



DIVISION OF WORKFORCE EDUCATION

INSTRUCTION MANUAL & GUIDANCE

REGARDING AN APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORITY

AND SITE EVALUATION

PURPOSE

It is the policy and purpose of the State of Texas to prevent deception of the public resulting from the conferring and use of fraudulent or substandard college and university degrees; it is also the purpose of this subchapter to regulate the use of academic terminology in naming or otherwise designating educational institutions, the advertising, solicitation or representation by educational institutions or their agents, and the maintenance and preservation of essential academic records. Because degrees and equivalent indicators of educational attainment are used by employers in judging the training of prospective employees, by public and private professional groups in determining qualifications for admission to and continuance of practice, and by the general public in assessing the competence of persons engaged in a wide range of activities necessary to the general welfare, regulation by law of the evidences of college and university educational attainment is in the public interest. To the same end the protection of legitimate institutions and of those holding degrees from them is also in the public interest.

Texas Education Code, Chapter 61, Subchapter G

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How to Use this Instruction Manual

The instruction manual will offer guidance in completing a Certificate of Authority application to grant degrees in the state of Texas. The instruction manual should not be included with the final application. The instruction manual is provided to assist an applicant in understanding the information which should be included in the application and possible areas of inquiry which a site team might explore. If you believe additional explanation is needed to address a standard, please provide that explanation in the application.

The final application should be developed using the current application template (provided on THECB's website), supporting documentation, and related appendices. The template is a framework for building a complete application.

Applicants are encouraged to discuss the proposed degree programs and levels with THECB staff prior to applying. Staff is available to discuss the Certificate of Authority process and timeline. Staff can answer applicants' questions which will facilitate an application with the necessary documentation in order to move forward with the review process.

Notifying THECB staff of the expected submission date for an application will ensure staff can begin identifying site team members and preparing the site team lead for the initial review of the application.

Who Should Apply for a Certificate of Authority?

A Certificate of Authority may be granted to an applicant institution which is **not yet accredited** but is seeking institutional accreditation from an accrediting agency recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). **The applicant must be seeking to offer degrees in Texas.**

Administrative Rules

Applicants must be familiar with all administrative rules contained in [THECB Chapter 7, Subchapter A](#). Specifically, the following THECB rules should be consulted to ensure the applicant institution is addressing and meeting current requirements:

- [Rule 7.4](#) Standards for Operation of Institutions
- [Rule 7.8](#) Institutions Not Accredited by a Board-Recognized Accreditor

Prohibitions and Restrictions for Certificates of Authority Regarding Professional Degrees

- A professional degree includes a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.), Doctor of Osteopathy (D.O.), Doctor of Dental Surgery (D.D.S.), Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), Juris Doctor (J.D.), and Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) and their equivalents and foreign cognates.
 - The Coordinating Board may not approve authorization to award a professional degree or to represent that credits earned in Texas are applicable toward a professional degree if the applicant is chartered in a foreign country or has its principal office or primary educational program in a foreign country.

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- The Coordinating Board may approve authorization to award a professional degree or to represent that credits earned in Texas are applicable toward a professional degree only if the board determines that:
 - (1) the capacity and ability of similar professional degree programs at institutions of higher education and private or independent institutions of higher education are insufficient to meet the state's current market needs;
 - (2) the institution seeking the certificate of authority:
 - (A) has the necessary faculty and other resources to ensure student success; and
 - (B) is subject to and agrees to meet the same standards for approval and all academic criteria applicable to similar professional degree programs offered by institutions of higher education and private or independent institutions of higher education, as defined in Texas Education Code, Section 61.003; and
 - (3) sufficient placements are available to students for required field-based experience, such as clinicals or clerkships, for the proposed professional degree.

Restrictions for Certificates of Authority Regarding No Previous Operating History

- An applicant that does not meet previous operational history conditions may not apply for a graduate degree or for more than one area of study as part of its initial application for a Certificate of Authority.

Components of a Complete Application

A complete application must include:

- One electronic copy of the complete application and required appendices.
 - The electronic copy may be submitted as one or more PDFs on a USB drive or other removable data storage.
 - The electronic copy must contain an index or bookmarks which allow staff and site evaluators to easily locate information within the application.
- Upon review of the electronic copy of the application and appendices, THECB staff may request one hard copy of the application and appendices (bound, spiral bound, or placed in a ringed binder) if the electronic copy is not readable or information within the application not easily located.
- The current application fee.
 - In addition to the application fee, actual site visit expenses, which will be invoiced after incurred, must be paid before an application is considered at a Coordinating Board quarterly meeting.
 - Based on the number of degree programs and levels proposed, THECB staff will determine the number of site team members necessary. A minimum of three team members is required.
- An original surety instrument, with an accompanying calculation worksheet and cover letter.

