
Section D:

The Accreditation Process

Table of Contents: Section D

The Accreditation Process	D-3
Getting Started	D-3
Part I Preliminary Application.....	D-4
Part II Self Evaluation Report (SER)	D-5
Part III Site Visit and Interviews.....	D-7
Part IV ARC Final Report	D-8
Part V Decision by Board of Directors	D-9
Part VI Maintaining Accreditation	D-9
Part VII Renewing Accreditation	D-9
Figure 1: Time Line for Initial Accreditation.....	D-10
Figure 2: Time Line for Renewing Accreditation	D-12

The Accreditation Process

Overview

The accreditation process is a structured, step-by-step process by which institutions/programs demonstrate how they meet the MEAC Standards for Accreditation. It consists of a preliminary application and self-evaluation report prepared by the institution/program followed by a site visit and interviews conducted by MEAC, a report of the findings of the accreditation review process, and a decision by the MEAC Board of Directors.

The accreditation process is designed to create or support opportunities for the directors, students, faculty and staff of institutions/programs to evaluate their midwifery education program against these national standards as well as any goals set by the institution/program itself. In addition, the accreditation process also provides opportunities for institutions/programs to receive training from MEAC specialists and feedback from teachers, administrators and other peers in the field of midwifery education.

The following pages contain general information on the parts and steps in the accreditation process. Generally the initial accreditation process takes at least 112 weeks. Those seeking reaccreditation can expect the process to take at least 106 weeks. Institutions and programs seeking initial accreditation and reaccreditation are always welcome to submit materials ahead of schedule and to respond promptly to notifications and requests for additional information during the process. They are also encouraged to present materials that are comprehensive, concise, and well-organized, as this will facilitate MEAC staff, ARC, and board review, and may limit the scope of materials requests, additional information requests, interim reporting requirements, etc. However, early submission and/or excellent materials does not automatically shorten the time that MEAC staff, ARC, and the board need to complete their steps in the process, and nor does early submission guarantee early review, as workload is planned around the expected deadlines described in Section D across multiple programs/institutions. The timelines presented here in Section D represent approximations based on MEAC's experience of working with many institutions and programs. However, each accreditation process is unique and may take more or less time than estimated. Detailed policies and procedures regarding all accreditation activities, including deadline extensions, can be found in Section G of the MEAC Accreditation Handbook.

Getting Started:

Initial Accreditation

Before initiating the accreditation process, carefully review the MEAC Accreditation Handbook. Consider the specific benchmarks that must be met within each of the standards, the kinds of documentation that will be required, the policies and procedures you must have in place, the costs of accreditation, and the responsibilities of maintaining accreditation status. This may seem overwhelming at first, but if you have a relatively new institution/program, the accreditation process will really help you get organized. If you have been involved in midwifery education for a long time, it may help to know that others have found this process to be very helpful in strengthening weak areas of an existing institution/program.

MEAC provides training and technical assistance to institutions/programs about the accreditation process and may recommend consulting educators, administrators, accountants and/or other

professionals for further development of the institution or program. MEAC requires all applicants to attend a workshop on the accreditation process prior to submitting a preliminary application for accreditation. This workshop must be taken (or retaken) within 2 years prior to applying. MEAC staff is available throughout the process to answer questions and provide other assistance. Contact info@meacschools.org for more information on this pre-accreditation workshop.

Once you've made the decision to seek accreditation, identify the people in your institution/program who will contribute to the preparation of your application and self-evaluation report. The Midwifery Program Director (or equivalent in your institution/program) generally leads the process but faculty, students, staff, board members and other stakeholders will also be involved depending on the size, structure and complexity of your midwifery education program. Get your team together to review the requirements and the timeline. Figure out who needs to do what to put all the pieces in place and get started!

Renewing Accreditation

The process to apply for Renewal of Accreditation begins 106 weeks before the expiration date of the institution's/program's current period of accreditation with a letter from MEAC notifying the school or program that it is time to begin the renewal process. The Intent to Renew Accreditation Form and Part I Fee are due within 8 weeks. The Accreditation Coordinator will provide applicants for renewal of accreditation with a schedule of their reaccreditation cycle.

Part I Preliminary Application for Initial Accreditation

The Preliminary Application and Part I Fee initiates the accreditation process and launches the timeline that structures each of the following steps in the process. The application is intended to document the institution's/program's legal authority to provide an educational program, explain the ownership and governance structure, provide other necessary background information, and briefly describe the midwifery education program. The Preliminary Application form and checklist will be distributed as part of the required pre-accreditation workshop.

