U.S. institutions, an accepted foreign equivalent that is listed in the *International Handbook of Universities* (18th ed.) ISBN: 1-403-906-882, IAU: 92-9002-175-6, London: International Association of Universities; New York: Stockton Press, September 2005. Palgrave Macmillan Ltd, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 6XS, England, <http://www.palgrave.com>.)

Degrees in Specialized Fields: Faculty teaching courses that are part of a degree in a specialized field must possess the appropriate credential and degree in the subject being taught and demonstrate expertise in the subject field.

Undergraduate Degrees: Faculty teaching courses that are part of an undergraduate degree program must possess, at a minimum, a degree at least one level above that of the program that they are teaching and demonstrate expertise in the subject field of the discipline. Faculty teaching general education courses at the undergraduate level must possess a Master's degree in the assigned general education subject field or have a Master's degree and 18 semester hours in the general education subject field.

Master's Degree: The size of the faculty shall be appropriate for the level of enrollment. All Master's program faculty must have a graduate degree relevant to the program being offered. The majority of the faculty must possess a relevant terminal degree. Instructors shall be assigned responsibilities in terms of their areas of expertise.

First Professional Degree: All teaching faculty and involved practitioners must hold the First Professional or higher degree, in a subject area relevant to the program that is being offered, earned at an appropriately accredited institution, and must have demonstrated specialized knowledge and skills in the subject area(s).

Faculty and involved practitioners must have experience in the First Professional degree program or in graduate-level distance education in a related subject area and in teaching adult students.

The institution shall have a policy and procedure for pairing a student with a faculty advisor.

The institution must demonstrate that it has a sufficient number of qualified faculty members and practitioners to meet the academic and, if necessary, the clinical needs and requirements of the program.

Professional Doctoral Degrees: All teaching faculty who instruct doctoral students must have terminal degrees **in relevant field of study** from other appropriately accredited institutions, either a professional doctoral or a doctor of philosophy.

The institution must have on its full-time staff, prior to enrolling students (a) a qualified Academic Dean, Department Chair, or Chief Learning Officer specifically for the doctoral degree program; and (b) qualified faculty members representing at least one-fourth of the total proposed degree program course offerings.

- **Exceptional Cases**

In exceptional cases, outstanding professional experience and demonstrated contributions to the teaching discipline may be presented in lieu of formal academic preparation. The institution on an individual basis must justify such cases. The institution must document and justify the academic and professional preparation of faculty members teaching in their programs.

- **Resolving Conflicts**

Policies and procedures for preventing and/or resolving faculty conflicts of interests must be published and made available to all students.

Standard VII: Admission Practices

- **Qualifications for Admission**

The institution should take reasonable measures to assure that the student has no physical limitation that will prevent success in the program contemplated. Such measures may be: 1) the publication of a clear description of physical handicaps or disabilities which could prevent successful completion; 2) the inclusion of an appropriate question or questions on the admission application which will alert the institution to a potential problem and which would trigger further action by the institution; and 3) the requirement of a doctor's statement in questionable cases.

The institution admits/enrolls only those students who can be expected to complete the degree program and benefit from it.

Undergraduate Degree Programs: The admissions policy must conform to the institution's mission, must be publicly stated, and must be administered as written. A student accepted for enrollment in a degree program must be in possession of a high school diploma or its equivalent¹, or must have successfully completed 12 college-level semester credits and must have attained a "C" or higher for each course at an appropriately accredited postsecondary institution. For applicants using 12 college-level semester credits to satisfy the admission requirements, an official transcript must be on file to document the earned credits. Students may be admitted on a provisional basis pending receipt of an official college or high school transcript, but in no case may they continue in the institution's program beyond one enrollment period (not to exceed 12 semester credits) without an official transcript of high school completion or earned postsecondary credits on file at the institution. (6/11)

International or homeschooled students must provide an appropriately authenticated program completion document issued by a governmental authority or school supervisor that attests to the successful completion of a program considered to be equivalent to an accredited high school diploma or GED certificate (also, see "When Applicant's Native Language is other than English"). (6/11)

Institutions must maintain (electronically or in print) an official high school transcript of the secondary school diploma or its equivalent to verify the student's qualification for admission to the program. Electronic documents must be maintained according to C.21. Policy on Required Institutional Documents.

