

Accreditation OVERVIEW

Message from the Accrediting Commission Chair

May 2007

Dear Colleague:

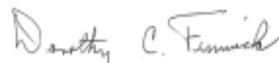
On behalf of the members and staff of the Accrediting Commission, we welcome your interest in the nationally recognized work of the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council.

Since 1955, the Accrediting Commission has established and monitored high standards of educational and administrative excellence in the distance education community.

All of us on the Accrediting Commission take our work seriously. We are anxious to assure all prospective institutional applicants, distance study students, governmental bodies and the public, that our goal is to conduct the finest accrediting program in the world.

After reading this brochure, if you desire to have complete information on how to apply for accreditation, please order the book, *DETC Accreditation Handbook*. Information on how to order the Handbook may be found on DETC's Web site at www.detc.org.

We welcome your questions on our program, and we invite you to write or call the Commission's staff for further information.



Dorothy C. Fenwick
Chair

DETC Accreditation Overview

Each year an estimated 4 million Americans pursue education or training through what is known as distance education. Distance education, which is also known as distance study, e-learning, online education, correspondence study, home study, independent study, and other various terms, has existed in America for more than a century. Yet, few teachers, counselors, students, and prospective students have an accurate picture of distance education. Even fewer people understand the meaning and purpose of accreditation.

Today, an estimated 300 private institutions and more than 4,000 colleges and other institutions offer distance education programs. This booklet is designed to help prospective students, counselors, public agencies, and institutions better understand distance education accreditation and how the accreditation procedures of the DETC Accrediting Commission work.

What is Distance Education?

Distance education is enrollment and study with an educational institution that provides lesson materials prepared in a sequential and logical order for study by a student on his or her own. When each lesson or seg-

ment is completed, the student submits to the institution via mail or electronically the assigned work for correction, grading, comment, and subject matter guidance by qualified instructors and faculty. Corrected assignments are returned to the student. This exchange provides for a personalized student-teacher relationship.

Distance education courses vary greatly in scope, level and length. Some have a few lessons and require only weeks to complete while others have a hundred or more assignments requiring three or four years of conscientious study. Accredited courses of study lead to credentials ranging from certificates of completion and certification of skills to academic degrees.

In recent years, electronic technology has played a significant role in transforming the “traditional” distance education institution into a dynamic, interactive distance learning institution using toll-free telephone lines, computers, the Internet, video devices, iPods, and other technological innovations. The future for distance education promises to be exciting!

A student planning to enroll in an educational institution wants to know something of the quality of that institution. Most institutions do just what their advertising and promotional lit-

erature claim they can do. A few do not.

How can a serious student tell which is which? The United States has rejected the idea of centralized governmental control over educational systems and has instead adopted a system of *voluntary accreditation*.

Well over half a century ago, both educators and the public began to realize that significant differences existed within the same general class of educational institutions. This realization resulted in the growth of accrediting bodies that used the judgment of peers as a measure of educational quality.

During the early years, several of the leading figures in distance education realized that problems existed in the field. After a special Carnegie Corporation study in the 1920's verified their analysis, they decided that it was time to establish standards for ethical institutions to follow.

The Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), then the National Home Study Council, was organized in 1926 as a voluntary association of correspondence institutions to promote "sound educational standards and ethical business practices within the correspondence field." In 1952, the Council decided further improvements should be made in the procedures used to examine and approve distance education institutions. A system of accreditation seemed the best solution.

As the planning progressed, individuals in the U.S. Department of Education, the National Commission on Accrediting, and other accrediting associations, assisted the Council.

The DETC's independent Accrediting Commission was established in 1955. Four years later the Commission was listed by the U.S. Department of Education as a "nationally recognized accrediting agency" under the terms of Public Law. The procedures and standards have been continuously refined and improved.

The official recognition of the Commission by the U.S. Department of Education has been reviewed periodically since 1955 following extensive re-evaluations of its activities and procedures. The Commission was most recently reviewed in 2006.

