



EUROPEAN AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION & ACCREDITATION

Document 1:  
**ACCREDITATION PROCESS**

"The essential purpose of the accreditation process is to provide a professional judgment as to the quality of the educational institution or program(s) offered and to encourage continual improvement thereof."

Accreditation is the process by which the European Agency for Higher Education & Accreditation (EAHEA) grants public recognition to an educational institution which has voluntarily submitted to an evaluative comparison with established qualifications and standards and has demonstrated that it is in compliance with the Standards for Accreditation, both upon initial application and periodically thereafter. EAHEA's function is focused upon educational quality, the continuous assessment and improvement of educational practices, and assistance to institutions in the improvement of these practices within their programs. Through its support of an independent Accrediting Commission, the EAHEA membership promulgates and sustains the Standards for Accreditation, along with policies and procedures that measure and inspire educational quality.

The four major components of this ongoing process are as follows: (1) the development and implementation of institutional and program goals and objectives that focus upon a continuing education mission; (2) a comprehensive, institutional self-evaluation review and report by the institution; (3) a virtual/on-site professional peer review to evaluate both the adequacy and accuracy of the self-evaluation and the institution's compliance with EAHEA standards; and (4) an independent review and decision by the Accrediting Commission as an assessment of the institution's commitment to and compliance with EAHEA standards, policies and procedures.

Integrity is a central, indispensable, and defining characteristic of a quality institution demonstrated by the operation of the institution and its programs in accordance with "*Document 2.1 - Principles of Professional Ethics for EAHEA Institutions*". In the accreditation process, an institution must provide the Commission with accurate, complete, and pertinent information, including reports of other accrediting, licensing, and auditing agencies. An institution's failure to report honestly by providing false or misleading information, including misrepresentation by omission, will constitute a breach of integrity and seriously jeopardize the institution's accreditation status, with the risk of an adverse action by the Commission.

### **1. Definition and Scope:**

EAHEA accredits all educational and training programs and institutions, including those institutions that are authorized to award occupational degrees.

EAHEA provides institutional accreditation for organizations whose primary function is for educational purposes. EAHEA-accredited institutions are located throughout the European Area and abroad. Organizations typically eligible for accreditation include:

- Traditional universities and open universities
- Educational institutes and vocational institutions
- Distance/lifelong learning centers and online courses
- Private career colleges and schools
- Intensive Language Programs (ILPs)
- Corporate training departments
- Continuing education departments/divisions
- Trade and professional associations
- Social service, volunteer, and personal development organizations

EAHEA also accredits organizational entities, within larger institutions, offering continuing education as clearly identified objectives, including: (1) corporate training divisions, (2) continuing education departments/divisions of colleges and/or universities, and (3) Intensive Language Programs owned and operated by colleges or universities. These organizational entities may be eligible for accreditation, provided they are discrete units with distinct management, budgets, and clear responsibility for the promotion and delivery of the education offered, including but not limited to enrollment, curriculum, faculty, student outcomes, and refunds, as applicable.

EAHEA accreditation may include educational institutions that offer programs at locations other than the main headquarters under specific conditions and controls.

Like other educational accrediting agencies, EAHEA does not grant academic credit or any other unit of educational measurement. Academic credit can be granted only by educational institutions licensed or chartered to do so by federal or state governments. Additionally, the transferability of academic credit between institutions is at the sole discretion of those institutions directly involved.

## **2. Eligibility:**

To be eligible for accreditation by EAHEA, an institution must meet the following requirements:

1. It is an formal or distance learning establishment that offers certificates, diplomas, or degrees all level.
2. It has an identified body of individuals actively involved in a prescribed learning format and setting. Programs offered must provide a clearly interactive component of educational methodology appropriate to the subject matter and expected training outcomes.
3. It can demonstrate continuous, on-going and successful operation of the institution in the delivery of education and/or training programs for at least one (1) consecutive year immediately prior to application. At minimum, one graduating class must have completed their training.
4. It has a continuous operation. The term "continuous operation" means that the principal educational and training activities of an institution, for which accreditation or reaccreditation is sought, has proceeded as scheduled without interruption.
5. Exceptions may be recognized after the fact when the interruption is caused by forces of nature, civil disorder or abrupt and unforeseeable change in law or regulation affecting the institution.
6. An institution may apply for an exception before the fact upon application to the Accrediting Commission and a showing of good cause for the exception. Applications must be submitted in a timely manner, considering the circumstances, in order to permit proper consideration of the application.
7. It has been under the same ownership and/or control for at least one (1) year immediately prior to application. This requirement may be waived by the Accrediting Commission upon provision of acceptable documentation showing the applicant institution is owned or controlled by an educational organization with a reputable history of stable operations and by individual(s) with extensive credentials that demonstrate competent administration of an accredited institution.
8. It agrees upon application and accreditation to abide by the EAHEA Bylaws, Principles of Ethics, EAHEA Standards for Accreditation and EAHEA Standards for Accreditation Quality, policies and procedures and to support the goals and integrity of the accreditation process.
9. It has demonstrated a record of responsible financial management (minimum 1 year) with resources sufficient to maintain quality training and educational services and to complete the instruction of all enrolled participants.