Exceptional Cases: If an institution allows for “exceptional cases” for admissions, it must have policies and procedures for reviewing and documenting these cases. The Chief Academic Officer or Educational Director may make allowances when appropriate documentation is not available. In exceptional cases, such as natural disasters, where a student cannot obtain an official high school diploma, a student may be admitted provisionally for a stated amount of credit hours that must be successfully completed before he/she is officially admitted into the program. (6/11)

¹Equivalent may be: General Education Development (GED) tests or the military DD Form 214 indicating that the applicant has completed high school.

Master’s Degree Programs: A threshold admission requirement to a Master’s program is based on the possession of a Baccalaureate Degree from an appropriately accredited institution. Exceptions to this requirement are at the institution’s discretion and only if the institution can document with reasonable assurance that the applicant will successfully complete the Master’s program.

The institution must have a policy that defines exceptions (e.g., appropriate GMAT or GRE scores, 7-10 years of experience in the related area, etc.). The number of students enrolled into a Master’s program without a Bachelor’s degree may not exceed five percent of the active enrollments for that program.

Institutions must maintain (electronically or in print) an official transcript from the college or university from which the student earned his/her Baccalaureate degree or its equivalent to verify the student’s qualification for admission to the program. Electronic documents must be maintained according to C.21. Policy on Required Institutional Documents.

First Professional Degrees: Applicants for admission must possess at a minimum a baccalaureate degree, but preferably both baccalaureate and master’s degrees, from an appropriately accredited institution. The institution shall maintain (electronically or in print) the official transcript from the college or university from which the student earned his/her Baccalaureate or Master’s degree to verify the student’s qualification for admission to the program. Electronic documents must be maintained according to C.21. Policy on Required Institutional Documents. Applicants must have successfully completed subject area/course prerequisites at an appropriately accredited institution.

Minimum cumulative grade point measures are required; minimum grades for subject area/course prerequisites may also be required. In countries whose institutions do not use these measures, students must be informed regularly about their progress on meeting degree requirements, using the country’s usual means for communicating that information. The institution’s admission policy meets the requirements of the applicable profession/industry and of applicable state law.

Professional Doctoral Degrees: Applicant students must document relevant academic experience for the doctoral program of study and, if in a professional field, relevant experience prior to being admitted.

A Baccalaureate or Master’s degree earned at an appropriately accredited institution must be required for admission to a doctoral degree program. The institution shall maintain (electronically or in print) the official transcript from the college or university from which the student earned his/her Baccalaureate or Master’s degree to verify the student’s qualification for admission to the program. Electronic documents must be maintained according to C.21. Policy on Required Institutional Documents. At a minimum, applicants must have completed 30 graduate-level hours before admission to the Professional Doctoral program.

Appropriate time periods for the length of each component of the doctoral degree programs have been

established by the institution and are clearly communicated to potential students and applicants prior to and during the admission process.

When Applicant’s Native Language is other than English

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 must demonstrate college-level proficiency in English through one of the following:

- **Undergraduate:** A minimum score of **500** on the paper-based Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL PBT), or **61** on the Internet Based Test (iBT), a **6.0** on the International English Language Test (IELTS) or 44 on the PTE** Academic Score Report. **Master’s Degree:** A minimum score of **530** on the paper-based Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL PBT) or **71** on the Internet Based Test (iBT), **6.5** on the International English Language Test (IELTS) or 50 on the PTE Academic Score Report; **First Professional Degree or Professional Doctoral Degree:** a minimum score of **550** on the paper-based Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL PBT), or **80** on the Internet Based Test (iBT), a **6.5** on the International English Language Test (IELTS), or 58 on the PTE Academic Score Report.
- A minimum grade of Level 3 on the ACT COMPASS’s English as a Second Language Placement Test;
- A minimum grade of Pre-1 on the Eiken English Proficiency Exam;
- A transcript indicating completion of at least 30 semester hours of credit with an average grade of “C” or higher at an appropriately accredited* accredited college or university where the language of instruction was English; “B” or higher for Master’s, First Professional Degree or Professional Doctoral Degree.
- A transcript indicating a grade of “C” or higher in an English composition course from an appropriately accredited* college or university; “B” or higher for Master’s, First Professional Degree or Professional Doctoral Degree; or
- **Undergraduate only:** A high school diploma completed at an appropriately accredited/recognized high school (where the medium of instruction is English).