In 1973, the Commission received the recognition of the National Commission on Accrediting and became the first agency accrediting private institutions—most of them proprietary—to receive such recognition. In 1975, the Accrediting Commission became a charter member of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation, (COPA), which became the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA) in 1994, and in 1997 became the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). This agency is a non-governmental body

which recognizes and coordinates the activities of accrediting agencies throughout the United States.

The procedures and standards have been continuously refined and improved over the past five decades.

In 1994, the National Home Study Council changed its name to the Distance Education and Training Council. Today, the DETC Accrediting Commission is recognized as the accrediting body for both private and non-private distance education institutions and accredits both non-degree and academic degree programs from the Associates through the professional doctoral degree levels.

Who are the Commissioners?

The Accrediting Commission consists of three senior executives and two academics of accredited distance education institutions, and four Commissioners who represent the public. Because of the unique nature of distance education, it is important that some members of the Accrediting Commission have an in-depth knowledge of distance education institutions. On the other hand, because accreditation is a public trust, it is vital that public members pro-

vide the objectivity and impartiality that such a trust demands.

What are the Purposes and Functions of Accreditation?

The word “accreditation” has acquired many shades of meaning over the years. Accreditation is the process whereby a non-governmental association recognizes an institution, college, university, or program of study as having voluntarily met established qualifications or standards as determined through initial and periodic evaluations by a peer group.

In addition, accreditation is certification by a recognized body that an institution has voluntarily undergone a comprehensive study and examination, which has demonstrated that the institution does in fact perform the functions that it claims: that the institution has set educational goals for students who enroll, and furnishes materials and services that enable students to meet these stated goals.

DETC’s accreditation is an institution-wide source of national accreditation that covers all distance education courses offered by an institution. It is unique in American accreditation because it is one based upon a method of instruction rather than educational level or subject matter discipline. It covers all programs, courses, and endeavors of an

(continued on page 6)

Public Members of the Commission



Dorothy C. Fenwick, *Commission Chair*, Executive Director Emeritus, Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation



Jan M. Larson, Managing Partner, (Retired) PricewaterhouseCoopers



Timothy Mott, Associate Provost, Distance Learning, Union Institute & University



David W. Stewart, Director of Program Development, Center for Adult Learning and Educational Credentials (Retired), American Council on Education

Institution Members of the Commission



Adelaide K. Cherry, Academic Advisor, Air Force Institute for Advanced Distribution Learning



David W. Curd, President, College of the Humanities and Sciences
Harrison Middleton University



Brook Ellis, Vice President of Education, Gemological Institute of America



Thomas A. Kube, President,
Sonoran Desert Institute



Gary L. Seevers,
Commission Vice Chair,
Vice President of Academic Affairs, Global University

institution, including degree, non-degree, vocational and avocational programs.

The DETC Accrediting Commission provides distance education institutions with a single source of national recognition.

Historically and currently, accreditation may be said to:

- foster excellence in education through the development of standards for assessing educational effectiveness;
- encourage improvement through continuous self-evaluation and planning; and
- assure the educational community, the general public, and other agencies or organizations that an institution has both clearly defined and appropriate objectives, maintains conditions under which their achievement can be reasonably expected, appears in fact to be accomplishing them, and can be expected to continue to do so.

What are DETC Standards for Accreditation?

The fact that a distance education institution is accredited means that the DETC Accrediting Com-

mission has determined that the institution offers quality instruction and meets the standards established by the Commission. The standards require that an institution:

- have a clearly defined mission statement and institutional objectives;
- state its instructional objectives clearly and offer sufficiently comprehensive, accurate, up-to-date, educationally sound instructional materials and methods to meet these announced objectives;
- provide adequate examination services and attention to individual differences;
- have a qualified faculty;
- enroll only students who can be expected to benefit from the instruction;
- maintain adequate student services;
- have students who express satisfaction with the instruction received;
- be honest in its advertising and promotional materials;
- carefully select, train, and supervise its recruiting personnel;
- show financial resources adequate to carry out all obligations to students;

- use a satisfactory tuition refund policy;
- maintain student records properly;
- demonstrate two consecutive years of sound and ethical operation as a distance study institution.