### **3. Organization of EAHEA:**

The membership of EAHEA consists solely of those organizations which have been accredited by the Accrediting Commission of EAHEA. The membership elects the institutional non-public members and may advise on the

appointment of public members to the Accrediting Commission; approves the eligibility requirements and Standards for Accreditation; serves as peer review evaluators for virtual/on-site team evaluations; and is solicited for commentary on the bylaws and major policy and procedural issues.

The Accrediting Commission consists of no fewer than three (3) nor more than five (5) members. The Accrediting Commission manages the administrative and fiscal affairs of EAHEA and serves as the judicial body with final authority to interpret and apply the Standards for Accreditation in determining whether or not an applicant meets the published criteria for accreditation. The Commission decides, based upon the eligibility criteria, whether it is competent to apply the EAHEA Standards to specific educational programs. The Commission is responsible for submitting proposed changes in the eligibility requirements and the Standards for Accreditation, to the membership for review and approval. The Commission may adopt such policies and procedures as it deems necessary with regard to the accreditation process.

#### **4. General Policies:**

1. Accreditation is a voluntary, self-regulatory process, conducted on the basis of published standards, policies and procedures, and judged by an independent Commission of knowledgeable peers. The burden of proof for meeting the accreditation standards rests on the institution, which must show that the administrative oversight, curricula, and educational methodologies used produce significant and beneficial outcomes. The institution's educational mission, goals and objectives must be demonstrated through successful outcomes realized by students, and employers, if applicable, as they relate to competency factors. To ensure a comprehensive and informative evaluation by the Commission, all correspondence and documentation must be provided in English to EAHEA.
2. Each institution is evaluated and considered for accreditation on the basis of its established objectives for meeting the education and training requirements of its clients and employers. Each program is evaluated within its own context and not in comparison with other programs.
3. Applications will be accepted by EAHEA in new fields of study upon a determination that sufficient expertise is available to effectively evaluate the program(s).
4. EAHEA approval is required before an EAHEA accredited institution may operate under a new name, new location, or change of location, or offer a new program or a program with a major revision or significant departure in the program's content or delivery. An application for EAHEA approval is also required within ten (10) days following the consummation of a change of ownership and/or control.

5. The Accrediting Commission serves to validate and improve educational quality; it does not function as a standardizing board.
6. Applicant institutions are reviewed and judged as a whole. Minor remediable weaknesses may be offset by major significant strengths; however, a major weakness in any area may prevent accreditation despite strengths in other areas.
7. Accreditation can be granted for a minimum of one year but cannot exceed five years. Following the initial grant of accreditation, institutions will be required to apply for reaccreditation by completing the full process, including an application, ISER/BISER(s), and virtual/on-site reevaluation(s) prior to the expiration date cited in their letter of accreditation from EAHEA. Reaccreditation applicants should refer to "*Document 1.2 – Reaccreditation Process*". EAHEA reserves the right to require an on-site evaluation at any time it determines that circumstances warrant such action.
8. An organization which administers and controls all aspects of its programs from a centralized headquarters is accredited as a single entity. Program delivery sites which are decentralized with some parts under uniform administrative control and other parts under local control are required to be accredited as separate entities.
9. The EAHEA Standards for Accreditation are under constant monitoring and review by the Accrediting Commission and periodically, at intervals no greater than every five years, are submitted to the membership and to other interested parties for review and comment.
10. A publicly available directory of EAHEA accredited institutions is available on EAHEA's website at [www.eahea.org](http://www.eahea.org). The directory includes each institution's name, address, and a listing of the programs/courses offered in addition to the designation of the year in which each institution is scheduled for reevaluation or expiration of its accredited status. Branches and auxiliary classrooms are listed directly following each corporate/main campus-designated listing.
11. EAHEA accredits online courses, short courses, programs offered at the certificate, diploma, and occupational degree levels, as well as courses and programs offered via interactive distance learning.

## ACCREDITATION PROCESS

### 1. Initial Inquiry:

**Preliminary Information:** An institution requests information regarding the accreditation process through the EAHEA website at [www.eahea.org](http://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.

### 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.

### **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.

### **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.

#### **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.

#### **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.

#### **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.