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Certificate of Authority Process Summary

1. Applicant submits application, appendices, fee, and original surety instrument.
2. THECB staff reviews submitted documents to ensure minimum requirements are met.
3. THECB contracts with a site review team leader. The site review team leader, in consultation with THECB staff, may be requested to conduct a desk review to assist in determining if the application is deemed complete and ready for a site team visit.
4. Board staff will make a final determination on acceptability of the application based on one of three recommendations:
 - a. Recommendation 1: Application is foundationally incomplete and not ready for submission. A foundationally incomplete application is one where the Standards for Operation of Institutions have not been met to such a degree that the institution is unlikely to be sustainable or operational.
 - i. A portion of the application fee, if not expended during the desk review, may be returned.
 - ii. Another application may not be submitted for one year from the date of rejection of the foundationally incomplete application.
 - b. Recommendation 2: Application may be resubmitted after incorporating revisions or additions suggested by staff or site review team leader. The revisions or additions suggested must be of a degree that they can be readily incorporated into the revised application and would demonstrate the applicant institution is sustainable and operational.
 - i. The revised application may be submitted as soon as complete.
 - ii. If revisions or additions make an application foundationally complete, a site review visit will be scheduled.
 - c. Recommendation 3: Application is foundationally complete and ready for a site review visit.
 - i. To be foundationally complete, the applicant must provide detailed evidence or documentation of how it meets each of the Standards for Operation. It is not sufficient to make a general statement that a Standard will be met.
 - ii. An applicant that does not have previous operational history must demonstrate it is able to meet all Standards for Operation through documentation and/or possession of adequate resources. Such demonstration includes, but is not limited to:
 - Executed agreements with all administration and faculty identified in the application.
 - Complete curriculum, assessment, and learning tools for each proposed degree.
 - Possession of all listed facilities and resources.
 - Sufficient financial resources to meet surety instrument requirements and the applicant's expected operating budget.
5. A site review is scheduled with a minimum of three site team members and a THECB staff member. Typical site reviews are conducted over two to three consecutive days.
6. Applicant is invoiced for site team expenses. The invoice must be paid before the application and site team report are scheduled for review and recommendation by the Certification Advisory Council.
7. Within two-three weeks after the visit, the site review team submits a written report of findings made at the time of the site visit. The site visit report is sent to the applicant.

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8. Within 30 days after receiving the site visit report, the applicant submits a written response to the site visit report which addresses any issues identified by the site review team and provides any additional documentation in support of the applicant's response.
9. The application is scheduled for consideration at the next quarterly meeting of the Certification Advisory Council (CAC) after the site team expenses invoice has been paid.
10. The CAC reviews the site team report, applicant's response, and may ask for additional verbal information from the applicant and site team leader. The applicant may not present additional information to be considered by the CAC, but the CAC members may ask for additional, clarifying information. The CAC may make a recommendation to either approve or deny the application.
 - a. The CAC may also postpone its recommendation until more information is provided at a future CAC quarterly meeting.
 - b. The CAC recommendation may include additional conditions, restrictions, or reporting requirements.
11. The CAC recommendation to approve or deny the application goes to the THECB Commissioner and is scheduled for a future Coordinating Board Committee on Academic and Workforce Success (CAWS) meeting and full board quarterly meeting.
 - a. If the applicant has no previous operational history, the CAC shall make recommendations for additional conditions, restrictions, or reporting requirements during the first two years of operation under a Certificate of Authority.
 - b. If the applicant has previous operational history, the CAC may make recommendations for additional conditions, restrictions, or reporting requirements during the first two years of operation under a Certificate of Authority.
 - c. THECB Commissioner may make a separate recommendation for approval or denial.
 - i. The Commissioner may make recommendations for additional conditions, restrictions, or reporting requirements for the time the applicant is operating under a Certificate of Authority.
12. The application for a Certificate of Authority is reviewed at a future CAWS meeting and approved or denied at a future quarterly meeting of the full board.
 - a. If applicable, the Certificate of Authority will be issued with any written, specific conditions, restrictions, or additional reporting requirements placed upon the applicant and approved by the Board.
 - b. If denied, an applicant with previous operational history may not reapply for a period of 180 days from date of denial.
 - c. If denied, an applicant with no previous operational history may not reapply for a period of one year from date of denial.

Certificate of Authority Validity and Renewal Time Periods

A Certificate of Authority to grant degrees is valid for a period of two (2) years from the date of issuance. Institutions must reapply prior to the end of the current Certificate of Authority. Each subsequent application must be complete and not merely an update of a previous application. The reapplication should clearly show the improvements made in response to previous evaluations and conditions imposed by the Board as well as progress toward accreditation. An applicant may be granted consecutive Certificates of Authority for no longer than eight (8)

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years. Absent sufficient cause, at the end of eight (8) years, the applicant must be accredited by a THECB-recognized accrediting agency.

If the institution is applying for its final two-year Certificate of Authority and it is not likely that it will obtain THECB-recognized accreditation by the end of the final Certificate of Authority, the institution should include a teach-out plan for the institution's students.

Reporting Requirements

Institutions under Certificates of Authority are subject to reporting requirements found in Texas Administrative Code [Rule 7.8](#). All institutions operating under a Certificate of Authority must:

- Furnish a list of their agents to THECB.
- Maintain records of students enrolled, credits awarded, and degrees awarded, in a manner specified by THECB.
- Report any substantive change, including changes in administrative personnel, faculty, or facilities.