DETC's *C.9. Policy for Degree Programs* expands on these standards. Furthermore, the accreditation process must be repeated at intervals of not more than five years.

Which Institutions are Eligible for Accreditation?

Application for accreditation from the DETC Accrediting Commission may be made at any time by any private or non-private *bona fide* distance education institution with two consecutive years of sound and ethical operating experience.

The Accrediting Commission is aided in its decisions by the extensive work done before a Commission meeting. The process of accreditation begins when an institution submits an application to the Commission's Washington, D.C. office. Here a determination is made of the institution's eligibility on two points: (1) whether it has been in actual operation for a period of at least two consecutive years immediately prior to accreditation (the two year period begins with the date of the first enrollment); and, (2) whether the applicant is in fact a

"*bona fide* distance education institution," defined by the Accrediting Commission as an educational institution which:

- formally enrolls students and maintains student records;
- retains a qualified faculty to service students;
- transmits to students organized instructional materials;
- provides continuous two-way communication on student work, e.g., evaluating students' examinations, projects or answering queries, with prompt feedback given to students;
- offers courses of instruction which must be studied predominantly at a distance from the institution; and
- properly licensed.

The Accrediting Commission accepts applications from institutions that offer high school, vocational, postsecondary, and academic degree programs up to the professional doctorate degree level.

How Does Accreditation Work?

The accreditation process has eight steps:

- 1. Obtain the *DETC Accreditation Handbook*, Review Application, Complete Course, and Begin Writing SER**

Institution receives the *DETC Accreditation Handbook* and reviews it carefully: The Accrediting Commission's comprehensive publication on accreditation, the *DETC Accreditation Handbook*, is \$30 (U.S.). It may be downloaded from DETC's web site for no charge (www.detc.org, select "Publications" and "Accreditation Handbook"). The Handbook is updated every January.

Review Application: Once the institution has studied the Handbook, the CEO/President should review the "Application for Accreditation" found in Appendix G.1. to make certain he/she understands all that is required in the accreditation process.

Enroll and Complete Course: A key person must enroll in and complete the *DETC Course on Preparing for Accreditation* to qualify as a Compliance Officer. The course is available online or in print for no charge from DETC's web site at www.detc.org, "Member Services" (sign in using the word "guest" for your user name and password) and "Publications." This course should be completed *before* writing the SER. DETC will not accept an application without proof that someone has completed this course.

Begin Writing the SER: The Compliance Officer begins writing the institution's Self-Evaluation Report (SER). The SER provides data

on all areas of an institution's operation, history, course offerings, student services, finances, etc. The self-evaluation includes as wide a gathering and analysis of pertinent data on all aspects of the institution and its work. It should, above all else, be a truly self-analytical document that identifies an institution's particular strengths and challenges. It should reveal the philosophy, organization, specific practices and procedures (documented wherever possible), the success of different operations, and the outcomes of the educational process including the degree to which the institution is accomplishing its stated objectives. Data should not be amassed routinely, but in a constant search for new meanings, new methods and procedures, new hypotheses, and new ideas for improvement. The Self-Evaluation Report really "tells a story" about the institution. What the Accrediting Commission is looking for is a candid self-analysis of the institution.

2. Submit Application and Other Required Information

Institution submits application with application fee: To initiate the accreditation process, the Application for Accreditation, and the \$1,000 accreditation fee (or \$500 reaccréditation fee), must be submitted to the Commission. Initial applicants must submit a draft of their SER no later than 60 days after

submitting their Application. Receiving the Application begins the formal process.

Institution submits students names, catalogs, and copy of state licensure: Along with the fee, no more than 100 mailing labels with student names must be submitted, as well as the institution's catalog and copies of state licensures. If an institution has less than 100 students, it must send mailing labels for all of its students. The Commission uses these labels to survey students.