Transcripts not in English must be evaluated by an appropriate third party and translated into English or evaluated by a trained transcript evaluator fluent in the language on the transcript. In this case, the evaluator must have expertise in the educational practices of the country of origin and include an English translation of the review.

*accredited by an agency recognized by the United States Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), or an accepted foreign equivalent that is listed in the International Handbook of Universities.

** Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE Academic). For more information on this test, visit www.pearsonpte.com.

- **Maximum Allowable Transfer Credits**

Note: When considering transfer credits, an institution must conform to its state regulatory agency's requirements on the amount of transfer credit allowed.

Undergraduate Degrees: A maximum of three-fourths of the credits required may be awarded for transfer credit or a combination of transfer credit and experiential or equivalent credit (including challenge/test-out credits). For no student, however, may the credit given for experiential or equivalent learning (including challenge/test out credits) exceed one-fourth of the credits required for a degree.

Master's Degrees: A maximum of one-half of the credits required for master's degrees may be given through transfer credit or a combination of transfer credit and experiential or equivalent credit (including challenge/test out credits). For no student, however, may the credit given for experiential or equivalent learning (including challenge/test out credits) exceed one-fourth of the credits required for a degree.

First Professional Degrees: Transfer and experiential credits awarded by the institution must not exceed the maximum limits in common use at comparable accredited First Professional degree programs and in no case may it exceed 50% of the required credits.

Professional Doctoral Degrees: Awarding degree credit for experiential learning is not permitted. Transfer credit is limited to 15% (or 9 credits for a 60 credit degree) of the total doctoral credits required to complete the degree. The courses must be relevant to the student's program of study and equivalent in both content and degree level of graduate courses.

- **Experiential Equivalent Credit**

Credit may also be given for adequately documented and validated experiential equivalent learning of a postsecondary nature. Examples include credit for learning acquired through business experience, college level equivalent tests, achievement in a related profession, military training, or other postsecondary level equivalent experience. The process of documenting and validating experiential equivalent learning should systematically and regularly be evaluated to ensure it is meeting the needs of its users and supporting the programs and objectives of the institution.

For equivalent credit purposes, adequate validating procedures must be clearly stated and published and the institution must consistently apply these procedures.

The institution should give special attention to and consider awarding appropriate amounts of academic credit for credits earned by applicants at institutions accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council. For all transfer and equivalent credit decisions, official documentation, including original transcripts, must be maintained.

- **Transfer Credit Policies**

Institutions must establish and implement a fair and equitable policy regarding transfer credit. The policy must be written, published in the catalog and other relevant publications, and disseminated to all students and prospective transfer students.

At a minimum, the policy for accepting transfer credit should contain clear and accurate information about the following:

1. Minimal acceptable grades and/or grade point average.
2. Credit transfer may not be denied solely on the source of accreditation of the sending institution.
3. Types of course that will be considered, including any courses offered outside of an institutional setting, such as those offered by the military, in the workplace, through apprenticeship and/or training programs, or other such programs recognized by the American Council on Education's Center for Adult Learning and Education Credentials programs.
4. Any options for earning credit through examinations such as the ACT Proficiency Examination Program (PEP), the College Board's Advanced Placement (AP) program and College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) Subject Standardized Testing (DSST), widely accepted industry certification, or institution-developed tests.
5. Transcripts from non-U.S. institutions must be evaluated by an appropriate third party and translated into English.
6. Any limits on the number of courses or credits hours that can be accepted for transfer and limits on how "old" the credits may be earned, e.g., within the most recent 7 years or fewer.
7. Any requirements for comparability of program content to the program in which the student will enroll.
8. Documentation that is required, e.g., transcript, catalog, syllabi, or course outlines.
9. Procedures to be followed when requesting transfer of credit.
10. Procedures to be followed when appealing transfer of credit decisions.
11. Methods by which tuition and fees are adjusted.
12. A description of potential ramifications for financial aid.
13. A description of any fees assessed for testing, evaluation, or granting transfer of credit.

Transfer credit toward a degree may be awarded for postsecondary courses completed by the student at other institutions if such courses are found to meet the standards of the accepting institution and the requirements of the specific program. Transfer credit must be from an appropriately accredited institution.

The institution should also include a list of the institutions with which the institution has established articulation agreements, as well as contracts with other educational providers or consortia agreements. (10/11)

- **Enrollment Agreements**

A clear statement concerning tuition and fee payments and the schedule for paying them must be included on the enrollment and admission forms. The statement also must include the projected maximum cost of the program where a student continues to the statute of limitations at the current tuition rate, but allows for acceptable tuition increases.