Institutions with no previous operational history, must also report, at the end of the first year of the initial Certificate of Authority:

- Documentary evidence of continued exemption or approval from the Texas Workforce Commission pursuant to Texas Education Code, [Chapter 132](#).
- Current audited financial statements, including a balance sheet, income statement, statement of changes in net worth, and statement of cash flow, updated since issuance of the initial Certificate of Authority.
- Documentation of continued validity of any required financial surety instrument.
- Current enrollment, retention, and graduation numbers for students in all approved degree programs.
- An updated accreditation plan, including any progress made toward obtaining Board-recognized accreditation identified in the initial application or a change in plans to apply for accreditation with another Board-recognized accreditation agency.

Amendments, Renewals and Revocations:

- Please refer to Texas Administrative Code [Rule 7.8](#) regarding amendment restrictions, renewals and revocations.

Fees and Expenses

- The Board has set the application fee, found in [§7.8\(3\)](#) of the administrative rules, at \$5,000. The application fee must be paid in order for any review of the application to proceed.
 - The application fee covers THECB staff's time taken to ensure the applicant has responded to all required application sections; attending the site visit; and in working with applicant, site team members, and the Certification Advisory Council.
 - The application fee also covers site team stipends for application review and site team activities. This fee is in addition to the site team expenses.

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- The Board has authorized collection of expenses incurred in connection with the required site visit. The incurred expenses must be paid for the application to be considered by the Certification Advisory Council. The estimated amount of site team expenses is \$650 per team member.

Template, Terminology, and Format of Application

The current application template is found on the THECB website (www.highered.texas.gov).

The template must be used to create the actual application for a Certificate of Authority. Text in BLUE should be maintained as-is and used to retain the common structure of the application. Shaded areas should be modified as needed to provide sufficient answers for each of the requested areas.

The term “applicant institution” is used within the template to indicate the institution for which this application is being made. It is understood that an applicant may be an entity applying to begin offering degree programs as a separate postsecondary educational institution. Therefore, if a distinction between an applicant and the postsecondary educational institution for which it is applying to operate should be made, please provide an explanation within the application.

In order to be considered ready for the Certificate of Authority review process, the application must contain complete information on all items and include all requested supplementary documents. Any item which is not applicable to the applicant should be identified and clearly marked NOT APPLICABLE along with the explanation of why it is not applicable.

The text used in the application template should be copied into the application and expanded into complete statements by providing the information requested in the instructions enclosed [in brackets].

ALL CAPS indicates “either/or” language or the type of information to be provided. Please provide the applicable information.

Text in italics is explanatory and should not be copied into the application.

The application template contains sections and sub-sections. The structure of the template sections and sub-sections should be maintained. If a section or sub-section is not needed, indicate “Not Applicable” after the section or subsection heading.

Each appendix should be identified with consecutive identifying letters. Within the application, please replace [X] with the proper corresponding letter. The appendix must be included at the end of the document and tabbed with the correct identifying letters. It may be bound into the one hard copy document or put in a separate ringed binder. PDF files must either be clearly named or bookmarked with corresponding appendix letters.

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Possible Areas of Site Team Review Based on the Completed Application

The following are typical areas of information that site reviewers may consider when reviewing the application or conducting the site visit. This information is provided to assist applicants prepare for the site review. An applicant may also refer to this information to ensure its written application addresses these likely areas of review. The Certificate of Authority application is divided into three parts:

- Application Cover Page
- Part One: General Information
- Part Two: Standards for Operation of Institutions

Under each part, the relevant application section or standard for operation is referenced.

APPLICATION COVER PAGE

- The cover page identifies the applicant, location of proposed institution, officials making the application, degree programs applied for, and required certifications and signatures.
- In addition to the person designated as the Single Point of Contact within the application, the chair of the governing board or an authorized board member and the chief executive officer of the applicant will be the persons considered responsible for arranging and attending the site visit, answering questions about the application, attending any advisory committee or board meetings, and generally representing the applicant during the application process.
- It is expected that the named individuals will have a working knowledge of the contents of the application and be able to address any questions about the application.

PART ONE: GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Purpose and Mission of the Institution

- *Reviewers may consider if the purpose and mission are appropriate for the type of degree programs proposed; and if the institution has shown it will benefit Texas students or add an educational program currently not available.*

B. Incorporation Status

- *Applicant is not authorized to use certain protected terms, such as "college" or "university" in its name until it has obtained authority from THECB to operate as a degree-granting institution. Applicant may be required to set up its operations under another name until such authority is given.*
- *Note: The Board may not issue a Certificate of Authority for a private postsecondary institution to grant a professional degree or to represent that credits earned in Texas are applicable toward a degree if the institution is chartered in a foreign country or has its principal office or primary educational program in a foreign country. If the applicant*

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believes the institution falls within this prohibition, please contact THECB staff before proceeding with the application.

