

## 13. Third-Party Comments

### ***Procedure for Requesting, Reviewing, and Acting on Third-Party Comments***

As part of the accreditation process, the names of applicants for initial or reaccreditation are circulated for comment. This procedure details the steps for requesting, reviewing, and acting on third-party comments.

If a Third-Party Comment is considered to be a “complaint” as defined by DETC’s C.20 Policy on Complaints, the comment will be processed according to the procedures detailed in that policy.

**Applicant for Initial Accreditation:** When an institution makes initial application for accreditation it must go through a Readiness Assessment as described in C.12. Policy on Readiness Assessment. As stated in this policy, “The name of an initial applicant will not be published in DETC’s publications or posted on DETC’s website until after it has completed a successful Readiness Assessment.” A successful Readiness Assessment is when the evaluator deems that the institution is “ready” to proceed to an on-site visit.

**Applicant for Reaccreditation:** When an institution makes application for reaccreditation as described in C.13. Policy on Re-Accreditation Review, its name is published on DETC’s website and in DETC’s publications. DETC also publishes the month and year that an institution was first accredited and the month and year the accreditation expires in its *DETC Directory of Accredited Institutions* and on its website’s searchable institutional database. This informs the public of the institution’s next scheduled review.

### **Requesting Third-Party Comments**

The Commission routinely, and in a timely manner, publishes the list of applicant institutions (initial and re-accreditation) in its bi-annual “Report from the Accrediting Commission,” which is published in the *DETC News*, the *Washington Memo*, and posted on DETC’s website. Once an initial applicant has completed the Readiness Assessment phase of the accreditation process, its name, city and state are posted on DETC’s website. A link from the homepage (Initial Applicants) provides the public with a current list of applicants. The website states: “Accredited institutions, governmental and non-governmental agencies, industry members, the general public and other interested parties are invited to submit written comments pertaining to any institution included on the Commission’s list. Comments should include information that will assist the Commission in making a decision regarding the accreditation action pending for an institution. Any comments received will be forwarded to the institution, which will then have an opportunity to submit a response to those comments.

“Comments are welcomed at any time. The Commission meets in January and June of each year to consider any applicants. Comments concerning the applicants for initial or reaccreditation should be submitted to the Commission by December 1<sup>st</sup> for the January meeting or May 1<sup>st</sup> for the June meeting. To view the entire list of applicants, [click here](#).” The link directs people to the most current *DETC Bulletin* “Report from the Accrediting Commission,” which lists all institutions to be considered initial and re-accreditation at the next Accrediting Commission meeting. On the rare occasion that the Commission holds additional meetings, a due date for comments is indicated, which is always at least 30 days after the announcements of any proposed changes are made.

The website further states, “DETC’s application procedure involves submitting an application for accreditation to start the accreditation process. The DETC does not have a candidacy status. In fact, DETC counsels institutions not to publicize the fact that they have applied for DETC accreditation because it may mislead students to enroll based on the impression that the institution will surely become accredited. DETC’s process of accreditation takes one to two

years to complete. If you have any comments concerning these institutions, please contact the Director of Accreditation, Nan Bayster Ridgeway at nan@detc.org or 202-234-5100 Ext. 103.”

In addition to soliciting comments through its website and publications, DETC also surveys students and other organizations such as Better Business Bureaus, Consumer protection agencies, accrediting associations, and federal and state regulatory agencies.

### **Processing and Reviewing Third-Party Comments**

When a written comment (that is not a complaint) is received by the Director of Accreditation, it is acknowledged and saved to be provided to the Accrediting Commission prior to the next Accrediting Commission meeting when the institution’s application is considered.

Typically, a third-party comment would be a comment from a state agency concerning an applicant’s status or information on past violations or areas of concerns, such as bankruptcy or closure.

DETC will not accredit an institution that is subject to a threatened action, an interim action, or an action taken by another accrediting agency or state agency, whereby the end result could lead or has led to probation, suspension, revocation, or termination of the institution’s license or accredited status, without providing to government authorities a thorough and reasonable information for doing so within 30 days.

DETC will not accredit, nor permit an accredited institution to remain accredited, if the institution has lost its state authorization or any required governmental authority to provide education in its state of domicile. Accredited status ceases when the date of a state action to terminate required licensure in the institution’s state of domicile is final.

Should DETC learn that an applicant institution is subject to an adverse action by a state agency or another recognized accrediting agency, or has been placed on probation or an equivalent status by another recognized agency, it will promptly review the status of the applicant to determine if DETC should also take an adverse action or issue a show cause order to the institution.

### **Acting on Third-Party Comments**

Any comments received from third parties are given to the members of the Examining Committee for their follow-up during the on-site visit, if appropriate, along with the institution’s response. The Commissioners review and discuss all third-party comments and the institution’s response, along with other documents of record provided when it considers an institution for initial or re-accreditation.

Please refer to DETC’s D.3. Notification and Information Sharing provides for details on the decisions available to the Commission and the procedures for notification and sharing information.

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