

THE TWO TYPES OF ACCREDITATION

INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION



Regional*

Regional accreditors grant accreditation to institutions with broad missions, usually within a set of specific states.

EXAMPLES OF REGIONAL ACCREDITORS

- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities



National

National accrediting bodies can accredit entire institutions, but they usually focus on institutions with a specific mission.

EXAMPLES OF FAITH-BASED ACCREDITORS

- Association for Biblical Higher Education
- Association of Theological Schools and its Commission on Accrediting
- Association of Advanced Rabbinical and Talmudic Schools

EXAMPLE OF CAREER-BASED ACCREDITOR

- National Accrediting Commission of Career Arts and Sciences

PROGRAMMATIC ACCREDITATION



Programmatic

Programmatic accreditation is specific to programs within an institution.

EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMMATIC ACCREDITORS

- American Bar Association
- Liaison Committee on Medical Education
- Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology

*As of 2019, the U.S. Department of Education uses the terms institutional or nationally recognized accreditors and authorized their ability to accredit in any state.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

Accreditation is a key tool to ensuring public accountability, quality, and transparency for U.S. colleges and universities. Accreditation is a rigorous system of evidence-based best practices and U.S. Department of Education (ED) requirements that ensures every accredited institution meets the highest standards. This structure has been in place since the 1950s and its peer reviewed, apolitical approach has been incredibly successful.

WHY IS ACCREDITATION IMPORTANT TO ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY?

Accreditation provides a clear guarantee that an institution or program meets the highest standards and indicates that public resources allocated to institutions are well used. For example, institutions must be accredited to receive federal financial aid. It is also a simple way to protect public trust—accreditation gives people confidence to make investments in their education or workforce training. Accreditation is the oldest and most reliable mechanism used by employers to verify that they are making qualified hires in their respective fields.

HOW DOES THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS WORK?

Historically, higher education accreditation has been regulated at the federal level by ED. Once ED approves an accreditor to operate, the accreditor sets up a rigorous peer-review system through which institutional representatives measure and certify quality. This system allows for regular oversight and supervision of institutions, provides a path for continuous review and improvement at colleges and

universities, and directs higher education to meet our country's evolving needs. For continued quality assurance, institutions must apply for accreditation or reaccreditation every few years.

HOW DO SOME STATES WANT TO CHANGE ACCREDITATION?

Though states often mandate that a college or university must achieve accreditation to continue operating, state governments have traditionally focused on the licensure or registration of institutions within state rules. Recently, however, some states have proposed policies that would require institutions to switch accreditors when their current recognition has expired. Changing accreditors without cause is costly, increases administrative burden, weakens public trust in our higher education system, and is likely to cause problems with federal recognition of the institutions—all of which could lead to students at that institution being unable to receive federal grants and loans.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF STATES WANTING TO DISMANTLE ACCREDITATION?

While there is always room for adjustment and improvement, legal and legislative efforts to undercut accreditation cause significantly more problems for students and states. These efforts come at a steep cost to taxpayers and students while diminishing quality and employer confidence. The current accreditation system ensures that institutions are held accountable and are transparent to the public as well as that students, taxpayers, and employers can be confident in the quality of a college or university.

Questions? Contact Alexander Cassell at acassell@acenet.edu.

