

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ADVANCEMENT

Document 1:

ACCREDITATION PROCESS

EAHEA accreditation is a voluntary, independent and non-governmental peer review of the quality of an educational institution, program or course. It examines whether the institution, program or course meets the EAHEA Standards for Accreditation, and it encourages continual improvement in educational practice.

This document explains what EAHEA accredits, who may apply, the general policies that govern accreditation, and how an application is evaluated and decided. The steps of an initial application are set out in Document 1.1 and the steps of a renewal in Document 1.2. The Standards are set out in Document 2, and the principles of conduct that accredited institutions follow are set out in Document 2.1.

Accreditation by EAHEA conveys only that an institution, program or course meets the educational standards of EAHEA on the date of the decision. It is not a license or an authorization from a government, it does not give degree-awarding powers, and it does not replace national licensing, recognition or regulation. EAHEA is not part of the governmental agencies of any country.

1. WHAT EAHEA ACCREDITS

EAHEA provides four accreditation services. Each service is independent of the others, starts with its own application, and results in its own certificate and validity period.

Service	Scope	Not included
Full Accreditation	Institutional accreditation of universities, colleges, schools, educational institutes, vocational institutions, corporations and similar bodies that use traditional education methods.	The degrees, programs and courses of the institution
Online Accreditation	Institutional accreditation of open universities, distance and lifelong learning centers, online course providers and similar bodies that use online education methods.	The degrees, programs and courses of the institution
Program Accreditation	Programmatic accreditation of a specific degree program (doctoral, master, bachelor, associate or similar) with a curriculum of 300 clock hours or more.	Institutional accreditation and other programs
Course Accreditation	Programmatic accreditation of a specific course (for example an online course, a vocational or avocational course, a language program, a seminar or workshop, corporate in-house training, or test, industry certification or licensing preparation) with a curriculum of less than 300 clock hours.	Institutional accreditation and other courses

Organizations that typically apply include universities and open universities, colleges, schools and educational institutes, vocational institutions, distance and lifelong learning centers, online course providers, language schools, corporate training departments, continuing education units, and trade and professional associations or other organizations whose educational activity is clearly identified. A unit within a larger institution, for example a corporate training division or the continuing education department of a university, may apply if it is

a discrete unit with its own management and budget and with clear responsibility for enrollment, curriculum, faculty, student outcomes and refunds, as applicable.

An organization that administers and controls all aspects of its programs from a central headquarters is accredited as a single entity. A site that is partly under local control applies as a separate entity. The Accreditation Status of a program or a course applies only to that program or course, at the level and in the delivery mode that were evaluated.

EAHEA does not award academic credit to students and does not confer degrees. Academic credit and degrees can be awarded only by institutions that are authorized to do so under the law of their country, and the transfer of credit between institutions is decided by the receiving institution. The credit-related services of EAHEA are separate services with their own rules and are not part of accreditation.

2. ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for accreditation, an institution must be an organization, entity or company properly authorized or incorporated to conduct educational teaching and certification, or to award degrees, certificates or other educational or professional credentials, and it must meet the following requirements.

1. **Delivery.** It offers education in a formal or distance learning format, with an interactive component suited to the subject matter and the expected learning outcomes, and it has an identified body of learners actively taking part.

2. **Operation.** It has operated continuously and successfully for at least one (1) consecutive year immediately before the application, and at least one graduating class has completed its training. “Continuous operation” means that the principal educational activities for which accreditation is sought have proceeded as scheduled without interruption. EAHEA may recognize an exception where an interruption was caused by force majeure, civil disorder or an abrupt and unforeseeable change in law or regulation. An institution may also ask for an exception in advance, giving good cause and applying in good time.

3. **Ownership.** It has been under the same ownership or control for at least one (1) year immediately before the application. EAHEA may waive this requirement on acceptable documentation showing that the institution is owned or controlled by an educational organization with a reputable history of stable operations.

4. **Finances.** It has a record of responsible financial management of at least one (1) year, with resources sufficient to maintain quality education and training and to complete the instruction of all enrolled participants.