DETC posts names of applicants for accreditation on its web site and publications: The name of the institution applying for initial accreditation or reaccreditation is published in DETC publications (*DETC News*, *DETC Bulletin*, *Washington Memo*, etc.) and web site (www.detc.org). The public is requested to send any comments they may have to the Accrediting Commission by a given date.

3. Undergo Readiness Assessment (Initial Applicants Only)

For initial applicants, the institution submits 3 copies of the draft of its SER (no later than 60 days from the date of application). Once DETC receives this document, the Director of Accreditation coordinates a review by an evaluator for a Readiness Assessment. The evaluator reviews the SER and writes a report stating if the institution is deemed "ready," to undergo a full on-site

visit. If ready, the institution proceeds to the next step. If it is not deemed "ready," then it must prove that it has corrected the areas of concern before proceeding with the accreditation process.

4. Submit Course Materials, DETC Schedules On-Site Visit and Surveys Students

Institution submits courses materials for review: Course materials are required to be submitted as part of the accreditation process. This includes advertising, an institution catalog, enrollment agreement(s), examinations and examination solutions, and all tools, kits, and equipment provided with the course(s). Subject matter experts, who are also called "subject specialists," are selected to review and report on the institution's course materials. Typically, these reviews take place in the subject specialists' home or office. Each subject specialist submits to the Accrediting Commission a written report on the courses he/she reviewed.

Date of Visit is Set: A mutually convenient on-site examination date is coordinated with the institution. On-site visits are from one to two days, depending upon the size of the institution.

Students Surveyed: The surveys are mailed using the self-adhesive mailing labels with student names, which were submitted with the institution's application. In addi-

tion, the Commission staff also surveys Better Business Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, various consumer protection agencies, accrediting associations, and federal and state regulatory agencies, such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Federal Trade Commission and the U.S. Department of Education. These surveys are used to collect information on the educational services, business ethics, and general reputation of all applicant institutions.

5. Submit SER, Receive Subject Specialist Reports, and Respond to Comments

Institution Submits SER: The Compliance Officer completes and submits the institution's SER. This should be done at least 10 weeks before the on-site visit.

Examining Committee is Selected: The Examining Committee is not limited in size, but usually includes a Chair, an Educational Standards Examiner, a Business Standards Examiner, Subject Specialists for each subject area (who may or may not visit the institution), and an Observer for the Accrediting Commission. An Examining Committee is appointed to visit the institution for the purpose of verifying the information in the Self-Evaluation Report, and to gather additional facts for the Accrediting Commission.

Examiners, who are also called "evaluators," are selected from

among educators, executives, and practitioners in business, technical, and service fields. To become a qualified examiner, one must complete the distance education course entitled "DETC Evaluator Training Program" and receive a certificate of completion. The Commission develops and maintains a record of the qualifications of people who have been trained as examiners.

State Observers are Invited: Representatives from state licensing bodies and from federal agencies are notified of forthcoming visits and are invited to participate as observers in the process. They are encouraged (but not required) to submit written reports to the Chair at the conclusion of the visit.

DETC Sends Subject Specialist Reports and Student Surveys to the Institution: The DETC staff sends the Subject Specialist Reports and Student Surveys to the institution 3-4 weeks prior to the Examining Committee's visit so that institutional representatives can prepare for questions from the visiting committee. If there are any "B" or "C" ratings, the institution must respond in writing as to what has been done to correct the problem.

Examiners Receive and Review SER, Subject Specialist Reports and Student Surveys: A copy of the SER, along with any Subject Specialist Reports and Student Surveys received, are sent to each member of the visiting Exam-

ining Committee prior to the on-site visit to the institution. While on-site visits are required for all institutions seeking accreditation or reaccreditation, they may or may not be required for institutions submitting interim progress reports.

- **Complaint Summary is Prepared:** The Accrediting Commission has a formal procedure for handling complaints lodged against an accredited institution. A summary of any complaints received on an institution that is undergoing reaccreditation is compiled and the summary is presented at the executive breakfast meeting on the day of the on-site visit.

