

# Update Sheet: Changes to the 2012 *DETC Accreditation Handbook*

## DETC Accreditation Standards Adopted in 2011

DETC members should study carefully the following new additions or revisions to the Accreditation Standards, Business Standards, and changes and additions to policies and procedures to ensure compliance by **January 1, 2012**. If your institution is scheduled for an on-site DETC review in 2012 or beyond, it will be checked for compliance with the standards, policies, and procedures below. Changed or additional language is in italic.

**I.A. Description of the Mission, Goals, and Objectives:** The institution has a mission statement that includes its general purpose and is supported by specific, clearly defined goals and objectives *appropriate to the level of study provided* including an institutional commitment to providing quality distance education programs. [Rev 8/11]

**I.C. Implementation of the Mission, Goals, and Objectives:** The institution can demonstrate that it is effectively carrying out its mission, is attaining its goals and objectives, and is sharing appropriate information on its attainments with relevant groups. *The institution identifies the key indicators it uses in determining how it is meeting its stated mission, goals, and objectives.* [Rev 10/11]

**II.C. Comprehensive Curriculum:** The curriculum is sufficiently comprehensive for students to achieve the stated program objectives and its content is supported by sound research and practice. *An institution has policies and procedures for determining credit hours as defined in C.9. Policy on Degree Programs and/or clock hours it awards for its courses and/or programs.* [Rev 10/11]

**II.F. Examinations and Other Assessments:** Examinations and other assessment techniques are *adequate evidence of the achievement of the stated learning objectives and outcomes.* *The institution must publish its academic grading policies, assignment marking system, course extension policy, and information on issuance and completion of incomplete grades, and apply them with fairness and consistency.* [Rev 8/11 – moved from III.A.].

**II.J. Study Instructions:** Instructions and suggestions on how to study and how to use the instructional materials *are made available to assist students to learn effectively and efficiently.* [Rev 8/11]

**II. L. Student Privacy, Integrity, and Identity:** The institution has clear, specific, published policies related to *student privacy, integrity, and academic honesty.* The institution has a student identity verification process that ensures that students who earn the credit or completion credentials are the same students who did the course assignments and assessments. [Rev 10/11]

**III.A. Student Inquiries and Submissions:** Relevant student inquiries are welcome and are answered promptly and thoroughly. Accurate assessment, correction services, and counseling by instructors/faculty are provided for assignments/lessons and examinations. *The institution has a process for maintaining and protecting the confidentiality of student records, e.g., grades, test results, etc.* [Rev 10/11]

**III.E. Student Evaluation of Courses:** *Opinions of students are systematically sought as one basis for evaluating and improving instructional materials, the delivery of instruction, and educational services.* [Rev 8/11]

**III.G. Resident Training:** Resident training *or face-to-face learning sessions* must supplement the electronically delivered, online, or other distance study method whenever it is necessary to attain the stated institutional and program objectives and intended student learning outcomes. [Rev 8/11]

**IV.B. Student Records:** Essential, accurate student records are adequately *and securely* maintained and readily accessible. [Rev 8/11]

**IV.C. Student Support Services:** *The institution provides support services relevant to the students enrolled, such as financial aid guidance, counseling services, employment assistance and/or alumni services. [Adopted 10/11]*

**IV.D. Student Complaints:** *The institution has policy and procedures for the purposes of responding to, addressing, and readdressing, as appropriate, a complaint made by a student (see C.20. Policy on Complaints), including one who has good reason to believe that the institution is not in compliance with DETC standards and policies. [Adopted 10/11]*

**V.A. Achievement and Student Learning Outcomes and Benefits:** *The institution articulates student learning outcomes has a systematic and ongoing process for assessing student learning, provides documented evidence that show that the results are used to improve programs, curricula, instruction, faculty development, and services, and the results meet appropriate benchmarked standards. [Rev 8/11]*

**V.B. Student Satisfaction:** *The institution regularly collects evidence that students are satisfied with the instructional and educational services provided. [Rev 8/11]*