C. Articles of Incorporation

- *Include a copy of the articles of incorporation of the controlling entity. Normally, this will be the applicant; in cases where the applicant is included under another entity's incorporation, that entity's articles of incorporation should also be supplied.*

D. Bylaws or Constitution

- *Reviewers may compare the bylaws or other governing documents with other documentation provided (e.g., faculty handbooks, contracts, meeting minutes, or information contained in the Certificate of Authority application itself) to ensure all policies and procedures follow the governing documents.*

E. Identification of Owners or Sponsors

- *If ownership of the applicant institution involves multiple parties or levels of ownership, it is advisable to include an organizational chart detailing the ownership and controlling interests.*

F. Single Point of Contact

- *THECB staff will contact the single point of contact (SPOC) throughout the time period an institution is under a Certificate of Authority. All communications regarding the applicant institution should be directed through the SPOC to ensure THECB has consistent contacts and communications. If the SPOC changes, please provide updated contact information as soon as possible.*

G. Operations in Texas

- *Some applicants will have already begun operating as a non-degree institution in Texas under another state agency. If so, this section provides information regarding when that operation started.*
- *If applicant is starting an institution with no previous operating history, applicant can indicate that operations will begin upon approval of the Certificate of Authority.*

H. Applicant Status

- *This section will be used to determine if any restrictions or conditions will be automatically placed on an applicant institution.*
- *Regarding an applicant who has legally operated in Texas as a degree-granting institution, if currently accredited by a THECB-recognized accreditor, the correct process*

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is to seek accreditor approval for a new campus and apply for a Certificate of Authorization.

- *The Certificate of Authority application should only be used if the new campus will not have THECB-recognized accreditation at the time operations begin or a change in accreditation status necessitates the applicant to apply as an unaccredited applicant.*
- *A separate status for renewal applications should be used if the applicant currently holds a Certificate of Authority.*

I. Number of Students

- *Full-Time Student Equivalent (FTSE) calculation: The Texas guideline for credit students uses a standard student credit hour load that would allow a student to graduate in a minimum number of 15-week semesters for their degree program.*
- *The FTSE calculation will average the enrollment of part-time and full-time students to compute either the annual average or the semester average.*
- *To compute the annual average FTSE enrollment of credit-hour students, determine the total yearly number of credit hours (including summer sessions) and apply the following conversion factors as applicable:*
 - *1 annual undergraduate FTSE student = 30 undergraduate semester credit hours*
 - *1 annual master's FTSE student = 24 master's semester credit hours*
 - *1 annual first-professional FTSE student = 24 first-professional semester credit hours, except Optometry which is 34*
 - *1 annual doctoral FTSE student = 18 doctoral semester credit hours*
- *To compute a semester average FTSE enrollment of credit-hour students, use a fall or spring term of credit hours and apply the following conversion factors as applicable:*
 - *1 semester undergraduate FTSE student = 15 undergraduate semester credit hours*
 - *1 semester master's FTSE student = 12 master's semester credit hours*
 - *1 semester first-professional FTSE student = 12 first-professional semester credit hours*
 - *1 semester first-professional FTSE Optometry student = 17 semester credit hours*
 - *1 semester doctoral FTSE student = 9 doctoral semester credit hours*
- *To determine an annual FTSE enrollment for medical and dental students use the unduplicated fall enrollment at the health-related institution.*
- *If your institution calculates the FTSE differently, please provide an explanation of how full time students are defined and reference course sequence sheets [which will be attached under Standard 14] that demonstrate how credit hours are allocated each semester so that students may complete the degree program within a set period of time. For example, show how an associate degree may be completed in two years or a bachelor's degree can be completed in four years.*
- *If the institution has not yet been authorized to enroll students or has not begun operations, please indicate the number of all students and FTSE students expected to enroll in the first two years of operation.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the institution has the capability to handle the number of students it is enrolling or anticipates enrolling.*
- *Calculation Example:*
 - *20 part-time students taking 6 semester credits = 120 semester credits*

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- *10 full-time students taking 15 semester credits = 150 semester credits*
- *Combine PT and FT semester credit hours and divide by 15 to determine FTSE for the semester: $(120+150) / 15 = 18$ FTSE*

J. Accreditation by Non-recognized Accrediting Agencies

- *Note: Accreditation by entities which are not recognized by the Board does not allow an institution to offer a degree or courses leading to a degree without a Certificate of Authority to offer such degree or courses.*
- *Reviewers may consider applicant's status with a non-recognized accreditor as support for whether the applicant has a pattern of compliance with accreditation standards or to flag any known issues as evidenced by the applicant's status with the non-recognized accreditor as found in the required reports and findings.*

K. Application with Board-recognized Accrediting Agencies

- *The written accreditation plan must include all information required in the application. Reviewers may consider whether the accreditation plan is sufficient.*
- *The accreditation plan should include a summary of the contacts made with the Board-recognized accreditor. Unless the Board makes a specific request, the supporting documentation should provide evidence of the status of the applicant institution in the accreditation process. Copies of the entire application to the accrediting agency may not be needed if it is duplicative of the Certificate of Authority application.*
- *Especially with regard to subsequent Certificate of Authority applications, reviewers may consider if the applicant institution is making progress toward recognized accreditation.*
- *The accreditation plan should include a summary of the contacts made with the Board-recognized accreditor. Unless the Board makes a specific request, the supporting documentation should provide evidence of the status of the applicant institution in the accreditation process. Copies of the entire application to the accrediting agency may not be needed if it is duplicative of the Certificate of Authority application.*

PART TWO: STANDARDS FOR OPERATION OF INSTITUTIONS

Standard 1. LEGAL COMPLIANCE.

