



meac
midwifery education
accreditation council

Section G: Policies & Procedures

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I. Board of Directors

MEAC Bylaws describe criteria for board membership, elections, meetings and other policies that are relevant to the Board of Directors. The following policies and procedures provide further clarification.

A. Members of MEAC Board of Directors

1. Composition
 - a. The MEAC Board of Directors has responsibility for governance and all final accreditation decisions for both institutions and programs, and therefore includes practitioners (midwives), educators, academic, and administrative personnel.
 - b. At least one, but no less than one-seventh of the members of the Board shall be members of the public, which may include students. To qualify as a public member, candidates must not be an employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution or program that either is accredited or preaccredited by MEAC or has applied for accreditation or preaccreditation; a member of any trade association or membership association related to, affiliated with, or associated with MEAC; or a spouse, parent, child or sibling of an individual associated with, affiliated with, or related to MEAC or to MEAC institutions or programs or other associated, affiliated, or related organizations.
 - c. All Board members must meet eligibility criteria to serve, as specified in MEAC's Bylaws.
2. Nominations
 - a. Nominees shall be solicited from the general public, from the midwifery community, and from midwifery educational programs.
 - b. Nominees must have the endorsement of at least two professional colleagues. If the prospective Board member is a midwife or midwifery educator, endorsements must be from professional colleagues who have worked with them in relevant committees, boards or organizations. If the prospective Board member is a public member, endorsements must be from colleagues who have worked with them in another organization.
 - c. The nominee will review MEAC documents and consider Board member responsibilities and expectations.
 - d. Prior to agreeing to run for election to the board, the nominees will provide MEAC with a résumé and letters of endorsement, including phone numbers, from the two professional references.
 - e. All nominees are subject to review by the Nominations Committee to ensure that candidates meet the requirements for serving as a member of the Board of Directors. This review shall follow a standardized process and utilize standardized rubrics and tools.
3. Elections
 - a. Elections will proceed as stated in the Bylaws. Voting in elections is restricted to Member Schools only. At no point may a Board Member be selected or elected by any associated agency or organization.
4. Responsibilities: Once elected to the Board, each Board member is expected to:
 - a. Travel to and participate in MEAC Board meetings. In the event of two or more unexcused absences from Board and /or Committee meetings the Executive Committee may request the resignation of the Director.

- b. Support the finances of MEAC by assisting with fundraising
- c. Participate in the work of at least one MEAC committee during a given year.
- d. Familiarize themselves with all MEAC documents and the accreditation processes utilized by MEAC.
- e. Participate in accreditation activities; including serving as Independent Board Reviewers (see II.B.6).
- f. MEAC Board Members are responsible for making final accreditation decisions.
- g. Comply with the ethics policies of MEAC (see II.C).
 - (i) In particular, Directors must avoid any interest, influence, or relationship that might conflict, or appear to conflict, with the best interests of MEAC, or that might affect judgment or loyalty. Directors must promptly disclose any situation where an actual or potential conflict may exist, and remove themselves from negotiations, deliberations or votes involving the conflict.
 - (ii) Directors must also agree to maintain the confidentiality of all documents and information acquired as part of an institution's/program's accreditation process. Directors will not discuss the accreditation matters related to an institution/program outside of the normal MEAC meetings unless such discussion is necessary to conduct MEAC business effectively. Any restrictions on the provision of otherwise confidential information may be superseded by the requirements of government agencies or national accreditation regulatory agencies.

B. The Executive Committee

- 1. Composition:
 - a. The Executive Committee shall be the Officers, the Executive Director and Director of Accreditation in ex-officio capacity, and such other members as determined by the Board. It shall be the key planning and coordinating body of MEAC.
- 2. Elections:
 - a. Officers shall be elected by the Board itself according to the Bylaws.
- 3. Responsibilities:
 - a. The Executive Committee shall act on behalf of the Board in the periods between meetings of the Board on all matters within the authority of the Board, except as to the following matters:
 - (i) The amendment, altering or repeal of the Bylaws or the adoption of new Bylaws;
 - (ii) Electing, appointing or removing any member of any Committee or any Director or Officer of MEAC;
 - (iii) Amending or restating the Articles of Incorporation, adopting a plan of merger or adopting a plan of consolidation with another corporation;
 - (iv) Authorizing the sale, lease, exchange or mortgage of all or substantially all of the property and assets of MEAC;
 - (v) Authorizing the voluntary dissolution of MEAC or adopting a plan for the distribution of the assets of MEAC;
 - (vi) Making decisions on behalf of or changing decisions of the Board regarding the accreditation status of an institution or program, and;
 - (vii) The amendment or repeal of any resolution of the Board which by its terms shall not be so amendable or repealable.

II. Administration

A. Personnel

MEAC will employ adequate administrative staff to carry out its accrediting responsibilities and manage its finances effectively. If for any reason, there should be insufficient funds to maintain staff, these administrative tasks will be carried out by the executive officers of the MEAC Board.

1. Executive Director

- a. The Executive Director is generally responsible for the governance of the organization, including but not limited to, representing the organization to the public and other agencies, managing the organization's finances, providing support to the Board of Directors, and supervising other staff.
- b. The Executive Committee of the Board of Directors supervises the Executive Director.
- c. The Executive Director should have the following qualifications:
 - (i) Ability to meet the requirements of the job description
 - (ii) Sound reputation for ethical conduct
 - (iii) Commitment to the goals and purposes of MEAC
- d. Recruitment and Selection
 - (i) The Board will establish a hiring committee.
 - (ii) All interested applicants must submit a résumé and at least two professional references to this committee. Applicants are expected to review all of MEAC's current documents and the job description for Executive Director.
 - (iii) Applicants will be interviewed.
 - (iv) The hiring committee will select the most suitable applicant for the position and present their recommendation to the Board of Directors for approval.
 - (v) All relevant parties will sign an employment agreement and complete job-specific training.

2. Director of Accreditation

- a. The Director of Accreditation is generally responsible for the program activities of the organization, including but not limited to, accreditation activities, representing the organization to the public and other agencies, providing support to the Board of Directors and supervising other accreditation staff.
- b. The Executive Director supervises the Director of Accreditation.
- c. The Director of Accreditation should have the following qualifications:
 - (i) Ability to meet the requirements of the job description.
 - (ii) Sound reputation for ethical conduct.
 - (iii) Commitment to the goals and purposes of MEAC.
- d. Recruitment and Selection
 - (i) The Board will establish a hiring committee.
 - (ii) All interested applicants must submit a résumé and at least two professional references to this committee. Applicants are expected to review all of MEAC's current documents and the job description for Director of Accreditation.
 - (iii) Applicants will be interviewed.

- (iv) The hiring committee will select the most suitable applicant for the position and present their recommendation to the Board of Directors for approval.
- (v) All relevant parties will sign an employment agreement and complete job-specific training.

3. Other Administrative Staff
 - a. Other administrative staff may be hired as needed.
 - b. Responsibilities may include reception, correspondence and clerical support, bookkeeping, and other services as delegated by the Executive Director.
 - c. The Executive Director and the Director of Accreditation are responsible for hiring and supervision.
 - d. All administrative staff must be qualified for the job for which they are hired, and must complete job-specific training.
4. Conflict of Interest
 - a. Administrative staff, consultants and other agency representatives are required to disclose any potential conflict of interest as described in the organization's ethics policies (see II.C).
5. Confidentiality
 - a. Administrative staff, consultants, and other agency representatives will not discuss the accreditation matters related to an institution/program outside of the normal MEAC meetings unless such discussion is necessary to conduct MEAC business effectively (see II.C). Any restrictions on the provision of otherwise confidential information may be superseded by the requirements of government agencies or national accreditation regulatory agencies.

B. Evaluation and Decision-Making Bodies

1. Composition of Evaluation and Decision-Making Bodies
 - a. MEAC accredits both institutions and programs, and therefore includes practitioners, educators, academic, and administrative personnel in evaluation and decision-making bodies. MEAC's evaluation bodies are known as Accreditation Review Committees (ARCs). The decision-making body is the Board of Directors.
2. Conflicts of Interest
 - a. Members of evaluation and decision-making bodies must agree to declare all conflicts of interest and remove themselves from proceedings accordingly (see II.C).
3. Confidentiality
 - a. Members of evaluation and decision-making bodies must agree to honor the confidentiality of all interactions with the institution/program (see II.C).
4. Training
 - a. Structured training is provided for all members of evaluation and decision-making bodies prior to accreditation cycles on their responsibilities, as appropriate for their roles, regarding the agency's standards, policies, and procedures, to conduct its on-site evaluations, apply or establish its policies, and make its accrediting and preaccrediting decisions, including, their responsibilities regarding distance education.
5. Evaluation: Accreditation Review Committees
 - a. Responsibilities of the Accreditation Review Committees (ARC)

- (i) Accreditation Review Committees are responsible for the evaluation of applicant institutions/programs, including review of the self-evaluation report and other documentation provided, conduct of site visits and interviews, and preparation of the ARC report and recommendations to the Board of Directors.
- b. Selection of Accreditation Review Committees
 - (i) MEAC makes regular announcements to the wider midwifery education community of the need for qualified volunteers to serve on ARCs. ARC members are appointed by the Director of Accreditation, under the Board President's supervision, if they meet the stated qualifications.
- c. Qualifications of Accreditation Review Committee Members
 - (i) ARC members are competent and knowledgeable individuals; qualified by education and experience in their own right and trained by the agency. They must have demonstrated experience and/or ability to evaluate institutions/programs as educators, clinicians, academic or administrative personnel, or they must be similarly qualified.
 - (ii) Potential ARC members must provide MEAC with a resume to document their qualifications and experience.
 - (iii) Potential ARC members must provide at least two professional references.
 - (iv) Potential ARC members must review and sign MEAC's Ethics Policy and conflict of interest declaration.
 - (v) Applicant institutions/programs have the right to request alternate ARC appointees in circumstances where there is a conflict of interest, an appearance of a conflict of interest, or sincerely-held concerns about the qualifications of the ARC appointee to conduct the review.
- d. Evaluation of Accreditation Review Committee Members
 - (i) Evaluation of ARC member performance is systematically collected and reviewed.
 - (a) The Director of Accreditation regularly reviews evaluations of ARC member performance, including self-evaluation, evaluation from the midwifery program (site visitors); and evaluations from others on the ARC and staff.
 - (b) In the event that evaluations include reports of inappropriate conduct at a site visit or conflict with other ARC members, the MEAC Director of Accreditation, in conjunction with the Board President, may decide that the person no longer serves in these capacities.

6. Decision-Making: Board of Directors

- a. The MEAC Board of Directors makes all final decisions regarding preaccreditation and accreditation status.
- b. Responsibilities of the MEAC Board of Directors
 - (i) The Board of Directors is supplied the accreditation process material, including self-evaluation reports submitted by the institution/program, site visit reports, Accreditation Review Committee reports, responses from the institution/program, and any other relevant material, including monitoring and compliance reports, so that it may conduct its own review.

- (ii) Two board members are assigned as Independent Board Reviewers to conduct an independent review of the materials described above, present their findings, and make recommendations to the Board regarding decisions to be made.
- (iii) All Board members are provided access to these materials electronically prior to the board meeting in which an accreditation decision will be made, except those recused from a decision.
- (iv) The Accreditation Review Committee will be represented at the decision-making meeting by the Director of Accreditation and the Board will have an opportunity to ask questions of the committee representative(s) before making a decision.

C. Ethics Policies

1. Compliance with Laws and Regulations
 - a. All MEAC activities are to be conducted in compliance with the letter and spirit of all laws and regulations. MEAC representatives have a responsibility to understand the applicable laws, recognize potential dangers, and seek legal advice when necessary.
2. Conflicts of Interest
 - a. MEAC's policy is to have effective controls against conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest by MEAC representatives. A "conflict of interest" is defined as a situation where members of the Board of Directors, staff, site visitors, or others acting in an official capacity for MEAC may have an opportunity to influence business or accreditation decisions in ways that could lead to personal gain or give improper advantage to associates.
 - b. Whenever MEAC is called upon to consider an application for accreditation or make an accreditation decision related to a midwifery education program or institution, and a MEAC Board member or committee member is affiliated with the program/institution, then that person:
 - (i) Shall disclose prior to MEAC's discussion of the program's application or accreditation action the nature of their affiliation with the program/institution; and
 - (ii) Shall not be present during discussion of and voting on the program/institution's application or accreditation action.
 - c. No MEAC representative accompanying a site visit team or committee may be affiliated with the program/institution being visited.
 - d. For the purposes of this policy, a person is affiliated with a midwifery program or institution if they or their spouse, parent, child, or sibling:
 - (i) Has been an officer, director, trustee, employee, contractor, consultant, or student of the midwifery program or institution within the last two years.
 - (ii) Has had any other dealings with the institution or program from which they have or will receive cash or property within the last two years.
 - (iii) In any event, all previous relationships should be disclosed.
 - e. If for any other reason a MEAC representative believes they have a conflict of interest or the appearance of one with regard to any program or institution's application or accreditation action before MEAC, the representative shall declare the conflict or appearance of one.

- f. If a representative of a midwifery program or institution that has an application or accreditation action before MEAC has a reason to believe a member or representative may have a conflict of interest or the appearance of one, or if any other members or MEAC's administrative staff may so believe, and if that member does not declare the conflict or the appearance of one, a request may be made that MEAC consider the matter. The possible conflict of interest or the appearance of one shall be discussed by all parties and resolved, if necessary, by consensus or vote, with all MEAC Board members entitled to vote.
 - g. Other areas involving conflict of interest include:
 - (i) Employment decisions if these concern friends, business associates, relatives, or themselves.
 - (ii) Purchasing or other contract decisions in which the individual may have a personal interest.
- 3. Confidentiality
 - a. The information provided by institutions/programs subject to MEAC accreditation will be maintained in strict confidence and will be used solely for the purpose of evaluating the institution's/program's compliance with MEAC requirements.
 - b. The MEAC Board, site visitors, staff, and consultants will not discuss the accreditation matters related to an institution/program outside of the normal MEAC meetings unless such discussion is necessary to conduct MEAC business effectively. Any restrictions on the provision of otherwise confidential information may be superseded by the requirements of government agencies or national accreditation regulatory agencies.
 - c. MEAC collects personal information about employees and other representatives that relates to their involvement with MEAC. Access to this information is limited to people with a need to know and any release of the information to others must be authorized in advance by the Executive Director or the President of the Board of Directors. Personal information is released outside MEAC only with the individual's approval and authorization of the Executive Director, except to verify employment or to satisfy legitimate investigatory or legal requirements.
- 4. Giving and Receiving Gifts
 - a. MEAC representatives may not give or receive gifts from a supplier, governmental official, an accredited organization or applicant, or other organization. Exceptions may be made for gifts which are customary and lawful, are of nominal value, and are authorized in advance. Gifts or benefits for more than a nominal value should be reported promptly, and shall be returned or donated to a suitable charity and this exchange documented.
 - b. Meals and refreshments are acceptable if they are infrequent, are of nominal value, and are in connection with business discussions.
 - c. Anyone doing or desiring to do business with MEAC should be informed that all gifts other than advertising novelties are discouraged.
- 5. Political Activity
 - a. MEAC recognizes that employees may participate in the political process by supporting political parties, candidates, or causes. However, MEAC is a tax-exempt organization which is prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in any political campaign supporting or opposing any candidate or issue. MEAC may not contribute anything of value, including employee's time, to political campaigns.

publish or distribute materials on behalf of any candidate or party, or engage in any other activity which may be considered political.

- b. MEAC representatives may personally contribute to a candidate or party of their choice. However, no compensation or reimbursement by MEAC shall be received for a personal contribution. Any efforts devoted to political activity must be outside working hours. MEAC representatives must make clear that any statements on political or public issues are not those of MEAC.

6. Personal Conduct

- a. MEAC strives to provide all employees, directors, volunteers and members a healthy, safe and positive environment. The climate at MEAC shall be free from discrimination and harassment (see MEAC's Non-Discrimination policy).
- b. MEAC shall not tolerate sexual advances or comments, threats of violence, or any other conduct that creates, in the opinion of the management of MEAC, an intimidating or otherwise offensive environment. Similarly, the use of racial or religious slurs, or any other remarks, jokes or conduct that encourages or permits an offensive environment will not be tolerated.
- c. If a member, employee or volunteer is subjected to improper conduct, or becomes aware of the improper conduct of others, they should bring this to the attention of the President of the Board of Directors. MEAC maintains an employee handbook for relevant policies. All complaints will be investigated promptly (see MEAC's employee handbook).

7. Use and Protection of MEAC Assets

- a. Members have a fiduciary duty to preserve MEAC's assets by demonstrating cost control and following vigorous procurement standards. MEAC employees, materials, equipment or other assets shall not be utilized for any unauthorized purpose. Assets shall be tracked and inventoried. Appropriate action shall be taken if there are any losses.

