



meac
midwifery education
accreditation council

Section D.1: Overview of the Initial Accreditation Process

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Overview of the Initial Accreditation (Pre-Accreditation) Process

Accreditation

Accreditation is a structured, step-by-step process consisting of a Preliminary Application, a comprehensive Self-Evaluation Report, a Materials & Information Request, a Site Visit, a Draft Findings Report, the school's response to the findings, and an accreditation decision.

The accreditation process is designed to create opportunities for and to support the directors, students, faculty, and staff of institutions/programs in evaluating their midwifery education programs against national standards and goals set by the institution/program. This process is the primary method for institutions/programs to demonstrate compliance with MEAC's Standards of Accreditation.

While the accreditation process provides several opportunities for due process and minor corrections, schools must have done the work to comply with all applicable standards before beginning the accreditation process. For initial applicants, the Readiness Self-Assessment is completed during Stage 3 of the Prospective Applicant Accreditation. When training is complete, the accreditation process begins. Preaccreditation can typically be accomplished in less than a year however, the total initial accreditation process generally takes about two years to complete.

Accreditation Training for Schools Applying for Initial Accreditation

Institutions/programs interested in MEAC accreditation must complete a four-stage training series with MEAC. The Training Stages include the following:

Stage 1: Self-study

- Read through the Accreditation Handbook Sections A-F and prepare questions for the Director of Accreditation

Stage 2: Pre-accreditation training with the Director of Accreditation

- Best Practices in Accreditation
- Introduction to the Weave accreditation portal
- Responding to Materials and Information Requests

Stage 3: Readiness Self-Assessment

- Complete a readiness self-assessment and submit it to the Director of Accreditation

Stage 4: Prepare the school's Self-Evaluation Report (SER)

- Upload SER and evidence to Weave

Parts of the Initial Accreditation Process

Self-Evaluation Report

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) is a comprehensive, detailed report prepared by the institution/program. The SER will systematically address each of MEAC's Standards and all applicable benchmarks thereunder for each program included within the grant of accreditation. The SER is completed via the Weave online portal, where the institution/program will enter a written narrative and supporting documentary evidence to demonstrate compliance with each applicable benchmark. An SER template is available.

The institution/program should be able to describe its self-evaluation process, how the staff, faculty, students, Program Advisory Committee, and other external interests contribute to the school's self-evaluation, and how the self-evaluation process is a meaningful, significant, and ongoing process.

SER Information

- I. Applying for Institutional or Programmatic Accreditation? Some standards apply to programmatic and institutional accreditation, but some are specific to institutional or programmatic accreditation.
 - A. Standards applying to only institutional accreditation: II.E1, II.E2, II.E3, II.F1, III.E1, III.E2, IV/D1, IVD2, IVD3, IV.D4, IVE1, V.A1, V.A3, V.B1, V.B2, V.B3, V.B5, V.D1, V.D3, VI.B1, VII.A3, VII.A5, V11.D1, VII.D3, VIII.B1, VIII.C1, X.A1, X.B1, X.B2, X.B3, X.B4, X.B5, X.C1, X.C2
 - B. Standards applying to only programmatic accreditation: V.A2, V.B4, VII.A4
- II. **Self Evaluation Report (SER)**
 - A. Provide a history of the school:
 1. When school opened
 2. When the school first enrolled students
 3. When the school first became eligible to apply for accreditation
 4. Any significant events in the school's history
 5. List and provide dates of all changes of control/ownership, name, location, addition of programs, separate facilities, and other substantive changes that have occurred in the last two years
 - B. Explain ownership and organization
 1. Provide as an exhibit a chart of the ownership structure of the school, including all entities and individuals in the chain of ownership and any additional information necessary to explain the ownership structure