- *Reviewers may consider the applicant institution's ability to remain in compliance with all governmental or accrediting agencies.*
 - *Applicants with no previous operational history will need to state if they are unable to comply with another government agency's requirements until operations begin. If so, a condition will be placed on the Certificate of Authority requiring compliance prior to enrolling students.*
- *If documentation of compliance with other state or federal agencies, including licensing agencies, is not included in the application, reviewers may determine that the applicant*

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institution is not ready for review and suspend the process until legal compliance is documented.

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Standard 2. QUALIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS.

- *Reviewers may consider evidence as to whether the CEO has educational and administrative background to effectively lead the applicant institution.*
- *Reviewers may consider evidence as to whether the CAO has educational and administrative background to effectively manage curriculum development and assessment; accreditation standards and processes, as well as all relevant state regulations; leadership and development of faculty, including the promotion of scholarship, research, service, academic freedom and responsibility, and tenure (where applicable); and the promotion of student success.*
- *Reviewers may consider evidence as to whether the other applicant institutional officers have appropriate educational and administrative background to effectively perform their specific job duties.*
- *Reviewers may consider, for all applicant institutional officers, evidence of appropriate education and/or experience to provide adequate control and direction to the institution; and anything in a person's background which may disqualify him/her from their position.*
- *If an applicant institution has no operational history, beyond the executed agreements to act as institution officers, reviewers will rely on documentation of previous educational achievements and experience. Documentation should show both education and experience.*
- *If this is a renewal application, reviewers may consider if officers demonstrate a record of effective leadership and administration.*

Standard 3. GOVERNANCE.

- *Reviewers may consider if the by-laws or other instruments of governance in the appendix adequately govern the applicant institution; address the mission and purposes of the applicant institution; support institutional effectiveness and integrity; and protect the interests of students, faculty, and staff.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the by-laws or other instruments of governance are followed by the governing board; if the governing board is an active policy-making body that properly exercises its authority; and for any governing board that does not consist of at least three members, if there are appropriate safeguards in place for governance.*
- *Reviewers may interview governing board members to determine if the board oversees a long and short-term planning process that sets the direction of the applicant institution and results in measurable outcomes; if board members are free from conflicts of interest by business, financial or personal factors; if the board gains financial benefit from the applicant; and if there are policies in place to avoid conflicts of interest in the operation of the applicant institution and its associated facilities.*

Standard 4. DISTINCTION OF ROLES.

- *Reviewers may interview governing board members, executive officers, faculty, and other personnel to determine what each person regards as their powers, duties, and responsibilities.*

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- *Reviewers may consider if the governing board appears to defer unduly to the chief executive officer on policy matters; provides proper policy direction to the chief executive officer at regularly scheduled or reasonably frequent meetings; or intervenes in administrative matters normally considered within the province of the chief executive officer.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the CEO is a voting member of the board; interferes or unduly influences the administrative staff in the performance of their duties; is responsible for duties beyond his/her expertise; or interferes with the responsibilities usually associated with the faculty.*
- *Reviewers may consider if other administrative staff are responsible for duties beyond their expertise; or if there is excessive turnover or long-standing vacancies in the leadership of the school.*
- *Reviewers may consider if any of the reporting structures pose a conflict of interest in administering the applicant institution.*

Standard 5. FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND STABILITY.

- *Reviewers may consider whether current resources are adequate to provide an education of good quality; if the financial reserves of the applicant institution are adequate, factoring in tuition at the current rate, to cover the currently enrolled students through the end of their current term should the applicant institution not be able to admit new students; if the applicant institution should close, whether there are provisions in place to ensure the Coordinating Board would be able to either directly access adequate funds to refund unearned tuition or require the applicant institution to restrict use of adequate funds to refund unearned tuition.*
- *In calculating the required surety instrument, applicant institution is encouraged to discuss its calculation and intended surety source with THECB staff prior to securing the surety. This will prevent the applicant institution from needing to seek a revised surety and ensure the amount is adequate and the surety source is acceptable.*
- *Reviewers may consider whether the salaries of staff and faculty are appropriate to the responsibilities held; if expanding to degree granting authority appears to be needed to sustain the applicant institution financially; if the applicant institution operates under strict budget controls; the approvals needed for fund transfers; and if the applicant institution has a good credit rating with private lending agencies.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the applicant institution can comply with the requirements of all the standards through use of its existing financial resources.*
- *If applicable, reviewers may enquire whether reliance on self-financing compromises the educational mission of the applicant institution or causes it to enroll more students than its total resources can accommodate.*

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Standard 6. FINANCIAL RECORDS.

- *Reviewers may consider if there is a record of annual audits; whether a lack of an audited report due to lack of operational history impacts the ability to assess financial viability; if the independent auditor is currently licensed as a Certified Public Accountant; if the audit was conducted according to the guidelines in "College and University Business Administration"; if the audit is truly independent, in that the auditors do not have any connection with the applicant institution which may raise questions about their objectivity [For example, auditor is enrolled as student at the institution or a member of an organization which sponsors the audited institution].*
- *Reviewers may consider the separation of financial records and reports for the applicant institution and those affiliated with or sponsoring the applicant.*
- *If no audited financial statements are available due to lack of operational history, applicant institution may be asked to provide independently audited personal financial records for all owners to show evidence of financial ability to adequately support and conduct all approved programs.*
- *Reviewers will be attempting to determine how the applicant is financed and if that financial backing is stable, well-documented, and available for use by the applicant for its educational mission.*

Standard 7. INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT.

