

EKU Professional Accreditation of Academic Programs

GUIDEBOOK

(Approved by the ECU Deans' Council, November 18, 2020)

Background

The purpose of professional accreditations for academic programs and units is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality. Professional accreditation provides an assessment of the effectiveness of an institution in fulfilling its self-defined mission and its ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of student learning and of its programs and services. It provides accountability and stimulates evaluation and improvement. As the environment of higher education undergoes profound changes and society increasingly demands accountability, accreditation of academic programs plays an even more important role in assuring stakeholders of the value added by higher education.

Professional accreditation is tied to the institution's mission. The cornerstone of ECU's mission is academic excellence. Academic excellence, according to Strategic Goal #1, is based upon recruiting, retaining, and supporting our faculty and upon continuous assessment and strengthening of our academic programs. Ensuring relevance of all academic programs through ongoing curriculum development and program review (Strategy 1.3.1) and recruiting and retaining faculty who are highly qualified in their discipline and demonstrate excellence in teaching (Strategy 1.1.5) speak directly to accreditation, both as a product and as a process.

ECU's Philosophy of Professional Accreditation

Accreditation provides for the maintenance and enhancement of academic quality through continuous self-assessment, planning, and improvement. Professional accreditations:

- confirm that ECU's programs have educational objectives based on our mission and that programs seek excellence through continuous improvement
- provide pathways for credentials, licensure, and employment for graduates
- enhance the University's ability to recruit and retain high quality students, faculty, and staff
- support pathways for the attainment of professional licensures and certifications (where applicable)
- contribute to employability success for ECU graduates and experiential learning placements for current students

ECU is committed to maintaining professional accreditation of its programs as confirmation of their effectiveness and quality and as a stimulus for further improvement and continued relevance, as well as their role in recruiting students and in attracting and retaining highly qualified faculty members who have demonstrated excellence in teaching and scholarly activity.

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Annual Action Items

Semesterly Meetings

The Associate Provost will convene a meeting of professional accredited program leaders and associate deans each fall and spring semester. The agenda will include items for distribution from Academic Affairs, with additional items as suggested from professional accredited program leaders.

Budgeting and Invoicing Process

Centralized Budget (sources of funds: Academic Affairs budget and a formula-based contribution from eCampus, based on percentage of Student Credit Hours delivered via eCampus in professional accredited programs)

The centralized budget for professional accredited programs will be maintained in the Provost's Office, Academic Affairs. This budget line will be used for programs resulting in an academic credential for the following:

1. Professional accreditation costs paid directly to the accrediting organization, including: annual or other cyclical fees, reviewer site visit expenses, or site review fees.
2. Membership fees that are required for a unit to maintain in order to hold a professional accreditation.

Annually in January or February, the Associate Provost will ask professional accredited program leaders to project the following fiscal year's professional accreditation costs for building and managing the Centralized Budget. Costs not estimated or provided during the annual budget development may not be funded through the Centralized Budget.

Process for Submission of Invoices to the Centralized Budget

1. Professional accreditation expenses that are declared and approved by the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs should be submitted to the University payment system by the identified contact in the college.
2. The invoice will be routed to the Associate Provost and Budget Manager for approval and payment.
3. The originating department can view the progress of the invoice and payment in Jaegger should any questions or concerns arise.

College/Department/Unit Budget

College, department, or unit budgets will be used to support professional accredited costs related to:

1. Travel for ECU personnel related to professional accreditation.
2. Course reassignments and leadership designations related to professional accreditation.
3. Printing, copying, mailing, and other office expenses.

Supporting Resources

For some professional accreditations, additional supporting resources are required or recommended for maintaining professional accreditations. Relevant deans and chairs are asked to initiate and document conversations related to cost-sharing and other

agreements that provide for supporting resources, such as library holdings.

In addition, decisions pertaining to course capacity maximums, faculty to student ratios, or other required instructional demands by professional accreditors should be documented and resourced at the college and department/unit level.

Communications and Brand Management

It is essential that prospective and current stakeholders have access to consistent and up-to-date information about professional accreditations maintained by ECU. In addition to collecting budget projections on an annual basis, professional accredited programs will provide updated information to inform ECU's communications and brand management related to professional accreditation.

Catalogs

Professional accredited program leaders will adopt consistent language to identify professional accreditation in the ECU Undergraduate and Graduate catalogs. Revisions to the catalog copy that include professional accreditation language should be carbon copied to the Associate Provost when submitting to the Registrar.

Websites

A singular landing page listing ECU's professional accredited programs will list all accredited programs and accreditors. This list will exactly reflect the information presented in the catalogs. Program titles will be linked to the homepage for each program, where the professional accreditation will also be identified.