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23. Temporary policy adaptations

The Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) is a specialized accreditation agency which accredits post-secondary English language programs and institutions. CEA’s scope provides for accreditation of programs within accredited institutions as well as stand-alone institutions in the US, and several types of schools outside the US.

CEA is recognized by the Secretary of Education and complies with regulations by the United States Department of Education (USDE). Accredited programs and institutions that enroll international students on student visas must also comply with regulations issued by the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP).

In 2020, in response to the emergence of COVID-19 (the novel coronavirus), the USDE Office of Postsecondary Education and DHS/SEVP issued formal guidance to accreditors regarding flexibility in establishing certain temporary practices for accreditors and SEVP-certified sites, respectively.

Correspondingly, CEA established and published notification requirements, available on the CEA website, by which accredited sites may make and must report to CEA any temporary adjustments to educational program delivery and student services. Temporary modifications made as a result of or in response to COVID-19 require notification for sites to maintain eligibility and accredited status. Other changes are subject to CEA’s substantive change reporting policies described in Section 9: Substantive change.

The following three temporary policy adaptations were adopted by Commission vote effective June 26, 2020. These adaptations, which add to or override existing policies and procedures are to be enacted on a temporary basis to address the effects of COVID-19 as they impact accreditation timelines and other accreditation-related reporting. Sites are reminded that they are required to maintain compliance with federal, state and local laws as well as applicable institutional regulations, and that CEA policy cannot supersede federal, state, or other legal requirements. Staff will contact sites affected by these policies with more details about the specific adaptations enumerated below.

23.1. Site visits

Beginning in August 2020, CEA will conduct hybrid site visits on a temporary basis for regular and special site visits. The hybrid site visit is a 2-part review process which involves an initial virtual review by a review team and a 1-day in-person focused follow-up visit to be conducted within one year of the accreditation decision, pending travel restrictions and other considerations.

CEA’s preference is to conduct in-person visits, and in-person site visits will continue where conditions allow according to the guidelines outlined in the document *Conducting Site Visits during COVID-19*, as issued by and available from CEA staff.

This temporary adaptation will remain in place until revoked or withdrawn by the Commission.

23.2. Extensions of term of accreditation

Effective July 2020, in cases where the reaccreditation timeline cannot be met due to CEA's scheduling constraints or unexpected circumstances at the site related to COVID-19, CEA will permit extensions to the period of accreditation not to exceed three CEA cycles, that is, by up to one year, under the following conditions:

- a. The site cannot be in any advisory or adverse action status as described in Section 12: Advisory and adverse action, including warning, probation or show cause.
- b. The Commission must approve all such extensions by formal vote.

CEA staff will contact sites whose reaccreditation timelines may be affected by COVID-19 to determine whether an extension to the period of accreditation is needed and, if so, to initiate a formal request for the extension.

This temporary adaptation will remain in place until revoked or withdrawn by the Commission.

23.3. Extensions of eligibility

Effective July 2020, CEA will permit an accredited site to continue to maintain eligible status during periods of extended hiatus under the following conditions:

- a. In cases where a site does not offer any classes, either in-person or through other modality, for a period in excess of 4 months, eligibility can be extended provided the site files the CEA Application for Extended Hiatus with appropriate documentation.
- b. The Commission must approve all such extensions by formal vote.

This temporary adaptation will remain in place until revoked or withdrawn by the Commission.