



## INSTITUTIONAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS (IERS) FOR INSTITUTIONS SEEKING APPLICANT STATUS WITH TRACS

The Institutional Eligibility Requirements (IERS) are (1) the Standards associated with The TRACS Accreditation Requirements (IERS #1 - #16) and (2) the Standards noted as Federal Requirements (IER #17) with which an institution must demonstrate compliance in order to be accepted as an "Applicant" and subsequently authorized to begin the Self-Study process for consideration by the Accreditation Commission for "Candidate" level recognition. (Note: Some Federal Requirements may not pertain to all applying institutions, i.e. Title IV Participation – If a Federal Requirement does not apply to your institution, simply note such on this worksheet.)

Compliance with these IERS is considered "Basic Compliance" and indicates that the institution has demonstrated compliance with the Standards and Federal Requirements supporting the IERS.

Institutions awarded "Candidate" status will have been deemed in compliance with these IERS and capable of demonstrating compliance with all other non-IER Standards within the period of "Candidacy".

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Directions: Utilizing the tables provided under each IER section below, list the Exhibit Numbers for the documentation submitted in support of compliance with each IER. At the end of this IER worksheet, provide a summary list of all exhibits in the order referenced. Label all exhibits clearly with the appropriate number when submitting documentation.

**IER #1 – Faith Statement:**

The following Standard supports this IER:

- 1.1 The institution has a Faith Statement which is readily available, and included in appropriate official publications.**

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. The Faith Statement of the institution

**IER #2 – Mission and Name**

The following Standard supports this IER:

- 2.1 The institution has a Mission Statement which is current and comprehensive, an accurate guide for the institution’s operations, approved and periodically reviewed by the institution’s Board, communicated to the institution’s constituencies, and accurately reflective of its Faith Statement.**

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. The Mission Statement of the institution

**IER #3 – Institutional Objectives**

The following Standard supports this IER:

- 3.1 The institution has adopted clearly defined written Institutional Objectives which are consistent with the institution’s mission, stated in measurable terms, and approved and periodically reviewed by the institution’s Board.**

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. The Institutional Objectives of the institution

**IER #4 – Institutional Integrity**

The following Standard supports this IER:

- 4.1 The institution operates with integrity and is represented accurately and honestly to students, the public, and to TRACS.**

<b>Exhibit Number</b>	<b>Documentation Required</b>
	1. Evidence (policies, statements in publications, disclosures, etc.) demonstrating the institution’s operational integrity and honesty

**IER #5 – Operational Authority**

The following Standard supports this IER:

- 5.1 The institution has legal authorization to operate from all appropriate governmental agencies (state, federal, territory, country) in which it is located and has filed copies of such authorizations with TRACS. If a governmental requirement conflicts with a TRACS Standard, the institution will be deemed to be in compliance with the TRACS Standard as long as it is in compliance with the governmental requirement.**

<b>Exhibit Number</b>	<b>Documentation Required</b>
	1. Documentation of the institution’s authority to operate (including Teaching Sites, Branch Campuses and Distance Education) from all applicable entities

**IER #6 – Organizational Structure**

The following Standards support this IER:

- 6.1 The institution’s Board, of not less than 5 voting members, is the legally constituted body that holds the institution in trust, has appropriate oversight in matters of policy, operation and evaluation, and exists without conflicts of interest.**
- 6.2 The institution’s Board appoints and periodically evaluates a full-time Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who is not the Chair of the institution’s Board or a Chair of any of its sub-committees, and who is granted the legal authority to fulfill the tasks defined in the written job description for this position as the individual responsible for carrying out published Board policies and procedures.**

**6.3 A full-time Chief Academic Officer (CAO) is in place who has the credentials, experience, and competence to lead the institution's educational programs toward quality outcomes and the CAO is periodically evaluated.**

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. Listing of all Board members noting their positions on the Board, addresses and occupations
	2. Appropriately signed copy of the contract for the institution's full-time CEO
	3. Copy of the institution's organizational chart
	4. Copy of the institution's Bylaws
	5. Job descriptions for all administrators and staff
	6. Appropriately signed copy of the contract for the institution's full-time CAO along with documentation of his/her academic credentials.
	7. Listing of all administrative personnel noting qualifications

**IER #7 – Publications and Policies**

The following Standard supports this IER:

**7.1 The institution's publications are Board approved and include at least the following: *Board Manual, Policies Manual, Catalog(s), Faculty Handbook, Student Handbook.***

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. Copies of all required publications along with Board minutes indicating approval of the publications

**IER #8 – Educational Programs**

The following Standards support this IER:

**8.1 The institution has at least one academic program at the diploma, certificate, associate, bachelor, masters, and/or doctoral level (based on at least 60 semester credit hours or equivalent at the associate level; at least**

120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the bachelor level, or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the graduate or professional level).

