

SCHOOL AND COLLEGE ACCREDITATION ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

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Want to know if your vocational school or college meets accreditation eligibility requirements?
We have prepared a list to help you evaluate your institution's readiness.

MOST COMMON ACCREDITATION ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Included next is a list of the 14 most common requirements for vocational schools and colleges.

1. The Institution Has Been Incorporated in the United States

It is an institution properly registered in the United States conducting business in the private sector.

2. The Institution's Main Purpose is Education.

Its principal activity is education.

3. Is Located within the United States

It is located in the United States or its territories. Some accrediting agencies include within their scope of accreditation overseas institutions. The application process is completed per each campus licensed by the institution.

4. Programs are Career Oriented

Programs of instruction are career-focused and designed to lead to employment or advancement in a career field. As part of the accreditation process, the institution will be required to demonstrate there is a need for their programs of instruction, as well as that the duration, cost, and curriculum are reasonable and appropriate.

5. Is Licensed or Approved to Operate

It is properly licensed, chartered, or approved to provide education beyond the secondary level under the laws and regulations of the state(s) or territories in which it operates. There is a common misunderstanding between the "licensing" and "accreditation" of institutions. Each state has an appointed regulatory agency to oversee all private post-secondary institutions. Licensing by the state is a requirement to operate, accreditation is not. Institutions cannot start the accreditation process unless are properly licensed. Institutions must apply and obtain the approval permit (license) to operate at a state level for each campus, branch, instructional center, or auxiliary classroom.

6. Has Been Operating for at Least Two Years

It must have been legally operating under the same ownership and continuously providing instruction as an institution for at least the prior year (institutions offering degree programs must have been in operation for at least two years).

7. Has Enrollments in the Programs to be Accredited

Enrollment in the program(s) to be included in the grant of accreditation is a requirement that allows the accrediting agency to complete a proper evaluation. Programs without active students will be left outside the scope of accreditation initial approval. Programs with no enrollments at the beginning of the accreditation process are not allowed to enroll until the institutional accreditation process has been completed.

8. Has Graduate Students from the Longest Program

It has at least one graduating class from the longest program(s) offered. Usually, accrediting agencies require at least one graduate from the longest program to have completed all courses at the institution (no transferred credits or hours).

9. Is Financially Stable

The institution will be required to demonstrate it meets the financial stability requirements for the most recently completed fiscal year. Each accrediting agency has specific standards for the evaluation of financial stability. Financial Audit Statements submitted with the accreditation application must be prepared by an independent certified public accountant in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS).

10. Meets Institutional and Program Outcome Benchmarks

Institutions are measured annually based on meeting established retention, placement, and licensure rates. Before accreditation, institutions are evaluated based on their state and board benchmark rates. Once an institution starts the accreditation process, it will also be required to comply with the particular rates for the

chosen accrediting agency. Standard rates are: 60 % for retention, 70% for placement, and 70% for licensing. There are many elements at play when dealing with program benchmarks. As an example, the Florida Board of Nursing considers an acceptable passing rate when the overall rate for first-time takers is no more than 10 percentage points lower than the national average. Schools about to start the accreditation process are encouraged to study in detail the specific requirements on benchmarks, and allowable circumstances if any.

11. Demonstrates Administrative Capabilities to Support the Programs Offered

Accrediting agencies analyze the administrative personnel listed in the institution's catalog and organizational chart to determine the school's support system for daily operations and to dedicate themselves to the accreditation process. Once a school starts the accreditation process, additional personnel will be required to assist the team in charge of documentation and exhibits.

12. Has Not Being Denied Accreditation or Candidacy Status

Many accrediting agencies are no longer accepting institutions that have lost accreditation status, have been denied accreditation, or have lost Federal Financial Aid.

13. Owners and Executive Personnel Do Not Possess Records of Improper Funding Use

Accrediting agencies will contact all current institution regulators such as the state department of education and state boards. Records of improper management at the institution or previous institutions will become a major issue at the time of initial application.

14. Religious Institutions: Are Licensed or Granted an Official Exempt

In some states, institutions offering faith-based education are not required to apply for a state license. Instead, they submit an affidavit and specific documentation such as the catalog in order to receive an exception letter. These institutions are able to pursue accreditation with faith-based specific accrediting agencies and apply for federal financial aid for programs that qualify.

GETTING STARTED WITH YOUR INSTITUTION'S ACCREDITATION

Accreditation may feel like an impossible task beyond your reach. After assisting client schools with accreditation for many years, we have prepared the [Getting Started with Your Institution Accreditation](#) that will help you get organized and steadily move toward your institution's accreditation success.

Visit our dedicated accreditation pages with downloadable eligibility assessments and free reference guides if you are considering starting the accreditation with ACCSC, ABHES, COE, or TRACS.

- [ACCSC Accreditation Resources](#)
- [ABHES Accreditation Resources](#)
- [COE Accreditation Resources](#)
- [TRACS Accreditation Resources](#)
- [ACCSC Consulting Services](#)
- [ABHES Consulting Services](#)
- [COE Consulting Services](#)
- [TRACS Consulting Services](#)

ACCREDITATION REFERENCES

Confirm the exact eligibility requirements and accreditation cycle of your chosen agency. Each accreditor has its specific standards and criteria. Visit the US Department of Education's official site for a list of approved accrediting agencies.

- [US DOE Recognized Institutional Accreditors](#)
- [US DOE Recognized Programmatic Accreditors](#)

Need assistance with your institution's initial accreditation? We are glad to help. Visit our [School Accreditation Page](#) for additional resources and free reference guides. Request a complimentary Consultation. [Bayside Projects Consulting](#)