8. Accounting and Financial Reports

- a. MEAC shall abide by accurate record keeping and reporting. Reimbursable business expenses should be justifiable, reasonable, and supported by receipts. Receipts are not required for per diem payments.
- b. MEAC's financial statements and all books and records on which they are based must accurately reflect all of the organization's transactions. All disbursements and receipts of funds must be properly authorized and recorded. No undisclosed or unreported fund may be established for any purpose.
- c. Those responsible for the handling or disbursal of funds must assure that all transactions are executed as authorized and recorded to permit financial statements in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

9. Compliance

- a. Failure to comply with this policy may result in formal disciplinary action that may include reimbursement to MEAC for any losses or damages, termination of employment, dismissal from the Board, and/or referral for criminal prosecution. Action may also be taken against anyone who fails to report a violation or withhold relevant information concerning a violation of this Ethics Policy. All ARC members, board members, employees and independent contractors must sign a certification form prior to their work with MEAC.

D. Financial Management

1. Budget
 - a. The organization's financial management will be guided by an annual budget that is developed without review by, or consultation with, any other entity or organization.
 - b. The Treasurer, with the input and assistance of the Executive Director and Board, will generate the annual budget which will be presented to the Board for approval at the Board meeting prior to the onset of the coming fiscal year.
2. Fees
 - a. Fees shall be based on projected MEAC operating costs.
 - b. The Treasurer, in development of the annual budget, will review fees and propose changes to fees to the Board for approval.
 - c. Once fees are approved, the Executive Director will notify all Member Schools within 30 days of any changes in fees and the schedule for payment in the upcoming year.
3. Financial Reports
 - a. The Treasurer and the Executive Director will meet periodically to review the agency's financial situation.
 - b. The Treasurer will review semi-annual financial reports and present them to the Board.
4. Legal Obligations and Record Keeping
 - a. The Treasurer works with the Executive Director to assure that all legal obligations are fulfilled regarding MEAC's financial documentation and reporting.
 - b. MEAC will maintain records in accordance with its Record Retention Policy.

E. Complaints about MEAC

1. A complaint against MEAC is defined as a written notification to MEAC by any person or entity that sets forth reasonable and credible information that the MEAC evaluators, MEAC Board Members, or MEAC staff, are not in compliance with one or more of MEAC's accreditation standards or MEAC Policies and Procedures." A complaint against MEAC will be accepted if it includes a statement clearly identifying the submitted materials as a written complaint, and
 - a. identification of, MEAC evaluators, MEAC Board Members, or MEAC staff against which the complaint is being filed, and
 - b. a concise statement of the specific activities or conduct that constitute the basis of the complaint, and
 - c. the name and contact information for the person making the complaint or a statement indicating the complaint is being made anonymously. If the complaint is being made anonymously, MEAC still requires a mailing address so that requests for additional information can be made. Every effort will be made to keep the Complainant's identity and mailing address confidential.
2. Process for Handling Complaints
 - a. All complaints should be submitted to MEAC in writing via email (info@meacschools.org) or via the online complaint form at <https://www.meacschools.org/about-meac/>. *Note-MEAC is in the process of creating a new website so this web address will likely change.*

- b. MEAC permits complaints to be filed in more than one method. Complaints may be submitted by email or electronic form.
- c. MEAC provides plain language assistance to complainants regarding the relevance of the complaint to MEAC's standards or procedures by giving a clear definition of a complaint as a written notification to MEAC by any person or entity that sets forth reasonable and credible information that (1) an accredited institution; (2) an institution applying for accreditation; or (3) the MEAC evaluators, MEAC Board Members, or MEAC staff, are not in compliance with one or more of MEAC's accreditation standards or MEAC Policies and Procedures. Complainants are also informed that complaints will be accepted provided they include a statement clearly identifying the submitted materials as a written complaint, and
 - (i) identification of the institution, program, MEAC evaluators, MEAC Board Members, or MEAC staff against which the complaint is being filed, and
 - (ii) a concise statement of the specific activities or conduct that constitute the basis of the complaint, and
 - (iii) a description of the steps already taken to resolve the problem, and
 - (iv) the name and contact information for the person making the complaint or a statement indicating the complaint is being made anonymously. If the complaint is being made anonymously, MEAC still requires a mailing address so that requests for additional information can be made. Every effort will be made to keep the Complainant's identity and mailing address confidential.
- d. The Executive Committee will review the complaint with due diligence appropriate to the nature and substance of the allegations and may request additional information from the complainant,
- e. The complainant will be notified, in writing, within thirty (30) calendar days of the close of the following MEAC Board meeting, as to the findings and actions taken and formalized in the MEAC Board meeting minutes.
- f. Under such circumstances where the complaint is against the MEAC Board or Executive Committee itself, an ad hoc committee of outside members will be appointed to independently review and evaluate a complaint and to submit a report for subsequent review of the Board. The ad hoc committee members will be independently appointed by members of Midwives Alliance of North America, Citizens for Midwifery, North American Registry of Midwives, and National Association of Certified Professional Midwives. The independent ad hoc committee has and uses its authority to make the following decisions: to remand the issue to the MEAC Board for further internal consideration, to require MEAC to conduct a formal investigation with public notification of the outcome, or equivalent action. In any decision, the independent ad hoc committee must identify specific issues that the Board is to address. The independent ad hoc committee does not have the authority to directly change MEAC's standards, criteria, or policies and procedures nor to remove or appoint any MEAC Board of Directors or staff.
- g. The independent ad hoc committee will simultaneously notify the MEAC Board and the complainant of the outcome of their review.

- h. In a decision that is to be implemented by or remanded to the Board, the Board must act in a manner consistent with the independent ad hoc committee's decisions or instructions.

F. Accreditation Records, Publications, and Notification Responsibilities

1. Types of documents that must be submitted to USDE:

MEAC will fulfill its obligations to ensure appropriate documentation, records and reports of its financial and accreditation activities by maintaining the following documents and submitting them to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and to the public upon request:

- a. A copy of any annual report MEAC prepares.
- b. A list, updated annually, of MEAC's accredited and preaccredited institutions and programs.
- c. Notice of final accrediting actions with respect to accredited institutions/programs.
- d. When requested by the Secretary, a summary of MEAC's major accrediting activities during the previous year.
- e. Any proposed change in MEAC's policies, procedures, or accreditation or preaccreditation standards that might alter MEAC's scope of recognition or compliance with the criteria for recognition.
- f. The name of any institution/program accredited by MEAC that MEAC has reason to believe is failing to meet its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities or is engaged in fraud or abuse, and the reason for MEAC's concern. This includes institutions that MEAC has found to be out of compliance regarding the assignment of credit hours per the requirements of 34 CFR 602.24(f).
- g. Information, when requested by the Secretary, regarding an accredited/preaccredited institution's Title IV, HEA program responsibilities and eligibility.
 - (i) MEAC conducts a review, on a case-by-case basis, of the circumstances surrounding contact with the Department of Education, and the need for the confidentiality of that contact when deciding whether or not to notify an institution when MEAC has provided information or materials to or otherwise has had contact with the U.S. Department of Education relating to potential malfeasance and/or an institution's eligibility for participation in FSA Title IV programs or compliance with the terms of such programs. Notwithstanding the foregoing, MEAC treats a contact or request from the U.S. Department of Education for information concerning an institution as being confidential, upon the specific request of the Department.
- h. MEAC will monitor the headcount enrollment of each institution it has accredited that offers distance education. If any such institution has experienced an increase in headcount enrollment of 50% or more within one institutional fiscal year, MEAC will report that information to the USDE within 30 days of acquiring such data.
- i. MEAC will review and evaluate the reliability and accuracy of each institution's assignment of credit hours. If, following the institutional review process, MEAC finds systematic noncompliance with MEAC's standards for awarding credits, or significant noncompliance regarding one or more programs at the institution, MEAC will promptly notify the Secretary.

2. In the event that MEAC contacts the USDE for reasons outlined in II.F1.d. or II.F1.f. above, then MEAC must provide for a case by case review of the circumstances, and for the confidentiality of that contact. If USDE specifically requests it, MEAC must consider the contact to be confidential.

3. Accreditation decisions requiring written notice to USDE, relevant state and accrediting agencies, and the public. MEAC will provide written notice of the following types of decisions to the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public no later than thirty (30) calendar days after it makes the decision:
 - a. A decision by MEAC to award initial accreditation/preaccreditation to an institution/program.
 - b. A decision to renew an institution's/program's accreditation/preaccreditation.
4. Actions requiring notice to USDE, appropriate state and accrediting agencies: MEAC will provide written notice of the following types of decisions to the USDE, the relevant state licensing/authorizing agency, and the relevant accrediting agencies at the same time it notifies the institution/program of the decision, but no later than 30 days after it reaches any of the following decisions:
 - a. A decision to place an institution/program on probation or an equivalent status
 - b. A decision to issue a show cause order, to place a school on heightened monitoring, or to require a focused review/special evaluation.
 - c. Any initial and any final decision to deny, withdraw, suspend, revoke, or terminate the accreditation/preaccreditation of an institution/program.
 - d. Any initial and any final decision to take any other adverse action, as defined by MEAC, not listed in 4b above.
5. MEAC will provide written notice to the public of the actions listed in II.F.4 within twenty-four (24) hours of its notice to the institution/program.
6. Notice to USDE, relevant state licensing/authorizing and accrediting agencies and the public if an institution voluntarily relinquishes or lapses accreditation. MEAC will notify the USDE (DAPIP), the relevant state licensing/authorizing agency (email), accrediting agencies (email), and the public (MEAC's website) if an accredited/preaccredited institution/program:
 - a. Decides to voluntarily relinquish or withdraw from accreditation/preaccreditation, within ten (10) business days of receiving notification from the institution/program that it is withdrawing voluntarily from accreditation/preaccreditation, or
 - b. Lets its accreditation/preaccreditation lapse, within ten (10) business days of the date on which accreditation/preaccreditation lapses.
7. Summary of findings to USDE, appropriate state licensing/authorizing agency and the public after an adverse decision:
 - a. For any decision to place an institution or program on probation, deny, withdraw, suspend, revoke, or terminate the accreditation or preaccreditation of an institution or a program, MEAC will make available to the USDE, the appropriate state licensing/authorizing agency, and the public, no later than sixty (60) calendar days after the decision, a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the its decision and the official comments that the affected institution or program may wish to make with regard to that decision, or evidence that the affected institution has been offered the opportunity to provide official comment.
8. Sharing information with other appropriate agencies:
 - a. Upon request, MEAC will share with other appropriate recognized accrediting agencies and State agencies information about the accreditation/preaccreditation status of an institution/program and

any adverse actions it has taken against an accredited/preaccredited institution/program. The requested information will be shared as soon as practicable, but in no event more than 10 business days following receipt of the request. The information provided will clearly identify the action taken and provide a summary of the reasons for it.

9. Providing opportunities for third party comment:

- a. MEAC publishes notices of the institutions/programs under review for initial or renewal of accreditation on its website and encourages interested parties to submit written comments pertaining to such review. MEAC also solicits comments from third parties, such as governmental or quasi-governmental entities, U.S. federal and state educational agencies, other accrediting or licensing organizations. MEAC may also solicit comments from education-focused media, industry groups, and other relevant parties. Comments may be submitted via MEAC's website or email.
- b. MEAC requires that public and third-party comments be submitted at least 30 days prior to the scheduled meeting of the MEAC Board of Directors at which the institution's/program's application for accreditation or reaccreditation is to be evaluated. This timeframe allows for a reasonable period for MEAC to share the comment with the institution/program and for the institution/program to respond to the same. Comments received by the deadline will be provided to the MEAC Board, together with such additional information relating to the comment as MEAC may have gathered. To the extent that the MEAC Board believes that the comment raises a serious and credible concern with respect to the institution's/program's compliance with MEAC accreditation standards which are not addressed by the institution's/program's Self-Evaluation Report, the Site Visit Report, and the institution's/program's response to the Site Visit Report, the MEAC Board will determine whether the issuance of a deferral notice or a show cause directive is appropriate.
- c. Any information received from the public is provided to the institution/program for review and response by a date set by the MEAC Board. A copy of the public comment and the institution's/program's response to the same, if any, are included in the record to be reviewed by the MEAC Board. Information received from government agencies or departments is treated in the same way as information obtained from nongovernmental sources unless the agency or department provides the information to MEAC with express requirements of confidentiality.

10. Notification of proposed changes in administrative policies and procedures to institutions/programs:

- a. MEAC will notify all institutions/programs, whether accredited or in process of accreditation, of proposed changes in administrative policies and procedures that would affect the institutions'/programs' ability to comply with MEAC standards. New policies and procedures will be implemented on the date established by the Board at the time they are approved.

11. Public notice of proposed new or revised standards or criteria

- a. MEAC will provide advance public notice of proposed new or revised standards or criteria, giving interested parties, including institutions/programs, adequate opportunity to comment on proposed changes prior to their adoption.
 - (i) The MEAC Board of Directors, after considering written comments and oral presentations, will take action on proposed accreditation standards to adopt without changes, to adopt with

changes or modifications, to defer action until further study and consideration is given, or to reject the proposed standards outright.

(ii) When any new standards are adopted, the Board will set the date they will become effective, providing a reasonable time for compliance by accredited/preaccredited institutions/programs.

12. MEAC maintains and makes publicly available the following written materials:

- a. Each type of accreditation/preaccreditation granted by the agency
- b. Its procedures for applying for accreditation/preaccreditation
- c. The criteria and procedures used by the agency for determining whether to grant, reaffirm, reinstate, deny, restrict, revoke, place an institution or program on probation, or take any other action related to each type of accreditation/ preaccreditation that the agency grants
- d. The names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of the members of the agency's policy and decision-making bodies as well as the agency's principal administrative staff
- e. The institutions/programs that the agency currently accredits or preaccredits, the dates of the current grant of preaccreditation/accreditation, the date when the agency will review or reconsider the accreditation/preaccreditation of each institution/program, a listing and status of all benchmarks found to be noncompliant, and the dates for all compliance reporting due.

13. MEAC provides for the public correction of incorrect or misleading information released by an accredited/preaccredited institution/program about:

- a. The accreditation or preaccreditation status of an institution/program
- b. The contents of reports of on-site reviewers
- c. The agency's accrediting

14. MEAC maintains complete and accurate records of all decisions made throughout a program's or institution's affiliation with MEAC regarding the accreditation and preaccreditation of that institution or program in accordance with its Record Retention Policy including but not limited to:

- a. Preaccreditation or accreditation determinations and substantive change decisions, including all correspondence that is significantly related to those decisions.
- b. Institution's/program's most recent SER
- c. Site visit reports
- d. Institution/program responses to site visit reports
- e. Annual reports
- f. Monitoring and Compliance reports
- g. Any written complaint records since last accreditation review
- h. Special reviews and reports
- i. Information related to the institution's Title IV responsibilities and eligibility, including record of compliance based on most recent student loan default rate data provided by the Secretary, the results of financial or compliance audits, program reviews, and any other information that the Secretary may provide to MEAC.

15. MEAC maintains records of the following administrative activities:

- a. Copy of minutes of all MEAC Board meetings, including proposals and decisions in MEAC's policies, procedures or accreditation standards in accordance with its Records Retention Policy.
- b. Documents related to approval of continuing education programs in accordance with its Records Retention Policy.
- c. Correspondence with state regulatory agencies in accordance with its Records Retention Policy.
- d. MEAC's directory of accredited and preaccredited institutions and programs.

III. Accreditation Activities

A. Scope of Accreditation Activities

1. US Department of Education Scope of Recognition
 - a. "The accreditation and preaccreditation throughout the United States of direct-entry midwifery educational institutions and programs conferring degrees and certificates, including the accreditation of such programs offered via distance education."
2. Geographic Scope of Accreditation Activities
 - a. MEAC accredits and preaccredits midwifery institutions and programs that operate, primarily or in full, within the United States of America.
 - (i) United States of America means a State of the Union, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau. The latter three are known as the Freely Associated States.
3. Accreditation and Preaccreditation
 - a. MEAC offers both accreditation and preaccreditation
 - (i) Accreditation applies to those institutions and programs that have completed an initial or reaccreditation process, and the Board of Directors has determined them to be in compliance with MEAC standards as described in III.B and III.C.
 - (ii) Preaccreditation applies to those institutions/programs that are progressing towards initial accreditation and that the Board of Directors has determined appear likely to achieve accreditation within one year after gaining preaccreditation status. The duration of preaccreditation status may be extended by vote of the Board. Preaccreditation does not signify that an applicant institution/program is accredited, nor is it a guarantee of eventual accreditation.
4. Institutional and Programmatic Accreditation
 - a. MEAC offers both institutional and programmatic accreditation.
 - (i) Institutional accreditation refers to the review and approval of an entire institution, including all of its financial and management aspects. MEAC institutional accreditation is limited to independent or freestanding educational entities that primarily provide midwifery education.
 - (a) If the institution also offers other educational programs beyond the scope of midwifery expertise, the institution must be accredited by another agency recognized by the USDE and the midwifery educational program can then apply for MEAC programmatic accreditation.
 - (ii) Programmatic accreditation refers to the review and approval of a midwifery program that legally functions as part of an accredited institution with a scope larger than midwifery. In order to apply for programmatic accreditation, the program must be housed within an institution already accredited by an agency recognized by the USDE.

