



THE FACTS OF ACCREDITATION



ac • cred • it [verb]: to certify (a school, college, or the like) as meeting all formal official requirements of academic excellence, curriculum, and facilities.*

Accreditation is a voluntary activity initiated by the institution that requires a rigorous self-evaluation and an independent, objective appraisal of the overall educational quality by peers. Accreditation emphasizes quality assurance and a commitment to continuous quality enhancement. To achieve accreditation by the Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), an institution must:

- Comply with rigorous standards;
- Develop and implement an Institutional Effectiveness Plan;
- Undergo an annual review of its financial stability, retention and placement rates; and
- Undergo announced and unannounced site visits.

If judged to be in compliance with established standards, an accreditation status may be granted for a specific period, ranging from three to eight years.

TYPES OF ACCREDITATION

NATIONAL

Accreditation of primarily for-profit, professional degree and non-degree career-based institutions. Geographic scope of authority is typically for all 50 states and U.S. Territories.

REGIONAL

Accreditation of public and private, primarily nonprofit and degree-granting, two- and four-year institutions. Geographic scope is limited to specific regions of the country, such as New England, western states or southern states.

SPECIALIZED

Accreditation of specific programs, professions and freestanding schools, such as law, medicine, cosmetology, engineering and health professions.

* Source: *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2009 by Houghton Mifflin Company.*

JUST THE FACTS

Fact: Mission. ACICS-accredited colleges and schools have a career-focused mission, and offer an education and applied-skills training that are not available at many traditional institutions.

Fact: Authority. As a nationally recognized accrediting agency, ACICS has authority from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) for the accreditation of professional, technical and occupational career education programs, and authority from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) for the accreditation of degree-granting institutions.

Fact: Standards. ACICS-accredited schools are required to meet and maintain rigorous standards of educational excellence and quality assurance as established by ACICS and authorized by state and federal regulations, including those of ED. ACICS-accredited colleges and schools are specifically required to maintain strong student retention and job placement performance as a condition of accreditation.

Fact: Transfer of Credit. ACICS-accredited colleges and schools must comply with transfer of credit standards. ED and CHEA have published guidelines advising all accredited institutions not to deny transfer of credit based solely on the source of accreditation.