



## Instructions for Completing the Institutional Certification Application for Institutions of Higher Education

### Tips about the Application Process

#### READ ALL INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE STARTING

- By applying for certification to operate an institution of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia, you attest that the institution will operate in compliance with Article 3 (§23.1-213 to §23.1-229) of title 23.1 of the Code of Virginia and with 8VAC 40-31 et seq. of the Virginia Administrative code (Regulations).
- After you have attended a New School Orientation Session, submit an “[Intent to Operate a Postsecondary School in the Commonwealth of Virginia \(Institutions of Higher Education\)](#)” form. The “Intent to Operate a Postsecondary School in the Commonwealth of Virginia” form must accompany your submission. Wait to receive approval from SCHEV before you proceed.
- Submit “Name Acknowledgement Form” and wait to receive an approval letter from SCHEV. You must use the approved name in completing the certification application forms.

#### GATHER AND PREPARE REQUIRED MATERIALS USING THE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW

- Certification application forms for new institutions of higher education are available at this link: <http://www.schev.edu/index/institutional/private-postsecondary-education/pope-forms/new-institutions>
- Certain items are required to be attached to various forms. Your responses to certain questions may indicate that other documents not listed below are required. You should start working on your application early enough to ensure you can secure all required documents.
- Submit all required forms and documents in a 3-ring binder with a table of contents and clearly marked tab dividers in the order prescribed in the instructions below.

Tab	Required Documents	Instructions for Completing Institutional Certification Application for Institutions of Higher Education
1.	Certification Application Fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You must provide a company or cashier's check in the correct, nonrefundable amount of \$6,000 made payable to: Treasurer of Virginia.</li> </ul>
2.	Projected Accounting Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete Projected Accounting Budget form (three-year projection).</li> </ul>
3.	Certification Checklist for Institutions of Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete the Certification Checklist for Institutions of Higher Education</li> <li>The <i>Affirmation by All Filers</i> clause must be notarized.</li> </ul>
4.	Certification Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete the Certification Application Form for Institutions of Higher Education in its entirety, in accordance with 8VAC40-31-170.</li> </ul>
5.	Accreditation Document	<p>Accreditation is a process of external quality review used by higher education to evaluate colleges, universities and educational programs for quality assurance. Institutions of higher education in Virginia must be accredited an accrediting organization recognized by the United States Department of Education (ED).</p> <p><b>In-State institutions</b> Degree-granting institutions must achieve candidacy status or its equivalent within 3 years of certification <b>AND</b> be fully accredited within 6 years to remain eligible for certification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-state institutions must submit an accreditation plan with the application for certification</li> <li>Only Council may grant any subsequent changes to an institution's accreditation plan.</li> </ul> <p><b>Out-of-State institutions</b> Out-of-state institutions requesting initial certification must be accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by ED. Out-of-State institutions must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submit a copy of the documentation providing the name and address of the current accrediting agency (or agencies); original accreditation date; date of next review; and proof of current status.</li> <li>Provide the name(s) of any former agencies the institution was accredited by and an explanation for why it is no longer accredited by that agency.</li> </ul>
6.	Good Standing Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Out-of-State institutions must provide evidence that there has been no determination of limitation, suspension, revocation, termination, or sanctions placed by US Department of Education, accrediting agency, or a state regulatory body against the institution within the last five years.</li> <li>New in-state institutions may simply provide a statement behind this tab that reads, "Proof of Good Standing is Not Applicable."</li> </ul>
7.	Site Listing Form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Out-of-state institutions must provide a complete list of all sites <b>AND</b> programs of study offered at each site.</li> <li>New in-state institutions may simply provide a statement behind this tab that reads "not applicable."</li> </ul>

