

## **THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS**

Accreditation is the process by which The American Association For higher Education and Accreditation (AAHEA) grants public recognition to an educational institution. The educational institution enters into a voluntary evaluation of the Standards for Accreditation, both upon initial application and periodically hereafter. AAHEA's function is focused upon educational quality, the continuous assessment and improvement of educational practices. Our goal is to assist institutions in the improvement of their practices and programs.

The AAHEA membership sustains the Standards for Accreditation along with policies and procedures that measure and inspire educational quality. The four major components of this ongoing process are as follows: (1) The development and implementation of measurable goals and objectives, which can be tied back to the institutions mission. (2) Completion of a self-evaluation process using forms provided by AAHEA. (3) On-site review to insure institutional compliance with AAHEA standards. (4) Formal review of all necessary parts of the accreditation process including, but not limited to applicable paper work and site visits.

### **Principles of Ethics for AAHEA Accredited Institutions**

*In support of its Standards for Accreditation, AAHEA members must uphold the following principles of professional ethics:*

To provide programs of study that are educationally sound and measurably effective under the guidelines provided by AAHEA.

To maintain fair, ethical, and clearly stated advertising, admission, and enrollment practices which accurately and fairly represent the institution and the services it provides.

To provide effective student services that recognize individual differences and ensure successful student retention, graduation, and employability.

To demonstrate student satisfaction in their educational experience.

To ensure proper and ethical administration of all financial aspects of the institution.

To embrace voluntary self-regulation, which is inherent to the accreditation process.

To demonstrate a commitment to the people served by positive institutional involvement in the local community.

To promote continuing education and training programs of the highest quality and integrity.

## **Eligibility**

To be eligible for accreditation by AAHEA, an institution must meet the following requirements:

1. Programs offered must provide a clear written instructional methodology appropriate to the subject matter and expected measurable outcomes.
2. Institutions must meet any and all applicable state licensing requirements.
3. Instructors must participate in continuing education programs.
4. Institutions must demonstrate continuous, ongoing, uninterrupted, successful operation delivering education and/or training programs for at least two consecutive years immediately prior to application.
5. Institutions has not had a prior accreditation withdrawn within one year prior to application to AAHEA.
6. Institutions must be able to show a history of stable operating procedures for two years prior to applying for accreditation.
7. Institutions must clearly define the degrees/certification programs offered that they wish to have accredited.
8. Institutions muse provide a time requirement for the education and training offered in clock hours, credit hours or continuing education units, as well as clearly defined regulations governing attendance and graduation expectations based on the completion of these time frames.
9. Institutions agree that upon application and accreditation they will abide by the AAHEA rules, Principles of Ethics, Standards for Accreditation, policies and procedures. They also agree to support the goals and integrity of the accreditation process.

Institutions seeking accreditation, but failing to meet any of these criteria may appeal to AAHEA for a waiver.

### **Organization of AAHEA**

AAHEA is a very old, (1870) and proud membership organization for higher education. It has worked over the years helping to set educational standards in concert with the top colleges and universities in the United States and is offering accreditation to those institutions who qualify. The accreditation membership of AAHEA consists solely of those organizations, which have been accredited by the Accrediting Body of AAHEA.

The directors; approve the eligibility requirements and Standards for Accreditation, serves as peer review evaluators for on-site team examinations; and is solicited for commentary on the bylaws and major policy and procedural issues.

The Accrediting Body consists of no fewer than eleven (11) nor more than fifteen (20) directors. The director's manage the administrative and fiscal affairs of AAHEA and serves as the judicial body with final authority to interpret and apply the Standards for Accreditation in determining whether or not an applicant meets the published criteria for accreditation. The directors decide, based upon the eligibility criteria, whether it is competent to apply the AAHEA Standards to specific educational programs. The directors are responsible for submitting proposed changes in the eligibility requirements and the Standards for Accreditation, to the accreditation membership for review and approval. The directors may adopt such policies and procedures as it deems necessary with regard to the accreditation process.