**VI. A. Owners, Governing Board Members, Officials, and Administrators:** *The Owners, Governing Board Members, officials, and administrators possess appropriate qualifications and experience for their positions and roles and have demonstrated the ability to oversee institutional operations. The governing board members are knowledgeable and experienced in one or more aspects of educational administration, finance, teaching/learning, and distance study. The institution has policies that clearly delineate the duties and responsibilities of governing board members, officials, and administrators. Individuals in leadership and managerial roles are qualified by education and experience. [Rev 10/11]*

**VI.B. Chief Academic Officer and/or Department Heads:** *A qualified<sup>2</sup> person serves as the chief academic officer or educational director. This person has overall administrative responsibilities for the educational program(s), faculty/instructors, and a policy-making voice in advertising, sales, and collections. In institutions that use department heads or persons with similar titles are delegated educational, editorial, and research responsibilities within the departmental subject fields. [Rev 10/11]*

<sup>2</sup> qualifications for degree-granting institutions are described in C.9. Policy on Degree Programs.

**VI.C. Instructors/Faculty and Staff:** *The institution has a sufficient number of qualified instructors/faculty<sup>3</sup> to give individualized instructional service to each student. The institution maintains files containing the resumes and official transcripts of its instructors/faculty. Faculty are carefully screened for appointment, and are properly and continuously trained with respect to institution policies, learner needs, instructional approaches and techniques, and the use of appropriate instructional technology. The institution has clear, consistent procedures to evaluate faculty performance. [Rev 10/11]*

<sup>3</sup> qualifications for degree-granting institutions are described in C.9. Policy on Degree Programs.

**VI.D. Reputation of Institution, Owners, Governing Board, Officials, and Administrators:** *The institution and its owners, governing board members, officials, and administrators possess sound reputations and possess a record of integrity and ethical conduct in their professional activities, business operations, and relations. [Rev 10/11]*

**VI.F. Succession Plan:** *The institution has 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 with the operation of the institution. The plan should be reviewed and revised on an annual basis. [Adopted 8/11 – moved from XII.C.]*

**VII.B. Enrollment Agreement (Contracts):** *The written enrollment agreement and/or other written enrollment documents specify clearly the nature and scope of the course or program, the services and obligations of the*

institution, and the responsibilities, obligations, financial and otherwise, of the student. Any changes in tuition, fees, and *course or* program policies and procedures must be made applicable to all future enrollees, not those currently enrolled. The institution must use a written enrollment agreement/contract that conforms to the provisions of DETC Business Standards II. A. and II. B. Students must be given copies of these written agreements/contracts and/or other written documents. [Rev 12/11]

**IX.A. Financial Practices:** The institution shows, by complete, comparative financial statements covering its two most recent fiscal years, that it is financially responsible and that it can meet its financial obligations to provide quality instruction and service to its students. (Financial statements must be prepared “in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.”) *The institution has budgeting processes that demonstrate the current and future budgets are sufficient to allow the institution to accomplish its mission and goals.* [Rev 10/11]

**IX.B. Financial Management:** *Individuals who oversee the fiscal and budgeting processes are qualified by education and experience.* The institution must have *adequate administrative staff for effectively operating, and at least one person who is qualified and able to prepare accurate financial reports in a timely manner.* Internal auditing trails and controls are in place to ensure finances are properly managed, monitored, and protected. *Adequate safeguards are in place to prevent unauthorized access to online and on-site financial information.* [Rev 10/11]

**IX.C. Financial Sustainability and Stability:** The institution can demonstrate that *it maintains adequate administrative staff and other resources to operate effectively* as a going concern and is not exposed to undue or insurmountable risk. Any risk that exists is adequately monitored, manageable, and insured. [Rev 10/11]

**IX. E. Demonstrated Operations:** In all respects, accredited institutions must document continuous sound and ethical operations, as well as the necessary resources to accommodate demand and to ensure all learners receive a quality educational experience. Applicant institutions must document two continuous years of sound and ethical operation under the present ownership and with the current programs offered as a bona fide electronically delivered, online, or other delivery method of distance study. This documentation shall show that the name being used by the institution is free from any association with activity that could damage the reputation of the DETC accrediting process, such as illegal actions, *fraud*, unethical conduct, or abuse of consumers. [Rev 10/11]