(iii) MEAC will not accredit or preaccredit an institution comprising fewer than all of the programs, branch campuses, and locations of an institution as certified for title IV participation by the Secretary, except with notice to and permission from the Secretary.

5. Types of Certificates and Degrees Covered

- a. MEAC accredits and preaccredits institutions and programs of midwifery leading to non-degree certificates and diplomas.
- b. MEAC also accredits and preaccredits institutions and programs of midwifery leading to degrees including associate, baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral degrees. MEAC applies an additional set of Standards and criteria to institutions and programs under this category.

6. Distance Education

- a. MEAC accredits and preaccredits institutions and programs of midwifery using distance education components. MEAC applies an additional set of Standards and criteria to institutions and programs under this category.

7. Title IV Federal Financial Aid

- a. MEAC serves as a link for institutions with eligible programs to access Title IV federal financial aid programs. Institutions seeking access to Title IV for their programs through MEAC Accreditation must meet USDE eligibility criteria and must fall within MEAC's scope of USDE recognition. MEAC applies an additional set of Standards and criteria to institutions under this category.

8. Changes to MEAC's Scope of Accreditation Activities

- a. Any changes that would change or otherwise expand MEAC's USDE scope of recognition must be approved by written application submitted to the USDE prior to implementation, as per 34 CFR 602.31(b).
- b. Institutions or programs seeking to include within their MEAC grant of accreditation a program that is outside the scope of MEAC's USDE recognition may petition MEAC to seek an expansion of its USDE scope of recognition.

9. Accreditation Activities Outside of MEAC's Scope of Recognition

- a. MEAC may consider accreditation of a program that would otherwise fall outside of the agency's approved USDE scope of recognition. Doing so will generally be limited to an abbreviated period of time and for the primary purpose of exploring an expansion of MEAC's scope of recognition. Consideration of accreditation outside of MEAC's scope of recognition will not be made without prior strategic planning, MEAC Board approval, stakeholder feedback, and communication with the USDE.
- b. Accreditation outside of the scope of recognition must still fall within a midwifery focus, must still demonstrate compliance with all applicable Standards and Benchmarks, and cannot be used to establish Title IV eligibility.

B. Standards for MEAC Accreditation

1. U.S. Department of Education Requirements: Standards, evaluation criteria, policies and procedures established by MEAC for the accreditation of institutions/programs will address the requirements of the USDE, including but not limited to:

- a. Success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution's mission, which may include different standards for different institutions or programs, as established by the institution, including, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examination, and job placement rates.
- b. Curricula
- c. Faculty
- d. Facilities, equipment, supplies and other resources
- e. Fiscal and administrative capacity
- f. Student support services
- g. Recruiting and admissions practices, academic calendars, catalogs, publications, grading, and advertising (student affairs)
- h. Measures of program length and the objectives of the degrees or credentials offered
- i. Record of student complaints
- j. Record of compliance with the institution's program responsibilities under Title IV of the Higher Education Act

2. Nationally-Accepted Criteria for Midwifery Education
 - a. Standards, evaluation criteria, policies and procedures established by MEAC for the accreditation of institutions/programs will be based on the internationally accepted criteria developed by the International Confederation of Midwives and the nationally accepted criteria developed by the North American Registry of Midwives, upon which such agencies as educators, educational institutions, licensing bodies, professional organizations and employers in the profession of midwifery rely.
3. Standards for Degree-Granting Institutions and Programs
 - a. Standards, evaluation criteria, policies and procedures established by MEAC for the accreditation of degree-granting institutions and programs will take into account generally accepted standards in higher education.
4. Systematic Review of Standards

MEAC maintains a systematic program of review to determine if its standards are adequate to evaluate the quality of the education or training provided by the institutions and programs it accredits and relevant to the educational or training needs of its students.

 - a. This program of review is comprehensive, occurs at regular, yet reasonable intervals or on an ongoing basis, examines each of MEAC's standards and the standards as a whole, and involves all the agency's relevant constituencies in the review.
 - b. All of MEAC's relevant constituencies, including but not limited to representatives of midwifery professional organizations and certifying bodies, school directors and faculty, students and graduates, will be given meaningful opportunities to provide input for the review.
 - c. If the agency determines, at any point during its systematic program of review, that it needs to make changes to its standards, the agency must initiate action within 12 months to make the changes and must complete that action within a reasonable period of time.
 - d. MEAC will provide notice to all of the agency's relevant constituencies, and other parties who have made their interest known to the agency, of the changes to its standards that the agency proposes to make, and provide reasonable time for comment.

5. Changing the Standards

As a result of its systematic program of review, or upon receiving pertinent recommendations, the MEAC Board of Directors (Hereafter, "MEAC") will adopt necessary changes to its standards, evaluation criteria, and policies and procedures to ensure that they provide a valid measure and consistent basis for determining the educational quality of different institutions/programs. The term "changes" includes both revisions to the wording of existing standards as well as to the creation of entirely new standards).

- a. If MEAC determines that it needs to make changes to its standards, MEAC will initiate action within 12 months to make the changes and will complete that action within a reasonable period of time (normally within two years).
- b. In advance of being approved by MEAC, proposed changes to MEAC's standards and/or evaluation criteria that would affect institutions'/programs' ability to comply with MEAC standards will be sent with a call for comment to all affected parties including all of MEAC's relevant constituencies, to the general public, and to other parties who have made their interest known to MEAC. MEAC will provide a reasonable time for comment within an established time frame (usually 30 days). A notice will be posted on MEAC's website to allow the general public to review and comment on the proposed changes. MEAC encourages all internal and external communities of interest, including those that have made their interest known, to comment on any proposed changes.
- c. MEAC will also submit to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education any proposed changes in MEAC's policies and procedures, or accreditation standards that might alter the agency's scope of recognition or compliance with the requirements of the USDE.
- d. After considering all comments that have been received within the designated time frame, MEAC will act on the proposed changes to either approve, modify, reject, or defer action until further study and consideration is given.
- e. When changes to standards are approved, all affected institutions/programs will be notified of these changes in writing. The effective date will be determined by the Board and published with the notification. Affected institutions/programs will be allowed a reasonable period of time within which to create plans and come into compliance with the changes.
- f. If exigent circumstances exist that necessitate a material change to MEAC accreditation standards or procedures to become final and effective immediately, MEAC will publish the change in final form without regard to the notice and comment procedures stated in II.B.5. b). Interested parties will be provided an opportunity to comment on the change as soon as practicable after publication. Examples of exigent changes which might require such immediate action include, but are not limited to: (a) immediate changes to MEAC policies, procedures and standards required by other accrediting organizations; (b) legal or regulatory changes with effective dates that do not support the standard comment period; and (c) external causes (such as pandemics, infrastructure/communication issues, or domestic/international conflicts).
- g. Non-substantive changes to MEAC's standards, policies and procedures may be adopted by MEAC without a notice or comment period. However, they will be published by MEAC in accordance with II.B.5.e). Non-substantive changes include, by way of example, changes which are intended (i) to clarify

and/or provide greater detail with respect to existing provisions, (ii) to improve readability, (iii) to conform terminology, and (iv) to update names, addresses and administrative information.

C. Basic Requirements for Accreditation

1. MEAC Standards and Criteria
 - a. MEAC will only preaccredit/accredit institutions/programs that meet the standards established by MEAC, using criteria for evaluating compliance.
 - b. MEAC will only preaccredit/accredit institutions/programs that have reviewed MEAC's accreditation policies and procedures, and adhere to such policies and procedures in good faith. The educational institution/program maintains and demonstrates clearly specified educational goals consistent with its mission and appropriate in light of the degrees or certificates it awards.
2. Legal authority under applicable local, state, and federal law
 - a. MEAC will only preaccredit/accredit institutions/programs that are legally authorized under applicable local, state, and federal law to provide a program of education beyond the secondary level. Prior to a decision to grant or renew accreditation or preaccreditation each institution/program will be required to submit evidence of its authority to provide the program of education beyond the secondary level. Proper state authorization in an institution's state of domicile is a prerequisite for MEAC accreditation and is required to maintain accredited status. Accordingly, should an institution/program lose its state licensure in its state of domicile for any reason while applying for initial or renewal of accreditation or reaccreditation, that process is automatically terminated. MEAC accreditation or preaccreditation of an institution/program is also automatically withdrawn as of the date of the loss of state licensure. Such a withdrawal of accreditation may be appealed by an institution/program pursuant to the procedures set forth in Section III.
3. Standing with other state agencies and accrediting agencies
 - a. All institutions/programs seeking preaccreditation/accreditation must supply MEAC with a list of other accrediting agencies that have authority to regulate the program and these agencies will be notified of the status of the institution/program as regards MEAC.
4. Prospective Applicant and Renewal of Accreditation Training Requirements
 - a. All institutions and programs applying for initial accreditation must complete a MEAC Prospective Applicant Accreditation Training before MEAC accepts the application. This training is offered in four parts: 1) a self-study, 2) a webinar on best practices, 3) a readiness assessment, and 4) a meeting with the MEAC Director of Accreditation to set a date for applying. Additional training may be provided, as available.
 - b. All institutions and programs applying for reaccreditation must complete a training session with the Director of Accreditation to review any changes to the MEAC standards, accreditation process, and accreditation forms before MEAC will accept a Part I Application.
5. If, at any point in its evaluation of an institution/program seeking initial accreditation, agency staff determines that the institution/program fails to demonstrate compliance with these basic requirements for accreditation, or that falls outside the scope of MEAC's accreditation activities, the staff will:
 - a. Return the institution/program's application and provide an explanation of the deficiencies that caused staff to take that action; and

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- b. Recommend that the institution/program withdraw its application and reapply when the institution/program can demonstrate compliance.

D. Accreditation Process for Determining Compliance with MEAC Standards

1. General guidelines for the accreditation process
 - a. MEAC consistently applies and enforces standards that respect the stated mission of the institution of higher education, including religious missions, and that ensure that the courses and programs of instruction, training, or study offered by the institution of higher education, including distance education or programs, are of sufficient quality to achieve, for the duration of the accreditation period, the stated objective for which the courses or the programs are offered.
 - b. All institutions/programs that apply to MEAC for accreditation/preaccreditation are systematically reviewed to determine if they are in compliance with MEAC's standards. This includes the following:
 - (i) An in-depth self-study that includes the assessment of educational quality and the institution/program's continuing efforts to improve educational quality.
 - (ii) An on-site review to verify information provided in the self-study.
 - (a) On-site reviews are not conducted prior to preaccreditation. Site visits are scheduled twelve to sixteen weeks following the grant of preaccreditation.
 - (iii) Responses by the institution/program to requests for additional information and the site visit report.
 - c. Standardized evaluation processes and tools are used to ensure that the criteria are applied consistently to all institutions/programs.
 - d. No school may declare their intention to become MEAC accredited or claim to have submitted an application for accreditation until MEAC has approved the Part 1 Preliminary Application. When a school has submitted the Part 1 Preliminary Application AND that application has been approved by MEAC, the school will be informed that they can use the following statement on their website, catalog and other marketing materials. "Our preliminary application for accreditation by MEAC was accepted on (date). The accreditation process generally takes two years or more from this date to complete successfully. If we are approved, only students enrolled at the time accreditation is approved and those enrolling after that date will be considered to have graduated from a MEAC-accredited program. Accreditation is not retroactive. For further information, contact MEAC at 360-466-2080, info@meacschools.org or through their website www.meacschools.org."
 - e. As accreditation is a voluntary process, institutions/programs may voluntarily withdraw an application for accreditation/preaccreditation at any point in the process by submitting a written statement of withdrawal. Withdrawal of an application for renewal of accreditation by an institution/program that is already MEAC accredited may jeopardize continual accreditation beyond any current grant of accreditation.
2. Specific guidelines for schools with a religious mission
 - a. MEAC will apply and enforce standards that respect the stated mission of the institution of higher education, including religious mission.

- b. Religious mission is defined by the US Department of Education as "a published institutional mission that is approved by the governing body of an institution of postsecondary education and that includes, refers to, or is predicated upon religious tenets, beliefs, or teachings."
- c. MEAC will not use as a negative factor the institution's religious mission-based policies, decisions, or practices in the following areas when making accreditation decisions: curriculum; faculty; facilities, equipment and supplies; student support services; recruiting and admissions practices, academic calendars, catalogs, publications, grading, and advertising.
- d. MEAC will require that the institution/program's curriculum include all core components required as listed in the Curriculum Checklist of Essential Competencies Worksheet.
- e. Schools with a religious mission must undergo the full accreditation process, including Self Evaluation Report and peer-review for all applicable Standards and Benchmarks, including those that might seemingly conflict with the school's religious mission. Any Benchmark found Not Met as a result of the institution's religious mission-based policies, decisions, and practices will be exempted from accreditation decisions under III.E and III.F as well as from actions to address non-compliance under III.J and adverse actions under III.K.

3. Overall timeframe and extensions for the accreditation process
 - a. The accreditation process will follow an established timeline. For more information see MEAC Accreditation Handbook Section D: The Accreditation Process.
 - b. On one occasion during this process, the institution/program may request a thirty-day extension on any deadline, accompanied by a fee. The Director of Accreditation will notify the institution/program and the ARC of the new timeline, and note it in the file. If the request is denied the fee is returned minus the processing fee.
 - c. The published timeline may be adjusted depending on the complexity of the institution/program, quality of the materials submitted, cooperation of the institution/program in submitting complete materials, volunteer availability, and extensions. MEAC staff will update the timeline accordingly and will notify the institution/program when there is a significant increase or decrease in any times previously stated.
4. Other accreditation-related processes
 - a. All institutions/programs that apply to MEAC for a substantive change and that submit required annual, monitoring and compliance reports are systematically reviewed to determine if they are in compliance with MEAC's standards.
 - b. Standardized evaluation processes and tools are used to ensure that the criteria are applied consistently to all institutions/programs.
 - c. Review of other accreditation-related processes will follow established timelines.

E. Decision-Making Regarding Preaccreditation

1. General guidelines for preaccreditation decision-making
 - a. All decisions regarding preaccreditation status are based on published standards, criteria, and policies and procedures.
 - b. The Accreditation Review Committee (ARC) will review the applicant's initial Self Evaluation Report (SER) and, if applicable, Materials and Information Request (MIR) materials, and, with the Director of

Accreditation, prepare a report with a recommendation to the Board of Directors to grant or deny preaccreditation status.

2. Actions and decisions which may be made regarding preaccreditation

a. Granting preaccreditation status

- (i) The MEAC Board of Directors grants preaccreditation status to applicant institutions/programs that :
 - (a) Can demonstrate current compliance (score of Met-2 or above on all preaccreditation benchmarks) with the 2025 Standards Benchmarks I.A1, I.B1, II.A3, II.A5, II.B4, II.C1, III.A1, III.A2, III.A3, IV.B IV.C1, and IV.C2; and
 - (b) Demonstrate a likelihood to gain accreditation within one year, as demonstrated by their preliminary application, SER, and MIR materials.
 - (i) To be considered for preaccreditation, schools must submit a complete SER in Weave for ARC review. If the school does not submit a complete SER, they will not be considered for preaccreditation.
- (ii) MEAC will provide written notice of preaccreditation decisions to the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public in accordance with II.F.3.
- (iii) If the institution/program is preaccredited, it must print the USDE's definition of preaccreditation in its brochure and catalog. Institutions/programs must include the following as an addendum to the statement described in III.D.1.d:

"We were granted the status of preaccreditation on [date]. Preaccreditation is defined by the US Department of Education as 'the status of public recognition that an accrediting agency grants to an institution/program for a limited period of time that signifies that the agency has determined that the institution/program is progressing towards accreditation and is likely to attain accreditation before the expiration of that limited period of time.' MEAC preaccreditation status is normally limited to one year and does not signify that an applicant institution/program is accredited, nor is it a guarantee of eventual accreditation."
- (iv) If preaccreditation status is granted, the initial accreditation process will continue as published.

b. Denying preaccreditation

- (i) An institution's/program's application for preaccreditation will be denied if the applicant institution/program is unable to demonstrate current compliance with the subset of benchmarks listed in 1.a above, or if MEAC believes that the institution/program does not appear likely to achieve accreditation within a specified time period, as demonstrated by their preliminary application, SER, and MIR materials.
- (ii) MEAC will provide written notice of denial of preaccreditation to the Secretary, the appropriate State licensing or authorizing agency, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public in accordance with II.F34.

