



EUROPEAN AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION & ACCREDITATION

Document 1.1:
INITIAL ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The following steps are provided to guide an institution through the initial accreditation application process. Each of the steps must be followed in order for the institution to be eligible for consideration of accreditation by the Accrediting Commission. While there is no fixed, definitive timeframe for completing the entire accreditation review process, 6-12 months is a reasonable estimate for an institution committed to a serious investment of the necessary effort and resources.

Step 1 - Initial Inquiry:

Preliminary Information: An institution requests information regarding the accreditation process through the EAHEA website at www.eahea.org and/or by contacting EAHEA directly.

Inquiry Questionnaire: An institution submits a completed Inquiry Questionnaire and processing fee to obtain a preliminary determination as to whether the institution is eligible for accreditation. Refer to "*Document 1 – The Accreditation Process*" for a listing of eligibility requirements for EAHEA accreditation, including the requirement that an institution has been under the same ownership and/or control for at least one year immediately prior to application.

Note: An institution will use the Members Management System (MMS) to complete and submit the "*Document 1.3 - Inquiry Questionnaire*" and subsequent documents electronically to EAHEA through a password protected log-in on the EAHEA website. Following a review of the questionnaire, notification of acceptance or rejection is forwarded to the institution. If accepted, the institution is notified to proceed to the next step with the completion of "*Document 4 - Application for Accreditation*" via Members Management System (MMS).

Note: An Inquiry Questionnaire expires if: (1) the Inquiry Questionnaire is not officially accepted by EAHEA within 30 days of receipt of the questionnaire and/or (2) a completed Application for Accreditation is not submitted to EAHEA within three (3) months of the acceptance date of the Inquiry Questionnaire.

Step 2 - Application for Accreditation:

An institution completes and submits "*Document 4 - Application for Accreditation*" through MMS. The application must include the required supporting documentation for the main campus and all branches and auxiliary classrooms, as applicable. An application processing fee is submitted electronically through MMS for the main campus, each branch campus, and each auxiliary classroom included in the application. The application fees are outlined in "*Document 10 - Fee Schedule*". An application is reviewed, with follow-up evaluation and

request for additional information, clarification, and/or resolution, as appropriate. Upon review, an acceptance/rejection letter is forwarded to the institution. However, if an initial applicant institution adds or revised programs, relocates, or changes its name before the official Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) due date, an amended Application for Accreditation must be provided. Such changes may require additional fees or delay scheduling of the visit and final action by the Accrediting Commission.

Note: An application expires 6 months following the date of receipt at EAHEA unless: (1) the application is accepted and (2) the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER), any Branch Institutional Self-Evaluation Report(s), request for the on-site visit(s), and on-site visit fees are received within that timeframe. This 6-month expiration period may be extended one cycle (two months), based on the submission of a written request with compelling reasons for the extension which, if approved, will be subject to the terms and conditions specified relative to fees, scheduling, and updated documentation. Institutions granted extensions must submit the following within the extended time frame: (1) ISER, (2) Request for an Virtual/On-Site Evaluation Team Visit, and (3) visit fees.

A rejection of an application is not subject to appeal, but may be reviewed for reconsideration as determined by the Commission.

Step 3 - Institutional Self-Evaluation Report:

Following acceptance of an application, EAHEA provides the institution a projected schedule for submission of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) for the main campus and, if applicable, the Branch Institutional Self-Evaluation Report(s) (BISERs). The institution is directed to the appropriate version of the ISER (*Document 3.1, 3.2, or 3.3*) and any templates applicable to the institution. These documents may be viewed/downloaded at the EAHEA website, and must be completed and submitted electronically through MMS.

The institution is advised that, upon submission of the ISER, no substantive changes in the institution's operations will be processed or further considered for EAHEA approval until after the Accrediting Commission has met, reviewed, and taken final action upon the application for initial accreditation. Substantive changes include, but are not limited to, new programs, major program/course modifications, additional sites, and relocations out of the general market area. Since the ISER presents a comprehensive picture at a given point in time, the Commission wishes to ensure that the accreditation process is accurately focused on a stable representation of the institution's operations.

