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## Section C: Standards Supplemental Information

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## Purpose of the Standards Supplemental Information

Accreditation has a dual purpose: compliance assessment and continuous improvement. While MEAC cannot give you the answer to each standard, we can assist our schools in understanding the requirements and different ways of meeting those requirements.

Accreditation, and higher education in general has its language. To be successful, each school will need to learn this language. This document assists Member Schools, applicant schools, potential schools, MEAC peer reviewers, and MEAC decision-makers in understanding MEAC's 2020 Standards for Accreditation. It will serve as an additional check and balance in helping ensure MEAC has consistency in the application and evaluation of benchmarks and to ensure MEAC's reviewers, decision-makers, and schools are on the same page regarding benchmark interpretation. This document will do that in the following ways:

- Explain the purpose of each standard and benchmark
- Discuss the interpretations and specifics of each benchmark
- Explain what the school will be required to provide in a Self-Evaluation Report
- Explain how each benchmark will be verified during a site visit, if applicable
- Explain how each benchmark will be evaluated and the key points to address

This document is also being provided as training for MEAC's Member Schools, applicant schools, and potential schools. In addition to the explanations noted above, this document contains several appendices that will be helpful for all schools in their preparation for accreditation.

## Contact Information for Help

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## Overview of Standards Layout

MEAC's 2020 Standards for Accreditation are broken into ten sections. Each section, while related to the others, looks at a distinct aspect of the program or institution to give a whole picture of how that program or institution is functioning as a place of higher education. While it may seem that a benchmark in one standard is asking for something similar to a benchmark in another standard, each is purposefully looking at the program or institution from a different viewpoint. Because of this, when responding to benchmarks, it is important to remember which overall standard or viewpoint you are being asked to speak to.



Each of the ten sections in MEAC's standards also corresponds to the ten areas accreditors must evaluate under federal regulation to be recognized by the US Department of Education<sup>1</sup>. The standards could be grouped in several other ways as well, such as by topic or area of focus (ex, orientation and training, equity and access, student learning and outcomes, and so on). As a USDE-recognized accreditor, MEAC has structured our standards to most easily allow us to demonstrate compliance with USDE requirements.

Most of the benchmarks within MEAC's standards are also designed to assess the process used to arrive at a quality endpoint and the endpoint itself. Both pieces are essential in accreditation as they ensure that the school is at a quality place (in compliance) during the snapshot in time captured within the specific review and that the systems and processes the school has in place are reliable for reasonably ensuring that the school will have ongoing compliance between reviews.

<sup>1</sup>34 CFR 602.16(a)(1)(i-x)

## List of Basic Policies and Procedures Required

Go to Federal Student Aid (FSA) for format assistance and policy ideas. FSA has a [Guide to Creating Policies and Procedures Manual](#).

### Student Policies

1. Academic Honesty
2. Code of Conduct for Students
  - a. Alcohol, smoking, weapons, etc.
3. Code of Conduct for Users of the College Computer System
4. Non-Discrimination
5. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
6. Rights and Freedoms of Students
7. Satisfactory Academic Progress
8. Services for Students with Disabilities
9. Student Consumer Information
10. Students' Rights Regarding Their Educational Records
11. Title IX Policies for Individuals Reporting Sexual Harassment and Misconduct
12. Title IX Policy on Absence Due to Pregnancy

### Faculty and Staff Policies

1. Faculty Responsibilities
2. Faculty Hiring Policy and Procedure
  - a. Job descriptions
3. Faculty Orientation, Training, and Professional Development
4. Staff Responsibilities
5. Staff Hiring Policy and Procedure
  - a. Job descriptions
6. Staff Orientation, Training, and Professional Development
7. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
8. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
9. Non-Discrimination
  - a. Hiring, promotion, etc.
10. Technology
11. Library and Learning Resources
12. Distance Education
13. Governance Structure
14. Institutional Plan
15. Financial Management
16. Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

## Continuous Improvement

MEAC's standards set the minimum requirements that schools must meet for accreditation. MEAC encourages schools to adopt a "Met-3 Mindset" and implement internal assessment methods.

### The Met-3 Mindset

1. Identify the minimum requirements set at the local, state, federal, and accreditation levels, then plan for going above and beyond.
2. Strive for best practices in all program or institutional operations areas.
3. Establish a regular and rigorous assessment and improvement system for all areas of the program or institution's operations.
4. Establish a regular and reliable professional development and continuing education system for all administrative and educational personnel.
5. Explore innovative ways of delivering the educational program, administrative and faculty structures/oversight, and business management.

### Assessment Resources

There are many higher education resources you can look to to develop your assessments. Here are a few links:

- The [Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education](#) publishes resources for assessment.
- Federal Student Aid (tied to DoE) publishes [FSA assessments](#) that provide guidance in compliance with Title IV requirements.
- Watermark has some great info on [building a culture of assessment](#).
- Old Dominion University (my alma mater) has a [How-To-Guide: Academic Program Assessment Plan and Report](#).

### Questions to Ask

- What is the institution/program's plan for self-study and ongoing assessment?
- Who will lead the assessments, and who will be involved?
- What schedule and timeline will the self-study and ongoing assessments follow?
- What resources are available or allocated to support the self-study and ongoing assessments?
- What issues have been identified with prior self-studies and assessments? Have these issues been adequately addressed and fully resolved?
- Are accreditation pieces embedded in the institution/program's strategic plan requiring attention before the next accreditation cycle begins?
- How does the institution/program use accreditation reports in its planning efforts?
- How will the institution/program demonstrate continued improvement?
- How will new leadership/staff be oriented to accreditation processes, requirements, and impact on how the school does its work?