- *If applicant institution is providing distance education, reviewers may consider if the application provides adequate evidence of compliance with the C-RAC provisions found in the THECB Rule 7.14.*
- *Reviewers may consider the specific measures taken to evaluate the curriculum; data collected and used to determine the extent to which educational objectives are met; follow-up measures taken to ensure that areas of weakness in the curriculum are corrected; and whether the results of curriculum evaluations are published for wide consumption or if the results are withheld.*
- *Reviewers may consider if and how faculty members are involved in the curriculum evaluation; whether there is a faculty committee dealing with curriculum; and if the faculty committee makes a real contribution or is merely ceremonial.*
- *Reviewers may consider if there is a system for the evaluation of faculty members and for the periodic counseling of each; whether and how the system involves student participation; and whether the applicant institution has follow up measures to ensure that areas of weakness in faculty performance are corrected.*
- *Reviewers may consider whether the applicant institution engages in research or public service; whether the institution is progressing toward accreditation with an accreditor recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board; what steps, if any, have been taken to gain accreditation; whether the institution has a formal process to collect and use information from students and alumni to assess the quality of the school, curriculum, facilities, faculty, administration, financial planning and control, student services, facilities, equipment, and auxiliary enterprises.*

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Standard 8. PROGRAM EVALUATION.

- *Reviewers may consider whether degree program educational objectives are identified and quantifiable; and how the institution measures effectiveness.*
- *If applicable, reviewers may consider what data exists for and how well the school performs on the following common measures of performance: student performance on national licensure exams; student performance on courses and field-based experiences; academic progress and program completion rates (1 year, 2 year); graduate surveys; and employer surveys.*
- *Reviewers may consider whether the applicant institution has shown a market need for the degree program and whether similar programs are inadequate to meet that market need.*

Standard 9. ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES.

- *Reviewers might consider whether the size of the administrative staff is appropriate for operating the applicant institution; whether sufficient resources have been committed to administration; whether there are adequate facilities, laboratories, equipment, technology and learning resources; and whether faculty and students believe there are adequate resources.*

Standard 10. STUDENT ADMISSION AND REMEDIATION.

- *Reviewers may consider if the applicant institution has documented that all undergraduate students hold a high school graduation or GED certification, with a score at or above the passing level set by the Texas Education Agency; if the institution assesses academic skills, the instrument used for assessment and if it is successful; and if the institution offers remediation, the remediation program used and if the remediation is successful;*
- *Reviewers may consider if there are any criteria, policies, and procedures in place to guide the selection of students; if the size of the entering class and student body is determined by the adequacy of critical resources (e.g., size of faculty, number and size of facilities); and if the applicant institution's catalog or other informational material explain the program's criteria for admission.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the applicant institution has documented proof that an admitted graduate student holds a baccalaureate degree from an institution accredited by a recognized accrediting agency or an institution holding a Certificate of Authority to offer baccalaureate degrees or a degree from a foreign institution equivalent to a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution; and if the institution has documented that it follows the correct standard in assessing the credentials of students who graduated from foreign institutions.*

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Standard 11: FACULTY QUALIFICATIONS.

- *Reviewers may consider whether the applicant institution shows a commitment toward ensuring adequate full-time, part-time/adjunct, or future faculty members based on education and experience; and if the number of faculty considered to be qualified based on exceptional experience in the field is reasonable.*
- *Reviewers may consider whether the documentation supports a faculty member's qualifications to teach in the areas he/she is teaching. All foreign credentials must be documented. All exceptional experience must be documented. During the onsite visit, reviewers will need to review official/original transcripts and foreign credential evaluations.*
- *Reviewers may also interview faculty members. Reviewers may consider if a faculty member's character or past background disqualify them from being faculty members; if faculty show the capability and continued commitment to be effective teachers; if faculty demonstrate achievements commensurate with their academic rank; if faculty show a commitment to scholarship, including published works listed on their vitae; and if any faculty lack the degree credentials required in this standard, whether this number of faculty is limited and justified, including documentation.*

Standard 12. Faculty Size.

- *Reviewers may consider sufficiency of number of faculty members and their accessibility. At the associate and baccalaureate levels, there shall be at least one full-time faculty member in each program. At the graduate level, there shall be at least two full-time faculty members in each program.*
- *Reviewers may consider whether the applicant institution shows a commitment toward ensuring adequate faculty members based on size of faculty; whether there are adequate full-time faculty for the size of the student body and the requirements of the curriculum; if the faculty teaching load is appropriate; and considering the total student headcount and the student FTE to faculty FTE ratio, if there are sufficient full-time faculty to accomplish the requirements of the standard, and if not, how many full-time faculty are appropriate.*
- *Reviewers may consider whether educational association is promoted; if a high faculty turnover rate creates problems in continuity; and if faculty is adequately represented in administrative and academic decisions affecting the quality of the curriculum and the progression of students through the program.*
- *Reviewers may consider whether faculty members have adequate professional development or growth opportunities; if salary schedules and various employment benefits are conducive to the retention of faculty; if faculty have adequate educational support including availability of institutional aids, office space, administrative help, and publications acquisition; to what extent administrative duties are assigned to the teaching faculty; if faculty members receive regular feedback on their academic performance; if faculty can demonstrate that their knowledge is current in their discipline; and if all or only some faculty have the opportunity to enhance teaching and assessment skills.*

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Standard 13. ACADEMIC FREEDOM & FACULTY SECURITY.