5. **Commitment.** It agrees, on application and on accreditation, to abide by the Standards, the Principles of Ethics and the policies and procedures of EAHEA, and to support the goals and integrity of the accreditation process.

A newly established institution that does not yet meet requirement 2, 3 or 4 may apply by submitting a goodwill letter (a sample is provided as Document 11). EAHEA decides at its discretion whether to accept the application on that basis. An institution that wants to check these requirements before it applies can use the Eligibility Checklist (Document 1.3).

3. GENERAL POLICIES

1. **Voluntary and self-regulatory.** Accreditation is voluntary and self-regulatory. It is based on published standards, policies and procedures and is judged by independent peers. The institution must show that its administration, curricula and educational methods produce significant and beneficial outcomes for learners and, where applicable, for employers.

2. **Language.** All correspondence and documentation are provided in English. A document in another language is submitted with an English translation.

3. **Evaluation in context.** Each institution, program or course is evaluated in its own context, against its stated objectives and the Standards, and not in comparison with others. An institution is reviewed as a whole: minor weaknesses that can be remedied may be offset by significant strengths, but a major weakness in any area may prevent accreditation. The Standards are applied in proportion to the size, mission and delivery mode of the institution. EAHEA validates and improves educational quality and does not act as a standardizing body.

4. **Impartiality.** To protect the impartiality of the evaluation, EAHEA does not provide consultancy or preparation services to institutions that apply for accreditation.

5. **Accuracy and integrity.** The institution gives EAHEA accurate, complete and relevant information, including the reports of other accrediting, licensing and auditing bodies. False or misleading information, including misrepresentation by omission, is a breach of integrity and may lead to the refusal of an application or to the suspension or revocation of a status.

6. **New fields of study.** An application in a new field of study is accepted when EAHEA has the expertise to evaluate it properly.

7. **Changes.** An accredited institution informs EAHEA within thirty (30) days of any material change, including a change of name, ownership, legal status, address, programs, delivery mode or fee structure, any

regulatory or court action against it, and the loss or restriction of a license. A Major Change must be notified before it is put into practice or, where a law or an authority makes the change, without delay. For Full Accreditation and Online Accreditation, a Major Change is a change to the name, legal status, ownership or control, legal address or delivery mode of the institution; for Program Accreditation and Course Accreditation, it is a change to the educational content, duration, name or title, level or delivery mode of the program or course. EAHEA reviews the changed institution, program or course again and charges a change fee for the review. Until EAHEA confirms the status, the Accreditation Status does not cover the changed program or course. A Minor Change, such as the correction of a typing error, a change of teaching staff or a change of contact details, needs only a notice to EAHEA.

8. **Validity and renewal.** An Accreditation Status is valid for the period stated on its certificate. It is renewed as set out in Document 1.2, and a status that is not renewed ends.

9. **Fees.** Fees are those published on the Service Fees page of www.eahea.org on the date of the application or of the renewal notice. Fees are not refundable, except an amount that was paid twice or by mistake.

10. **Public directory.** EAHEA lists accredited institutions in its public directory at www.eahea.org, with the status, scope and validity of each accreditation. A suspended or revoked status is published with a short factual reason for five (5) years from the date of the decision.

11. **Name and logo.** An accredited institution uses the EAHEA name, logo, emblem, seal and badges only as Document 10 allows.

12. **Review of the Standards.** EAHEA monitors the Standards and reviews them periodically, at intervals of no more than five (5) years, and publishes the revised Standards at www.eahea.org.

4. EVALUATION AND DECISION

4.1. Evaluation and Grades

EAHEA reviews the application and the attached documents and grades how each standard is addressed, on the following scale.

Grade	Level	Meaning
4	Outstanding	No need for improvement.
3	Standard	May improve.
2	Acceptable	Requires improvement.
1	Insufficient	Not meeting the minimums.

Grade	Level	Meaning
0	Null	Failed to comply with the requirement.