- 8.2 The curriculum clearly relates to the mission and objectives of the institution.
- 8.3 Academic programs have adequate enrollment to facilitate student interaction appropriate to quality instruction and to financially sustain the program.
- 8.4 Undergraduate academic degree programs offered include an appropriate general education core. General education courses are not narrowly focused nor are they directed toward a specific occupation or profession. Undergraduate bachelor degree programs include a minimum of 30 semester hours, with at least 3 semester hours, in each of the humanities/fine arts, behavioral/ social sciences, and natural science/math. Associate degree programs include a minimum of 15 semester hours in general education.

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. Listing of all programs offered by the institution including the number of units required for program completion
	2. Listing of student enrollment by headcount (including Teaching Site, Branch Campus and Distance Education students) for each program for the past three years (if applicable)
	3. Listing of General Education requirements (undergraduate only) by category

**IER #9 – Faculty**

The following Standard supports this IER:

- 9.1 The institution employs at least one full-time, contracted, academically and spiritually qualified faculty member for each program area to teach and perform related duties, such as advising and the curricular oversight needed for the institution to fulfill its mission.

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. Listing of all program areas offered by the institution noting the qualified full-time faculty assigned to each program area
	2. Appropriately signed contract(s) for the required full-time faculty assigned to offer instruction in each program area
	3. Completed Instructional Staff Listing (ISL)

## IER #10 – Student Services

The following Standard supports this IER:

- 10.1 The institution offers an array of student services that are appropriate to its mission and objectives and which address the needs of its students regardless of location or the mode of delivery of educational programs.**

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. Description of the various student services provided by the institution

## IER #11 – Financial Operations

The following Standards support this IER:

- 11.1 The institution’s finances are adequate to support the staffing, facilities, equipment, materials, and support services for the approved programs.**

- 11.2 A certified external audit of the institution’s financial statements is conducted each year in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in Government Auditing Standards. Final audit reports along with all management letters are submitted to the TRACS office annually within 5 months of the close of the institution’s fiscal year. (See definition of *Certified External Audit*.) Audits demonstrate a recent history of financial stability. (See Definition of *Financial Stability*.) Institutions organized as non-profit or not-for-profit entities must have their audits prepared using the “net asset” model of accounting consistent with the policies and procedures provided by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) in its document, *Audit and Accounting Guide: Not-for-Profit Organizations: 2017*, or any later enacted version.**

- 11.3 The institution demonstrates credit lines or other liquid reserves adequate to ensure operations at all times.**

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. <u>Non-profit institutions</u> : Provide completed audit reports for the last three fiscal years, with the most recent two fiscal years showing a positive change in Unrestricted Net Assets and Total Net Assets and no increase in Pledges Receivable or Contributions Receivable. Submission must include all management letters.

	For-profit institutions: Provide completed audit reports for the last three fiscal years, with the most recent two fiscal years showing a positive change in Retained Earnings and cash. Submission must include all management letters.
	2. Provide Composite Score calculation based on audit report from most recently completed fiscal year. Analysis of most recent audit must result in a Composite Score of 1.5 to 3.0 in order to demonstrate Financial Stability. Composite Scores of less than 1.5 will require additional documentation of Financial Stability and Sustainability.
	3. Utilizing the TRACS supplied Salary Worksheet, provide information indicating salaries of all full-time personnel required by TRACS Standards and indicate the line items in the Audit Report where the salary expenses are included. Required full-time personnel include: the CEO, the CAO, one full-time faculty member for each program area.
	4. Provide a copy of the institution's five-year financial plan indicating positive changes in Unrestricted Net Assets and Total Net Assets (nonprofit institutions) or Retained Earnings (for-profit institutions).
	5. Provide documentation that the institution has credit lines or other liquid reserves adequate to ensure operations at all times. (An unused or available amount equal to 10% or more of institution's annual operating budget will be considered to demonstrate compliance. Amounts less than 10% will require a detailed explanation of how cash flow needs will be met along with accompanying financial documentation.)