First Professional Degrees: The enrollment form or agreement must be unique for the First Professional degree program. It must include a clear statement concerning tuition and fee payments and the applicable refund policy, and the schedule for paying them must be included on the enrollment and/or admission forms.

Professional Doctoral Degrees: An enrollment agreement must be provided that is unique to professional doctoral degree programs. It must include a clear statement concerning tuition and fee payments and the applicable refund policy, and the schedule for paying them must be included on the enrollment and/or admission forms.

Standard VIII: Advertising, Promotional Literature, and Recruitment Personnel

• Advertising Requirements

The institution must clearly indicate and affirmatively disclose in its advertisements, promotional materials, enrollment forms, descriptive literature, and other media, that the degree program being offered is based solely or primarily on distance study instruction. Advertising must be ethical in every respect and follow DETC's Business Standard I.A.

The institution must have a catalog readily available to students, prospective students, and other members of the interested public in printed or online format (pdf). The catalog must contain and accurately depict, at a minimum, the following:

1. The institutional mission, goals, and objectives.
2. Names and titles of administrators of the institution.
3. The legal control, names of trustees, directors, and/or officers of the corporation.
4. A general statement of accredited status and governmental approvals (including DETC's address, phone number and website address)
5. Hours of operation, including holiday schedule, and faculty/instructor's availability.
6. List of full-time and part-time faculty, each listed separately, with degrees held and conferring institutions, and the area of teaching specialization.
7. Academic calendar for combination programs or any programs that operate on a fixed calendar.
8. Institution's admission policy for each specific degree offered, i.e., Associate, Baccalaureate, Master's, First Professional, or Professional Doctoral degree.
9. Statement of curricula offered including curriculum objective, courses included, total credits required, required prerequisites, requirements for certification, and licensing as appropriate.
10. Expectations for maintaining satisfactory academic progress.
11. Explanation of grading policies, transfer of credits, and equivalent.
12. Assessment and proctoring procedures.

13. Student code of conduct and academic and non-academic dismissal policies.
14. Student complaint or grievance policies and procedures, including DETC contact information.
15. Student identity verification procedures.
16. Student Financial Aid program policy disclosures, as required by federal regulations, if participating in Federal Student Aid.
17. If residence training is required, facilities and/or equipment available to support courses or programs;
18. Graduation requirements, including minimum passing grades.
19. Statement of fees, tuition, and all regular and special charges for each program.
20. Statement of refund policy and cancellations that conforms to the DETC Business Standards.
21. Description of counseling and/or placement services available to students, if any.
22. The institution should include on the front cover or title page of the catalog (or the online equivalent) the year or years for which the catalog is effective.

An institution must permanently archive its catalogs.

Advanced Degrees: No direct or implied promise shall be given that it is easy to earn the degree or that it is easy to earn in a short period of time.

Standard IX: Financial Responsibility

- **Financial Reporting**

The institution must document with its financial statements that it has sufficient liquid assets to provide for a staff and faculty of unqualified merit that characterizes a quality-focused degree-awarding college or university. There must be adequate funds readily available for attracting superior faculty, in-service training, a high level faculty to learner interactivity, faculty research, continuous improvement of curricula and services.

- **Demonstrated Operation**

Institution must have a completely developed curriculum with at least one academic degree program in which students have been enrolled for a minimum of two consecutive years under the present ownership.

Advanced Degrees: The institution must demonstrate that the allocation of resources to the advanced degree program does not detract from the other offerings of the institution.

Standard X: Tuition Policies, Collection Procedures, and Refunds

Refer to Accreditation Standard X.

Standard XI: Facilities, Equipment, Supplies, and Record Protection

Refer to Accreditation Standard XI.

Standard XII: Research and Self-Improvement

The institution uses sound research and evaluation procedures and techniques to determine whether program objectives and learning outcomes are being met.

The institution provides evidence of effort and progress in improving operating efficiency and service to students.

Policies and procedures for improving instruction and upgrading faculty, practitioners, and staff are required.

Improvement and upgrading can be demonstrated by membership and active participation in professional associations; application of recent research results in both the academic and clinical/practical portions of the program; and continuing study and practical experience in the profession, related subject areas, adult education, and distance education.

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