**X.B. Tuition Collection Procedures:** Tuition collection practices and procedures are fair. They encourage the progress of students and seek to retain their good will. The institution exercises its right to protect its finances through collection practices in keeping with sound and ethical business standards. Such practices take into account the comparable rights and interests of the student. *Collection procedures also conform to DETC Business Standard Section III.D.* [Rev 8/11]

**X. C. Tuition Cancellation/Refund Policies:** The institution recognizes that there are legitimate reasons why enrolled students may not be able to complete their programs with benefit to themselves. Accordingly, the institution has a policy for equitable tuition adjustments or refunds in such cases that conform to DETC Business Standards Section III.B. and III. C. Records are maintained on tuition refunds and enrollment cancellations to provide a reference source for management analysis. [Rev 8/11]

**XI.A. Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies:** *The institution maintains sufficient facilities, equipment, and supplies to achieve its mission and goals and support its programs and future growth. A written plan exists to maintain and upgrade facilities, equipment, and supplies. The plan states the resources that will be budgeted to support its goals.* Buildings, workspace, and equipment comply with local fire, building, health, and safety regulations and are adequately equipped to handle the educational program(s) of the institution. [Rev 10/11]

**XI. B. Record Protection:** Institutional financial and administrative records and students’ educational records are maintained in a reasonably accessible place and are adequately protected as long as they are likely to be needed. Protection may be by: (1) an active fire suppression system, or (2) passive protection using two-hour rated files

or vaults *for hard copy files/records*, or (3) using off-site back-up files *for electronic files/records*. Other records are maintained in accordance with current educational, administrative, business, and legal practices. [Rev 12/11]

**XII.A. Planning and Evaluation:** An institution has a written plan that is designed to identify internal and external trends and patterns, optimize opportunities, address challenges, reflect on achievements, and maintain quality. The planning enables the institution to improve services to students, ensure the professional growth of its instructors/faculty and staff, and provide for the long-term quality and growth of the institution. *The institution collects and analyzes data on a systematic, consistent basis to monitor the status and effectiveness of the plan and evaluates its full range of services.* [Rev 8/11]

## **DETC Business Standards**

**I.A.1.** All advertisements, website copy or promotional literature with respect to the institution, its personnel, its courses and services, or the occupational opportunities for its graduates are *accurate, clear, and readily accessible to the public* and *clearly indicates that training or education is being offered at a distance.* [Rev 10/11]

**I.A.6.** *Institution's website must make available information on program requirements, course descriptions, tuition and related costs, schedules, course delivery formats, and its catalog, prior to the collection of personal contact information.* [Adopted 8/11 & 10/11]

**I.A.7.** The institution must disclose in *its catalog* and on its website information which accurately describes the institution and its programs. At a minimum, the institution must disclose to prospective students, prior to enrollment, the admission policies, description of its programs, grading policies, *appropriate technology requirements*, statement of all fees and tuition, refund policy, and contact information including hours of operation and holiday schedules. Degree-granting institutions must include items listed in C.9. Policy on Degree Programs. [Rev 6/11 & 12/11]

**I.A.9.** *Institutions routinely provide reliable, current, and accurate information to the public on their website on their performance, including student achievement, as determined by the institution.* [Adopted 8/11]

**I.A.11.** Incentives offered to prospective students to enroll must not exceed a nominal value (\$100). [Rev 6/11]

**I.B.1.** An institution may refer to its accredited status as, “Accredited by the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council” “Accredited by the DETC Accrediting Commission,” “*accredited member of DETC*” or “DETC Accredited.” An institution may use the term “accredited programs,” “accredited courses,” and/or “nationally accredited” when referring to its individual programs, courses, and/or institution. [Rev 10/11]

**I.B.4.** *Courses and programs must be approved by DETC before an institution may advertise them or enroll students.* [Rev 8/11]

