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POLICY #3

ELIGIBILITY FOR ACCREDITATION

To be eligible for initial or continuing accreditation, a nursing program must demonstrate that it meets or continues to meet the following eligibility requirements of the ACEN:

1. The governing organization/institution offering the program:
 - a. is legally authorized to provide a postsecondary education program in the state in which the institution/nursing program is physically located;
 - b. is legally authorized to grant the credential (degree, diploma, or certificate) to the nursing program seeking accreditation.

Once eligibility is established, the nursing program must demonstrate that it meets the ACEN Accreditation Standards.

2. The governing organization/institution offering the nursing program and granting the credential is accredited or approved for candidacy (or status equivalent to candidacy) by an appropriate agency.

If the governing organization has candidate status (or a status equivalent to candidacy status) with an accrediting agency, then the governing organization/institution must achieve initial accreditation with the agency prior to the nursing education unit scheduling an initial accreditation visit with the ACEN.

In order to maintain eligibility for ACEN accreditation, the governing organization/institution must earn accreditation within the appropriate agency's timeframe and, once earned, the governing organization/institution must continuously hold accreditation/approval by its appropriate agency. An appropriate agency is determined as follows:

- a. ~~If the nursing program is administered by a college, university, or technical/vocational governing organization/institution that is part of the system of higher education and grants a diploma, certificate, associate degree, baccalaureate degree, master's degree, or clinical doctorate in nursing, the governing organization/institution must be accredited or hold candidacy by one (1) of the following agencies:~~

- ~~Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools*~~
- ~~Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges*~~
- ~~Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools*~~
- ~~Council on Occupational Education*~~
- ~~Distance Education Accrediting Commission*~~
- ~~Middle States Commission on Higher Education*~~

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- ~~• New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education*~~
- ~~• Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*~~
- ~~• Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges*~~
- ~~• Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges*~~
- ~~• The Higher Learning Commission*~~
- ~~• Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission*~~

~~* Recognized by USDE to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV programs~~

~~b. If the governing organization/institution that administers the nursing program is a vocational/technical/career school or public school system/district and grants a postsecondary certificate, (1) the governing organization/institution must be approved by the appropriate state agency for education with authority over this type of governing organization/institution or (2) the governing organization/institution must be accredited or hold candidacy by one (1) of the following agencies:~~

- ~~• Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools*~~
- ~~• Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges~~
- ~~• Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges*~~
- ~~• AdvancED~~
- ~~• Council on Occupational Education*~~
- ~~• Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools*~~
- ~~• New England Association of Schools and Colleges Committee on Public Secondary Schools~~
- ~~• New England Association of Schools and Colleges Committee on Technical and Career Institutions~~

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~~c. If the nursing program is administered by a hospital and grants a diploma, certificate, associate degree, baccalaureate degree, master's degree, or clinical doctorate in nursing, the hospital must be approved by one (1) of the following agencies:~~

- ~~• Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools*~~
- ~~• Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges*~~
- ~~• Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools*~~
- ~~• DNV Healthcare~~
- ~~• Healthcare Facilities Accreditation Program~~

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- ~~• The Joint Commission~~

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~~d. If the nursing education unit (school/college) is independent and has state approval to grant the associate degree, baccalaureate degree, master's degree, or clinical doctorate in nursing, the school/college must be accredited or approved for candidacy by one (1) of the following agencies:~~

- ~~• Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools*~~
- ~~• Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges*~~
- ~~• Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools*~~
- ~~• Council on Occupational Education*~~
- ~~• Distance Education Accrediting Commission*~~
- ~~• Middle States Commission on Higher Education*~~
- ~~• New England Association of Schools and Colleges Commission on Institutions of Higher Education*~~
- ~~• Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities*~~
- ~~• Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges*~~
- ~~• Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges*~~
- ~~• The Higher Learning Commission*~~
- ~~• Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission*~~

~~* Recognized by USDE to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV programs~~

3. The ACEN will accredit a nursing program when it:

- a. Is administered by a college, university, or technical/vocational governing organization/institution that is part of the system of higher education; grants a diploma, certificate, associate degree, baccalaureate degree, master's degree, or clinical doctorate in nursing degree; and the college, university, or technical/vocational governing organization/institution holds institutional accreditation through an [ACEN-recognized institutional accrediting agency](#).
- b. Is administered by a vocational/technical/career school or public school system/district; grants a postsecondary certificate; and the vocational/technical/career school or public school system/district holds institutional accreditation through an [ACEN-recognized institutional accrediting agency](#), or the governing organization/institution is supervised by a state education department/public school system/district.

If the nursing program is administered by a vocational/technical/career school or public school system/district and grants a postsecondary certificate, the governing organization/institution/nursing program may use ACEN accreditation

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to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV programs of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended. If the governing organization's/institution's accrediting agency is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to establish Title IV eligibility, the ACEN may not be used to establish Title IV eligibility.

- c. Is administered by a hospital; grants a diploma, certificate, associate degree, baccalaureate degree, master's degree, or clinical doctorate in nursing degree; and the hospital holds institutional accreditation through an [ACEN-recognized institutional accrediting agency](#).

If the nursing program is administered by a hospital and grants a diploma, certificate, associate degree, baccalaureate degree, master's degree, or clinical doctorate in nursing, the governing organization/institution/nursing program may use ACEN accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV programs of the Higher Education Act of 1965 as amended. If the governing organization's/institution's accrediting agency is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to establish Title IV eligibility, the ACEN may not be used to establish Title IV eligibility.