6. Institution Undergoes On-Site Visit and Examiners Write Reports

Institution undergoes the on-site visit: During the visit, the questions asked by the examiners and the methods of inquiry help safeguard impartial judgment. Each examiner develops a comprehensive picture of the institution's operations before the visit by doing a thorough review and study of the SER. Information provided in the report is verified at the time of the visit. The Examiner's Rating Form directs Examining Committee members in their inquiries. Also, the presence of an Accrediting Commission observer helps ensure objectivity, impartiality, uniformity, and adherence to established procedures.

Evaluators test and verify information in the SER: The Committee members work in their area of expertise during the examination. They interview staff and examine files, review records, verify data, and assemble relevant information to aid in preparing their individual reports.

Evaluators write reports and send them to the Chair: Each examiner completes the appropriate sections of the "Examiner's Rating Form for All Institutions" and transfers his or her ratings to the "Summary of the Examiner's Rating Form. The Summary Rating Form and narrative comments are sent to the Committee Chair. The examiners are not limited by the questions on the rating form. They are encouraged to explore any related characteristics and activities that help to determine if the institution meets each Standard.

Observer's and CEO's comments are solicited: Any observers/representatives from state licensing bodies and/or federal agencies are strongly encouraged to send their comments to the Commission and the Chair. Their comments should address any issues concerning the institution's compliance with state or federal regulations or the accrediting process itself. The CEO's comments are solicited immediately following the on-site visit and prior to the receipt of the Chair's Report.

Commission surveys on-site evaluators: After the on-site visit, the Commission surveys the examiners for any comments they may have on the institution's SER, the on-site visit, and the accreditation process. If a state observer went on the on-site visit, the Commission normally sends the observer a copy of the Chair's Report and the institution's response to the Chair's Report.

7. Chair Writes & Submits Report and Institution Responds

Chair writes report and sends it to DETC: Once the Chair receives all of the examiner reports, he/she then prepares a Chair's Report. The purpose of the Report is to present to the Accrediting Commission a thorough, succinct, and accurate statement of the findings of the Examining Committee. It presents a composite view of the findings of Committee members and subject specialists on the policies, conditions, and practices of the institution as measured against the published standards for accredited institutions. The Chair's Report also summarizes the findings and recommendations of the Subject Specialist reports and the institutions comments about them.

DETC sends the Chair's Report to the institution for comment: A copy of the Chair's Report is forwarded, approximately four weeks after the on-site visit, to the

CEO of the applicant institution by the Executive Director for comment and response before the Accrediting Commission takes action. This procedure provides the institution with the opportunity to respond to Committee findings as well as to report on any corrective actions taken subsequent to the visit.

Institution responds to Chair's report: The institution has 14 days from the receipt of the Report to comment on the Report and to submit additional written materials which it desires to place before the Accrediting Commission.

8. Commission Reviews, Takes Action and Announces Decision

Commission reviews surveys, Chair's report and the institution's response to the Chair's report: The Accrediting Commission meets twice a year, in January and in June, to take action on schools' applications for accreditation. At each meeting, the Commission reviews information and documentation on the various applications for initial accreditation or reaccreditation. The Commission looks at the Chair's Report; the school's response to the Chair's Report; student surveys; any complaints from the public; information gathered from Better Business Bureaus, Chambers of Commerce, consumer agencies, accrediting associations, and federal and state regulatory agencies; any

responses to the public notices; school's advertisements and catalog; any communications between the school and the Accrediting Commission; and other relevant documentation from various sources.

Commission makes its decision and informs institution: The Commission can take one of four courses of action:

1. accredit a new applicant institution, or continue an institution's accredited status;
2. accredit, or continue accreditation, with conditions that an institution must agree to meet within a period not to exceed one year. (Note: the Commission will initiate adverse action against an institution if it fails to meet all of the stipulations within the specified time unless the Commission decides the time period should be extended for a good cause.);
3. defer a decision for a period not to exceed one year pending receipt of a Special Report, or submission of additional information and, possibly, a follow-up on-site visit; or
4. deny accreditation to an applicant, or withdraw accreditation from an accredited institution.

