

## DETC Business Standards (Proposed changes in RED) Approved for public comment on 6/3/11

Business Standards are a part of the Accrediting Commission’s overall standards for accredited institutions. The policies, procedures, practices, and activities of an accredited institution must be in compliance with these Standards. In reviewing an accredited institution, the Examining Committee members will determine adherence to the Business Standards.

The Business Standards prescribe the *minimum* policies accredited institutions must observe in all phases of institutional operations.

No institution, whether an initial applicant for accreditation or an applicant for re-accreditation, can receive or retain accreditation if it is not properly licensed, authorized or approved by the applicable state educational institution authority. All institutions, including institutions seeking initial accreditation, must also conform to all of the provisions of applicable laws and regulations, and these governmental regulations take precedence if there is a variance with the Business Standards when they are more favorable to students.

The Accrediting Commission will not accredit a distance education institution with a franchise, distributorship, or similar sales arrangement.

### I. Institution and Course Promotion

#### A. Advertising and Promotion (Standard VIII.A.)

1. All advertisements, web site copy or promotional literature with respect to the institution, its personnel, its courses and services, or the occupational opportunities for its graduates are completely truthful and indicate training or education is being offered at a distance.
2. The institution’s name and street address must appear in catalogs, enrollment agreements, published promotional literature, web sites, and official DETC listings (P.O. Box numbers are not considered physical addresses). At a minimum, all advertisements must include the city and state of the institution and/or the institution’s web site URL or destination.
3. The word “guarantee” is not used in advertisements. The word “free” is not used to describe any item, service, or materials regularly included as part of the institution’s curricula offerings (see III.A).
4. Testimonials and endorsements are truthful and current (less than 4 years old, except for those historical in nature). Signed student consent forms are kept on file.
5. Advertisements do not imply that employment is being offered and are placed in the appropriate place in media, e.g., under sections identified for education, training, or instruction.
6. **Institutions must make available information on program requirements, course descriptions, tuition and related costs, schedules, and course delivery formats prior to the collection of personal contact information.**

6. The institution must disclose in its catalog and on its web site 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, 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.
7. Institution discloses on its web site, its enrollment forms, and in its catalog that the acceptance for transfer of its academic credits is determined by the receiving institution.
- 8. Institutions routinely provide reliable, current and accurate information to the public on their web site on their performance, including student achievement, as determined by the institution.**
9. Institutions may not provide the names of other institutions as triggers for their own sponsored links on Internet search engines.
10. Incentives offered to prospective students to enroll must not exceed a nominal value.

**I. B. Institution and Course Recognition (Standard VIII.A.)**

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,” 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.
2. The word “accredited” may not be used in conjunction with certification programs.
3. The institution may use the official accreditation seal and statement of accreditation in its advertisements, promotional literature, letterheads, and web site.
- 4. Courses and programs must be approved by DETC before an institution may advertise or enroll students.**
5. An institution may use the term “College” or “University” in its name only if it offers academic degree programs.
6. A degree-granting institution must state its accredited status in its catalog and on its web site. DETC’s name, address, and telephone number must be published in the institution’s catalog, along with a link to DETC’s web site ([www.detc.org](http://www.detc.org)).
7. The institution may only refer to DETC’s recognition by the U.S. Department of Education as, “The Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council is listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency.”

8. The institution may only refer to DETC’s recognition by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation as, “The Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council is a recognized member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.”

## **II. Student Enrollment**

### **A. Enrollment Agreements (Contracts) (Standard VII.B.)**

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 June 2011]
2. The enrollment agreement must be written in the same language (English, Spanish, French) as the language of the promotional presentation.
3. The institution provides the student with ready access to and a copy of the institution’s tuition refund policy. It also determines with reasonable certainty that the student has been informed of the policy prior to enrolling.
4. The terms of the refund policy must be clearly disclosed in the institution’s enrollment agreement, catalog, and web site.
5. If a termination date is used on contracts, the date is, at a minimum, one and one half the projected time to complete the course(s) or the projected completion time plus 12 months, whichever is less.
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 June 2011]

### **II. B. Admission Practices and Referrals (Standards VII.A. & B.)**

1. The institution must not discriminate in its admissions because of race, sex, color, creed, age, or national origin in admitting students.
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.
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. [adopted June 2011]
4. If an institution enrolls an applicant under the compulsory school age, it must obtain permission from the appropriate, responsible parties that pursuit of the course/program will not be

detrimental to any compulsory schooling.