- *Reviewers may consider if there is an adequate statement of academic freedom; and if the statement has been distributed to all faculty members.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the faculty handbook contains the required policies and procedures; if the faculty handbook policies are clearly stated and published; if policies are adhered to by the applicant institution; and if the handbook is supplied to all faculty.*
- *Onsite reviewers may request to review copies of employment contracts kept in individual employment files.*
- *Reviewers may consider, if the applicant institution has faculty contracts, whether the contracts are signed by both the appropriate institutional officer and the faculty member; and whether the contracts are on file for each faculty member.*
- *Reviewers may consider if there are written and distributed policies in place that explain faculty appointment, renewal of appointment, promotion, and dismissal; and if there are written and distributed policies in place that address conflict of interest issues relating to the private interests of faculty and their instructional responsibilities.*

Standard 14. CURRICULUM.

- *Reviewers may consider if the mission of the school is reflected in the curriculum; if there are specific objectives stated for each course; if the objectives are clearly defined and sufficient in scope; if the curriculum has an orderly and identifiable sequence of courses; if the curriculum covers the breadth of knowledge of the discipline; if the coursework builds on previous courses to increase the rigor of instruction and learning of students; and if the proposed courses and curriculum structure are appropriate.*
- *Reviewers may consider during faculty interviews if the faculty is largely responsible for making curricular changes and if there is a faculty committee dealing with curriculum; if the faculty defines and are active in the articulation and evaluation of objectives; the objectives of the program; if those objectives serve as a guide for establishing the curriculum content and for evaluating the program's effectiveness; if the objectives of the program are stated in outcome-based terms and if they allow assessment of student progress in developing competencies; and if faculty have sufficient knowledge in the subject matter to provide effective instruction and have a clear understanding of the objectives of the educational experience and the assessment methods used to determine achievement of those objectives.*
- *Reviewers may consider if course syllabi have been prepared for each course, and, if so, are they adequate; and if a permanent file of syllabi is maintained for student reference.*
- *If applicable, reviewers may consider if there a system in place to specify and monitor the types of internship conditions that students encounter; who controls the instruction at the internship site; if the program has a formal feedback mechanism in a course or internship which would allow students sufficient time for remediation; and if the student assessment includes a narrative description of the student's performance.*
- *Reviewers may consider if a majority of courses in the areas of specialization are offered in organized classes; and if for-credit coursework that does not directly relate to approved program is limited to 25% of all courses.*
- *Reviewers may consider if semester credit hours meet the standard for the appropriate degree.*

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- *Reviewers may consider if the school can verify remedial courses, courses designed to correct deficiencies, or leveling courses are not counted toward completion of the degree.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the degree level, degree designation, and major course of study are appropriate to the curriculum; and if this information is accurately listed on diplomas and transcripts.*

Standard 15. GENERAL EDUCATION.

- *Reviewers may consider if general education semester credit hours meet the standard for the appropriate degree.*
- *Reviewers may consider if general education courses cover the breadth of required subject areas.*
- *If applicable, reviewers may consider the terms of the agreement to provide general education; and if there are stated procedures for documenting and accepting general education courses from the providing institution.*

Standard 16. CREDIT FOR WORK COMPLETED OUTSIDE A COLLEGIATE SETTING.

- *Reviewers may consider the policies and procedures for awarding work completed outside a collegiate setting, including if such policies and procedures adhere to the Standard.*
- *Reviewers may consider how the applicant institution's policies adhere to the Standard's requirements; if any required policies are missing; if any policies are in place which do not follow the Standard; if graduate credit for work outside a collegiate setting is awarded; if life experience credit or years of service credit is awarded.*

Standard 17. LEARNING RESOURCES.

- *Reviewers may consider if learning resources are adequate and appropriate for the purposes and enrollment of the applicant institution; if learning resources are current, well distributed among fields of instruction; if learning resources are cataloged, logically organized, and locatable; if the size and configuration of the library is conducive to study and research; if there is adequate space, accessible to students, to hold the collection; if there is adequate workspace for library staff, including office space for the librarian; and if there is an appropriate balance between physical publications and online/Internet resources.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the librarian has a graduate degree in library science from an accredited institution (Note: the standard does not require the program to have accreditation from the American Library Association); if the librarian is employed for a sufficient amount of time (months of the year and days of the week) to adequately perform the responsibilities of the librarian including providing service to the students in a useful and convenient way; and if the librarian is in control of the budget and acquisitions of the library.*
- *Reviewers may consider if students are able to adequately use the learning resources provided; if a providing institution or entity is located close enough to be accessible; or if*

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an agreement with another institution or entity provides a proper level of learning resources.

- *Reviewers may consider if students are adequately trained to use online resources and able to easily access the online resources.*
- *Reviewers may consider if learning resources specific to graduate or associate degrees are adequate.*

Standard 18. FACILITIES.