**I.B.6.** An institution must state its accredited status in its catalog and on its website. DETC's name, address, and telephone number must be published in the institution's catalog, along with a link to DETC's website ([www.detc.org](http://www.detc.org)). [Rev 10/11]

**I.B.9.** *An institution publicly corrects any misleading or inaccurate information it releases on its accreditation status, contents of reports of the examining committee from accreditation-related visits, and/or actions taken by the Accrediting Commission with respect to the institution.* [Adopted 6/11]

**II.A.1.** *The institution must ensure that each applicant is fully informed of the rights, responsibilities and obligations of both the student and the institution under the enrollment agreement before it is signed by the applicant.* [adopted 6/11]

**II.A.6.** *No enrollment agreement is binding until it has been submitted by the student and accepted by the institution. A copy of the accepted enrollment agreement is made available to the student within 10 days of acceptance and maintained as part of the student's record. [Adopted 6/11]*

**II.B.2.** *The institution must disclose in writing the scope and nature of its courses/programs, and its educational and training objectives, and how the institution protects student privacy. [Rev 6/11]*

**II.B.3.** *The institution must establish qualifications that an applicant must possess to successfully assimilate the educational materials. The institution must also determine with reasonable certainty, prior to acceptance of the applicant, that the applicant has been informed of and has proper qualifications to enroll in the course/program. *The applicant has been informed that he/she has been accepted into the program and that official transcripts or required documentation must be received by the institution within one enrollment period not to exceed 12 semester credits, or the student will not be accepted into the program. [Rev 6/11]**

**II.B.6.** *If an institution provides incentives for making referrals, the incentive must not exceed a nominal value (no greater than \$100 per year). [Adopted 6/11]*

**II.C.3.** *The institution routinely monitors for compliance with standards its student recruitment personnel, including any independent organizations providing prospective applicants names to the institution. [Adopted 6/11]*

**III.A.4.** *If the institution requires or permits students to purchase textbooks or other required materials separately, the institution must make available to the student on its website, catalog, or enrollment agreement "a best effort estimate" of the costs of the textbooks and materials needed for successful completion of course/program. If an institution is participating in Title IV programs, it must disclose accurate course material information, including ISBN and retail prices. The institution's textbook pricing policy for new or used textbooks must be fair to students. [Rev 6/11]*

**III.A.7.** *The institution must disclose to students on the enrollment agreement any additional charges to the student associated with verifying student identity. [Adopted 6/11]*

**III.C.3. Degree-granting institutions:** *The refund policy above must be applied to individual lessons within a course (not courses within a program). When an institution enrolls a student in an entire degree program, it must refund 100% of tuition for courses the student never started when he/she cancels. [Rev 10/11]*

**III.C.4.** *For example, a student who contracts with an institution for three distinct three credit courses, but completes only part of one course, is entitled to a full refund when he/she cancels on the remaining two uncompleted courses. [Rev 10/11]*

### **Code of Ethics for Student Recruitment Personnel**

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. [Rev 6/11]*
5. *State accurately and clearly to prospective students the approvals, accreditation, business, and employer recognition, and course acceptance accorded to my institution. [Adopted 6/11]*
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. [Adopted 6/11]*

7. *Provide prospective applicants only complete and accurate information on the total financial obligation they will be incurring prior to accepting their enrollment application. [Adopted 6/11]*
8. *Provide students prior to enrolling complete and accurate information about financing options for students and answer any questions. [Adopted 6/11]*

\*A recruitment representative is someone who enrolls prospective students, including *but not limited to* telephone marketers, enrollment advisors, and admissions representatives. [Adopted 6/11]

## **Summary of Changes to Policies and Procedures Adopted in 2011**

**C.1. Policy on Substantive Change and Notification:** Major revision.

**C.2. Policy on Change of Mission, Goals, and Objectives:** Added first paragraph. Revised “Action” section and added new requirements for a “Change of Mission/Goals/Objectives Report”; added the last three paragraphs.