## **IER #12 – Institutional Assessment**

The following Standards support this IER:

- 12.1 The institution has developed and implemented a comprehensive *Assessment Plan* which includes all aspects of the institution.**
- 12.2 The institution provides a systematic assessment of whether or not student learning outcomes at the institution, program and course levels are appropriate to its educational mission.**

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. A copy of the institution's current comprehensive <i>Assessment Plan</i> along with Board minutes indicating approval of the <i>Assessment Plan</i> .
	2. A listing of the outcomes for each program offered by the institution.

**IER #13 – Strategic Planning**

The following Standard supports this IER:

**13.1 The institution has developed and implemented a comprehensive, Board approved *Strategic Plan* which is based on both internal and external factors.**

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. A copy of the institution's current <i>Strategic Plan</i> along with Board minutes indicating approval of the <i>Strategic Plan</i> .

**IER #14 – Library and Learning Resources**

The following Standards support this IER:

**14.1 The institution furnishes library and learning resources and related services appropriate to support the institution's mission, academic programs, and administrative functions, through strategic, operational, and financial planning. These resources and services are made available to all students regardless of location or mode of course delivery.**

**14.2 The institution employs an adequate number of professionally qualified staff who administer the institution's library and learning resources.**

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. A comprehensive summary of all library and learning resources the institution makes available (either by ownership or other arrangements and/or agreements) to students regardless of location or mode of course delivery
	2. Listing of all library and learning resources staff, including their status, along with documentation of appropriate credentials



**IER #15 – Facilities and Equipment**

The following Standard supports this IER:

**15.1 The institution provides, maintains, and controls adequate facilities and equipment, (both on and off-campus) that appropriately serve the needs of the educational programs, support services, and other mission related activities.**

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. List and describe of the institution’s facilities and equipment which demonstrates adequacy

**IER #16 – Health and Security**

The following Standard supports this IER:

**16.1 Appropriate health and security measures, including an Emergency Plan, are in place for all institutional facilities and activities.**

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. Description of the institution’s policies and procedures (including an Emergency Plan) related to health and security matters
	2. Copies of all appropriate approvals, inspections and permits related to occupancy and health and security matters

**In addition to demonstrating compliance with the TRACS Standards supporting the above named IERs, applying institutions must also demonstrate compliance with the following Federal Requirements as applicable:**

**Applicable Federal Regulation Numbers are cited with each requirement.**

**IER #17 – Federal Requirements**

The following Standards support this IER:

**17.1 Credit Hours: The institution’s award of credit hours and length must meet national norms and federal requirements.**

**The institution is responsible to award credit hours in accordance with accepted practices in higher education and in compliance with the**

Federal definition of a credit hour which is as follows: "A credit hour for Federal purposes is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates some minimum amount of student work reflective of the amount of worked expected in a Carnegie unit: key phrases being 'institutionally established,' equivalency," "reasonable approximate," and "minimum amount."

The institution must have policies determining credit hours awarded for course and programs. Determining a credit hour should be equivalent to the following: (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or (2) at least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other activities as established by an institution, including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading toward to the award of credit hours.

The institution must demonstrate peer review of a credit hour for courses regardless of mode of delivery. TRACS staff, peer evaluators, and/or the TRACS Accreditation Commission will review the assignment of a credit hour to determine the reliability and accuracy of the assignment and process. - §600.2, §602.24(f)

- 17.2 Program Length and Cost: The institution's programs must be appropriate to the institution's mission and objectives and must demonstrate that program lengths are comparable to accredited institutions of higher education.

Program-specific fees and tuition must be published and appropriate for the program length and objectives. - §602.16(a)(1)viii

- 17.3 Student Complaints: Institutions must record student complaints. Records must be kept of student complaints received, the process for addressing the student complaints, and the manner in which the student complaint was handled in accordance with the institution's policies and procedures. The institution's student complaint policy must include, at a minimum: a method for receiving confidential student input, clear step-by-step procedures for due process, an appropriate office that securely maintains all information and records of complaints, appeals, proceedings, and instructions for filing a complaint with TRACS and any other relevant government agencies. - §602.16(a)(1)ix

- 17.4 **Transfer of Credit Policies:** The institution has published policies and procedures for accepting transfer of credits. Published policies include criteria for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit transfer, credit by examination, experiential learning (undergraduate only), advanced placement, and professional certificates. Policies and practices must ensure that course work is at the collegiate level. The institution is responsible for the quality of course work and credit given on the transcript.