Part I Procedures and Timeline for Initial Accreditation

1. Applicant submits Preliminary Application and Part I Fee
2. MEAC Accreditation Coordinator (AC) reviews the Preliminary Application:
 - Is the Preliminary Application complete?
 - Does the applicant meet the basic legal and financial requirements?
3. MEAC notifies applicant of receipt of Preliminary Application:
 - Preliminary Application has been accepted.
 - MEAC will notify applicant of acceptance within 10 weeks of receipt of preliminary application
 - The Self-Evaluation Report is due within 26 weeks of notification of acceptance

- If Preliminary Application is incomplete and/or doesn't meet basic legal and financial requirements:
 - Applicant must submit missing and/or new information within 4 weeks of notification
 - AC will review missing and/or new information
 - MEAC will notify applicant within 2 weeks of receipt of missing and/or new information that the Preliminary Application has either been accepted or rejected
- 4. If the Preliminary Application is rejected, an explanation will be provided and the applicant may reapply at any time.

Part II Self Evaluation Report (SER)

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) is a comprehensive, detailed report prepared by the institution/program addressing each of the standards and associated benchmarks. The institution/program is asked to demonstrate how the benchmarks are met by providing written descriptions; completing forms and tables; submitting documents, records and reports; and copies of policies and procedures, contracts, and marketing materials. The SER must be submitted digitally. MEAC will provide you with a SER Word Template and a Style Guide to assist in the creation of your digital SER after the initial application has been accepted .

An Accreditation Review Committee (ARC) will be appointed to evaluate your SER, conduct your subsequent site visit and interviews, and to prepare a report with recommendations to the MEAC Board of Directors. You will be provided the names of volunteers who may be appointed to serve as your ARC and you have the right to request alternate appointees. The ARC will determine whether your SER is complete and the information provided adequately addresses the benchmarks. You will be given an opportunity to provide new and/or different information if necessary.

After you submit your SER, MEAC will publish a notice in the MANA News and a community newspaper about your institution's or program's application for accreditation. We will also send an announcement to any applicable regulatory or accrediting bodies. The ARC will consider any third party comments regarding your institution's/program's qualifications for accreditation and will follow-up as needed.

Part II Procedures and Timeline

Remember, the accreditation process may take more time than estimated to complete.

1. MEAC sends a list of proposed Accreditation Review Committee (ARC) members to applicant for approval. Applicant approves or rejects ARC members within 4 weeks of MEAC providing a list of proposed ARC members.
2. Accreditation Coordinator proposes site visit dates to applicant and site visitors.

3. Applicant must submit Self Evaluation Report (SER) and Part II Fee within 26 weeks of MEAC notifying applicant that Preliminary Application was accepted. For renewals of accreditation, the SER is due 24 weeks from the time the letter of renewal notification is sent to the school.
4. MEAC posts public notices of applicant's application for accreditation within 4 weeks of MEAC receipt of SER and notifies state agencies and other accreditors, soliciting third party comment.
5. Coordinator completes a checklist review of SER to determine if the applicant has submitted enough material to be evaluated by the ARC. If demonstrations are found missing, staff prepares and sends a Materials Request to the applicant school within 4 weeks of MEAC's receipt of SER.
 - Is the SER complete?
 - Does the applicant appear to meet the documentation requirements?
6. Applicant responds to Materials Request within 2 weeks.
7. Within 8 weeks of receipt of response to Materials Request, the ARC & MEAC staff complete a thorough review of the SER. Each benchmark will be analyzed under the following guidelines:
 - At a time when the benchmark is able to be fully analyzed by using the materials submitted in the SER, in an Additional Information Request, or during a site visit, the ARC members will assign a score of 3, 2, 1, or NOT MET:
 - 3 = The submission exceeds expectations for this benchmark.
 - 2 = The submission satisfactorily meets expectations for this benchmark.
 - 1 = The submission meets minimal requirements for this benchmark but weaknesses are present and school is expected to address the weaknesses by the next accreditation cycle.
 - NOT MET = After a comprehensive review, the ARC is unable to conclude that the school meets the benchmark. If the benchmark is found NOT MET after the site visit and a full analysis of the submission, the ARC will recommend an interim report.
 - Benchmarks will be scored at the earliest point in the process that the ARC has sufficient information to complete their analysis. Depending on the benchmark and the information submitted, this could be as soon as the SER review or as late as after the applicant has responded to the draft ARC Final Report (see Part IV). Scores may be revised as needed.
 - If the benchmark is unable to be fully analyzed without gathering information in an Additional Information Request or during the site visit, the ARC will make notes regarding the demonstrations which have been provided in the SER but leave the benchmark itself unscored.
8. After the ARC conducts its review, MEAC notifies the applicant whether the SER is adequate. If it is, the ARC Preliminary Analysis and site visit preparation materials are provided and site visit will be scheduled within 26 weeks.