**C.3. Policy on Change of Ownership/Management:** Major Revision. Added definitions section, added three paragraphs under “Actions,” added “If a new owner owns or operates other distance education institutions, those institutions must receive accreditation within 2 years of the change of ownership or accreditation may be withdrawn”; added “change of management notification” section, added what determines the effective date of change of ownership for Commission, and “management” requirements; added “Change of Legal Status Notification” section.

**C.4. Policy on Change of Location or New Administrative Site:** Revised, added first paragraph, added paragraphs under “Action,” updated items needed in “Change of Location or New Administrative Site Report,” added timeline when institution must notify Commission of change of location or new administrative site. Also added a new application form (E.15).

**C.5. Policy on Course/Program Approval:** Major revision.

**C.6. Policy on Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs:** Updated with changes to standards.

**C.7. Policy on Approval of New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs or Training Sites:** Revised and added a new application form (E.16).

**C.8. Policy on Bankruptcy of Institutions:** Added “Action” section.

**C.9. Policy on Degree Programs:** Revised, added statement about how Commission applies standards, and added requirement for an advisory council under Standard I; added the institution must have policies and procedures for determining credit hours under “Curriculum”; added “Certificate Programs section”; revised definition of Credit Hour; added under “transfer of credit policies” that institution should include a list of institutions with which it has established articulation agreements with.

- *editorial:* moved copy about faculty interaction and intellectual property rights to “Curriculum”
- Standard II. (Changed “doctoral-level” to “graduate-level”)
- alternatives to high school transcripts requirement – pages 10-11
- additions to admission requirements for non-English speaking applicants – pages 12-13

**C.11. Policy on Change of Marketing Approach:** Revised, added 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph; added “Partnering with non-U.S. sales organization and/or educational institutions for marketing and/or student support services” and added last paragraph on Commission’s right to order a comprehensive review.

**C.13. Policy on Re-Accreditation Review:** Revised, renamed (was Policy on Five-Year Review); added that DETC publishes expiration date in directory and website; added statement on Commission’s right to order a comprehensive review

**C. 14. Policy on Student Achievement and Satisfaction:** Added 3 new paragraphs on page 2 under “Outside independent assessments” stated institutions are expected to provide any data available to them that shows this outcome.

**C.15. Policy on Institutions Participating in Title IV:** added section on reaccreditation

**C.16. Policy on Special Visits:** Revised, added header “Meeting Obligations of Accreditation” and added notifying the Commission of any “substantive change”

**C.17. Policy on International Activities:** Revised, added 1<sup>st</sup> paragraphs; added “The Commission considers any decision to operate overseas to be a “substantive change”; added 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph under “Action,” added statement on Commission’s right to order a comprehensive review

**C.18. Policy on Annual Reports:** Major revision.

**C.20. Policy on Complaints:** Major revision.

**C.22. Policy on Information Provided to the U.S. Department of Education:** Revised, added “any actions described in D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission”; added next to last paragraph and last sentence “DETC will treat a contact or request from the U.S. Department of Education for information concerning an institution as being confidential, upon the specific request of the Department.”

**C.23. Policy on Credit Hour:** New Policy.

**C.24. Policy on Non-U.S. Institutions:** added first paragraph (institutions outside of the United States must petition the Accrediting Commission and request that its application be accepted.

**C.25. Policy on Change of Name:** Major revision.

**C.27. Policy on Teach-Out Plans:** Addition of new Federal requirements. Revised, added “a statement that describes any additional charges/fees and notification to students about the charges/fees”

**C.28. Policy on Petition and Waivers:** New policy, details what needs to be in a petition or waiver to the Commission and when it may be granted.

**C.29. Policy on Contracting for Educational Delivery:** New Policy.

**C.30. Policy on High Schools:** (new Policy)

**D.1. Providing the Chair’s Report:** Revised, added that the Commission will consideration application, SER, Student Surveys and any third-party comments; added to next to the last paragraph on written notification.

**D.1.1. Actions Available to the Commission:** Major revision. Added new Show Cause Action with definition. Added “good cause” and definition. Deleted option to be accredited with stipulations.