After a final decision is made, the Commission will notify the institution within 10 days of its decision. If the Commission votes to deny or with-

draw accreditation, the institution is sent a statement of the reasons for denial and the institution may appeal or request reconsideration of the decision of the Commission. If an institution is denied accreditation or if accreditation is withdrawn, the institution must wait one year from the date of the Commission's decision before making application for accreditation again. All judgments of the Accrediting Commission are final. They are not subject to review or veto by DETC members.

Commission announces decision: After a final decision is made, the Accrediting Commission notifies other appropriate recognized accrediting agencies and state and federal agencies and the public about accreditation status of institutions and any adverse actions taken. Announcements of accreditation, reaccreditation, denial, and/or withdrawal of accreditation are made in DETC publications (*DETC News*, *DETC Bulletin*, *Washington Memo*, etc.) The U.S. Department of Education is notified within 24 hours of the final decision. After the final decision is announced, the Commission purges its files and keeps only the reports and information specified in its file retention policy.

Periodic Reviews

An accredited institution must conform to all educational and business standards, must submit re-

requested reports to the Accrediting Commission, and must be re-examined at least every five years. However, the Commission may call for periodic or special reports from any accredited institution and may call for a re-examination in fewer than five years if there is a change in ownership or management or if there is evidence of serious problems in the institution.

The DETC Accrediting Commission regularly meets in January and June of each year. A time schedule of actions is provided to each applicant institution. As a guideline, institutions desiring accreditation should allow 12 months for completing the application process.

Special Policies

The Accrediting Commission, in carrying out its work, has from time to time developed special policies to cover recurring situations or unique institutions. These policies supplement the formal Commission standards.

Examples of special policies include policies on: Bankruptcy of Institutions; Change of Mission, Objectives, or Marketing Approach; Change of Ownership; Change of Location or Name; Course/Program Approval; Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs; Approval of New Combination Distance Study-Resident Programs; New Training Sites; Degree Programs;

Non-U.S. Institutions; First Professional Degrees; Readiness Assessment, Annual Reports, Title IV, and Electronically Delivered Learning. All policies may be found in the *DETC Accreditation Handbook*.

Acceptance of Distance Education Credits and Degrees

Many DETC member institutions offer academic degree programs. These degree programs are in many areas, such as engineering technology, business, health, law, and theology.

Acceptances of distance education degrees, or of distance study credits from college level courses, are largely determined by the policy of the “receiving organization,” e.g., an employer, a college registrar, etc. DETC accreditation is *not* a guarantee that credit will be granted to any credit-seeking distance study graduate. Accreditation granted by any agency does not mean “credit transferability.” Students seeking acceptance of their distance education work are best advised to learn what the specific policies of acceptance are at the receiving organization or institution.

Recognition

The Accrediting Commission’s recognition by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation

(CHEA) are for postsecondary programs purposes only. Since the U.S. Secretary's authority is statutorily limited to postsecondary institutions in the United States, this federal recognition encompasses only DETC accreditation in this area.

The Benefits of Accreditation

Throughout the past eight decades, accredited distance education institutions have been the leaders in the field of distance study. Some of the major benefits of accreditation:

- Reliance by counselors, employers, educators, governmental officials, and the public on the accredited status of an institution as a reliable index of quality;
- An expression of confidence in the policies and procedures of the institution by its peers—a lasting source of pride to the institution;
- An external source of stimulation to improve services, programs, and staff through periodic evaluations by an outside agency and by self-study;
- Assurance of high standards and educational quality through the adherence to established criteria, policies and standards;
- Recognition of status by certain states under legislation and regulation as well as recognition given by federal, state and local agencies in referring students to accredited institutions;
- Eligibility for the benefits and opportunities given to accredited institutions by federal law. **Only** accredited institutions may participate in the Montgomery G.I. Bill;
- Eligibility for degree-granting institutions to participate in Title IV programs;
- The listing of the institution and its courses in the *Directory of Accredited Institutions*;
- The listing of the institution along with other higher education institutions in the Council for Higher Education Accreditation directory, *Accredited Institutions of Postsecondary Education*, distributed by the American Council on Education;
- The use of the DETC seal and reference to accreditation by the Accrediting Commission;
- Student qualification for tuition reimbursement under several industry and military plans requiring enrollment with accredited institutions. Only accredited institutions may participate in the DANTES' tuition assistance program for military personnel;
- Eligibility for participation in the academic credit evaluation pro-

cedure conducted by the American Council on Education; and

- Expedited acceptance of institution advertising by newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations and other advertising media.