Part III Site Visit and Interviews

A two or three day visit to the institution/program and interviews of students, faculty, and staff will be conducted by members of your Accreditation Review Committee (ARC) to verify that the information provided in the SER is accurate and complete. The SER Workbook includes all of the specific information that the site visitors will be looking for in the site visit and interviews. The ARC will use standardized procedures and forms to gather information and you will receive copies of these forms well in advance of the site visit so that you know what to expect and what to prepare.

MEAC will work with you to establish a site visit date that works for you and the site visitors and will make travel arrangements for the site visitors. You will be contacted to help prepare and arrange a schedule for activities during the site visit.

9. If the SER is incomplete or inadequate, and if the ARC believes that additional information may be helpful in its review, it may file an Additional Information Request. The Additional Information Request may contain the following: a request for additional demonstrations, questions about submissions, or guidance that may be helpful to the school in preparing for the site visit. The institution/program is not notified of benchmark scores at this time.

- Applicant must respond to the Additional Information Request within 6 weeks
- AC/ARC will review the response to the Additional Information Request.
- Within 6 weeks of receiving the response to the Additional Information Request, the ARC will determine either:
 - that the SER with the additional information is adequate and that the site visit can be scheduled or
 - that the SER with the additional information is inadequate, and will then send its recommendation to reject the SER to the MEAC Board.
- The Board reviews the ARC recommendation, SER, additional information, and public comments.
- The Board then votes to reject or accept the SER within 4 weeks.
- If the SER is rejected, MEAC will provide an explanation. The applicant may not re-apply until a period of 26 weeks has elapsed since MEAC's decision.
- If the SER is accepted by the Board, site visit preparation materials are provided to the school and site visit is scheduled.

Part III Procedures and Timeline

1. Site visit is scheduled to occur within 30 weeks of MEAC notifying applicant that the SER has been accepted
2. Accreditation Coordinator develops tentative site visit schedule and sends to applicant at least 4 weeks in advance of site visit
3. Applicant submits Part III Fee at least 4 weeks in advance of site visit
4. Accreditation Coordinator and ARC review any public comments received and any other concerns and/or questions raised by SER review; finalize site visit schedule (including tasks assigned to site visitors); and prepare information for applicant 2 weeks in advance of site visit
5. MEAC sends final site visit schedule, site visit preparation materials, and any specific questions/concerns the ARC will address during site visit in addition to basic site visit activities at least 2 weeks in advance of site visit
6. Site visit occurs over 2-3 days; phone and/or online surveys interviews may occur before, during and/or after the site visit
7. ARC and Accreditation Coordinator verbally review Preliminary Report and site visit results with applicant at conclusion of site visit

Part IV ARC Final Report

The ARC evaluates whether your program or institution meets the standards through review of the SER, the site visit and interviews. They examine any third party comments, complaints or information from regulatory or accrediting agencies. Based on their findings, they will prepare and send you a draft of the ARC Final Report. You will have the opportunity to send clarifying comments and, if requested, to provide additional information or new evidence to demonstrate how benchmarks are met. After incorporating your response, the ARC will submit the ARC Final Report with their recommendations to the MEAC Board of Directors.

Part IV Procedures and Timeline

1. Accreditation Coordinator prepares written report combining ARC Preliminary Report, site visit and interview results and provides to ARC within 4 weeks of completing site visit.
2. ARC reviews ARC Preliminary Report, site visit and interview results and AC written report; adopts draft ARC Final Report within 4 weeks of receiving AC written report:
 - Is all documentation complete and adequate to determine whether or not benchmarks have been met?
 - Was the ARC able to verify information during site visit and/or interviews?
3. MEAC sends draft ARC Final Report to applicant with request, if applicable, for additional information and/or new evidence that benchmark(s) have been met; applicant must respond within 8 weeks of receipt with clarifying comments, additional information and/or new evidence that benchmarks have been met.
4. Accreditation Coordinator and ARC review applicant's response and revise report accordingly; ARC adopts ARC Final Report with Recommendation to grant, defer or deny accreditation within 6 weeks.