- (iii) MEAC will send a denial of preaccreditation status letter to the institution/program, including reasons for denial, procedures for appeal, timelines and applicable fees, should the institution/program decide to appeal.
- (iv) An institution/program has the right to appeal the decision under the rules of the appeal process (see III.L Due Process and Appealing MEAC Decisions and MEAC Accreditation Handbook Section E: Fees).
- (v) An institution/program denied preaccreditation may not reapply for initial accreditation until a period of one year has elapsed since MEAC's final decision. The applicant institution/program will be treated procedurally and substantively as if it is a new applicant for initial accreditation.
- (vi) An institution/program that has been denied preaccreditation must disclose this final decision within seven (7) business days of notification to all current and prospective students. Proof of disclosure must be submitted with MEAC.

3. Regard for decisions of states and other accrediting agencies

- a. MEAC will not grant preaccreditation to an institution/program during the period in which the institution/program:
 - (i) Is the subject of a pending or final action brought by a state agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution/program's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the state;
 - (ii) Is the subject of a decision by a recognized accreditation agency, other than MEAC, to deny accreditation or preaccreditation;
 - (iii) Is the subject of a pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency, other than MEAC, to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution/program's accreditation or preaccreditation;
 - (iv) Is the subject of probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized accrediting agency, other than MEAC.
- b. In considering whether to grant preaccreditation MEAC takes into account actions by:
 - (i) Recognized institutional accrediting agencies that have denied accreditation to the institution, placed it on public probationary status, or revoked status
 - (ii) State agencies that have suspended, revoked or terminated the institution's legal authority to provide post-secondary education
- c. When MEAC grants preaccreditation to an institution/program notwithstanding any of the circumstances listed in (a), above, it will provide the Secretary of the Department of Education, and other involved accrediting and state agencies with an explanation of the reasons for its actions within thirty (30) calendar days including a thorough and reasonable explanation consistent with MEAC's accreditation standards, why the action of the other body does not preclude MEAC's grant of accreditation or preaccreditation.
- d. If MEAC learns that an institution/program that MEAC has preaccredited is the subject of an adverse action by another recognized accrediting agency or has been placed on probation or an equivalent status by another recognized agency, then MEAC will promptly review its preaccreditation of the

institution/program to determine whether it will take adverse action, place the institution/program on probation, or issue a show cause directive.

- e. If a review of a Member School is warranted as a result of another agency's action or decision, the MEAC Board of Directors will appoint a review committee which will:
 - (i) Solicit an explanation from the agency with details of the action taken and the basis for the action
 - (ii) Review the agency's action and basis for the action in comparison against MEAC Standards and policies and procedures to determine if the institution/program is also in violation or noncompliance with MEAC
 - (iii) Recommend to the MEAC Board of Directors whether the institution/program should be subjected to MEAC's policies for addressing non-compliance with standards and adverse action.

4. Required Teach-Out Plans

- a. Institutions/programs must have an approved provisional teach-out plan on file with MEAC prior to being awarded preaccreditation status (see III.N Institution/Program Closure, Teach-out Plans and Teach-out Agreements).
- b. The provisional teach-out plan must ensure that students completing the teach-out would meet curricular requirements for professional licensure or certification, and must include a list of academic programs offered by the institution and the names of other institutions that offer similar programs and that could potentially enter into a teach-out agreement with the program.

5. Withdrawal of Application for Accreditation and Relinquishment of Preaccreditation Status

- a. Preaccredited institutions/programs may voluntarily withdraw their application for initial accreditation.
- b. Upon withdrawal, the institution/program's preaccreditation status will end.
- c. An institution/program that has relinquished preaccreditation may not reapply for accreditation until a period of one year has elapsed. If the applicant institution/program chooses to reapply for initial accreditation after withdrawal, the applicant institution/program will be treated procedurally and substantively as if it is a new applicant for initial accreditation.

6. Time Limit for Preaccreditation Status

- a. The duration of preaccreditation status is one year from the time it is granted; however, an extension may be approved by Board vote in situations where an extension of preaccreditation status is needed to complete a program calendar, fiscal year audit, or other reporting cycle needed to demonstrate compliance with MEAC Standards. The duration of preaccreditation status, including any approved extensions, is not to exceed two years.
- b. Institutions/programs that are granted preaccreditation will proceed with the site visit. An initial ARC Report will be provided following the site visit. Institutions/programs must respond to the report with plans for making corrections and improvements in any area where there are concerns of noncompliance and/or weakness. The one-year period of preaccreditation is to be used to implement these improvements and submit a final response to the ARC Report no later than three (3) months prior to expiration of preaccreditation. The Board will make the initial accreditation decision based on all materials submitted, including documentation of improvements made while in preaccreditation.

7. Change from "preaccreditation" to "accreditation"
 - a. For actions and decisions that may be made regarding initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation, see III.F. Decision-making Regarding Accreditation.
 - b. If MEAC should deny initial accreditation to an institution/program that had previously been preaccredited, MEAC will maintain the institution/program's preaccreditation for a reasonable time to complete the activities in its teach-out plan to assist students in transferring or completing their programs, but for no more than 120 days unless approved by MEAC for good cause.
8. Value of a preaccreditation status
 - a. All credits and degrees earned and issued by an institution or program holding preaccreditation from a nationally recognized agency, such as MEAC, are considered by the US Secretary of Education to be from an accredited institution or program as per 34 CFR 602.23 (f)(2).
 - b. The North American Registry of Midwives (NARM) will accept students and graduates of a preaccredited institution/program as eligible for the certifying examination under the MEAC-accreditation eligibility pathway.

F. Decision-Making Regarding Accreditation

1. General guidelines for accreditation decision-making
 - a. All decisions regarding accreditation status are made by the MEAC Board of Directors and are based on published standards, criteria, policies and procedures.
 - b. MEAC takes into account decisions made by other accrediting agencies and state regulatory agencies when making an accreditation decision.
 - c. MEAC takes into account third-party comments when making an accreditation decision. MEAC will provide public notice of all institutions/programs that are being considered for preaccreditation/accreditation and provide an opportunity for written comment by the public concerning the institution/program's qualifications for preaccreditation/accreditation.
 - d. When a decision has been made, institutions/programs will receive a detailed written report that clearly identifies any deficiencies in the institution's or program's compliance with the MEAC's standards.
2. Actions and decisions which may be made regarding initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation:
 - a. Granting initial or renewal of accreditation of the institution/program. An institution or program will be granted accreditation if the following conditions are met:
 1. No benchmarks found Not Met -and-
 2. More than 50% of applicable benchmarks found Met-2 or Met-3.
 - A grant of accreditation is for a six-year period.
 - b. Granting with compliance reporting required; initial or renewal of accreditation of the institution/program. Accreditation with compliance reporting required will be granted if the following conditions are met:
 1. 10% or less of applicable benchmarks found Not Met -and-
 2. 50% or more of applicable benchmarks found Met-2 or Met-3
 - A grant with compliance will be for a six-year period if none of the benchmarks found Not Met are in the probation list below, a five-year period if one of the benchmarks found Not Met is in

the probation list below, or a four-year period if two of the benchmarks found Not Met are in the probation list below.

- Note for initial accreditation- all benchmarks in the probation list must be found met.
- MEAC will assign Compliance Reports to document that areas of non-compliance have been corrected within a specified time period.
- MEAC may also require TRAC Reports and Monitoring Reports for reasons, including but not limited to, tracking progress toward compliance and/or verifying continued compliance.
- See III.J Actions to Address Non-Compliance.

c. Granting probationary accreditation, renewal of accreditation only. Probationary Accreditation will be granted if the following conditions are met:

1. Up to 25% of applicable benchmarks found Not Met -or-
2. More than 33% but less than 50% of applicable benchmarks found Met-2 or Met-3 -or-
3. Benchmarks found Not Met indicate systemic issue/concentrated areas -or-
4. 75% of benchmarks found Not Met were also noted as Not Met or Met-1 during the most recent comprehensive review -or-
5. Found Not Met in more than two of the following Benchmarks (renewal of accreditation only):
 - a. 2025 I.A1 Mission
 - b. 2025 I.B1 Program Goals
 - c. 2025 II.A3 Essential Competencies
 - d. 2025 II.A5 Clinical Skills
 - e. 2025 II.B4 Learning Activities
 - f. 2025 II.C1 Assessment of Learning
 - g. 2025 III.B1 Faculty Initial Training
 - h. 2025 IV.C1 Clinical Site Sufficiency
 - i. 2025 IV.C3 Community Needs in Clinical Sites
 - j. 2025 V.B2 Audit Compliance (Institutional)
 - k. 2025 V.B4 Institutional Support for Program (Programmatic)
 - l. 2025 V.B5 Financial Responsibility (Institutional)

- A grant of probationary accreditation is for a four-year period.
- The decision to place a program or institution on probation is not an adverse action and is not subject to appeal.
- Probationary accreditation still bestows the institution/program with the full rights, benefits, and responsibilities of accreditation while making corrections.
- The areas of deficiency and/or non-compliance leading to probationary status must be corrected within a specified time period (see III.J Actions to Address Non-Compliance).
- If the areas of deficiency, and/or non-compliance are corrected in a timely manner, MEAC will remove the probationary status from the grant of accreditation.

- If the areas of deficiency and/or non-compliance are not corrected within the specified time period, MEAC will proceed with withdrawing accreditation, unless MEAC, for good cause, extends the period for corrections.
- MEAC will notify applicable third parties, regulatory agencies and the public of the Board's decision to place a program/institution on probation (see II.F).
- Institutions/programs placed on probation are required to disclose this status within seven (7) business days of notification to all current and prospective students.
- Probationary accreditation will not be granted to institutions/programs that are being considered for initial accreditation.

d. Denying initial accreditation or renewal of accreditation. An institution's/program's application for an initial or renewal of accreditation will be denied if the following conditions are met:

1. For initial accreditation, any benchmarks found Not Met that are on the probationary list above (III.F.2.c) -or-
2. For initial accreditation, any of the conditions that would have resulted in probationary accreditation are met -or-
3. More than 25% of applicable benchmarks are found Not Met -or-
4. 33% or less of applicable benchmarks found Met-2 or Met-3

- MEAC will send a letter of denial of accreditation to the institution/program, including its reasons for denial, procedures for appeal, timelines, and applicable fees.
- An institution/program has the right to appeal the decision under the rules of the appeal process (see III.L Due Process and Appealing MEAC Decisions and MEAC Accreditation Handbook Section E: Fees).
- An institution/program denied accreditation may not re-apply for accreditation until a period of one year has elapsed since MEAC's final decision. The applicant institution/program will be treated procedurally and substantively as if it is a new applicant for accreditation.
- An institution/program that has been denied accreditation must disclose this final decision within seven (7) business days of notification to all current and prospective students. Proof of disclosure must be submitted with MEAC.

e. Deferring a decision regarding accreditation until conditions are met. A deferral extends considerations of the institution's/program's application for an initial or renewal grant of accreditation beyond the normal, published comprehensive review process. Deferrals occur when extenuating circumstances exist that prevent the Board from making an informed accreditation decision. This includes, but is not limited to insufficient information. Any deferral will be for a limited period, generally no more than six months.

- (i) The option for deferral may not be used to delay taking adverse action, to deny accreditation, or to supersede MEAC's standardized evaluation tools.
- (ii) A deferral is not an adverse action and is not subject to appeal.
- (iii) If a program/institution is accredited by MEAC at the time of the deferral, the period of accreditation will be extended until the end of the deferral period.

- (iv) If accreditation is deferred, MEAC will notify the applicant in a letter detailing the decision of deferral and any conditions including the final time limit within which the applicant must respond.
- (v) MEAC may require a special site visit and/or an updated Self-Evaluation Report as a condition of making an accreditation decision.
- (vi) After reviewing the school's response, the ARC will write a final report summarizing the institution's/program's compliance with each standard, strengths, and areas for further improvement. The ARC Report will be forwarded to the Board for a final decision to grant or deny accreditation.
- A final accrediting action means a final determination by MEAC regarding the accreditation status of an institution/program. With the denial of accreditation or other adverse action, MEAC will make a final decision when the applicant has failed to notify their intent to appeal, or when the appeal process is complete and the Board has considered the findings of the Ad Hoc Appeal Committee (see III.L Due Process and Appealing MEAC decisions). A final accrediting action is not subject to appeal within the agency.
- MEAC will notify applicable third parties and regulatory agencies and the public of the Board's final decision (see II.F).

3. Retroactive application of an accreditation decision
 - a. An institution or program which is granted initial accreditation may opt to have the start of that accreditation period retroactively applied so as to start on the date that preaccreditation was previously awarded.
 - b. An institution or program operating under a continuation and which has their accreditation reaffirmed at the conclusion of the comprehensive review process will have the accreditation period reaffirmed as starting when the continuation decision stated and ending at an appropriate length of time, as per section (2) above.
 - c. Retroactive application of an accreditation decision may not predate an earlier denial by MEAC of preaccreditation or accreditation to the institution/program.
4. Regard for decisions of states and other accrediting agencies
 - a. MEAC will not grant initial or renewed accreditation to an institution/program during the period in which the institution/program:
 - (vii) Is the subject of a pending or final action brought by a state agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution/program's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the state;
 - (viii) Is the subject of a decision by a recognized accreditation agency, other than MEAC, to deny accreditation or preaccreditation;
 - (ix) Is the subject of a pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency, other than MEAC, to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution/program's accreditation or preaccreditation;
 - (x) Is the subject of probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized accrediting agency, other than MEAC.

- f. In considering whether to grant initial or renewal of accreditation MEAC takes into account actions by:
 - (i) Recognized institutional accrediting agencies that have denied accreditation to the institution, placed it on public probationary status, or revoked status
 - (ii) State agencies that have suspended, revoked or terminated the institution's legal authority to provide post-secondary education
- g. When MEAC grants accreditation to an institution/program notwithstanding any of the circumstances listed in (a), above, it will provide the Secretary of the Department of Education, and other involved accrediting and state agencies with an explanation of the reasons for its actions within thirty (30) calendar days including a thorough and reasonable explanation consistent with MEAC's accreditation standards, why the action of the other body does not preclude MEAC's grant of accreditation or preaccreditation.
- h. If MEAC learns that an institution/program that MEAC has accredited is the subject of an adverse action by another recognized accrediting agency or has been placed on probation or an equivalent status by another recognized agency, then MEAC will promptly review its accreditation of the institution/program to determine whether it will take adverse action, place the institution/program on probation, or issue a show cause directive.
- i. If a review of a Member School is warranted as a result of another agency's action or decision, the MEAC Board of Directors will appoint a review committee which will within 10 business days following receipt of the other agency's action or decision, appoint a review committee which will, within 20 business days:
 - (i) Solicit an explanation from the agency with details of the action taken and the basis for the action
 - (ii) Review the agency's action and basis for the action in comparison against MEAC Standards and policies and procedures to determine if the institution/program is also in violation or noncompliance with MEAC
 - (iii) Recommend to the MEAC Board of Directors whether the institution/program should be subjected to MEAC's policies for addressing non-compliance with standards and adverse action.

5. Other matters

- a. The Board may, at its discretion, consolidate two or more actions involving the same school or affiliated schools that are pending before the Board.

G. Maintaining Accreditation Status

- 1. Submission and MEAC review of all required reports and complaints to monitor continued compliance with standards and policies.
 - a. Annual Reports
 - (i) All institutions/programs accredited or preaccredited by MEAC are required to submit an Annual Report. Annual Reports are based on a subset of the MEAC Standards.
 - (ii) All information submitted during the annual reporting process is subject to verification. MEAC will conduct verification for any data that contains identified discrepancies, is suspect, or is otherwise believed to be inaccurate.

