



Tips for Explaining Accreditation to Students

Students consider many factors when selecting a college or university, and while some students may be undecided on a specific career path, it's important that advisors explain how accreditation may affect their future decisions and opportunities.

Explain that there are two kinds of accreditation.

Institutional accreditation means the college or university as a whole is recognized as an official educational facility. *Specialized or professional accreditation* means an academic program at the college or university is approved by the accrediting body that enforces educational standards for that particular professional field.

Help them understand the terminology.

Accreditation can be complex, but it's even harder to understand when you're unfamiliar with the jargon. Phrases such as "eligibility to sit for the registration exam" or "completion of an accredited program as required by state licensure law" can be confusing and intimidating! Explain concepts in the simplest of terms, including credential vs. certification vs. license.

Role Play.

Practice with students so they know not only what questions to ask school administrators—but also the answers they should be listening for—in order to determine if a program is accredited in the field and for the career they seek:

- "Is your program accredited? If so, by which agency or organization?"
- "If your program is not accredited, will I be able to work in this or any other state after I graduate?"
- "Is there a required exam or certification to practice in this field? If so, does graduating from your program mean I can take this exam?"
- "How important is accreditation to the employers in this field?"
- "Does this program's accreditation make me eligible for federal student aid?"

Visit www.aspa-usa.org/member_fields for a list of career fields that have specialized or professional accreditation, plus links to each accrediting agency or organization's website.

ac·cred·i·ta·tion (ə-krēd'ī-tā'shən)

Who: Accreditors verify that an academic program offers a good education.

What: Accreditation standards are the criteria that college programs must meet.

Where: Accredited programs are in colleges and universities across the country.

When: It's important to find out if a program is accredited *before* you decide to go there.

Why: Accreditation helps make sure you're prepared for the career that you want.



See the video

One of the many factors you should consider when selecting the college or university that's right for you is **accreditation**—the official approval awarded to schools and programs that meet established educational standards.

Why is this important? Even if your degree is from an accredited school (a.k.a. "institutional accreditation"), in many fields—from nursing to dentistry, teaching to library and information studies—often your degree must also be from an **accredited program** (a.k.a. "specialized or professional accreditation").

Can this affect your career? Absolutely. Visit www.aspa-usa.org/member_fields for a list of professional fields that have specialized accreditation, plus links to each **accreditor** (the organization or agency that ensures university and college programs are meeting the teaching standards in that field).

How do you know if a program is accredited? Most accreditors will list on their websites the colleges and universities that have accredited programs in that field. Even so, it's always a good idea to **ask the school:**

- 1 "Is your program accredited? If so, by which agency or organization?"
- 2 "If your program is not accredited, will I be able to work in this or any other state after I graduate?"
- 3 "Is there a required exam or certification to practice in this field? If so, does graduating from your program mean I can take this exam?"
- 4 "How important is accreditation to the employers in this field?"
- 5 "Does this program's accreditation make me eligible for federal student aid?"

www.aspa-usa.org

Learn more about accreditation and questions you should ask.

For: _____

From: _____

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