The policies and procedures must be published and communicated to those who administer the policies. Articulation agreements must be disclosed and the institution listed with which the agreement is made. - §602.24(e)

- 17.5 **Distance Education and Correspondence Education:** The institution demonstrates that programs and courses offered via Distance Education and Correspondence Education are in compliance with the Federal definition of Distance Education and Correspondence Education (Title IV funds are available for Distance Education only):

*Distance Education Definition:* Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed 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 the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed above.

*Correspondence Education Definition:* 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; interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; correspondence courses are typically self-paced; and correspondence education is not distance education. - §602.3

*[NOTE: This definition for Correspondence Education is provided to ensure that the institution's Distance Education meets the definition of Distance*

*Education and does not fall to the level of Correspondence Education. Correspondence Education is not reviewed by TRACS and is not included in an institution's scope of recognition with TRACS.]*

- 17.6 **Verification of Student Identity:** An institution offering Distance Education as stated in Federal definitions must have a process to verify that the student who registers for a Distance Education program or course is the same student who participates in, completes, and receives credit. Methods to verify the student include but are not limited to: a secure login or passcode, proctored examinations, or new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying the identity of the student.

Institutions must notify the student at the time of registration of any additional charges associated with the verification of student identity. - §602.17(g)1

- 17.7 **Student Privacy:** The institution has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in Distance Education programs or courses. - §602.17(g)2

- 17.8 **Public Information:** The institution makes the following information available to students and the public through the institution's Catalog(s), website and/or other methods: academic calendar, grading policies, refund policies, admission policies, program requirements, and information regarding tuition and fees. - §602.16(a)(1)vii

- 17.9 **Advertising and Recruitment Materials:** The institution's advertising and recruitment materials must accurately represent the institution's practices and policies. - §602.16(a)(1)vii

- 17.10 **Fraud and Abuse:** The institution must not engage in fraud or abuse and practices or procedures that are designed to deceive students or falsify information to students. - §602.27(6)

- 17.11 **Student Achievement:** The institution's assessment of student achievement includes retention rates, course completion rates, graduation rates, job placement rates, and state or other licensing examinations. Student achievement information is made available to the public. - §602.16(a)(1)i

- 17.12 **Title IV Participation:** The institution maintains and demonstrates compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the most recent *Higher Education Act* as amended.

In evaluating the institution's compliance with Title IV program responsibilities, the TRACS Accreditation Commission will rely on documentation forwarded to TRACS by the U.S. Secretary of Education supported by letters of authorization on file from relevant agencies indicating certification of eligibility and Federal Aid audits - §602.16(a)(1)x, §602.27(a)6,7

Exhibit Number	Documentation Required
	1. Description of institution's definition of a credit hour and evidence (ex. meeting minutes) of appropriate review of this definition.
	2. Description of program lengths and evidence of publication of program lengths and costs
	3. Copy of policies and procedures related to student complaints and evidence that student complaints have been processed appropriately
	4. Copy of policies and procedures related to the transfer of credits
	5. Complete description of the institution's Distance Education and/or Correspondence Education processes which demonstrates compliance with all aspects of the requirement
	6. Description of the processes used to verify the identity of students enrolled in Distance Education and/or Correspondence Education courses /and or programs
	7. Description of the processes used to protect the privacy of students enrolled in Distance Education and/or Correspondence Education courses /and or programs
	8. Evidence that the institution makes all required elements available via its relevant publications
	9. Evidence that the institution's advertising and recruitment materials accurately represent the institution's practices and policies.
	10. Evidence (ex. policies, description of how complaints or lawsuits are/have been handled) that the institution does not engage in practices that are fraudulent, abusive, deceptive or false.
	11. Evidence that the institution collects and compiles data relative to student achievement that includes the required components
	12. Evidence, as applicable, that the institution maintains compliance with Title IV expectations.