8.	<b>Acknowledgement of Prior Postsecondary Involvement Form</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Acknowledgement of Prior Postsecondary Involvement form allows the President or CEO to attest to any previous involvement in the operation of a postsecondary institution as required under 8VAC 40-31-180(B)(10).</li> <li>• Disclosure of any previous involvement by any administrator, owner, controlling shareholder, or member of the institution’s governing board in the operation of a postsecondary institution is also required.</li> <li>• Misrepresentation of facts may cause the application to be denied in its entirety.</li> <li>• The form must be signed and notarized, and all required supporting documents must be included.</li> </ul>
9.	<b>Program Inventory Form</b>	<p>Include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A complete list of programs that will be offered at the institution;</li> <li>• The appropriate Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code for each program;</li> <li>• Credential awarded (e.g. certificate or degree);</li> <li>• Number of credit hours required to complete program;</li> <li>• Any necessary supporting documents.</li> </ul>
10.	<b>Application for New Program Approval Form</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete one form per program.</li> <li>• Include curriculum and any supporting documents with this form.</li> <li>• <b>No fee is required when included as part of a new certification application package.</b></li> </ul>
11.	<b>Institutional Checklist and Catalog</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include a completed Institutional Catalog Checklist at the beginning of this tab. (refer to instructions provided for guidance)</li> <li>• Include a copy of your institution’s catalog; catalog must be in accordance with</li> <li>• 8 VAC 40-31 et seq.</li> </ul>
	<b>Student Handbook</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a copy of student handbook if applicable.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Virginia regulations do not require institutions to provide a student handbook in addition to an Institution catalog. However, some institutions produce a separate handbook to provide students enrolled in certain programs with specific requirements.</p>
12.	<b>Policy Documents</b>	<p><b><u>Powers, Duties and Responsibilities</u></b>  A document available to students and the general public upon request that accurately states powers, duties, and responsibilities of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The governing board or owners of the institution;</li> <li>• The chief operating officer, president, or director at that site in Virginia;</li> <li>• The principal administrators and their credentials at that site in Virginia;</li> <li>• The students, if students participate in school governance.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Curriculum</u></b>  A document that clearly defines a process by which the curriculum is established, reviewed, and evaluated. The curriculum policy should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An explanation of how each program is consistent with the mission of the institution;</li> <li>• An explanation of the written process for evaluating each program once initiated and an explanation of the procedures for assessing the extent to which the educational goals are being achieved;</li> <li>• Documented use of the results of these evaluations to improve the programs offered by the institution.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Internship, Externship, Production of Work (if applicable)</u></b>  A document that accurately describes a compliant policy applicable to programs that require an internship, externship, or production work. The policy must adhere to 8VAC-40-31-160 P.</p>

13.	<b>Senior Administrator Qualification Form and Background Check Profile Form</b>	<p>Provide a Senior Administrator Qualification form and a Background check profile form for each administrator that has already agreed to work for the institution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Administrators have administrative or managerial authority within an institutions. Includes: Chief Executive Officer, President, Chancellor, Dean, Provost, or Owner.</li> </ul> <p>Senior Administrator must qualify for position by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational background, relevant work experience, or record of accomplishments in previous educational work settings; and</li> <li>• Being of good reputation and character. SCHEV will conduct a background check.</li> </ul>
14.	<b>Board Member Qualification Form</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a Board Qualification form for each board member that has already agreed to serve.</li> <li>• Boards must collectively demonstrate financial, academic, managerial, and any necessary specialized knowledge, but individual members need not have all of these characteristics.</li> </ul>
15.	<b>Administrative Personnel Qualification Form</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A form must be completed and submitted for each administrative personnel hired to work at the institution. If the institution has not yet hired all administrative personnel, please provide forms for those already hired and submit a statement indicating all additional administrative positions that will be filled prior to the institution beginning classes. All new hires MUST be approved by SCHEV before SCHEV issues the full certificate to operate.</li> <li>• Provide documentation that demonstrates that the administrative personnel is qualified for his/her particular responsibilities through educational background, relevant work experience, or records of accomplishments in previous educational work settings.</li> <li>• Administrative personnel that do not meet the educational and relevant work experience to qualify for the position must receive documented, relevant training within the first year of employment and prior to SCHEV issuing a full Certificate to Operate.</li> <li>• A copy of this form with supporting documents must be maintained in the personnel file and available upon request in the event of an audit.</li> </ul> <p>Administrative personnel generally oversee operational/administrative areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus Director, Financial Aid administrator, Admissions Director, Registrar, Director of Student Services; etc.</li> </ul>
16.	<b>Faculty Qualification Form</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A form must be completed and submitted for each faculty hired to work for the institution. If the institution has not yet hired all of the instructors please provide forms for those already hired and submit a statement indicating all additional instructor positions that will be filled prior to the beginning of classes. All new hires MUST be approved by SCHEV before SCHEV issues the full certificate to operate. A copy of this form should be maintained in the personnel file and available upon request in the event of an audit.</li> <li>• Include required supporting documents with each form.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Faculty must be qualified in accordance with 8VAC40-31-140. Qualifying faculty under “exceptions to the rule,” is allowed only under the following circumstance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In emerging fields where academically qualified faculty is uncommon or non-existent. Not applicable when an academically qualified faculty member would be easy to recruit.</li> <li>• Exception to the rule must be documented and approved by SCHEV prior to hiring. Should only be used sparingly. The exception may not “swallow” the rule.</li> </ul>