Part V Decision by Board of Directors

The Board of Directors makes the decision to grant, defer or deny accreditation. If you are unable to provide information that satisfactorily demonstrates how your institution or program meets the standards by the established deadline, accreditation will be denied. If it is denied, your institution or program may re-apply when one year has elapsed from the date of the Board's final decision.

MEAC provides an appeal process if an institution or program believes it has been unjustly denied accreditation which is described in Section G of the MEAC Accreditation Handbook.

MEAC will notify your institution/program once an accreditation decision has been made.

If the Board grants accreditation or pre-accreditation status, MEAC will provide you with a certificate, and notify applicable 3rd parties.

Part VI Maintaining Accreditation

Accredited institutions/programs must demonstrate continuing compliance with MEAC standards and fulfill certain other requirements, including the submission of annual reports and sustaining fees as well as any interim reports required by the Board.

If MEAC has reason to be concerned that an accredited institution/program is not in compliance with MEAC standards, MEAC may conduct special evaluations or site visits, require the institution/program to show cause why accreditation should not be withdrawn, and/or take adverse action which could include terminating accreditation.

Accredited institutions/programs must notify MEAC before making substantive changes and certain changes require prior approval by MEAC. More specific requirements, policies and procedures for maintaining accreditation can be found in Section G of the MEAC Accreditation Handbook.

Part VII Renewing Accreditation

The process to apply for renewal of accreditation occurs over the 106 weeks prior to the expiration date of the institutions/program's current period of accreditation. MEAC initiates the renewal process by sending a letter to the program or institution notifying them that it is time to begin the renewal process and providing a schedule of due dates for their reaccreditation cycle. The school or program has 8 weeks to respond with their Intent to Renew Accreditation Form and Part I Fee.

After the Intent to Renew Accreditation Form and Part I Fee are received, the Self-Evaluation Report is due within 16 weeks. The process continues as described in Parts II through VI above.

If the Board grants a renewal of accreditation the new period of accreditation will begin at the end of the current period of accreditation MEAC will notify your institution/program once an accreditation decision has been made.

More specific requirements, policies and procedures for renewing accreditation can be found in Section G of the MEAC Accreditation Handbook.

Figure 1: Initial Accreditation Timeline Table

	Cumulative Timeline	Time for Each Step within Parts I-V	Applicant submits to MEAC:	MEAC Internal Procedures:	Applicant notified by MEAC:
PART I 10 weeks	0 weeks		Preliminary Application and Part I Fee Received		
	4 weeks	4 weeks		Accreditation Coordinator (AC) has 4 weeks to review preliminary application; verifies info and finds complete, basic requirements met or application found incomplete.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If complete and accepted, AC notifies applicant within 10 weeks, • If preliminary application is incomplete; applicant notified, and has 4 weeks to respond with additional information.
	8 weeks	4 weeks	If application was found incomplete, applicant submits additional information		
	10 weeks	2 weeks		AC has 2 weeks to review additional information and notify the school if application meets basic requirements	Preliminary application has been accepted, SER due in 26 weeks
PART II- 56 weeks	14 weeks	4 weeks		ARC assigned	List of proposed Accreditation Review Committee (ARC) members sent to applicant
	18 weeks	4 weeks	Applicant approves ARC members	AC confirms site visit dates with applicant and site visitors	Confirm site visit dates
	36 weeks	18 weeks	Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and Part II Fee		
	40 weeks	4 weeks		AC drafts preliminary analysis of SER; staff posts public notices	
	46 weeks	6 weeks		ARC reviews/revises AC preliminary analysis of SER; AC sends notification to the school if additional information requested by ARC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •If SER incomplete, school notified by AC of additional information request by ARC. Applicant has 8 weeks to respond. •If adequate, applicant notified of preliminary analysis of SER and site visit info, site visit to be completed within 30 weeks
	54 weeks	8 weeks	If SER was found incomplete, applicant submits additional information		
	62 weeks	8 weeks		ARC has 8 weeks to review Additional Information submitted by school. ARC finds additional Information adequate/not adequate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •If adequate, preliminary analysis of SER and site visit prep info, site visit to be completed within 14 weeks •If not adequate refer to the Board for review and action
	66 weeks	4 weeks		Board review and decision to accept or reject SER	Applicant notified of Board's decision