- (iii) The Director of Accreditation is responsible for reviewing annual reports and preparing a summary to the Board. The Board reviews, determines further actions, if necessary, and the school is notified.
 - (a) If a school fails to submit an annual report, the school will be put on Show Cause until such time as the annual report is complete.
- b. Timely Review, Advisory, and Consultation (TRAC) Reports
 - (i) TRAC Reports are assigned by the DA or MEAC Board of Directors in circumstances where weaknesses or inadequacies have been identified and require further review to ensure the institution/program is making improvement.
 - (ii) Programs/Institutions may also voluntarily submit a TRAC Report for any Benchmark the program/institution would like formal feedback on.
 - (iii) The Director of Accreditation is responsible for reviewing the report, preparing a summary, and forwarding to the school.
 - (iv) Further actions that may be taken as a result of a TRAC report:
 1. If the school is "on track", no further action is needed.
 2. If the school has gone "off track" or is about to, the report is forwarded to the MEAC Board of Directors for additional action, including further TRAC Reporting or Compliance and Monitoring Reporting.
- c. Monitoring Reports
 - (i) Monitoring Reports are assigned by the DA or MEAC Board of Directors in circumstances where noncompliance with MEAC Standards have been identified and requires further review to ensure the institution/program is making progress toward compliance. These are assigned in tandem with a Compliance Report and function as a monitoring point leading up to the Expected Compliance Date and due date of the Compliance Report.
 - (ii) The Director of Accreditation is responsible for reviewing the report, preparing a summary, and forwarding to the Independent Board Reviewers (IBR). The IBR reviews the report and makes a recommendation to the Board. The Board reviews, determines further actions, if necessary, and the school is notified.
- d. Compliance Reports
 - (i) Compliance Reports are assigned by the DA or MEAC Board of Directors in circumstances where noncompliance with MEAC Standards have been identified.
 - (ii) The Director of Accreditation is responsible for reviewing the report, preparing a summary, and forwarding to the Independent Board Reviewers (IBR). The IBR reviews the report and makes a recommendation to the Board. The Board reviews, determines action taken, if necessary, and the school is notified.
- e. Third Party Reports
 - (i) Third party reports, including public comment, are accepted at any time and may raise questions about an institution's/program's continuing compliance with MEAC Standards and Policies and Procedures.

- (ii) The Director of Accreditation is responsible for forwarding third party reports to reviewers for further analysis and recommendation to the Board. The Board reviews and accepts or determines action taken, if necessary, and the school is notified.
 - f. Complaints
 - (i) Complaints against an institution/program are accepted at any time and may raise questions about an institution's/program's continuing compliance with MEAC Standards and Policies and Procedures.
 - (ii) The Director of Accreditation will implement the complaint process (see III.O).
- 2. Making substantive changes
 - a. Accredited and preaccredited institutions/programs are required to notify MEAC before making substantive changes. Certain changes require prior approval by MEAC (see III.H Approval for Substantive Changes).
- 3. Financial Responsibilities
 - a. Preaccredited and accredited institutions/programs are required to submit annual sustaining fees, fees for reaccreditation, fees for substantive changes, and other miscellaneous fees as detailed in the MEAC Accreditation Handbook, Section E: Fees. All fees, including annual sustaining fees, are paid directly to MEAC and may not be combined with, nor paid out of, fees paid to any related midwifery organization or other agencies or associations.
 - b. Annual sustaining fees will be prorated accordingly for institutions/programs that gain initial accreditation or that have accreditation terminated mid-year.
- 4. Accurate Institution/Program Marketing Materials
 - a. Institutions must accurately describe all programs in its brochure and catalog, differentiating any that are MEAC accredited from those that are not.
 - b. Only institutions/programs that are currently accredited/preaccredited may say in catalogs that accreditation/preaccreditation has been granted by the Midwifery Education Accreditation Council. Institutions/programs that elect to disclose this information must also print the current address and telephone number of MEAC. It is acceptable to print the mission and purpose of MEAC as written in the MEAC Accreditation Handbook. All MEAC accredited or preaccredited institutions must designate their accreditation status on all student transcripts (e.g., "MEAC accredited/preaccredited").
 - c. Advertising or promotion to the public may clarify that MEAC has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
 - d. If printed informational materials need correction, they must be withdrawn from circulation or the required corrections or clarifications must be attached to those materials. The institution/program will publicly correct any errors in the representation of its accreditation status, the contents of reports of site team visitors, and/or MEAC's accrediting actions with respect to the institution/program.
- 5. The institution or program is candid, transparent, and forthcoming in its dealings with MEAC, including:
 - a. Cooperating with all request for information from MEAC
 - b. Promptly notifying MEAC of key personnel changes
 - c. Promptly notifying MEAC of any current or impending changes that might jeopardize the institution/program's compliance with MEAC standards or policies.

6. The institution is candid, transparent, and forthcoming in its dealings with current and prospective students, including:
 - a. Prominently listed on its website and email and telephone number where students, prospective students, and members of the public can speak with a representative of the institution or program.
 - b. A complete listing on its website of the institution or program's administrative staff members, owners, and members of its Board of Directors, as applicable.
7. Active Program Operations
 - a. For programmatic accreditation, the program must remain in active operation with student enrollment in such a way that meets MEAC's Standards, Policies and Procedures
 - b. For institutional accreditation, the institution must have at least one program under the grant of accreditation that remains in active operation with student enrollment in such a way that meets MEAC's Standards, Policies and Procedures
 - c. Any institution or program failing to maintain active program operations will be considered to have voluntarily withdrawn accreditation.
8. Conduct
 - a. The following circumstances will cause the institution or program to be subject to MEAC's policies around show cause, non-compliance, and adverse action.
 - (i) Conduct unbecoming of an accredited institution or program
 - (ii) Failure to fulfill obligations to students
 - (iii) Corporate misconduct
 - (iv) Any owner, director, office, or key management staff person of an institution or program has:
 - (a) Been convicted or pled nolo contendere or guilty to a crime involving the acquisition, use or expenditure of public funds
 - (b) Been judicially determined to have committed fraud involving their fiduciary responsibilities
 - (c) Been debarred by an accrediting agency and/or state or federal agency
 - (d) Been convicted of medical malpractice and/or had their certification/license to practice revoked

H. Approval for Substantive Changes

1. Scope and Definition. A substantive change is one that may significantly affect an institution's /program's quality, mission, scope, operations including primary methods of delivering programs, or control. Substantive changes are reviewed to ensure that changes in educational offerings, teaching modalities, locations, scope of offerings, and control of the institution/program are or will be made in compliance with MEAC accreditation standards. A substantive change must be approved by the MEAC Board of Directors before the change can be included in the institution's/program's scope of accreditation. Institutions/programs currently operating under a show cause directive may not implement a substantive change unless such change is required to cure an identified deficiency and is approved by the Board. Similar restrictions may be included in deferral notices, as determined on a case-by-case basis. The actions listed below are considered substantive changes that require MEAC approval.
 - a. Any substantial change in the established mission or objectives of the institution/program.

- b. Any change in the legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution/program.
- c. The addition of programs that represent a significant departure from the existing offerings or educational programs, or method of delivery, from those that were offered or used when MEAC last evaluated the institution/program.
- d. The addition of graduate programs by an institution/program that previously offered only undergraduate programs or certificates.
- e. A change in the way an institution/program measures student progress, including whether the institution measures progress in clock hours or credit-hours, semesters, trimesters, or quarters, or uses time-based or non-time-based methods.
- f. A substantial increase in the number of clock hours or credit hours awarded, or an increase in the level of credential awarded for successful completion of one or more programs.
- g. The acquisition of any other institution or any program or location of another institution/program.
- h. The addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution/program is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution/program that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.
- i. The addition of a new location or branch campus, except as provided in paragraph 3 of this section. MEAC's review will include assessment of the institution's/program's fiscal and administrative capability to operate the location or branch campus, the regular evaluation of locations, and verification of the following:
 - i. Academic control is clearly identified by the institution/program.
 - ii. The institution/program has adequate faculty, facilities, resources, and academic and student support systems in place.
 - iii. The institution/program is financially stable.
 - iv. The institution/program had engaged in long-range planning for expansion.
- j. Entering into a written arrangement under 34 CFR 668.5 under which an institution/program or organization not certified to participate in the title IV, HEA programs offers more than 25 percent but less than 50 percent of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs.
- a. Note for Title IV Schools: Substantive changes may impact your eligibility for, and/or participation in, Title IV programs through the US Department of Education. It is the responsibility of the school to conduct due diligence to ensure that the substantive change won't jeopardize continued participation in FSA Programs. The US Department of Education may have their own substantive change reporting procedures that will need to be followed in addition to MEAC's.

2. Requirement for prior approval by MEAC of a substantive change:

- a. MEAC requires any institution/program considering a substantive change to submit an application specific to the change at least six months prior to the proposed date of implementation of the substantive change. Unless specific circumstances allow for an expedited review, this is the minimum time that MEAC will need to review and approve the change.
- b. The substantive change must receive MEAC approval prior to implementation in order to be included in MEAC's grant of accreditation to the institution/program. Failure to receive prior approval may result in adverse action (see III.J.2 and III.K.1).

- c. Exception to (a) and (b) above is made to any institution/program that is not preaccredited, not on probation, and that has not been subject to negative action in the prior three academic years.
- d. Additionally, institutions/programs that have been placed on probation or equivalent status, have been subject to negative action by the agency over the prior three academic years, or are under a provisional certification, as provided in 34 CFR 668.13, must receive prior approval for the following additional changes (all other institutions must report these changes within 30 days to their accrediting agency):
 - (i) A change in an existing program's method of delivery.
 - (ii) An aggregate change of 25 percent or more of the clock hours, credit hours, or content of a program since the agency's most recent accreditation review.
 - (iii) The development of customized pathways or abbreviated or modified courses or programs to
 - (a) Accommodate and recognize a student's existing knowledge, such as knowledge attained through employment or military service; and
 - (b) Close competency gaps between demonstrated prior knowledge or competency and the full requirements of a particular course or program.
 - (iv) Entering into a written arrangement under 34 CFR 668.5 under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the title IV, HEA programs offers up to 25 percent of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs.
- e. Institutions/programs that have successfully completed at least one cycle of accreditation and have received agency approval for the addition of at least two additional locations as provided in III.H.1.(h) of this section, and that have not been placed on probation or equivalent status or been subject to a negative action by the agency over the prior three academic years, and that are not under a provisional certification, as provided in 34 CFR 668.13, need not apply for agency approval of subsequent additions of locations, and must report these changes to the accrediting agency within 30 days, if the institution has met criteria established by the agency indicating sufficient capacity to add additional locations without individual prior approvals, including, at a minimum, satisfactory evidence of a system to ensure quality across a distributed enterprise that includes—
 - (i) Clearly identified academic control;
 - (ii) Regular evaluation of the locations;
 - (iii) Adequate faculty, facilities, resources, and academic and student support systems;
 - (iv) Financial stability; and
 - (v) Long-range planning for expansion.
 - (vi) These institutions/programs may implement the following substantive changes without receiving prior approval:
 - (a) A change in an existing program's method of delivery
 - (b) An aggregate change of 25 percent or more of the clock hours, credit hours, or content of a program since MEAC's most recent accreditation review
 - (c) The development of customized pathways or abbreviated or modified courses or programs to:

- (i) Accommodate and recognize a student's existing knowledge, such as knowledge attained through employment or military service
- (ii) Close competency gaps between demonstrated prior knowledge or competency and the full requirements of a particular course or program
- (d) Entering into a written arrangement under 34 CFR 668.5 under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in Title IV, HEA programs offers more than 25 but less than 50 percent of the accredited institution's educational programs.

Failure to report may result in adverse action (see III.J.2 and III.K.1)

3. These substantive changes must be reported to MEAC within thirty (30) calendar days of implementation.

Failure to report may result in adverse action (see III.J.2 and III.K.1).

- a. MEAC must still approve these substantive changes. Approval will specify the effective date on which the change is included in the program's or institution's grant of accreditation. The date of approval may be made retroactive but may not pre-date either an earlier denial of the substantive change or MEAC's formal acceptance of the application for substantive change.
4. The following substantive changes apply to both institutions and programs and require prior approval by MEAC:
 - a. Change in the established mission or goals of the institution/program (see 11.a. below)
 - b. Change in the ownership, legal status or form of control of the institution /program (see 10.b. below)
 - c. Change in curriculum (see 11.c. below)
 - d. Change of location (see 11.d. below)
5. The following substantive changes apply only to institutions and require prior approval by MEAC:
 - a. Addition of a new branch campus (see 10e. below)
 - b. Addition of an additional location providing at least 50% of an educational program (see 10.f. below)
 - c. Entering into a contract with another institution or organization that will provide more than 25% of one or more of the accredited institutions educational programs whether or not that institution or organization is certified to participate in the Title IV, HEA programs (see 11.g. below)
 - d. Acquisition of any other institution or any program or location of another institution (see 11.h. below)
 - e. Addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study (see 11.i. below)
 - f. Decision to participate in Title IV, HEA programs (see 11.j. below)
 - g. Decision to cease participation in Title IV, HEA programs (see 11.k below)
6. Certain substantive changes also require a site visit by MEAC no later than six months from the date of the change, including but not limited to:
 - a. Change in ownership which results in a change of control
 - b. Addition of a new branch campus
 - c. Addition of an additional location providing at least 50% of an educational program (except as specified in 11.f. below)

7. The addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution/program is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution/program that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study. Site visits to confirm items in the substantive change process may be conducted in an abbreviated manner from the full reaccreditation site visit as determined by the complexity of the substantive change being made.
 - a. Additionally, site visits will be conducted at reasonable intervals to a representative sample of additional locations approved under III.H.3.e and III.H.10.f. Site visits to confirm items in the substantive change process may be conducted in an abbreviated manner from the full reaccreditation site visit as determined by the complexity of the substantive change being made.
8. If an institution/program makes four or more substantive changes within any consecutive twelve-month period, MEAC will require a new accreditation review, including Self-Evaluation Report and site visit (see III.F). For the purposes of this policy, MEAC considers the teach-out and closure of a program to be changes that count toward this cumulative total.
9. Failure to implement an approved substantive change within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed one year from notification of approval of the change, will forfeit approval and will require a new substantive change application.
10. Substantive changes in a MEAC accredited program (programmatic accreditation)
 - a. If a MEAC accredited program within an institution is undergoing a review of substantive change by that institution's accrediting agency, then the program must provide MEAC with the documentation required by that agency but is not required to pay the substantive change fee(s).
 - b. However, if the substantive change, as defined by MEAC, does not require a substantive change approval by the institution's accrediting agency, then the program must complete MEAC's substantive change process and pay the fee(s).
11. Procedures for reviewing substantive change applications:
 - a. Prior to implementation of any of the changes listed above, the institution/program must submit the necessary substantive change application form and fee to the MEAC. The application submitted must include a complete and detailed plan for how the change will be made and all the areas it will impact at the institution/program.
 - b. Certain substantive changes may be approved or disapproved directly by MEAC's Director of Accreditation in a timely, fair, and equitable manner. These are limited to the following:
 - (i) The addition of programs that represent a significant departure from the existing offerings or educational programs, or method of delivery, from those that were offered or used when MEAC last evaluated the institution/program.
 - (ii) A change in the way an institution measures student progress, including whether the institution measures progress in clock or credit-hours, semesters, trimesters, or quarters, or uses time-based or non-time-based methods.
 - (iii) A substantial increase or decrease in the number of clock or credit hours awarded, or an increase or decrease in the level of credential awarded for successful completion of one or more programs.

- (iv) The addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for students of another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.
- (v) Entering into a written arrangement under 34 CFR 668.5 under which an institution or organization not certified to participate in the Title IV, HEA programs offers more than 25 and up to 50 percent of one or more of the accredited institution's educational programs.
 - (a) Note: a final decision regarding (e), above, must be made within ninety (90) days of receipt of a materially complete request, unless the MEAC Director of Accreditation has determined that there are significant circumstances related to the substantive change which require a review by the full MEAC Board, to occur within one hundred eighty (180) days.

- c. All other substantive change applications will be reviewed by an Accreditation Review Committee.
- d. After reviewing all materials (including any site visit reports) the ARC will provide a report to the MEAC Board of Directors which may approve or deny the proposed change.
- e. MEAC will specify an effective date, which is not retroactive, on which the change is included in the program's or institution's accreditation. MEAC may designate the date of a change in ownership as the effective date of its approval of that change if the accreditation decision is made within thirty (30) calendar days of the change in ownership.
- f. The school will be notified of the Board's decision.
- g. If a site visit is required to verify the information provided by the institution/ program, one or more members of the ARC will visit the institution/program and/or new branch campus or additional location. The institution/program is required to submit the site visit fee prior to scheduling the site visit.
- h. Review occurring prior to Board decision will be conducted in order to determine the likelihood that the institution/program's proposed plan will allow the change to be implemented without creating areas of noncompliance. Follow-up, via Monitoring Reporting, will be conducted with all Substantive Changes to determine actual benchmark scoring and continued reporting. This will normally occur six months following implementation of the change.
- i. Findings during review of the follow-up Monitoring Reporting that demonstrate noncompliance will result in the removal of the substantive change from the institution/program's grant of accreditation rather than lead to compliance reporting or adverse action. Institutions/programs may resubmit an application for the substantive change after taking corrective planning and action.