**D.2. Appealing Commission's Adverse Decision:** Major revision; Revised, revised 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph under "Appeals Panel" to clarify describe on qualifications of Appeals Panel members; added last sentence on page 1; and new "Timelines to Remedy Noncompliance" to page 2.

**D.3. Notification and Information Sharing:** Revised and changed name (was Notifying Agencies and Public of Commission's Decision: clarified three options and added reporting requirements to the U.S. Secretary of Education, and clarified reporting actions when an institution resigns or voluntarily withdraws, or when accreditation lapses; added new section under "Scope of Public Information," "Sharing Information with Government Entities and Other Accrediting Agencies" "Authorized Disclosure Information" "Public Disclosure of Accreditation Status" and "Correction of Misleading or Inaccurate Information"; added "as part of its Accreditation to page 2.

**D.4. Retention of Commission Files:** Major revision to simplify.

**D.5. Reviewing, Adopting, and Circulating Standards, Policies, and Procedures:** Revised, renamed (was Adopting and Promulgating Standards, Policies, and Procedures); Revised section under "Origin of Standards, Policies and Procedures," added new section under "Systematic Program Review" and "Process and Procedure for Adoption," added numbers 3-7 under "Circulation of Accreditation Standards" section, and added new section under "Publications"

**D.6. Undergoing an On-Site Visit:** Revised, added policy name for C.21. and deleted "Board Members"

**D.8. Conflict of Interest Policy** (New - was Standards of Ethics and Professionalism for Accreditation Participants): All new. Must be read and signed by any Accrediting Commissioner, Evaluator, Subject Specialist, Consultant, Administrative Staff, Appeals Panel Member, or DETC employee annually.

**D.8.1. Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form:** New. Must be read and signed by any Accrediting Commissioner, Evaluator, Subject Specialist, Consultant, Administrative Staff, Appeals Panel Member, before reviewing an institution.

**D.9. Code of Conduct for On-Site Evaluators:** New, must be read and signed for all evaluators before reviewing an institution.

**D.10. Selection and Training of Commissioners:** Revised, clarified make up of Commission; added procedures for selecting and training commissioner and "conflict of interest" requirement; and other revisions.

**D.11. Selection and Training of Evaluators:** revised and renamed (was C.23. Policy on Selection and Training of Evaluators); added the new code of conduct requirement and conflict of Interest Disclosure Form; added new section on Conflict of Interest Policy; added "Each on-site committee will have an academic and administrative personnel represented" on page 1 and listed new guide (B.7.) on page 4.

**D.12. Selection and Training of the Appeals Panel Members:** New, procedures for selecting and training DETC Appeals Panel Members

**D.13. Third-Party Comments:** New, procedures for requesting, reviewing and acting on Third-Party Comments.

**E.1. Fees:** updated page 3 to reflect new applications.

**E.2. Application for Accreditation:** Revised, added "avocational" to selection of courses and programs offered; added "It also acknowledges that accreditation information may be shared with other accrediting agencies and government entities" to page 4.

**E.6. Annual Report:** Revised, added more requirements under Section I.; added “reported significant growth in the number of new enrollments” and “the programs receiving the largest percentage of growth” in Certified area; revised numbers 2, 3, and 6, under Section III; and added policy references under section VII.

**E.7. Annual Report with Title IV:** Revised (same as above), and added statement on who is primary accreditor under section VI. And request for ECAR.

**E.14. Application for Change of Ownership/Management:** New, must be submitted at least 30 days before a change of ownership or management.

**E.15. Application for Change of Location or New Administrative Site:** New form to accompany C.4. Policy on Change of Location or New Administrative Site

**E.16. Application for New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs or Training Sites:** New form to accompany C.7. Policy on Approval of New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs or Training Sites.

**E.17. Glossary:** Renumbered, Revised, added definitions for: Academic; Administrator; Certificate Program; Conflict of Interest; Correspondence Education; Credit Hours; Diploma; Distance Education; Electronic Signature; GED; Good Cause; IELTS; Intellectual Property Rights; Show Cause; and Vocational.

12/13/11