PART III 10 weeks	68 weeks	2 weeks	Part III Fee	AC/applicant develops tentative site visit schedule	Confirmed site visit tentative schedule
	70 weeks	2 weeks		AC/ARC review any public comments received, finalize site visit schedule, prepares info for applicant	Final site visit schedule, prep reminders and any specific questions/concerns the ARC will address during site visit
	76 weeks	6 weeks	Site Visit and Interviews Completed		Verbal review of preliminary analysis and site visit results at close of site visit
PART IV 22 weeks	80 weeks	4 weeks		AC prepares draft ARC Final Report	
	84 weeks	4 weeks		ARC reviews/revises draft ARC Final Report	Draft ARC Final Report, response with any comments/added info due in 8 weeks
	92 weeks	8 weeks	Response to draft ARC final report with any comments/added info		
	98 weeks	6 weeks		AC/ARC reviews applicant response, makes revisions as indicated, adopts ARC Final Report with Recommendations	
PART V 14 weeks	106 weeks	8 weeks		Board reviews ARC Final Report with Recommendations and makes decision regarding accreditation	
	108 weeks	2 weeks			Applicant notified of Board decision
	112 weeks	4 weeks		Planning cushion	

Figure 2: Reaccreditation Timeline Table

	Cumulative Timeline	Time for Each Step within Parts I-V	Applicant submits to MEAC:	MEAC Internal Procedures:	Applicant notified by MEAC:
Part 0 -6 weeks	0			MEAC Internal Reaccreditation Process Begins.	
	-6 weeks	-6 weeks		ARC assigned by President of the Board and the Executive Director. AC prepares renewal notification letter and reaccreditation schedule	
Part I 8 weeks	0 weeks	0 weeks			Reaccreditation process begins with a letter sent to applicant notifying the school/program to submit the Intent to Renew Accreditation Form and Part I Fee within 8 weeks. Letter includes projected reaccreditation schedule including proposed site visit dates; and the names of proposed Accreditation Review Committee (ARC) members.
	8 weeks	8 weeks	Part I Fee and Intent to Renew Accreditation Form Received		SER due in 16 weeks
PART II- 46 weeks	12 weeks	4 weeks	Applicant approves ARC members	AC confirms site visit dates with applicant and site visitors	Confirm site visit dates
	24 weeks	12 weeks	Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and Part II Fee Due		
	28 weeks	4 weeks		SER uploaded and shared with ARC . AC drafts preliminary analysis of SER; staff posts public notices	
	34 weeks	6 weeks		ARC reviews/revises AC preliminary analysis of SER; AC sends notification to the school if additional information requested by ARC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •If SER incomplete, school notified by AC of additional information request by ARC. Applicant has 8 weeks to respond. •If adequate, applicant notified of preliminary analysis of SER and site visit prep info, site visit to be completed within 30 weeks
	42 weeks	8 weeks	If SER was found incomplete, applicant submits additional information		
	50 weeks	8 weeks		ARC has 8 weeks to review Additional Information submitted by school. ARC finds additional Information adequate/not adequate.	If adequate, preliminary analysis of SER and site visit prep info, site visit to be completed within 14 weeks If not adequate refer to the Board for review and action
	54 weeks	4 weeks		If ARC found SER/Additional Information not adequate, Board Review and Decision to accept or reject SER	Applicant notified of Board's decision

PART III 10 weeks	56 weeks	2 weeks	Part III Fee	AC/applicant develops tentative site visit schedule	Confirmed site visit tentative schedule
	58 weeks	2 weeks		AC/ARC review any public comments received, finalize site visit schedule, prepares info for applicant	Final site visit schedule, prep reminders and any specific questions/concerns the ARC will address during site visit
	64 weeks	6 weeks	Site Visit and Interviews Completed		Verbal review of preliminary analysis and site visit results at close of site visit
PART IV 22 weeks	68 weeks	4 weeks		Site Visit Book packaged and uploaded. AC prepares draft ARC Final Report	
	72 weeks	4 weeks		ARC reviews/revises draft ARC Final Report	Draft ARC Final Report, response with any comments/added info due in 8 weeks
	80 weeks	8 weeks	Response to draft ARC final report with any comments/added info		
	86 weeks	6 weeks		AC/ARC reviews applicant response, makes revisions as indicated, adopts ARC Final Report with Recommendations	
PART V 20 weeks	94 weeks	8 weeks		Board reviews ARC Final Report with Recommendations and makes decision regarding accreditation	
	96 weeks	2 weeks			Applicant notified of Board decision
	106 weeks	10 weeks		If Board decision is to grant re-accreditation the new period of accreditation begins at end of the current accreditation cycle.	*Reflects a 10 week planning cushion