12. More information regarding substantive changes, policies and procedures:

Note: Certain substantive changes are identified in the Code of Federal Regulations found in Part 602 of Title 34 of the Higher Education Act. (602.22)

- a. Change of established mission, purpose, or program objectives
 - (i) Examples of changes of established mission, purpose or objectives of the institution/program include:
 - (a) Altering the institution's/program's emphasis on midwifery education
 - (b) Changing its purpose or objectives in providing midwifery education, or

- (c) Changing its ability to meet the definition of institutional/ programmatic accreditation
 - (ii) The application for a substantive change in mission, purpose, or program objectives will address Standard I and, depending on the proposed change, may also include other Standards.
- b. Change in ownership, legal status, or form of control of the institution
 - (i) Examples of change in legal status or form of control include:
 - (a) Changing from a for-profit to non-profit status or vice versa
 - (b) Changing from partnership or sole proprietorship to corporation
 - (c) Selling the institution/program to another owner
 - (d) Having a new partner "buy into" the ownership of the institution/program
 - (e) Changing more than 50% of the members of the Board of Directors of the corporation during a given election period or consecutive twelve-month period
 - (f) Other related changes that alter who "controls" the institution
 - (ii) The application for a substantive change in legal status, ownership, or form of control of the institution will address Standard V and, depending on the proposed change, may also include other Standards.
- c. Changes in curriculum
 - (i) Examples of a change in curriculum include:
 - (a) The addition or discontinuation of courses or programs that represent a significant departure from the existing offerings of educational programs, in terms of content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when MEAC most recently evaluated the institution/program (this includes the addition of distance learning courses)
 - (b) The addition of courses or programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that included in the institution's/program's current accreditation.
 - (c) A change in the way an institution measures student progress, including:
 - (i) A change from clock hours to credit hours, or vice-versa
 - (ii) A change in the length of each term, from or to, semesters, trimesters, or quarters
 - (iii) A change from time-based to non-time-based methods, or vice-versa.
 - (d) A substantial increase or decrease in the number of clock or credit hours awarded, or an increase in the level of credential awarded for successful completion of a program
 - (e) A substantial increase or decrease in the length of the program
 - (f) Significant changes in the capacity for clinical training.
 - (ii) The application for a substantive change in curriculum will address Standard II, Standard VII and, depending on the proposed change, may also include other Standards.
- d. Change of location

- (i) Examples of a change in location include:
 - (a) A change in the location of the main campus
 - (b) A change in the location of the main administrative site if the educational program is provided via a distance education program.
- (ii) The application for a substantive change in location will address Standard IV and, depending on the proposed change, may also include other Standards.

e. The addition of a branch campus

- (i) A branch campus is defined (according to CFR 600.2) as a physical facility that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution and within the same ownership structure of the institution, and that also—
 - (1) Is approved by the Secretary as a branch campus; and
 - (2) Is independent from the main campus, meaning the location—
 - (i) Is permanent in nature;
 - (ii) Offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized education credential;
 - (iii) Has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and
 - (iv) Has its own budgetary and hiring authority.
- (ii) The application for a substantive change to add a new branch campus will address each standard and criteria in order to permit MEAC to determine that the branch campus has sufficient educational, financial, operational, management, and physical resources to satisfy MEAC's standards for accreditation. The review will specifically include:
 - (a) The educational program to be offered at the branch campus
 - (b) The projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow at the branch campus
 - (c) The operation, management and physical resources at the branch campus
- (iii) Accreditation will only be extended to the branch campus after MEAC has satisfactorily completed review of the institution's business plan and ensured that the institution will continue to meet MEAC standards for education, finances, operations, management, and facilities resources at the branch location.
- (iv) MEAC will undertake a site visit as soon as practicable, but no later than 6 months after the establishment of that branch campus to determine continuing compliance with MEAC standards.

f. Addition of an additional location providing at least 50% of an educational program (as defined in CFR 600.2):

- (i) An additional location is a physical facility that is geographically separate from the main campus of the institution and within the same ownership structure of the institution, at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program. An additional location participates in the title IV, HEA programs only through the certification of the main campus.
- (ii) Each additional location must be individually reviewed as a substantive change and requires prior approval by MEAC. MEAC does not pre-approve institutions to add additional locations without going through this application process.

- (iii) The application for a substantive change to add an additional location will address Standard I; Standard II; Standard III; Standard IV; Standard V; Standard VI; and, depending on the proposed change, may also include other Standards. The institution must document satisfactory evidence of a system to ensure quality across a distributed enterprise that includes:
 - (a) Clearly identified academic control;
 - (b) Regular evaluation of the locations;
 - (c) Adequate faculty, facilities, resources, and academic, and student support systems;
 - (d) Financial stability; and
 - (e) Long-range planning for expansion.
- (iv) MEAC will undertake a site visit, within six months, to each additional location the institution establishes, if the institution
 - (a) Has a total of three or fewer additional locations;
 - (b) Has not demonstrated, to MEAC's satisfaction, that it has a proven record of effective educational oversight of additional locations; or
 - (c) Has been placed on probation or show cause by MEAC or is subject to some limitation by the agency on its accreditation status.
- (v) MEAC will conduct, at reasonable intervals, visits to a representative sample of additional locations of institutions that operate more than three additional locations. MEAC will conduct visits to 10% of all additional locations or a minimum of three locations, whichever number is greater within each period of accreditation granted to the institution.
- (vi) MEAC may, at its discretion, include visits to additional locations, for ensuring that accredited/preaccredited institutions that experience rapid growth in the number of additional locations maintain educational quality.
- (vii) The purpose of the visits is to verify that the additional location has the personnel, facilities, and resources it claimed to have in its application to MEAC for approval of the additional location.
- (viii) The requirements of III.H.10.f. for approval of additional locations apply to all institutions/programs including those where MEAC's accreditation enables the institution to seek eligibility to participate in title IV, HEA programs.

g. Entering into a contract with another institution or organization that will provide more than 25% of one or more of the accredited institutions educational programs whether or not that institution or organization is certified to participate in the Title IV, HEA programs.

- (i) The application for a substantive change to acquire another institution or program or location of another institution will address each standard and criteria in order to permit MEAC to determine that the contracted institution or organization has sufficient educational, financial, operational, management, and physical resources to satisfy MEAC's standards for accreditation.

h. The acquisition of any other institution or any program or location of another institution.

- (i) The application for a substantive change to acquire another institution or program or location of another institution will address each standard and criteria in order to permit MEAC to

determine that the institution or program to be acquired has sufficient educational, financial, operational, management, and physical resources to satisfy MEAC's standards for accreditation.

- i. The addition of a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study.
 - (i) The application for a substantive change to add a permanent location at a site at which the institution is conducting a teach-out for another institution that has ceased operating before all students have completed their program of study will address each standard and criteria in order to permit MEAC to determine that the permanent location at which the institution is conducting a teach-out has sufficient educational, financial, operational, management, and physical resources to satisfy MEAC's standards for accreditation.
- j. Decision to participate in Title IV HEA programs
 - (i) An institution planning to establish their eligibility to participate in Title IV HEA programs must currently be in compliance with all benchmarks in Standard V.
 - (ii) The application for a substantive change to participate in Title IV HEA programs will address Standard V and Standard X.
 - (iii) The institution may not begin participation in Title IV HEA programs until they have been both certified by the U.S. Department of Education and their application for this substantive change has been approved by MEAC.
- k. Decision to cease participation in Title IV HEA programs
 - (i) Any decision made by the U.S. Department of Education to suspend or terminate an institution's ability to participate in Title IV HEA programs will supersede this policy and institutions are expected to comply with such decision immediately.
 - (ii) The application for a substantive change to cease participation in Title IV HEA programs will include the following:
 - (a) The institution's full rationale for the decision
 - (b) A plan for how students will be informed
 - (c) The plan for phase out and anticipated date on which financial aid availability is expected to cease
 - (d) The institution's plan for supporting any students who are currently Title IV recipients
 - (e) The institution's updated budget and strategic plan

I. Renewal of Accreditation

- 1. Renewal of accreditation is required every four to six years, or as determined by the Board.
 - a. MEAC will notify accredited institutions/programs that they must begin the process of renewing accreditation by submitting an Application to Renew Accreditation and Part I Fee. See MEAC Accreditation Handbook Section D: Accreditation Process.

- b. Accredited institutions/programs are required to submit a Self-Evaluation Report as part of the re-accreditation process. The process continues in the same manner as that for initial grant of accreditation. See MEAC Accreditation Handbook Section D: Accreditation Process.
 - c. An annual report is required every year, including the years in which a school submits its SER for renewal of accreditation.
 - d. Sustaining fees are assessed every year, including the years in which re-accreditation fees are paid.
2. The institution's/program's accreditation status is maintained while it is undergoing the re-accreditation process.
 - a. A continuation will be routinely granted for any institution/program that is nearing the end of its current period of accreditation but that has not completed the normal comprehensive review process, pending outcome of said review.
 - b. Institutions/programs must be fully cooperative with the comprehensive review process in order to receive, and remain under, a continuation. This means all items must be submitted on time and site visits must be promptly scheduled. Failure to cooperate will result in the termination of a continuation.
 - c. Time spent under continuation is considered to be a part of any future period of accreditation that may be granted, pending the outcome of the review. It may not be used to extend the time between comprehensive reviews or to otherwise extend the period of accreditation.

J. Actions to Address Non-Compliance

1. MEAC monitors institutions/programs that have been granted preaccreditation/accreditation through annual reports, TRAC reports, monitoring reports, compliance reports, third party reports, and investigation of complaints. Based on information gleaned from these or other sources that indicates an institution/program may not be in compliance with MEAC standards, criteria, and policies, MEAC must take action:
 - a. Conduct special evaluations/focus reviews or site visits. These evaluations or visits are considered to be exploratory and are preliminary to making a finding. They may not be used as a way to avoid the show cause or compliance reporting process but may result in either process being initiated.
2. Require an institution/program to show cause why preaccreditation/accreditation should not be withdrawn. A show cause order may be issued for any of the following reasons:
 - a. As a result of non-compliance with MEAC standards, criteria, and/or policies
 - b. When there is a consistent pattern of incomplete, incorrect, and/or late submissions
 - c. When there is a pattern of outcomes and/or Benchmark scoring that consistently demonstrates widespread and/or systemic weaknesses
 - d. The institution/program files for bankruptcy under the U.S. Bankruptcy Code
 - e. Another recognized accrediting agency places the institution/program on probation or takes adverse action
 - f. Other changes are made by the institution that are detrimental to the quality of the institution/program. Affected areas include, but are not limited to, educational purpose and goals, management, ownership, student success in relation to mission, faculty, or facilities
 - If MEAC issues an order requiring the institution/program to show cause, the institution/program is required to respond in writing and "show cause" why adverse action should not be taken against the institution/program. The MEAC Board of Directors will describe in writing to the institution the terms

and conditions of the submission of the response to the show cause order. The issuance of a show cause is considered to be exploratory and is preliminary to making a finding. It may not be used to avoid the compliance reporting process but may result in compliance reporting being initiated.

- An institution's/program's show cause response will be processed in the same manner as for a Compliance Report. In evaluating and resolving the show cause, MEAC may:
 - Vacate the show cause, if the institution/program has shown adequate cause that adverse action should not be taken. Vacating means that no further action or reporting is needed on the show cause but does not prevent the assignment of reporting on the issues leading to the show cause.
 - Place a program or institution on probation, if the institution/program has shown adequate cause that the school needs to be placed under a heightened level of review. Probation means that a rigorous schedule of reporting will be assigned to be completed over a period of one to two years.
 - Continue the show cause with additional reporting, if the institution/ program has shown some cause that immediate adverse action should not be taken but might still be warranted pending additional information and clarification. The total time an institution/program may remain under a show cause order is not to exceed one year from initial notification.
 - Take immediate adverse action, if the institution/program has not shown adequate cause and immediate adverse action is warranted.
- A program may remain subject to a show cause directive for no longer than twelve (12) months without resolution.

3. Permit institutions/programs to be out of compliance with one or more standards, policies and procedures for a period of time, as determined annually, not to exceed three years unless MEAC, for good cause, extends the period of noncompliance. This permitted noncompliance is allowed if all of the following criteria are met:

- a. MEAC and the institution/program can show that the circumstances requiring the period of noncompliance are beyond the institution or program's control, such as:
 - (i) A natural disaster or other catastrophic event significantly impacting an institution or program's operations
 - (ii) Accepting students from another institution that is implementing a teach-out or closing
 - (iii) Significant and documented local or national economic changes, such as an economic recession or closure of a large employer
 - (iv) Changes related to State licensure requirements
 - (v) The normal application of the agency's standards creates an undue hardship on students
 - (vi) Instructors who do not meet MEAC's typical faculty standards, but who are otherwise qualified by education or work experience to teach within career and/or technical courses
- b. The grant of the period of noncompliance is approved by MEAC's Board
- c. MEAC projects that the institution or program has the resources necessary to achieve compliance with the postponed standard, policy or procedure within the time allotted
- d. The institution or program demonstrates to MEAC's satisfaction that the period of noncompliance will not:

- (i) Contribute to the cost of the program to the student without the student's consent
 - (ii) Create any undue hardship on, or harm to, students
 - (iii) Compromise the program's academic quality
- Approval of this permitted noncompliance, following review of the criteria, is considered to be a finding of noncompliance. To be granted approval for this, schools must request MEAC consideration of the specific issue impacting the school.

4. If MEAC determines that an institution/program is not in compliance with MEAC standards or criteria, it will require the institution/program to take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance within a specified time period and submit a Compliance Report demonstrating compliance. This determination is considered to be a finding of noncompliance. The time period for coming into compliance may be as short as thirty (30) calendar days from notification, but will not exceed the lesser of:

- a. four (4) years
- b. 150% of the stated length of the program (for programmatic accreditation)
- c. 150% of the stated length of the longest program at the institution (for institutional accreditation)
- When the specified time period for compliance is shorter than the maximum time allowed by MEAC policy and USDE regulations, MEAC will provide an explanation for the time stated. Institutions/programs may petition MEAC for a longer time period, not to exceed the limit stated above, if circumstances outside of the institution/program's control will not allow the institution/program to demonstrate compliance within the time period granted. Examples: an auditor's report will not be available until after the expected compliance date; a state authorization decision will not be available until after the expected compliance date.
- Failure to show evidence of compliance with the standards/elements within the specified time period will immediately result in adverse action (see III.K) unless MEAC, for good cause, extends the period for achieving compliance.

5. MEAC may grant a good cause extension toward the time period for compliance, generally not to exceed one year, in the following circumstances:

- a. In situations where an extension is needed to complete a program calendar, fiscal year audit, or other reporting cycle.
- b. In situations where documentation/evidence is expected from an external source/process, such as a state authorizing agency or USDE.
- c. In situations where MEAC has made an error that has impacted a school's compliance or ability to demonstrate compliance.

K. Adverse Action

1. Institutions/programs will be provided with written specification of any deficiencies identified and will be given the opportunity to submit a written response before any adverse action is taken.
2. If, after the institution/program has had the opportunity to respond to notification of deficiency, it is determined that the institution, individual program within an institution, or program is not in compliance with standards, criteria, or policies and procedures, MEAC will take prompt adverse action against the institution/program. Adverse Action may be taken against individual programs within MEAC-accredited institutions and/or against the institution as a whole.

3. However, notwithstanding the above, MEAC may take immediate adverse action, without prior notice or issuance of a show cause directive, to initiate an action to withdraw accreditation from an institution/program if it determines, that an institution's/program's noncompliance with MEAC standards and/or policies warrant such immediate action. A decision to initiate an immediate adverse action under the terms of this paragraph is subject to the due process rights set forth in Section III.L. below.
4. Adverse actions include: denial, withdrawal, or suspension of accreditation, or any comparable accrediting action.
 - a. Denial is the decision not to grant preaccreditation or accreditation to any institution/program applying for initial or renewal of accreditation. In the case of renewal of accreditation, the institution/program may be allowed to complete the remainder, if any, of the current grant of accreditation.
 - b. Withdrawal is the decision to revoke a currently accredited institution/program's grant of accreditation. This ends the institution/program's current grant of accreditation as well as the rights, benefits, and responsibilities of that accreditation.
 - c. Suspension is the decision to place a currently accredited institution/program's grant of accreditation on hold as well as the rights, benefits, and responsibilities of that accreditation.
5. Reasons for taking adverse action
 - a. MEAC may take adverse action for any of the following reasons:
 - (i) An institution/program is determined to be out of compliance with standards.
 - (ii) The institution/program has not corrected deficiencies within the specified timeframe (see III.J.3).
 - (iii) The institution/program fails to cooperate in making arrangements for a scheduled visitation.
 - (iv) The institution/program fails to maintain or correct its advertising policies and practices in accordance with MEAC criteria and directives.
 - (v) The institution/program engages in unethical recruiting practices as determined by MEAC.
 - (vi) The institution fails to file all documents and receive approval as required for a substantive change.
 - (vii) The institution/program is the subject of a pending or final action to suspend, revoke, or terminate accreditation by another recognized accrediting agency.
 - (viii) The institution/program is the subject of a pending or final action to suspend, revoke, or terminate legal authority to provide education by a state or federal agency.
 - (ix) The institution/program loses its state license/authorization to operate.
 - (x) The institution/program fails to file its annual report or to promptly pay the annual sustaining fees, necessary visitation expenses, or other fees specified in MEAC's handbook.
6. Steps following an initial decision for adverse action
 - a. Institutions/programs have the right to appeal any decision for adverse action. (see III.L Due Process and Appealing MEAC Decisions)
 - b. Details of the adverse action, timeline for appeal, notification requirements, and requirements for a teach-out plan will be sent to the institution/program with notification of the adverse action.
 - c. Adverse actions are not considered final until the deadline for an appeal has been reached without an appeal being submitted or until the appeal process is exhausted.