4.2. Interviews and Visits

An accreditation is normally evaluated from the application and its documents. Where the material is not enough for a clear judgment, where a complaint or a change requires it, or where EAHEA otherwise considers that circumstances warrant, EAHEA may require an interview with the representatives of the institution, or an online or on-site visit. The institution cooperates, gives access to the persons, records and systems concerned, and answers in writing the findings that EAHEA sends it within fifteen (15) days.

Online visit: An online visit is made by video conference. It may include online meetings with management, staff and learners; a live review of the institution's online education system (its learning management system) and of the content of its courses and programs; and live attendance at online classes. The institution gives EAHEA the access to the system that these checks need. An online visit forms part of the evaluation.

On-site visit: An on-site visit is made at the premises of the institution or at the place where the education is delivered. It may include the inspection of facilities, records, documents and teaching, and meetings with staff and learners.

Cost of an on-site visit: The cost of an on-site visit is calculated separately for each visit and communicated to the institution in advance. EAHEA invoices it to the institution before the visit, and the invoice must be paid before the visit takes place. EAHEA does not make the visit until the invoice is paid.

4.3. Review and Decision

The Accreditation Commission is established by the Commissions Charter (Document 2.3), which sets out its composition and its working methods. The Secretariat communicates the initial result to the members of the Accreditation Commission, who have thirty (30) days from the announcement to review and amend the conclusions and grades. The President of EAHEA reviews the report to resolve any discrepancy and endorses the final grades. The Secretariat then informs the institution of the conclusion in writing, with suggestions where they apply, and sends the detailed accreditation report.

4.4. Results

The final average of the grades decides the result.

Average grade	Result	What follows
3.0 to 4.0	Accreditation granted	The certificate is issued for its validity period and the institution is listed in the public directory.
2.0 to 2.9	Conditional Accreditation	A temporary status of one year. The institution must pass a new review within 12 months, and if accreditation is not achieved in that review it is denied.
0.0 to 1.9	Denial of Accreditation	The reasons are explained in writing. The Accreditation Fee is not refunded. The institution may apply again after a period of 12 months.

4.5. Reconsideration

The institution may ask the Secretariat in writing, giving reasons, to reconsider a decision within thirty (30) days of the notice of the decision. EAHEA decides on the request in good faith, and its answer ends the internal review.

5. AFTER ACCREDITATION

When accreditation is granted, EAHEA issues the certificate and the report, lists the institution in the public directory, and allows it to use the EAHEA seal and badges that correspond to its status, as Document 10 provides. Full Accreditation and Online Accreditation also give Accredited Membership of EAHEA, which lasts for as long as the accreditation lasts; the Management Board decides whether an Accredited Member is admitted to the General Assembly. Program Accreditation and Course Accreditation do not give membership.

EAHEA may review an accredited institution at any time, on its own decision or after a complaint. If EAHEA finds that the Standards, the Principles of Ethics or the accreditation agreement are not respected, it may, according to the seriousness of the case, send a warning, require a corrective action plan with a deadline, suspend the status or revoke it. Misleading advertising, misuse of the EAHEA name, seal or certificate, a false or forged document and failure to pay fees can lead to immediate suspension or revocation. An institution whose status ends, or is suspended or revoked, stops presenting itself as accredited and removes the EAHEA name, logos, certificates and verification links from its website, social media and documents within seven (7) days.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

The following documents are available at www.eahea.org under Documents and Forms.

- Document 1.1 – Initial Accreditation Process, Document 1.2 – Reaccreditation Process and Document 1.3 – Eligibility Checklist
- Document 2 – Standards for Accreditation, and Document 2.1 – Principles of Ethics
- Document 2.2 – Code of Ethics, and Document 2.3 – Commissions Charter

- Document 4 – Application for Institutional Accreditation, Document 6 – Application for Program Accreditation and Document 7 – Application for Course Accreditation
- Document 5 – Academic / Administrative Personnel Form and Document 8 – Institutional Contact Declaration & Update Form
- Document 9 – Code of Ethics Declaration Form and Document 10 – Logo & Emblem Usage Guidelines
- Document 11 – Goodwill Letter (Sample)