Often-Asked Questions

Q. How long does the accreditation process take?

A. Generally, it can take about 12 months for the entire procedure. A smaller school may be able to prepare for accreditation in as few as 6-9 months. The Accrediting Commission meets in January and June, so prospective applicants are advised to initiate the process at least 12 months before the meeting they wish to have their application considered.

Q. From whom may one seek advice in preparing to undergo an accreditation review?

A. The Accrediting Commission staff in Washington is available for consultation by mail, phone, e-mail, or personal visit regarding any questions about the accrediting process, procedures, or standards.

Q. What other publications are useful to study as an institution prepares for an accreditation review?

A. Besides the *DETC Accreditation Handbook*, an applicant for accreditation must have at least one person complete the *DETC Course on Preparing for Accreditation* (available online) before making application. In addition, one may wish to read the *DETC Business Standards Course* that explains the business standards in detail. The *Course Development Handbook*, and the *Student Services Handbook* are also useful. The online course entitled, *DETC Evaluator Training Program* is also an excellent guide.

Q. As an applicant, may we mention the Accrediting Commission or our applicant status in our literature?

A. No. This would be inappropriate and has the potential to mislead the public about your institution's affiliation with DETC.

Q. Must a distance study institution be located in the United States to qualify?

A. No. Distance study institutions outside of the U.S. may apply for accreditation. The Commission has a special policy for non-U.S. institutions. The DETC Accrediting Commission is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and is for U.S. institutions only. Since the U.S. Secretary's authority is statutorily limited to postsecondary institutions

in the United States, this federal recognition encompasses only DETC accreditation in this area.

Q. Must the school be in operation two years before it may apply for accreditation?

A. The institution must have 24 months of continuous operation as a distance study institution before it may be accredited. However, if an institution's parent company is currently accredited by another recognized accrediting agency, then the institution must only have 12 months of continuous operation as a distance study institution before it may be accredited. Institutions may initiate an application near the end of its appropriate waiting period.

Q. Can an accredited school transfer its accreditation or the benefits of its accreditation to another institution or individual by sale, contract, franchise, or other arrangement?

A. No. Accreditation by the DETC Accrediting Commission is institutional and is extended only to the accredited institution and its approved programs. Accreditation cannot be transferred in any way to an entity not under the ownership, management, and control of the accredited institution. All distance study programs and distance study-related activities under the ownership, man-

agement, and control of the accredited institution must be included in the accreditation, or none can be accredited. When an accredited institution undergoes a change in ownership, management, or control, the institution must undergo a complete accreditation review.

Q. What are the costs involved for accreditation?

A. There are actually four types of fees:

1. on-site review fees
2. subject specialist review fees
3. annual accreditation fees
4. DETC annual dues

To estimate the on-site review fees and subject specialist review fees, consult the *DETC Accreditation Handbook* Appendix I.1. The DETC dues and accreditation fees are based on annual tuition receipts.

Q. Must the travel expenses for visiting Examining Committees be paid in addition to the on-site examination fees?

A. No. The on-site examination fee is a "flat fee" which includes the cost of travel for the Examining Committee members (except for non-U.S. institutions).

Q. Are accrediting reports and documents made public?

A. No. The process of accreditation is regarded as a confidential one, and accreditation reports and documents are treated in a confidential manner. The public is notified of final Accrediting Commission decisions, but chair reports, school responses, etc., are not released to the public.