- d. Institutions/programs are required to disclose any final decision of adverse action within seven (7) business days of notification to all current and prospective students.
- 7. Effective date of the adverse action may occur upon notification of final decision or may allow for a reasonable time to complete the activities in a teach-out plan or to fulfill obligations of a teach-out agreement.
- 8. Reinstating accreditation after adverse action
 - a. An institution/program that has had its accreditation denied or withdrawn may not re-apply for accreditation until a period of one year has elapsed since MEAC's final decision. The applicant institution will be treated procedurally and substantively as if it is a new applicant for accreditation.
 - b. An institution/program that has had its accreditation suspended must complete the terms of the suspension in order to reinstate accreditation. This will ordinarily involve a comprehensive evaluation of the entire institution/program to determine if accreditation should be reinstated or withdrawn.

L. Due Process and Appealing MEAC Decisions

- 1. MEAC policies and procedures provide institutions/programs with due process
 - a. MEAC procedures governing accreditation/preaccreditation process are provided in writing to all interested parties, including institutions/programs.
 - b. MEAC procedures allow institutions/programs a reasonable period of time to comply with requests for information and documents.
 - c. Before a final adverse action is taken, based solely upon a failure to meet financial standards and benchmarks, the institution or program may, on one occasion, request that the Accreditation Review Committee review significant financial information that was unavailable to the institution or program prior to the determination of the adverse action, and that bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified by MEAC. Upon such review of the new financial information as to significance and materiality, the ARC shall report to the MEAC Board of Directors the findings of their review and any adjustment in their recommendations regarding adverse action. Any decision made by the MEAC Board of Directors upon review and consideration of the new financial information shall not be separately appealable by the institution or program.
 - d. MEAC will make written notification to the institution/program about final decisions regarding applications for accreditation/preaccreditation and any adverse actions. This written notification will include details for the basis of decisions and the appeals process for adverse actions.
- 2. Institution/program right to appeal adverse actions and responsibilities
 - a. MEAC permits the institution/program the opportunity to appeal the following decisions made by the Board of Directors:
 - (i) Denial of accreditation or preaccreditation.
 - (ii) Suspension of the institution/program's accreditation, in part or in whole.
 - (iii) Withdrawal of the institution/program's accreditation, in part or in whole.
 - (iv) Any other comparable adverse action taken.
 - b. MEAC will keep confidential the details of any action and the basis for the action until the institution/program has either failed to appeal as permitted or MEAC has completed consideration of the institution's/program's appeal.

- c. Institutions/programs that choose to provide notifications to their administrative staff, faculty, current or prospective students, or other stakeholders prior to a final appeal decision, must provide only accurate, justifiable, and provable information. MEAC must be provided prompt copies of all communications/notifications made.
- 3. Description of the Appeals Process
 - a. Notification of an adverse decision
 - (i) If MEAC takes action denying, suspending, or revoking accreditation/preaccreditation, or takes other adverse action against an institution/program, MEAC will send to the institution/program its written statement of findings of fact and reasons forming the basis of that action within ten (10) business days following the decision.
 - b. Notice of intent to appeal
 - (i) An institution/program wishing to appeal the adverse decision must submit a written notice of intent to appeal and applicable fees to MEAC's Director of Accreditation within fourteen (14) business days of its receipt of notification of the adverse action.
 - c. Statement of Appeal and Burden of Proof
 - (i) If an appeal is requested, within twenty-one (21) business days after the receipt of notification of the adverse action the institution/program must submit to MEAC's Director of Accreditation a complete written statement of the grounds for its appeal, setting forth all of the reasons the institution/program believes that the MEAC Board of Directors' decision was in clear error and the part or parts of the Record that support its positions.
 - (ii) The institution/program may submit new evidence (evidence not previously considered by the MEAC Board of Directors) at the time it files material in support of its appeal, but any such new evidence must be identified as such and must be accompanied by a demonstration that the new evidence relates to:
 - (a) Any aspect of the MEAC Board of Director's determination that relied on issues or evidence which the institution/program has not had an opportunity, in advance of MEAC's action, to make its position known; or
 - (b) Facts that were in existence at the time of the action and were relevant to any basis for the adverse action, but were not presented to the MEAC Board of Directors because of mistake or misunderstanding by the institution/program, and which have subsequently come to the attention of the institution/program.
 - (iii) When the written statement of appeal is received, the Director of Accreditation will notify the MEAC Board of Directors of the school's appeal and will convene an Ad Hoc Appeal Panel. The MEAC Board of Directors may, in its discretion, submit a written response within 30 days following its receipt of the statement of appeal.
 - d. Appointment of the Ad Hoc Appeal Panel
 - (i) Within three (3) calendar weeks of MEAC's receipt of the request for appeal, the Director of Accreditation shall select a pool of seven (7) persons from which the Ad Hoc Appeal Panel will be selected. The Director of Accreditation will designate one person from the list of seven

to serve as Chair of the Ad Hoc Appeal Panel of three persons. The Director of Accreditation will provide a list of pool members to the institution/program

- (ii) The institution/program, within ten (10) business days of receipt of the list, may strike up to two persons, other than the chair, from the list. Should this occur, the Director of Accreditation will then designate two new individuals from those remaining on the list to constitute the second and third members of the Ad Hoc Appeal Panel. If a Panel member should become unable to serve prior to the conclusion of the appeal an alternate member may be selected from the remaining pool to fill the vacancy.

The Ad Hoc Appeal Panel shall be subject to MEAC's Ethics Policies (Section IV), including the conflict of interest policy. Ad Hoc Appeal Panel members must not be current members of the MEAC Board of Directors and must not have participated in the decision for adverse action, nor may they be related by marriage to the MEAC Board of Directors. Preferably, Ad Hoc Appeal Panel members should have knowledge of accrediting purposes and procedures and possess experience as midwifery education program administrators, and/or experienced accreditation persons from other agencies. A minimum of one public member is required to serve on this panel. The public member must meet the definition of public member set out in Section I.A.1.b) of MEAC's Policies and Procedures.

- e. The Director of Accreditation shall also notify the site visitors and members of the MEAC Accreditation Review Committee who participated in the accreditation review of the date, time and place of the hearing. The Director of Accreditation may request that one of the site visitors and one member of the Accreditation Review Committee be present at the hearing.
 - (i) A time and place will be selected to permit the institution/program to make its appeal, allowing sufficient time for presentations, deliberations, and the forwarding of a report to MEAC. Ordinarily, the meeting shall be no more than sixty (60) and no less than forty (40) business days from the final appointment of the Ad Hoc Appeal Panel.
- f. Notification of hearing procedures to the appellant institution/program
 - (i) MEAC shall forthwith notify the appellant institution/program in writing of the following:
 - (a) The time and place that the Ad Hoc Appeal Panel will meet for the hearing, the hearing fee and the expenses of the Ad Hoc Appeal Committee that must be reimbursed.
 - (b) The consideration of the appeal will be based on the Record which consists of all documentation utilized by the MEAC Board of Directors Board to make the adverse action including, but not limited to: MEAC' Board of Directors' written statement of findings and reasons related to the action, the institution's/program's written response detailing grounds for appeal, and relevant supportive documents.
 - (c) The appellant institution/program has the right to be present and represented, at its option and expense, by counsel of the institution's/program's choosing, and to have a transcript of the hearing proceedings of the appeal.
 - (d) The institution/program has the right to introduce evidence on its behalf, to examine any evidence introduced against it, to be advised, on request, of the names of any witness appearing against it, and to cross-examine any such witness.

g. Conduct of hearing

- (i) The Chair of the Ad Hoc Appeal Panel shall preside over the hearing to determine the order of the proceedings, maintain decorum and assure that all participants in the hearing have a reasonable opportunity to present and examine all relevant oral and documentary evidence introduced therein. All documentation utilized by the Board to make the adverse action must be made available to the Ad Hoc Appeal Panel
- (ii) The MEAC Board of Directors shall have the right to be accompanied or represented by counsel in the conduct of the appeal. The hearing need not be conducted strictly according to the rules of evidence applicable in a court proceeding as to the examination of witnesses or presentation of evidence. Any relevant matter upon which reasonable persons customarily rely in the conduct of their affairs may be considered. Audio recording of the hearing shall be maintained and the recording or transcriptions shall be available to the appellant for review.

h. Decisions Available to the Ad Hoc Appeals Panel

- (i) Affirm: If the Ad Hoc Appeals Panel determines that the institution has failed to meet its burden of proof in showing that the MEAC Board of Directors' action was not supported by the record or was attributable to a material error in its application of MEAC's published policies and procedures, it must affirm the decision of the MEAC Board of Directors.
- (ii) Remand: The Ad Hoc Appeals Panel may remand a decision to the MEAC Board of Directors for reconsideration when it finds that the Record on Appeal (and, as applicable, the hearing transcript) did not support the MEAC Board of Directors' decision. In its decision to remand, the Ad Hoc Appeals Panel must identify those material facts that it finds the MEAC Board of Directors failed to consider or where the MEAC Board of Directors otherwise committed one or more material errors in its deliberations and decision-making process. The MEAC Board of Directors must act in a manner consistent with the Ad Hoc Appeals Panel's decisions and/or instructions.
- (iii) Affirm and Amend: If the Ad Hoc Appeals Panel determines that, although it agrees with the MEAC Board of Directors' decision based on the entirety of the Record for Appeal, one or more elements of the MEAC Board of Directors' stated reasoning or procedural actions was nevertheless clearly in error, the Ad Hoc Appeals Panel may amend the decision. An Ad Hoc Appeals Panel decision to amend a MEAC Board of Directors decision remands the matter to the MEAC Board of Directors in order that the MEAC Board of Directors modify the bases for its decision in accordance with the specific direction of the Ad Hoc Appeals Panel.

i. Following the hearing, the Ad Hoc Appeal Panel shall submit a report based on its review. The report will then be considered and acted upon by the MEAC Board of Directors. The action of the MEAC Board of Directors, which evoked the appeal, may be considered effective and final if the Panel's deliberations result in a decision consistent with that made previously by MEAC.

(i) The Director of Accreditation shall notify the institution/program in writing of the final decision upheld by the panel, or a new determination by the Board after consideration of the Panel's report, including rationale for the decision, within thirty (30) calendar days following the conclusion of the hearing. MEAC will also notify the applicable federal and state agencies

and the public according to notification responsibilities required by MEAC's administrative policies and procedures.

j. Arbitration

- (i) MEAC has the authority to require binding arbitration of institutions/programs in lieu of appeals through the courts. If MEAC decides to initiate a binding arbitration requirement, it may do so only after giving prior notice to all institutions/programs accredited by MEAC. In its notice, it must describe in writing the terms and conditions of such an appeal process.
- (ii) If an institution/program elects to dispute MEAC's initiation of an adverse action or a MEAC decision not to approve a substantive change beyond the appeals process administered by MEAC, its dispute shall be resolved exclusively through binding arbitration. To initiate such arbitration, the institution/program must submit to MEAC a request for a de novo review by an independent arbitrator within five business days of its receipt of written notice from MEAC of its decision (after the appeal has been exhausted) together with the applicable non-refundable arbitration fee, MEAC sets it at \$25,000. It might cost that much or more for MEAC to hire counsel for the arbitration). Such arbitration shall be conducted under the auspices of the American Arbitration Association (AAA) and must be initiated by the institution/program with the AAA within 30 days following the institution/program's receipt of notice that the adverse action taken by MEAC has become final. The sole and exclusive venue for the arbitration shall be the District of Columbia (or wherever is most convenient for MEAC). Arbitration under this section shall be conducted by a single arbitrator who must have familiarity and experience with the field of higher education and the federal rules governing accrediting organizations. The AAA will provide a list of qualified arbitrator candidates. The institution/program and MEAC will use good faith efforts to select an arbitrator from the AAA list; if they are unable to do so, the AAA will select the arbitrator. The question(s) to be resolved by the arbitrator are limited to whether MEAC's decision was clearly erroneous because it was (a) not reasonably supported by the Record for Appeal and/or (b) solely attributable to a misapplication of MEAC's accreditation standards or published policies and procedures. The fact that the Record considered by MEAC could have also supported a different decision is not sufficient grounds for an arbitrator to reverse the decision if MEAC's actual decision is also supported by the Record.

The arbitration shall be held within ninety days following the submission of the Record of Appeal to the Appeals Panel. The date for the hearing shall be determined by the arbitrator in their discretion but may be revised by the arbitrator in their discretion in response to a request for change from either party. The institution/program may submit a brief of no longer than 20 pages at least 30 days prior to the hearing date. MEAC may respond to the institution/program's brief with a brief of no more than 20 pages. No discovery shall be authorized nor may evidence in addition to that in the Record for Appeal be introduced in either party's briefs or oral argument. At the arbitration hearing, each party shall be entitled to 20 minutes of oral argument, including questions from the arbitrator. A party may reserve up to five minutes for use in a closing statement. A transcript of the hearing

shall be made and provided in electronic form to the arbitrator and each of the parties. The arbitrator shall make a decision based on the Record for Appeal, the briefs of the parties, and the arbitration hearing (the "Arbitral Record").

The arbitrator may affirm, affirm in an amended form, or remand MEAC decision at issue. The decision of the arbitrator shall include a summary of the reasoning supporting the decision and shall be delivered to the institution/program and MEAC within 60 days following the arbitration hearing. The decision of the arbitrator is binding on the parties and may be reviewed by the federal courts only for abuse of discretion. It is enforceable by all courts of competent jurisdiction. The arbitration proceedings, arbitration filings and Record for Appeal shall be treated as confidential by the parties except as may be required to enforce their respective rights. The arbitrator's decision shall not be deemed confidential.

The expense of the AAA, the arbitrator, and the hearing transcription shall be shared equally by the parties. Otherwise, each party shall bear its own costs in connection with the arbitration.

M. Relinquishment of Preaccreditation/Accreditation

1. An institution/program automatically relinquishes or voluntarily withdraws its preaccreditation/accreditation through any of the following actions:
 - a. MEAC receives formal, written notification from an authorized representative of the institution/program that it voluntarily relinquishes preaccreditation/accreditation.
 - b. The institution/program enters into a teach-out plan and/or closes.
 - c. The institution/program fails to remain in active operation.
2. An institution/program that has relinquished or voluntarily withdrawn its preaccreditation/accreditation may not reapply for accreditation until a period of one year has elapsed since final action with MEAC.

N. Institution/Program Closure, Teach-Out Plans, and Teach-Out Agreements

1. Due to the broad impact of any closure, the determination to close a program, branch campus, or the institution should be made through a consultative process between MEAC, the institution and other stakeholders in midwifery education, and should be decided only after alternatives have been considered.
2. MEAC considers the decision to enter into a teach-out and/or closure to be a major change. It is a decision that should not be entered lightly as it cannot be reversed. Once MEAC has received a teach-out and/or closure plan from an institution or program, that institution or program will no longer be eligible for renewal of MEAC accreditation and the accreditation for that program will be considered voluntarily withdrawn. The current grant of accreditation will cover an institution or program up to the scheduled end date of the grant of accreditation or the completion of the teach-out plan, should the latter occur sooner. A teach-out plan will be considered complete thirty (30) calendar days following the last date of student enrollment. This thirty-day period is allowed to complete any final MEAC reporting and conclude student services such as graduate employment placement. Once an institution/program has entered into a teach-out plan, no new enrollment or reenrollment of prior students will be permitted.
3. Institutions and programs that are compiling a teach-out and/or closure plan should also include any substantive change(s) that will be needed as part of the process, such as change of location, change in

curriculum, entering into contracts with another institution or organization to provide education services. These substantive changes will be evaluated under the teach-out and/or closure plan rather than as a separate process and the usual substantive change fees may be waived.

a. Institution or Program Closure

- i. Institutions/programs that will close are required to complete a closure plan, teach-out plan, and/or a teach-out agreement to be evaluated by MEAC prior to implementation. If an institution or program MEAC accredits or preaccredits closes without a teach-out plan or agreement, MEAC must work with the USDE and the appropriate state agency, to the extent feasible, to assist students in finding reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charge.

b. The closure plan must include:

- i. The effective date of closure.
- ii. A plan for disposition of all student records, including educational, billing, accounting and financial aid records, in an accessible location and in accordance with applicable legal requirements in the event the institution closes.
- iii. Information on the number and types of credits the teach-out institution is willing to accept prior to the student's enrollment.
- iv. Full contact information for the entity that will assume responsibility for student records.
- v. A plan for the disposition of all institution/program shares, assets, and liabilities in accordance with the institution/program's bylaws or other governing documents.

c. MEAC will prorate the Annual Sustaining Fee for any institution/program closing, according to the final day the institution/program is open.