2. Provide as an exhibit an organizational chart of the school's management structure
- C. Include information regarding requirements with which school must comply that are significantly different or more stringent than MEAC standards
1. Any state-specific student refund requirements
 2. Any state-specific requirements for faculty
 3. Any state or local government requirements for fire, safety, sanitation, and insurance
 4. Any state program requirements
 5. Any other additional requirements by federal, state, or local government agencies or other accrediting bodies that are significantly different or more stringent than MEAC standards
- D. Respond to *each of the standards* outlined in [MEAC's Section B: Standards of Accreditation](#)
1. Responses should be clear and concise but should speak to all parts of each standard. Explain processes and procedures.
 - a) Think about writing out instructions to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich ([this is a silly video](#) describing what I mean)
 2. Explain how the school meets each standard and its benchmark(s). Provide examples and exhibits. See the example in #3.
 - a) Example: School's Mission Statement
 - (1) Include the Mission Statement
 - (2) Provide pages from or links to where the Mission Statement may be found (student handbook, website, etc.)
 3. Example of how the school might respond to Standard I | Mission, Program Assessment, and Student Achievement:
 - a) Benchmark I.A | Mission
Benchmark I.A1 (Programmatic and Institutional Accreditation) - The institution or program has a mission statement.
 - (1) Institution Response: The mission of Made Up College of Midwifery is to prepare clinically, culturally, and philosophically competent midwives who provide exceptional care to women, newborns, and families (I pulled this basically word for word from the University of Utah instead of trying to write my own 😊).
 - (2) Made Up College of Midwifery includes the College's mission statement in the student handbook (see Exhibit 1: Page X of

Student Handbook) and on the school's website (see Exhibit 2:
(Insert link) Made Up College of Midwifery Website).

- III. To earn pre-accreditation, the school must show compliance with or progress towards compliance with all standards (remember that some are either institutional or programmatic)
- IV. To earn pre-accreditation, the school *must show current compliance* with the standards listed below (See the Standards Handbook for specific details on each) and progress towards or proof of planning for compliance for all required standards:
 - A. I.A1
 - B. I.B1
 - C. II.A3
 - D. II.A5
 - E. II.B5
 - F. II.C1
 - G. III.A1
 - H. III.A2
 - I. III.A4
 - J. IV.C1
 - K. IV.C2
- V. Formatting the SER
 - A. Schools will upload all responses and exhibits in Weave (might be a good idea to create outside of Weave and then copy them into the software)
 - 1. Responses - Format consistently, check for spelling, grammar, etc. Should reference exhibits in response.
 - 2. Exhibits - Name all Exhibits in a logical, standardized format (Example: Exhibit 1: Page X of Student Handbook)

A team of peer reviewers (Accreditation Review Committee [ARC]) will be assigned to evaluate the institution's/program's SER. The ARC team will prepare a report that outlines any additional materials or information needed to complete the evaluation.

Materials and Information Request

Following submission of the SER, your school's assigned MEAC Director of Accreditation will review the SER for completeness. If there are benchmarks/demonstrations that have not been answered, if your response references evidence that didn't get submitted, or if there are responses that didn't fully answer the benchmark, you will be notified with the Materials and Information Request. The Materials and Information Request has three sections:

1. Materials Requested (where items are missing or incomplete)
2. Information Requested (where is it unclear how the school meets the benchmark)
3. Opportunity to Respond to Noted Deficiencies and Possible Noncompliance (where there are not any requests for additional information as it is clear what the school is doing). This section is specifically provided as an opportunity for the school to come into compliance.

The institution/program will have the opportunity to respond to each section of the Materials and Information Request prior to the site visit.

Preparation for Site Visit

The Director of Accreditation will meet with the institution/program prior to the site visit to discuss logistics, additional requirements, and any other pertinent information. MEAC will provide a Site Visit Manual and a tentative schedule for purposes of preparation.

The Site Visit

The Director of Accreditation and the assigned team of peer reviewers (ARC) will conduct a site visit to verify the information provided in the institution's/program's submissions. If the institution/program offers the majority of its coursework via distance education, the site visit will be conducted virtually. If the school/program is brick and mortar, the site visit will be in person.