- d. Is administered by an independent college, university, or technical/vocational governing organization/institution; grants a diploma, certificate, associate degree, baccalaureate degree, master's degree, or clinical doctorate in nursing degree; and the college, university, or technical/vocational governing organization/institution holds institutional accreditation through an [ACEN-recognized institutional accrediting agency](#).

4. The nursing program must be currently approved without qualification by the state agency **or agencies** that has or have legal authority for education programs in nursing. This policy is not applicable to those programs in nursing over which a state regulatory agency that has legal authority for education programs in nursing has no jurisdiction (e.g., selected master's degree programs or programs admitting previously licensed **registered** nurses).
5. For initial accreditation of a nursing program without previous graduates, the initial accreditation site visit for the nursing program should occur while the initial cohort of students is enrolled in either (1) the final semester/quarter/term of the nursing program or (2) the semester/quarter/term prior to the final semester/quarter/term of the nursing program.

For initial accreditation of a nursing program with previous graduates, the initial accreditation site visit can occur during any semester/quarter/term of the candidacy period.

Note: Initial accreditation is effective as of the accreditation cycle in which the Board of Commissioners grants initial accreditation. **Accreditation is not retroactive for**

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students who graduated prior to the semester/quarter/term in which the initial accreditation site visit occurred.

- ~~6. If the nursing program is administered by a vocational/technical/career school, or public school system/district and grants a postsecondary certificate (see 2b above), the governing organization/institution/nursing program may use ACEN accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV programs.~~

~~If the governing organization/institution is accredited by one (1) of the following agencies, that accrediting agency is the primary agency for establishing Title IV eligibility:~~

- ~~• Council on Occupational Education~~
- ~~• Middle States Association Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools~~
- ~~• New York State Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education~~
- ~~• New York State Board of Regents, State Education Department, Office of Professions (Public Postsecondary Vocational Education, Practical Nursing)~~
- ~~• Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education~~
- ~~• Pennsylvania State Board for Vocational Education, Bureau of Career and Technical Education~~

- ~~7. If the nursing program is administered by a hospital and grants a diploma, certificate, associate degree, baccalaureate degree, master's degree, or clinical doctorate in nursing (see 2c above), the governing organization/institution (hospital)/nursing program may use ACEN accreditation to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV programs.~~

~~If the governing organization/institution is accredited by the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES), Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC), or Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools (ACICS), the ABHES, ACCSC, and ACICS is the primary agency for Title IV eligibility.~~

6. A nursing program that offers more than one (1) option/track must be reviewed by the ACEN in its entirety. All nursing program options/tracks that lead to the same degree or certificate within a single governing organization/institution must be accredited by the ACEN for any one (1) of the options/tracks to be accredited. The nursing program may not select individual options/tracks within the same certificate or degree to be reviewed for accreditation.

For example:

- The accreditation of a master's degree program that includes several options/tracks such as Family Nurse Practitioner, Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner, Nurse Educator, and Nurse Leader must be inclusive of all options/tracks. The nursing program may not select only the Family Nurse

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Practitioner and Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner options/tracks to be reviewed for accreditation. [Rationale: Students graduate from a master's degree program, not an option/track; therefore, the accreditation applies to the entire nursing program.]

- The accreditation of an associate degree program that includes two (2) options/tracks such as pre-licensure and LPN-to-RN must be inclusive of all options/tracks. The nursing program may not select only the pre-licensure option/track to be reviewed for accreditation. [Rationale: Students graduate from an associate degree program, not an option/track; therefore, the accreditation applies to the entire nursing program.]
7. If a governing organization/program offers a certificate or certificates composed of only the specialty courses for an option/options or track/tracks, the ACEN will automatically include the certificate program option(s)/track(s) in its review of the degree program in the accreditation process.
 - For example, if the governing organization/program seeks accreditation of a master's program that includes several options/tracks such as Family Nurse Practitioner, Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner, Nurse Educator, and Nurse Leader, **and** the governing organization/program offers a certificate or certificates composed of only the specialty courses from an option/options or track/tracks such as Family Nurse Practitioner, then the ACEN will automatically include the certificate program option(s) in its review of the degree program in the accreditation process. [Rationale: The options/tracks that compose the certificate(s) are a subset of the degree program, and the accreditation applies to the entire nursing program, including the certificate(s).]
 8. In accordance with federal regulation 34 CFR §602.28:
 - a. The ACEN may not grant initial accreditation or continuing accreditation to a governing organization/institution or a nursing program offered by a governing organization/institution if the ACEN knows, or has reasonable cause to know, that a governing organization/institution or a nursing program is the subject of:
 1. A pending or final action brought by a state agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate a governing organization's/institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the state;
 2. A decision by a recognized agency to deny accreditation or pre-accreditation;
 3. A pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate a governing organization's/institution's accreditation or pre-accreditation; or
 4. Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized agency.
 - b. The ACEN may grant initial accreditation or continuing accreditation to a governing organization/institution or nursing program **described in 8a above** only

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if ACEN provides to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, within 30 days of its action, a thorough and reasonable explanation, consistent with the ACEN Standards and Criteria, why the action of the other body does not preclude the granting of initial accreditation or continuing accreditation by the ACEN.

- c. If the ACEN learns that a governing organization/institution or nursing program it accredits 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, the ACEN must promptly review its accreditation of the governing organization/institution or nursing program to determine if it should also take adverse action or place the governing organization/institution or nursing program on conditions or warning. See ACEN Policy #14 Reporting Substantive Changes and ACEN Policy #18 Accreditation Status of the Governing Organization for details regarding a negative or adverse action by an appropriate institutional accrediting agency.

Policy #3 History
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