4. Teach-out Plans

a. Teach-out plan means a written plan developed by an institution/program that provides for the equitable treatment of students if an institution/program, or an institutional location that provides one hundred percent of at least one program, ceases to operate or is expected to cease operation before all students have completed their program of study, and may include, if required by the institution's accrediting agency, a teach-out agreement between institutions.

b. MEAC requires an institution/program it accredits or preaccredits to submit a teach-out plan for approval upon the occurrence of any of the following events:

- i. The HEA Secretary notifies MEAC of a determination by the institution's independent auditor expressing doubt about the institution's ability to operate as a going concern or indicating an adverse opinion or a finding of material weakness related to financial stability. Non-Title-IV schools must also submit a teach-out plan if, during an Annual Report, MEAC receives an audit or financial review wherein the institution's independent auditor has determined the same.
- ii. The HEA Secretary notifies MEAC that the institution is participating in Title IV, HEA programs under a provisional program participation agreement and the Secretary has required a teach-out plan as a condition of participation.

- iii. The HEA Secretary notifies MEAC that it has placed the institution on the reimbursement payment method under 34 CFR 668.162(c) or the heightened cash monitoring payment method requiring the Secretary's review of the institution's supporting documentation under 34 CFR 668.162 (d)(2).
- iv. The HEA Secretary notifies MEAC that the Secretary has initiated an emergency action against an institution, in accordance with section 487(c)(1)(G) of the HEA, or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate an institution participating in any Title IV, HEA program, in accordance with section 487(c)(1)(F) of the HEA.
- v. MEAC acts to withdraw, terminate, or suspend the accreditation or preaccreditation of the institution or place the institution/program on probation.
- vi. The institution notifies MEAC that it intends to cease operations entirely or close a location that provides one hundred percent of at least one program, including if the location is being moved and is considered by the HEA Secretary to be a closed school.
- vii. A state licensing or authorizing agency notifies MEAC that an institution's license or legal authorization to provide an educational program has been or will be revoked.

c. MEAC must evaluate teach-out plans. The teach-out plan must include:

- i. A listing of all students in all programs and:
 1. their name and student ID number (do not submit social security numbers or birth dates, in part or in whole)
 2. their estimated graduation dates
 3. their anticipated decision for staying at the institution through graduation, transfer, and/or participation in a teach-out agreement with a specific institution
 4. the status of unearned tuition
 5. all current refunds due
 6. their account balances
 7. the program requirements each student has completed
- ii. An anticipated timeline of activities, including:
 1. The date by which recruitment, admissions, and new enrollment will cease.
 2. The date(s) by which all marketing materials and advertising will be withdrawn, cancelled, corrected, or deleted.
 3. The date by which an audit will be completed to determine what courses and/or other activities are needed by students currently enrolled to complete their programs.
 4. The date by which development of a schedule of courses to be taught during the teach-out process that ensures that all remaining courses required for the students to complete their programs will be offered in a reasonable sequence. In some cases, it may be necessary to modify the program requirements (e.g., include self-study courses or other alternatives) to enable the students to complete their programs, but in these cases the learning objectives and credit-hour requirements must be equivalent to those of the original program.

5. The date of last classes
6. The effective date of site closure, if applicable
7. The anticipated date of loss of degree-granting authority, if applicable
8. The anticipated date of loss of Title IV access, if applicable

- iii. An explanation, accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation and timelines, of how the institution has or will notify students, administrative staff, and faculty of the teach-out plan and, if applicable, of any applicable teach-out agreement, including key dates within each.
- iv. A detailed listing of additional charges, if any, and how students will be informed of the charges.
- v. Procedures to ensure that the delivery of training and services to students will not be materially disrupted and that obligations to students will be timely met.
- vi. A plan for advising students (group and/or individual meetings, dates, agendas).
- vii. A plan for notifying Title IV FSA of closure and/or teach-out.
- viii. A plan for providing all potentially eligible students with information about how to obtain a closed school discharge of federal student loans, and, if applicable, information on state refund policies.
- ix. The names of other institutions that offer similar programs and that could potentially enter into a teach-out agreement with the institution/program.
- x. Title IV approved schools: An explanation of how the institution will arrange for continuity of financial aid services at the new institution and, if unavailable, how students will be informed of the cessation of financial aid support.
- xi. An updated MEAC Curriculum Checklist Worksheet and a course objectives list for all courses. This may be shared with other MEAC-accredited schools should MEAC need to help facilitate the transfer of students to said MEAC-accredited schools.
- xii. If the school is unable to fulfill its obligations to all currently-enrolled students, then the school must also submit a proposed teach-out agreement with one or more institutions which currently offer programs similar to those offered at the school and:
 1. Are within reasonable geographic proximity or which would be capable of conducting the teach-out without requiring students to move or travel substantial distances.
 2. Provides information on the number and types of credits the teach-out institution is willing to accept prior to the student's enrollment.
 3. Includes a clear statement to students of the tuition and fees of the educational program and the number and types of credits that will be accepted by the teach-out institution.
- xiii. A record retention plan to be provided to all enrolled students that delineates the final disposition of teach-out records (e.g. student transcripts, billing, financial aid records).
- xiv. If the program will close but the institution will remain open, the teach-out plan must also include a plan for disposition of all student records, including educational, billing, accounting

and financial aid records, in an accessible location and in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

- d. Procedures for reviewing teach-out plans
 - i. Prior to implementation of a teach-out plan, the institution/program must submit the necessary plan and associated materials to the MEAC office.
 - ii. The plan is reviewed by Independent Board Reviewers, which may request additional information from the institution/program.
 - iii. After reviewing all materials (including any site visit reports) the IBR will provide a report to the MEAC Board of Directors.
 - iv. The Board of Directors will determine the approved length for the teach-out plan, typically not to exceed 12-18 months. This timeframe allows the institution/program to teach-out those students closest to completion and arrange for transfers and/or teach-out agreements for the remainder.
 - v. The Board of Directors will determine areas of further monitoring and recommendations for strengthening the teach-out process. This may include TRAC Reports, Monitoring Reports, and/or Compliance Reports detailing changes in enrollment, administration, faculty, curriculum, facilities, finances and other major components that could affect the quality or equitable treatment of students within the educational program.
 - vi. Any teach-out plan that is not acceptable and/or that would require undue further monitoring will not be approved and will require that the institution/program enact teach-out agreements in a timely manner.
 - vii. MEAC will notify institutions/programs of further reporting requirements within ninety (90) calendar days of submission of a complete teach-out plan to MEAC.
 - viii. If a site visit is required to verify the information provided by the institution/program, one or more members of the IBR will visit the institution/program and/or new branch campus or additional location. The institution/program is required to submit the site visit fee prior to scheduling the site visit.
- e. MEAC will monitor the status of all active teach out plans, and will continue to monitor compliance with all benchmarks as they relate to the focus stated in 2.c above.
- f. If MEAC receives a teach-out plan from a program that is accredited by another recognized accrediting agency, the Agency will notify that accrediting agency of the teach-out.
- g. MEAC will not permit any institution/program to serve as a teach-out institution if any of the following conditions are present:
 - i. The institution/program is subject to the conditions in III.N.2(b), above.
 - ii. The institution/program is under investigation, subject to an action, or being prosecuted for an issue related to academic quality, misrepresentation, fraud, or other severe matters by a law enforcement agency.
- h. MEAC requires any institution/program under a teach-out plan to provide copies of all notifications made by the institution/program related to the institution/program's closure or teach-out options to

ensure the information accurately represents the student's ability to transfer credits and may require corrections.

5. Teach-out Agreement

- a. Teach-out agreement means a written agreement between institutions that provides for the equitable treatment of students and a reasonable opportunity for students to complete their program of study if an institution, or an institutional location that proves one hundred percent of at least one program offered, ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study.
- b. MEAC requires an institution it accredits or preaccredits that enters into a teach out agreement, either on its own or at the request of MEAC, with another institution to submit that teach-out agreement to MEAC for approval. MEAC will approve the teach-out agreement only if the agreement is between institutions that are accredited or preaccredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency, is consistent with applicable standards and regulations, and provides for the equitable treatment of students by ensuring that:
 - (i) The teach-out institution has the necessary experience, resources, and support services to provide an educational program that is of acceptable quality and reasonably similar in content, delivery modality, and scheduling to that provided by the institution that is ceasing operations either entirely or at one of its locations
 - (a) Note: while an option via an alternate method of delivery may be made available to students, such an option is not sufficient unless an option via the same method of delivery as the original educational program is also provided.
- c. Teach-out agreements must be submitted and approved by MEAC prior to implementation.

O. Complaints against an Institution/Program

1. MEAC will review in a timely, fair, and equitable manner any complaint it receives against an accredited/preaccredited institution or program in accordance with these procedures and will take follow-up action as appropriate based on the results of its review. MEAC encourages parties to pursue informal grievance mediation attempts with each other, or with MEAC staff or Board members, to attempt to resolve grievances informally before commencing a formal written complaint process with MEAC.
2. Scope of MEAC authority in a complaint is limited to compliance or adherence with MEAC's published standards, criteria, and policies and procedures. Matters of noncompliance will be referred to the appropriate process for remediation or show cause, as appropriate.
3. Contents of a complaint:
 - a. The complaint shall be submitted in writing and dated by the Complainant and shall include:
 - i. a statement clearly identifying the submitted materials as a written complaint, and
 - ii. identification of the institution or program against which the complaint is being filed, and
 - iii. a concise statement of the specific activities or conduct that constitute the basis of the complaint, and
 - iv. a description of the steps already taken to resolve the problem, and
 - v. the name and contact information for the person making the complaint or a statement indicating the complaint is being made anonymously. If the complaint is being made anonymously, MEAC still requires a mailing address so that requests for additional

information can be made. Every effort will be made to keep the Complainant's identity and mailing address confidential.

- b. If the written complaint does not contain the required information listed above, the MEAC Director of Accreditation will notify the Complainant, and request additional information. The Complainant has thirty (30) calendar days to respond with additional information; if additional information is not provided within thirty (30) calendar days the complaint will be considered inactive, and MEAC will take no further action unless the Complainant submits the requested information and a letter requesting that the complaint review re-commence.
- c. The Director of Accreditation will review the complaint information, including any additional information requested by MEAC, and determine if the complaint is within the scope of the MEAC standards or policies. Should the Director of Accreditation be named in the complaint, the MEAC Executive Director or another uninvolved staff or Board member will review the complaint. If the Director of Accreditation determines that the written complaint is outside the scope of MEAC standards or policies, they will notify the Complainant and the MEAC Executive Committee. If the written complaint is found to be within the scope of MEAC standards or policies, the following procedures will commence.

4. Process for handling complaints
 - a. Within fifteen (15) business days of receipt by the MEAC office of a written complaint that includes all of the required components, or submission of additional information by the Complainant as requested by MEAC to complete a complaint, a copy of the complaint and a letter requesting a response to the complaint will be forwarded via certified mail to the institution/program against which the complaint has been filed.
 - b. The Complainant will receive written notification from MEAC within fifteen (15) business days that the complaint has been received and that the complaint process has been initiated. The notification will provide an outline of the remaining steps and an anticipated date of resolution, including that the Respondent has been advised of the nature of the complaint, the address to which any additional information in support of the complaint may be sent and the deadline for the submission of any such additional material.
 - c. The institution/program (the Respondent) will then have a maximum of thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the letter from MEAC to respond to MEAC in writing to the complaint. MEAC will request the Respondent to provide documentation and/or evidence relevant to the complaint sufficient to permit evaluation of its merits.
 - d. Whenever a complaint indicates that the school may be in violation of accrediting standards or requirements, the matter will be forwarded to the MEAC Board of Directors for independent consideration or for consideration in conjunction with any other accreditation matter pending before the Board.
 - e. The MEAC President shall appoint a member of the Board of Directors who shall not have a conflict of interest nor shall have been directly involved in the circumstances giving rise to the complaint to serve as chairperson of an Investigative Committee (the "Investigative Committee") to investigate the activities or conduct under complaint.

- f. Should the MEAC President be named in the complaint, the Investigative Committee Chairperson will be appointed by an uninvolved member of the MEAC Executive Committee.
- g. Within thirty (30) calendar days, the Chairperson of the Investigative Committee shall appoint at least one additional member of the Investigative Committee who is a current or former member of the MEAC Board of Directors or a current or former Accreditation Review Committee Member, excluding any current or former members with conflicts of interest or who may have participated directly or indirectly in the complaint under review. The Director of Accreditation will participate as an ex-officio member of the Investigative Committee. A public member must participate in either the Investigative Committee or the Executive Committee, the body that will render the complaint review decision. Within ten (10) business days of appointing the Investigative Committee members, the Chairperson of the Committee shall notify the Respondent of the names of the members of the Investigative Committee.
- h. The Investigative Committee will review the documentation provided by the Complainant and the Respondent and create a report analyzing this documentation, including how each area of the complaint reflects compliance or non-compliance with MEAC standards, benchmarks, or policies by the Respondent. The report will also identify areas where the Respondent complied with MEAC standards, benchmarks, or policies. Where areas of inadequacy or weakness in policy, action or response by the Respondent occurred that require feedback and/or remediation, the Committee may make a recommendation for resolution of the complaint. This resolution may include:
 - i. a follow-up Monitoring or Compliance Report, to be submitted by the Respondent, addressing changes to inadequate areas or weaknesses identified in the investigation, or
 - ii. adverse action regarding the accreditation or preaccreditation status of the institution or program), and/or show cause action.
- i. The Investigative Committee shall complete the investigation within sixty (60) calendar days after its formation.
- j. The Chairperson of the Investigative Committee shall send the Investigative Committee's report and recommendations to the Executive Committee in advance of the Executive Committee's next available scheduled meeting and present the Committee's findings at that meeting.
- k. The Executive Committee will consider the Investigative Committee's recommendations and determine whether the Executive Committee requires any additional information to render a decision. If no further information is required, the Executive Committee will determine what actions are needed to achieve resolution.
- l. If more than half the Executive Committee has conflicts of interests with the complaint under review, then the consideration of the complaint will be considered by the full MEAC Board, excluding those with conflicts of interest.

5. Resolution of the complaint:

- a. If the Executive Committee decides to require a report(s) or initiate a Show Cause action in response to the complaint review, then these will follow MEAC's policies and procedures for Compliance and Monitoring Reports and Show Cause Actions (see III.G).

- b. The Director of Accreditation will notify in writing the Complainant and Respondent of the findings of the complaint review and any decisions by the MEAC Executive Committee or Board regarding actions to be taken by the Respondent.
 - c. The Respondent may request an appeal hearing to dispute the findings or MEAC's decision regarding actions to resolve the complaint. If the Respondent does not request a hearing within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the Complaint Findings letter, MEAC will consider the complaint review closed.
 - d. The Complainant may also request a hearing if the resolution has failed to satisfy the Complainant or if the Complainant wishes to pursue the matter further. If the Complainant does not communicate in writing to within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the Complaint Findings letter, MEAC will consider the complaint review closed.
 - e. If the Complainant and Respondent accept that the complaint review has been resolved, the MEAC Director of Accreditation will provide written confirmation of closure to both parties.
 - f. A hearing in accordance with MEAC's due process procedures will be arranged if further recourse is required and/or if the situation warrants such action.
 - g. The MEAC Director of Accreditation shall present a synopsis of the processing and outcome of complaints and investigations to the MEAC Board at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting following final resolution.
6. No person filing complaints or otherwise participating in the investigation arising from such complaints will be discriminated against, harassed, retaliated against, or disciplined as a result of said filing or participation. Procedures for offering protection and for responding to discrimination, harassment, retaliation, or discipline will adhere to MEAC's Non-discrimination policy.