- *Reviewers may consider if classrooms are crowded during instruction; if scheduling additional classes would relieve the problem or if new construction is indicated; if the buildings are in good condition; if there are sufficient security officers in-place to provide proper security for the students and faculty; and if any internship sites affiliated with the school provide evidence of the breadth and quality of resources for field-based instruction.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the equipment is sufficient to provide education of good quality, including if the equipment is up-to-date, well-maintained, and readily available to students.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the instructional materials are sufficient to provide education of good quality, including if the materials are up-to-date and readily available to students.*
- *If applicable, reviewers may consider if student housing is appropriate, safe, adequate, and in compliance with state and local requirements.*

Standard 19. ACADEMIC RECORDS.

- *Onsite reviewers may ask to review student records and locations of such records.*
- *Reviewers may consider if there are complete records of all students who have attended the applicant institution; if the records are secured by appropriate means from tampering and from destruction, including locks and fireproof storage facilities; if there are multiple copies of the records; and if at least one set of records is stored off site.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the student records contain all the information required by the Standard; if there is any other information one would expect to document based on the type of programs offered at the applicant institution, i.e., immunizations or documentation of fitness to participate in the program; licensure exam results, etc.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the transcripts include standard information, such as student's name and identification, all courses attempted by course designation and title, professor of record, grade, grade point average, cumulative grade point average, designation of the major course of study, degree awarded (if any), signature of the registrar, and markings (such as a college seal) to assure legitimacy; and if student-issued transcripts are marked "unofficial."*
- *Reviewers may consider if there are fair policies for issuing transcripts to students; and if there is a record of these policies being followed, based on student interviews or documentation in student files.*

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Standard 20. ACCURATE AND FAIR REPRESENTATION IN PUBLICATIONS, ADVERTISING, AND PROMOTION.

- *Reviewers may consider if there are sufficient policies and procedures in place to prevent false, deceptive, misleading, or unfair advertising or promotion; and if the institution or any officer has been cited for false, deceptive, misleading, or unfair practices, how the institution handled the citation and took steps to remedy the issue.*
- *Reviewers may consider if all publications, by any medium, accurately, and fairly represent the applicant institution, its programs, available resources, tuition and fees, and requirements; if there are samples of advertisements (TV, newspaper, other print media, digital) available which solicit students for the institution; and if advertisements about the institution are consistent with the legal status of the institution and contents of the catalog.*
- *Reviewers may interview students regarding whether there are significant discrepancies between what they had been led to expect about the applicant institution before they enrolled and what they found as students.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the catalog contains all information required by the Standard and if the information is accurate and not misleading, including if the catalog or other informational material accurately addresses the matter of accreditation, or absence thereof, as it pertains to this applicant institution.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the cancellation and refund policy is fairly and timely distributed to all persons to whom it may apply.*
- *Reviewers may consider whether graduation rates and job placement rates are complete and clearly presented.*
- *Reviewers may consider any special requirements or limitations for the programs. Such requirements may include prior knowledge or skills, minimum entrance exam test scores, etc.; and if these special requirements or limitations are fairly and consistently applied to all students or potential students.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the diploma or written certificate clearly states the information required by the Standard; and if any policy for withholding transcripts is fairly enforced.*

Standard 21. ACADEMIC ADVISING & COUNSELING.

- *Reviewers may consider if there is evidence of an effective program of academic advising and counseling for prospective and current students and graduates; if staff is adequately prepared, by education and experience, to conduct an academic advising or counseling program; which staff are responsible for the advising program; if faculty are involved in the advising process; if faculty have regular assignments or is the counseling on an ad hoc basis and informal; and the nature and efficacy of the orientation program.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the school has a system in place to assist students in evaluating career options and applying for licensure (if applicable); if the applicant institution continues to provide services to graduates for a certain time period; and if students believe the job placement services are adequate and effective.*

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Standard 22. STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- *Reviewers may consider if a student handbook or other informational material regarding rights and responsibilities is supplied to all students upon enrollment; and if the policies are clearly stated.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the discipline policy is fair and equally enforced; and if students are aware of the discipline policy.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the student grievance policy includes information on filing a complaint with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board or Texas Office of Attorney General upon exhaustion of the institutional grievance process and links to the THECB student complaint procedures; and if the policy is fair and equally enforced.*

Standard 23. HEALTH AND SAFETY.

- *Reviewers may consider if the health program(s) are appropriate and adequate for students based on the programs offered at the applicant institution or other pertinent factors, such as composition of the student body or health risks; if the institution makes health insurance available to each student and his or her dependents; and if the institution follows guidelines for meeting immunization requirements.*
- *Reviewers may consider if there are written procedures and/or orientation training for handling emergencies, such as accidents and injuries, fire, and other catastrophes; if the institution's policy addresses student exposure to infections and environmental hazards; and if the policy addresses crime on or around the campus.*

Standard 24. LEARNING OUTCOMES

- *Reviewers may consider if the learning outcomes assessment is objective and effective; if the results indicate outcomes are being achieved; and if an applicant institution which is not assessing learning outcomes is making progress toward objective assessment.*
- *Reviewers may consider if the reason for deviation from either Standard 12 or Standard 16 is a compelling academic reason; and if academic objectives are fully met despite deviation.*