5. If the institution enrolls a person *not* meeting established qualifications for admission, a record must be kept showing the reasons for acceptance of that person.
6. If an institution provides incentives for making referrals, the incentive must not exceed a nominal value (no greater than \$100 per year). [adopted June 2011]

## II. C. **Control and Monitoring of Student Recruitment Personnel\* (Standard VIII.B.)**

*\*Any personnel, including employees or contractors, who enroll prospective students (e.g., telemarketers, enrollment advisors, etc.)*

1. The institution has full responsibility for the actions, statements and conduct of its student recruitment personnel, including any required licensures or registrations. The institution maintains appropriate and current records on its student recruitment personnel.
2. The institution adequately trains its student recruitment personnel (including providing them with a sales manual or materials covering applicable procedures, policies and presentations) and provides them with accurate information concerning employment, remuneration, and a signed written agreement. Signed copies of the DETC Code of Ethics for recruitment personnel are kept on file.
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 June 2011]
4. Student recruitment personnel (including telemarketing staff):
  - a. must conform to applicable federal and state laws, including any industry guides issued by the FTC;
  - b. may not use any title that indicates special qualifications for career guidance, counseling, or registration; and
  - c. may not place advertisements without the appropriate, written authorization from the institution.

## III. **Tuition, Cancellations, Refunds, and Collections**

### A. **Tuition Policies (Standard X.A.)**

1. Institutions must use **Total Course Price** in preparing enrollment agreements, calculating refund amounts and collecting student accounts. **Total course price** includes charges for tuition, registration, educational services and instruction. Total Course Price also includes earned financial charges, and any fees that are charged to all students for required services, such as proctoring, technology access, and library services. Costs expended for normal shipping and handling are not subject to refund (after the expiration of the 5 calendar day cooling-off period).

2. The costs expended for optional or special services, such as expedited shipment of materials, experiential portfolio assessment, or other optional services such as dissertation binding, must be disclosed effectively to prospective students and are not subject to refund (after the expiration of the 5 calendar day cooling-off period).
3. High Schools and degree-granting institutions employing an admissions review process may charge a onetime non-refundable fee not to exceed \$75.
4. If the institution requires or permits students to purchase textbooks or other materials required 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. [adopted June 2011]
5. The total course price for any program must be the same for all persons, with the exception of discounts for well-defined groups.
6. Any variation in Total Course Price must be *bona fide*. This applies to scholarships, limited time institution aid grants, discount offers, special prices, or announcements of price increases, all of which must occur during a specified period and must state a specific date of execution or termination. The Total Course Price may be varied, and special discounts or payment plans be offered, as long as the Total Course Price remains the same for all enrollees during a specific period of time.
7. The institution must disclose to students on the enrollment agreement any additional charges to the student associated with verifying student identity.

### **III. B. Cancellations (Standard X.C.)**

1. A student’s notification of cancellation may be conveyed to the institution in any manner.
2. Students who elect to cancel within 5 calendar days of enrolling must receive a refund of all money paid, regardless if any lessons have been submitted. The 5 calendar days begins when the student signs the enrollment form.
3. Upon cancellation, a student whose tuition is paid in full is entitled to receive all materials, including kits and equipment.
4. In case of a student illness or accident, death in family, and other circumstances beyond the control of the student, the institution should give special consideration to the student’s request for cancellation beyond the minimum DETC refund policy.
5. Correspondence regarding cancellation between the student and the institution, banks, collection agencies, lawyers, or any third party must clearly acknowledge the existence of the cancellation policy of the institution.

6. If promissory notes or enrollment agreements are sold to third parties, the institution ensures that it and any third parties comply with DETC cancellation policies.
7. If an institution believes that any part of the DETC minimum cancellation policy should be waived, and/or is inappropriate to the institution's particular operations, it must seek and obtain a waiver from the Accrediting Commission and an approval for the use of an alternate proposed cancellation policy. Institutions, in requesting a waiver of the cancellation policy, as described above, and approval of an alternate policy, must submit a request in writing to the Accrediting Commission, along with a copy of the proposed alternate policy and an analysis of how enrolling students will be afforded fair protection for all monies paid under the proposed policy.

### III. C. Tuition Refund Policies (Standard X.C.)

1. Any money due the student must be refunded within 30 days of a cancellation request, regardless if materials have been returned.
2. To offset its administrative costs, the institution may designate a percentage of the course/program tuition as a non-refundable fee (often termed "registration fee") that it may retain if the student cancels after 5 calendar days. This fee may be either \$75 or 20% of the tuition charge, not to exceed \$200.

**Degree-granting institutions:** A student withdrawing from a degree program or dropping a course may only be assessed a one-time "registration fee" of either \$75 or 20% of the tuition charge per course (not to exceed \$200 per degree program).

3. **Minimum Refund Policy:** (The term "course" means each course within a degree program, e.g., English 101 or an entire vocational program, e.g., Medical Billing.) After the 5 day cooling off period, where the student cancels after completing at least one lesson assignment but less than 50 percent of course assignments, the institution may retain the non-refundable fee (registration fee) plus a percentage of tuition which shall not exceed the following:
  - a. Up to and including 10 percent of the course, 10 percent of the refundable tuition (tuition charges remaining after subtracting the non-refundable fee already retained).
  - b. Between 10 percent and 25 percent of the course, 25 percent of the refundable tuition.
  - c. Between 25 percent and 50 percent of the course, 50 percent of the refundable tuition.
  - d. After the student completes more than half the course, the institution shall be entitled to retain the entire total course tuition.