Five members of the Accrediting body must be from the public, unaffiliated with the AAHEA membership. Additional public and consumer representatives may be appointed to advise the directors as needed. An annual conference and other such special meetings will be held as approved by the Accreditation Body in accordance with the AAHEA Bylaws.

## **THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS**

### **Inquiry**

An inquiry from an interested institution, whether initialized through telephone, correspondence, or email, is routed to the AAHEA offices. They will then be provided with the necessary paper work to begin the process of seeking accreditation.

### **Application**

Formal application to AAHEA for initial review and consideration to determine eligibility requires the submission of AAHEA Document, "Application for Accreditation".

The application must include supporting documentation for the main campus, all branches, auxiliary classrooms, and classroom extensions, along with an application processing fee as outlined in AAHEA Document-"Fee Schedule." Acceptance of the application is not an indication or assessment of the institution's accreditation. It is merely an acceptance to review the institutions ability to be accredited. The supporting documentation will be reviewed and analyzed in order to make a final determination for acceptance of the application.

### **Accreditation Workshop**

AAHEA offers Accreditation Workshops to assist applicants in understanding the process of accreditation from filling out paper work to preparing for the site visit. Check the AAHEA website or contact them for more information about workshop schedules.

### **Accreditation Assistance**

Upon acceptance of the application for accreditation an institution may request assistance from one or more of our representatives in preparing for the accreditation process. Representatives are available on a fee basis to visit an organization in advance of the site-based team to help with last minute reviews of materials. Please contact AAHEA for more information about this valuable service.

### **On-Site Visit**

The on-site team will conduct a review of the institution applying for accreditation using the policies and procedures outlined by AAHEA in accordance with the Information Checklist for AAHEA on-site examination that will be provided prior to their visit. All items must match information provided in prior documentation by the applicant agency.

### **Institutional Response**

A written report will be sent to the applicant institution, providing an opportunity to respond and to submit additional documentation pertinent to issues raised during the visit. The institution will be given 30 calendar days to submit its response to the On-Site Team, including any additional documentation or needed institutional changes. All materials are treated as confidential and are not shared with other members of the press or the public. These materials may however be subject to review by appropriate state and federal agencies or courts of law in accordance with statutes and regulations.

### **Notification of Commission Action to the Institution**

The institution will be notified in writing within 90 calendar days of the action taken by AAHEA regarding the institution's application for accreditation after receipt of all necessary documentation, including the institutional response to the on-site team.

### **General Policies**

1. Accreditation is a voluntary process conducted on the basis of published policies and procedures. Materials will be judged by AAHEA under these established guidelines.
2. Each institution is evaluated and considered for accreditation on the basis of its established goals and objectives for meeting the education and training requirements of its students, employees and employers. These goals and objectives must be measurable and connected to the mission of the applicant institution.
3. Applications will be accepted by AAHEA upon a determination that they can effectively evaluate the program(s).
4. The Accrediting Body serves to validate and improve educational quality.
5. Applicant institutions are reviewed and judged as a whole. Accreditation can be denied for any reason deemed by AAHEA.
6. Accreditation can be granted for a minimum of one year, but cannot exceed five years. Following the initial granting of accreditation, institutions will be required to apply for re-accreditation by completing the full process prior to the expiration date cited in their letter of accreditation from AAHEA. AAHEA reserves the right to require an on-site examination at any time it determines that circumstances warrant such action. AAHEA may bill an organization and hold them responsible for any cost accrued from such a necessary visit.

7. An organization which administers and controls all aspects of its programs from a centralized headquarters must have each location apply for accreditation separately.
8. The AAHEA Standards for Accreditation are under constant monitoring and review. Occasionally changes must be necessary in order to maintain a high quality of standards.
9. A publicly available directory of AAHEA accredited institutions is available on AAHEA's website at [www.aahea.org](http://www.aahea.org).
10. AAHEA accredits institutions offering classroom instruction for courses and programs offered at the certificate, diploma, and associate degree levels.

Dr. Stephen R. Barnhart  
CEO AAHE9A)