Step 4 - Virtual/On-Site Readiness Meeting/Visit:

Following acceptance of an application for initial accreditation, an institution is scheduled for a Virtual/On-Site Readiness Meeting/Visit unless the institution submits written notification of its decision not to have the Virtual/On-Site Readiness Meeting/Visit. At least one review cycle prior to the full virtual/on-site team evaluation, the one-day Virtual/On-Site Readiness Meeting/Visit is conducted by an experienced EAHEA representative to assist an institution in its preparation for the subsequent virtual/on-site team evaluation.

Prerequisites for the Virtual/On-Site Readiness Meeting are: (1) completion of the Application of Accreditation and (2) completion of a draft ISER. To schedule the Virtual/On-Site Readiness Meeting/Visit, an institution must submit "*Document 8 – Request for Virtual/On-Site Evaluation Team Visit*" and the Virtual/On-Site Readiness Meeting/Visit fee. Upon completion of the Virtual/On-Site Readiness Meeting/Visit, the institution will assess whether it should proceed as scheduled with the full virtual/on-site team visit or delay the team visit to allow additional time for the institution to more fully address the issues in the ISER relative to compliance with the standards.

Step 5 - Virtual/On-Site Evaluation Team Visit:

Request for Virtual/On-Site Visit: Concurrent with the submission of the final ISER/BISER(s), the institution submits a completed "*Document 8 – Request for Virtual/On-Site Evaluation Team Visits*" and an electronic check for the visit fee, based upon the schedule for the projected review cycle in which the institution is assigned. The virtual/on-site evaluation visit fees are outlined in "*Document 10 – Fee Schedule*". Note that the initial accreditation visit will not be conducted to an institution that fails to timely submit the required virtual/on-site evaluation visit fee.

Virtual/On-Site Evaluation Team Visit: After the ISER/BISER materials are received, the assigned Commission Representative contacts the institution to set the date for the virtual/on-site visit and forwards specific information regarding the visit team and team members when the final arrangements have been made. The virtual/on-site evaluation team visit(s) is scheduled and conducted to verify the information reported in the ISER and determine whether the institution meets EAHEA Standards.

The virtual/on-site evaluation team visits and conducts a review of the institution based on the EAHEA Standards for Accreditation. The institution's self-analysis (ISER/BISERs) provides the framework for the team

to evaluate operational activities/results in the context of EAHEA's standards, policies, and procedures. At the end of the virtual/on-site visit, the team presents a brief oral exit briefing.

Note that any programs without enrollees at the time of the EAHEA virtual/on-site visit will neither be evaluated in the team report nor subsequently considered by the EAHEA Commission in its review of the institution for initial accreditation. Except for financial statements, which are reviewed separately by EAHEA, items presented with the application must be duplicated and made available to the virtual/on-site evaluation team in accordance with the Preparation Checklist for EAHEA Virtual/On-Site Evaluation Visits that is provided to the institution prior to the virtual/on-site visit.

Step 6 - Virtual/On-Site Evaluation Team Report and Institutional Response:

Team Report: Within approximately 30 calendar days of the virtual/on-site visit, a written follow-up Team Report(s) is sent to the institution through MMS for its review and response.

Response to Team Report: Within 15 calendar days of receipt of the Team Report(s), an institution submits its response(s) to the Team Report(s) through MMS. This response allows for the institution to provide new and/or clarifying information regarding the findings reflected in the Team Report. The failure to submit a timely response to the Team Report is considered by EAHEA to be a self-executed withdrawal of the institution's application for accreditation.

Step 7 - Accrediting Commission Deliberation and Action:

Commission Decision: The Accrediting Commission reviews and makes a decision to grant, deny, or defer initial accreditation. Information that is available to the Commission for its deliberation and action includes the Application for Accreditation, the ISER/BISER(s), the Virtual/On-Site Evaluation Team Report(s), the institution's response(s) to the team report(s), financial statements, and any other information that might have a bearing on accreditation.

Notice of Commission Decision: A notification of the Accrediting Commission's decision is sent to the institution within 30 calendar days following the conclusion of the Commission meeting.