*The amount of the course completed shall be the ratio of completed required lesson assignments received by the institution for evaluation to the total lesson assignments required to complete the course.*

**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.

4. **Optional Refund Policy for Academic Credit-Bearing Courses using Time-Based Terms:** Institutions offering academic degree courses and programs, which have a published duration stating specific dates for student starting and completing, have the option of using the refund table below. Courses cannot exceed 16 weeks in duration. The time-based refund policy also applies to certificate courses that the institution accepts for academic credit into its degree program(s).

The table below sets out the percentage of tuition that will be refunded to students who complete only part of a course, normally defined as an academic learning unit ranging from one to four semester credit hours, as defined in DETC C.9. Policy on Degree Programs. If the student contracts for a program of study, defined as a learning unit that includes two or more courses, each course must be treated separately for the purposes of calculating any refund to the student. 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 on the remaining two **uncompleted courses**.

Published Length of Course	*Refundable Tuition Due Student AFTER-	Published Length of Course	*Refundable Tuition Due Student AFTER-
1-6 weeks	1 <sup>st</sup> week = 70% 2 <sup>nd</sup> week = 40% 3 <sup>rd</sup> week = 20% 4 <sup>th</sup> week = 0%	11-16 weeks	1 <sup>st</sup> week = 80% 2 <sup>nd</sup> week = 70% 3 <sup>rd</sup> week = 60% 4 <sup>th</sup> week = 50% 5 <sup>th</sup> week = 40% 6 <sup>th</sup> week = 30% 7 <sup>th</sup> week = 20% 8 <sup>th</sup> week = 10% 9 <sup>th</sup> week = 0%
7-10 weeks	1 <sup>st</sup> week = 80% 2 <sup>nd</sup> week = 60% 3 <sup>rd</sup> week = 40% 4 <sup>th</sup> week = 20% 5 <sup>th</sup> week = 0%		

**\*Refundable tuition is the total course tuition minus the registration fee.**

5. **Refund Policy for Resident Courses/Programs:** For a course/program that includes mandatory resident training, the tuition price for the distance study portion and the tuition price for the resident portion must be separately stated on the enrollment agreement. The total of the two is the Total Course Price.

The distance study portion of the combination course/program must use the refund policy stated in III.C.3. or 4 above. If the mandatory resident portion of the course/program is more than 6 weeks, the institution may use the time-based refund policy in III.C.4. above. If the resident portion is less than 6 weeks, the institution may use the following policy:

After the student attends the first resident class session, if the student requests cancellation, the institution shall be entitled to retain a tuition charge which shall not exceed the following:

- up to and including completion of the first 10 percent of the resident training, 10 percent of the tuition;
- after completing more than 10 percent of resident training and up to and including completion of 25 percent of the resident training, 25 percent of the tuition.
- After completing more than 25 percent of the resident training and up to and including

completion of 50 percent of the resident training, 50 percent of the tuition.

- If the student completes more than half of the resident training, the full tuition.

*The amount of resident training completed shall be the number of days the students attends resident training as compared to the total days of the resident training program.*

Courses with optional resident training, seminars, and other training sessions are subject to the refund policy above.

### **III. D. Collections (Standard X.B.)**

Collection procedures used by the institution or third parties must reflect ethical business practices.

**Code of Ethics  
for Student Recruitment Personnel  
of  
Accredited Distance Education Institutions**

As a student recruitment representative\* of an accredited distance education institution, I recognize that I have certain responsibilities toward students, the public, and my institution. To fulfill these responsibilities, I pledge adherence to this Code of Ethics.

I will observe fully the standards, rules, policies, and guidelines established by my institution, the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council, the State Education Agency, and other legally authorized agencies.

\* \* \*

I will adhere to high ethical standards in the conduct of my work, and to the best of my ability, will:

1. Observe fully the rights of all applicants and commit no action that would be detrimental to any applicant's opportunity to enroll because of race, sex, color, creed, or national origin.
2. Never knowingly make any false or misleading representation to any applicant nor use any coercive practices in presenting information.
3. Enroll applicants only in the course or courses in which they have expressed their interest, provided they meet the qualifications and standards established by my institution for enrollment.
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. [adopted June 2011]
5. State accurately and clearly to prospective students the approvals, accreditation, business and employer recognition, and course acceptance accorded to my institution.
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 June 2011]
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 June 2011]
8. Provide students prior to enrolling complete and accurate information about financing options for students and answer any questions. [adopted June 2011]
9. Never use tuition assistance available from a governmental agency or other source as the primary inducement for enrollment.
10. Refrain at all times from making any statement or inference that might falsely impugn the integrity or value of any other institution, method of training, or profession.

11. Discharge faithfully, and to the best of my ability, all of the duties and obligations and procedures established by my institution for my position and know all of my obligations and obligations as an institutional representative.
12. Reflect at all times the highest credit upon myself, my institution, and the field of distance education and always strive to enhance the reputation of my profession through my conduct as an institutional representative.

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

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