Draft ARC Report

The Draft ARC Report is prepared by MEAC following the site visit. This report summarizes findings and is the first time the institution/program will see preliminary benchmark scoring for all applicable benchmarks. A copy of the Draft ARC Report will be provided to the institution/program, and the institution/program will have the opportunity to respond to the preliminary benchmark scoring and findings. The school's response to the Draft ARC Report is the final opportunity for due process before the Board's decision.

The Director of Accreditation will summarize the institution's/program's response and approve the ARC recommendations. The final scoring recommendations will then be submitted to the Board of Directors for an accreditation decision.

Board Report

Before making a pre-accreditation decision, the MEAC Board of Directors will review all the materials from each step of the accreditation process, including the Final ARC Report and the Director of Accreditation's summary report. Two Board Members, with the assistance of the Director of

Accreditation, will take the lead in the review and will present their recommendations to the entire Board for a pre-accreditation decision. Following discussion and a decision, the Board's overall pre-accreditation decision will be put into a Board Report and sent to the program/institution. The Board Report will include official benchmark scores, requirements for further reporting, and adverse action (hopefully none!) with details for appeal if warranted. If the decision includes adverse action (denial, suspension, or withdrawal of accreditation), the institution/program will have further options for due process. See MEAC's Accreditation Handbook, Section G, Appeal and Due Process policy for more information.

Preaccreditation Timeline

	Step	Details	Timeline
PART I	Accreditation Training	Prospective schools must complete Accreditation Training	6 Weeks
	Preliminary Application	Prospective schools have one year from completing the Prospective Applicant Accreditation Training to submit the application	
	Part I Fee	Due before Part I is officially accepted	
	Notification of Part I Acceptance	Upon notification, the preaccreditation timeline begins	
PART II	Complete Self-Evaluation Report (SER)	Due within 22 weeks of Part I notification	50 Weeks
	SER Fee	Due before the end of the 22-week time period	
	MEAC Review of SER	MEAC staff will review the SER for completeness, compile a list of missing, incomplete, or unclear pieces, and notify the applicant via a Materials and Information Request (MIR)	
	Applicant Response to MIR	The applicant has 6 weeks to provide the requested MIR	
	Teach-Out Plan	Complete the Teach-Out Plan before the preaccreditation decision; MEAC staff will review the plan	
Preaccreditation Decision	Accreditation Review Committee (ARC) Review of SER	ARC reviews full SER and conducts an abbreviated audit to ensure compliance assigning scores for each benchmark	6 Weeks
	Preaccreditation Decision	MEAC Board of Directors reviews ARC and Director of Accreditation recommendation	
	Notification of Preaccreditation	Preaccredited school will be provided with a Notification of Preliminary Scoring (Draft ARC Report) and Guidance to Prepare for the Site Visit	

	Step	Details	Timeline
PART III	Site Visit Scheduled	MEAC will coordinate with ARC and the school to schedule a site visit no more than 120 days from notification of preaccreditation	12 Weeks
	Part III Fee	Due before site visit (2 weeks)	
	Site Visit	MEAC and ARC will conduct a site visit	
PART IV	Draft ARC Report	MEAC Staff prepares the Draft ARC Report with updated preliminary benchmark scoring following the site visit	34 Weeks
	Approval of Draft ARC Report	ARC reviews/revises the Draft ARC Report, and MEAC Staff sends the report to the Preaccredited School	
	School Improvement (Compliance)	The time between notification of the draft ARC report and 1 month before the deadline	
	ARC Review of School Response	ARC will review the applicant's response, finalize the benchmark score, and approve the final ARC report	
	Independent Board Review (IBR)	2 Board members assigned to conduct a thorough review of the preaccredited school's materials, ARC's final report, and finalize the accreditation recommendation	
PART V	Accreditation Decision	MEAC Board reviews the school's materials, final ARC report, and recommendations, and the IBR report and makes decision regarding accreditation	4 Weeks
	Notification of Accreditation Decision	MEAC provides the school with a full written explanation of the decision	

The timeline is not set in stone; the process can be sped up or slowed down depending on the school's needs.