

## § 602.2

recognition listed in subpart B of this part.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1099b)

### § 602.2 How do I know which agencies the Secretary recognizes?

(a) Periodically, the Secretary publishes a list of recognized agencies in the FEDERAL REGISTER, together with each agency's scope of recognition. You may obtain a copy of the list from the Department at any time. The list is also available on the Department's web site.

(b) If the Secretary denies continued recognition to a previously recognized agency, or if the Secretary limits, suspends, or terminates the agency's recognition before the end of its recognition period, the Secretary publishes a notice of that action in the FEDERAL REGISTER. The Secretary also makes the reasons for the action available to the public, on request.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1099b)

### § 602.3 What definitions apply to this part?

The following definitions apply to this part:

*Accreditation* means the status of public recognition that an accrediting agency grants to an educational institution or program that meets the agency's standards and requirements.

*Accrediting agency* or *agency* means a legal entity, or that part of a legal entity, that conducts accrediting activities through voluntary, non-Federal peer review and makes decisions concerning the accreditation or preaccreditation status of institutions, programs, or both.

*Act* means the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

*Adverse accrediting action* or *adverse action* means the denial, withdrawal, suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation or preaccreditation, or any comparable accrediting action an agency may take against an institution or program.

*Advisory Committee* means the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity.

*Branch campus* means a location of an institution that meets the definition of branch campus in 34 CFR 600.2.

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*Compliance report* means a written report that the Department requires an agency to file to demonstrate that the agency has addressed deficiencies specified in a decision letter from the senior Department official or the Secretary.

*Correspondence education* means:

(1) Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor.

(2) Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student.

(3) Correspondence courses are typically self-paced.

(4) Correspondence education is not distance education.

*Designated Federal Official* means the Federal officer designated under section 10(f) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. Appdx. 1.

*Direct assessment program* means an instructional program that, in lieu of credit hours or clock hours as a measure of student learning, utilizes direct assessment of student learning, or recognizes the direct assessment of student learning by others, and meets the conditions of 34 CFR 668.10. For title IV, HEA purposes, the institution must obtain approval for the direct assessment program from the Secretary under 34 CFR 668.10(g) or (h) as applicable. As part of that approval, the accrediting agency must—

(1) Evaluate the program(s) and include them in the institution's grant of accreditation or preaccreditation; and

(2) Review and approve the institution's claim of each direct assessment program's equivalence in terms of credit or clock hours.

*Distance education* means education that uses one or more of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (4) of this definition to deliver

instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include—

- (1) The internet;
- (2) One-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;
- (3) Audio conferencing; or
- (4) Video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if the cassettes, DVDs, or CD-ROMs are used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in paragraphs (1) through (3) of this definition.

*Final accrediting action* means a final determination by an accrediting agency regarding the accreditation or preaccreditation status of an institution or program. A final accrediting action is not appealable within the agency.

*Institution of higher education* or *institution* means an educational institution that qualifies, or may qualify, as an eligible institution under 34 CFR part 600.

*Institutional accrediting agency* means an agency that accredits institutions of higher education.

*Nationally recognized accrediting agency*, *nationally recognized agency*, or *recognized agency* means an accrediting agency that the Secretary recognizes under this part.

*Preaccreditation* means the status of public recognition that an accrediting agency grants to an institution or program for a limited period of time that signifies the agency has determined that the institution or program is progressing towards accreditation and is likely to attain accreditation before the expiration of that limited period of time.

*Program* means a postsecondary educational program offered by an institution of higher education that leads to an academic or professional degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential.

*Programmatic accrediting agency* means an agency that accredits specific educational programs that pre-

pare students for entry into a profession, occupation, or vocation.

*Recognition* means an unappealed determination by the senior Department official under § 602.36, or a determination by the Secretary on appeal under § 602.37, that an accrediting agency complies with the criteria for recognition listed in subpart B of this part and that the agency is effective in its application of those criteria. A grant of recognition to an agency as a reliable authority regarding the quality of education or training offered by institutions or programs it accredits remains in effect for the term granted except upon a determination made in accordance with subpart C of this part that the agency no longer complies with the subpart B criteria or that it has become ineffective in its application of those criteria.

*Representative of the public* means a person who is not—

- (1) An employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution or program that either is accredited or preaccredited by the agency or has applied for accreditation or preaccreditation;

- (2) A member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the agency; or

- (3) A spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in paragraph (1) or (2) of this definition.

*Scope of recognition* or *scope* means the range of accrediting activities for which the Secretary recognizes an agency. The Secretary may place a limitation on the scope of an agency's recognition for Title IV, HEA purposes. The Secretary's designation of scope defines the recognition granted according to—

- (1) Geographic area of accrediting activities;

- (2) Types of degrees and certificates covered;

- (3) Types of institutions and programs covered;

- (4) Types of preaccreditation status covered, if any; and

- (5) Coverage of accrediting activities related to distance education or correspondence education.

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*Secretary* means the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education or any official or employee of the Department acting for the Secretary under a delegation of authority.

*Senior Department official* means the senior official in the U.S. Department of Education who reports directly to the Secretary regarding accrediting agency recognition.

*State* means a State of the Union, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau. The latter three are also known as the Freely Associated States.

*Teach-out agreement* means a written agreement between institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students and a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study if an institution, or an institutional location that provides one hundred percent of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study.

*Teach-out plan* means a written plan developed by an institution that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution, or an institutional location that provides one hundred percent of at least one program, ceases to operate before all students have completed their program of study, and may include, if required by the institution's accrediting agency, a teach-out agreement between institutions.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1099b)

[64 FR 56617, Oct. 20, 1999, as amended at 74 FR 55426, Oct. 27, 2009]

### Subpart B—The Criteria for Recognition

#### BASIC ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

## § 602.10 Link to Federal programs.

The agency must demonstrate that—

(a) If the agency accredits institutions of higher education, its accreditation is a required element in enabling at least one of those institutions to es-

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tablish eligibility to participate in HEA programs; or

(b) If the agency accredits institutions of higher education or higher education programs, or both, its accreditation is a required element in enabling at least one of those entities to establish eligibility to participate in non-HEA Federal programs.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1099b)

## § 602.11 Geographic scope of accrediting activities.

The agency must demonstrate that its accrediting activities cover—

(a) A State, if the agency is part of a State government;

(b) A region of the United States that includes at least three States that are reasonably close to one another; or

(c) The United States.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1099b)

## § 602.12 Accrediting experience.

(a) An agency seeking initial recognition must demonstrate that it has—

(1) Granted accreditation or preaccreditation—

(i) To one or more institutions if it is requesting recognition as an institutional accrediting agency and to one or more programs if it is requesting recognition as a programmatic accrediting agency;

(ii) That covers the range of the specific degrees, certificates, institutions, and programs for which it seeks recognition; and

(iii) In the geographic area for which it seeks recognition; and

(2) Conducted accrediting activities, including deciding whether to grant or deny accreditation or preaccreditation, for at least two years prior to seeking recognition.

(b) A recognized agency seeking an expansion of its scope of recognition must demonstrate that it has granted accreditation or preaccreditation covering the range of the specific degrees, certificates, institutions, and programs for which it seeks the expansion of scope.

(Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1099b)