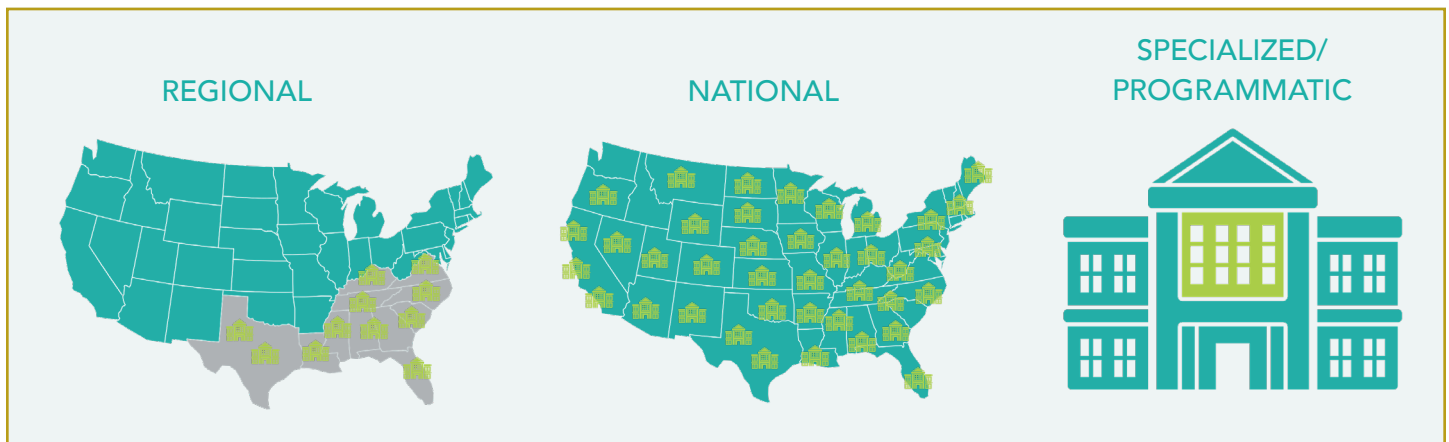


101: ACCREDITATION GLOSSARY



- **Accreditor (or accrediting agencies)** – private educational associations of national or regional scope that accredit institutions of higher education for purposes of quality assurance and access to federal financial aid.
- **CHEA** – Council for Higher Education Accreditation; an association of 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities that recognizes 60 institutional and programmatic accrediting organizations.¹
- **C-RAC** – Council of Regional Accrediting Commissions; made up of the seven regional accrediting agencies.
- **Differentiated accreditation** – an accreditation practice that allows accreditors to differentiate among their member institutions to provide varying levels of engagement and support based on results from the risk assessment.²
- **Decision and publication** – a formal notice of accreditation or preaccreditation issued by accreditors once an IHE has met its standards. Only public and private non-profit institutions can qualify to award federal student aid based on preaccreditation.³
- **ED** – the U.S. Department of Education, responsible for granting recognition to accreditors, permitting them to certify the quality of colleges and universities.
- **FSA** – Federal Student Aid, the office within ED that oversees and administers federal student loan and student grant programs.
- **HEA** – the Higher Education Act, the federal law governing accreditation rules that establishes accrediting agencies as gatekeepers of federal financial aid.
- **IHE** – institution of higher education (nonprofit, public or for-profit); only accredited IHEs can receive federal financial aid through Title IV of the Higher Education Act.
- **Institutional accreditation** – certification performed by regional and national accreditors, indicating that each part of an institution is contributing to the achievement of the institution’s objectives. The regional and national accreditors perform institutional accreditation. Necessary from a federally recognized accreditor for an IHE to participate in ED federal student aid programs.



- **Monitoring** – process of tracking accredited institutions or programs throughout their period of accreditation to verify that the accreditor’s standards continue to be met.⁵
- **National accreditation** – recognition by a national accrediting agency
 - **DEAC** – Distance Education Accrediting Commission
- **NACIQI** – the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity; a body that advises the Secretary of Education on accreditation policy and oversees the process of formally recognizing the accreditors themselves.
- **On-site evaluation** – process used by accreditors to review the institution or program to determine first-hand if the applicant meets the established standards.⁶
- **Programmatic accreditation** – normally applies to individual programs, departments, or schools that are part of an institution. The accredited unit may be as large as a college or school within a university or as small as a curriculum within a discipline.⁷
- **Quality assurance** – in postsecondary education, defined as the systems and processes by which quality is attributed to an institution of higher education
- **Reevaluation** – process for considering whether an already accredited institution or program should receive a continuation of its accredited or preaccredited status.⁸
- **Regional accreditation** – recognition by one of the seven regional accrediting agencies in the U.S.
 - **ACCJC** – Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges; a regional accrediting agency
 - **HLC** – Higher Learning Commission; a regional accrediting agency
 - **MSCHE** – Middle States Commission on Higher Education; a regional accrediting agency
 - **NEASC** – New England Association of Schools and Colleges; a regional accrediting agency
 - **NWCCU** – Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities; a regional accrediting agency
 - **SACS** – Southern Association of Schools and Colleges; a regional accrediting agency
 - **WASC** – Western Association of Schools and Colleges; a regional accrediting agency
- **Self-study** – in-depth self-evaluation report prepared by an institution or program seeking accreditation measuring performance against the standards established by the accreditor.⁹
- **Specialized accreditation** – type of accreditation earned by a unit within an institution, as large as a college or school within a university or as small as a curriculum within a discipline.¹⁰
- **Standards** – benchmarks set by an accreditor, in collaboration with educational institutions and/or programs, required for an IHE to receive accreditation.¹¹
- **The Accreditation Group** – a group within the Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education that carries out specific functions with respect to accreditation.¹²
- **Title IV** – title in the HEA which provides the legal authority for federal financial aid, including the Pell Grant and federal student loans
- **Triad** – represents the three main functions of quality assurance: accreditation through a recognized (by ED) accreditor; state authorization; and a program participation agreement with the U.S. Department of Education

¹<http://www.chea.org/>

²<http://ib5uamau5i20f0e91hn3ue14.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Risk-Informed-Differentiated-Accreditation-Framework-FINAL.pdf>

³<https://www2.ed.gov/admsn/finaid/accred/accreditation.html#Overview>

⁴⁻¹²Ibid.