Q. Must all courses, including kits, tools, textbooks, hardware, etc., be sent to the Accrediting Commission for review?

A. No. Please consult C.5. Policy on Course/Program Approval for the details..

Q. Will course material be returned to the institution after subject specialists review the material?

A. No. All course material, including kits, tools, textbooks, and hardware, is consumed in the course review process and is not returned to the applicant institution.

Q. Do outside observers serve on visiting Examining Committees?

A. The Commission routinely extends an invitation to the appropriate state licensing agency to have someone serve on the Examining Committee as an Observer. On occasion, federal officials are also invited to serve as observers. The institution

pays no examination fees for such observers. The Chair's Report and the Institution's Response to the Chair's Report are shared with the state observers who attended the on-site visit.

Q. Do "competitors" serve on visiting Examining Committees?

A. No. Evaluators known to have competing interests with the applicant institution are not appointed to serve on a committee. DETC accreditation is, however, a "peer review" process. Committees are made up of executive officers of other accredited institutions.

List of Accredited Institutions

A Directory of Accredited Institutions is published by the DETC Accrediting Commission and distributed to the public. It is available for no charge from DETC's web site at www.detc.org (select Publications).

If you have additional questions on the accrediting process, please e-mail the Director of Accreditation, Nan Bayster, at nan@detc.org or call her at 202-234-5100 ext. 103. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8:00 a.m. to Noon on Fridays. The office is closed on all federal holidays.

Over Four Decades of Excellence—

Accrediting Commission Milestones

1955: First meeting of the Accrediting Commission, New York City.

1959: U.S. Commissioner of Education, Lawrence G. Derthick, signs letter giving official recognition to the Accrediting Commission as a “nationally recognized accrediting agency.” He later joins the Commission as a public member.

1970: U.S. Commissioner of Education continues recognition of Commission as a “nationally recognized accrediting agency.”

1972: The composition of the Accrediting Commission changes to include a majority of members who represent the public. The Commission remains the sole U.S. accrediting agency to have such a composition.

1973: Accrediting Commission receives formal recognition as a member of the National Commission on Accrediting, the first time in history an agency accrediting proprietary schools had received NCA recognition.

1975: U.S. Commissioner of Education continues recognition of Accrediting Commission. Commission becomes a charter recognized member of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation, a successor organi-

zation of NCA. First non-private correspondence school, the U.S. Air Force Extension Course Institute, is accredited.

1979: First academic degree by correspondence study accredited, the Cleveland Institute of Electronics’ Associate degree in Specialized Electronics Technology.

1981: U.S. Commissioner of Education continues the recognition of the Commission and expands its recognized scope to include the accreditation of academic degrees at the associates level.

1983: The Council on Postsecondary Accreditation continues recognition of the Accrediting Commission and expands its recognized scope to include academic degrees from the associates through the masters degree levels.

1985: U.S. Secretary of Education continues the recognition of the Commission and expands its recognized scope to include academic degrees from the associates through the masters degree levels.

1993: Recognition of the Commission by the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation is continued for full five year period. COPA disbands, and the Accrediting Commis-

sion becomes a charter recognized member of the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA).

1994: Name of Commission is changed to the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC).

1995: Recognition of the Commission continued by the Secretary of Education under the new regulations implementing the Higher Education Amendments of 1992.

1997: Commission becomes a member of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

2001: Commission's recognition by CHEA is continued.

2001: Commission's recognition by Secretary of Education is continued and scope is expanded to include first professional degrees.

2005: Commission's scope or recognition by the U.S. Secretary of Education is expanded to include federal student aid authority.

2006: U.S. Secretary of Education continues the recognition of the Commission and expands it recognition to include professional doctoral degrees.

DETC Staff



Mr. Michael P. Lambert,
Executive Director



Ms. Sally R. Welch,
Associate Director



Ms. Nan Bayster,
Director of Accreditation

Distance Education and Training Council

1601 18th St., NW, Suite 2 • Washington, DC 20009
tel: 202-234-5100 • fax: 202-332-1386
Email: detc@detc.org • www.detc.org