17.	<b>Advertisements and Other Promotional Materials</b>	<p>Provide sample advertisement, announcement, or other promotional material that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A statement that the Council has provisionally certified the institution to operate in Virginia;</li> <li>• The institution's complete name as approved by SCHEV;</li> <li>• The address of at least one site located in Virginia.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Refer to sample advertisement for guidance.</p>
18.	<b>Enrollment Agreement</b>	<p>Institutions of higher education are required to enter an enrollment agreement with each student prior to enrollment. Include a copy of the proposed enrollment agreement.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Refer to sample enrollment agreement for guidance.</p>
19.	<b>Truth-In-Lending Agreement</b>	<p>When tuition and fees are paid by the student in installments, a clear disclosure of truth-in-lending statement must be provided to and signed by the student. Include a copy of your institution's truth-in-lending agreement.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Refer to sample agreement for guidance.</p>
20.	<b>Authorization Certificates</b>	<p>Provide copies of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Corporation Commission Certificate, if incorporated;</li> <li>• Certificate of Assumed or Fictitious Name (obtained from the circuit court clerk's office);</li> <li>• Current Business License (from the Virginia locality within which the institution will operate);</li> <li>• Proof of State Authorization from home state (if applicable): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evidence the institution is operating in good standing in its home state</li> <li>- Evidence the institution closed in good standing if it ever operated in another state.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
21.	<b>Library Resources</b>	<p>Submit a library plan describing library resources must be in accordance with 8VAC40-31-160M.</p> <p>The institution shall maintain and ensure that students have access to a library with a collection, staff, services, equipment and facilities that are adequate and appropriate for the purpose and enrollment of the school. Plan must include but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description of physical and virtual library</li> <li>• Plan to ensure library resources are current; well distributed among fields of study; cataloged; logically organized, and readily located.</li> <li>• Personnel, qualifications and job description for persons responsible for library and resources</li> <li>• Plan for agreements with other libraries.</li> <li>• Institutions offering graduate work must describe library resources that include major journals in each discipline offered.</li> </ul>

22.	<b>Telecommunications/ Distance Education Activities</b>	<p>Institutions seeking approval to offer distance education from a location in Virginia must submit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description of online platform</li> <li>• Policy guidelines regarding attendance; assignment submission; passing grades; plagiarism policy; etc.</li> <li>• Rules by which the school will ensure regular student-faculty interaction by computer, telephone, mail, or face-to-face meetings.</li> <li>• Description of training and support services specific to distance education.</li> <li>• Means by which school ensures students have sufficient background, knowledge, and technical skills to successfully undertake an online program.</li> <li>• Complete the SCHEV Distance Education Attestation statement form.</li> </ul>
	<b>APPLICATION SUBMISSION</b>	<p>After you complete steps 1 through 22 above, organize your application package as indicated below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit all required forms and documents in a 3-ring notebook binder with a table of contents and clearly marked tab dividers in the order prescribed in these instructions.</li> <li>• Do not use sheet protectors.</li> <li>• Submit original documents with original signatures.</li> <li>• Photocopies and hand written documents will not be accepted.</li> <li>• <b>Mail your completed application package to:</b> State Council of Higher Education for Virginia Private Postsecondary Education 101 North 14th Street, 9th Floor James Monroe Building Richmond, VA 23219-3659</li> </ul>
	<b>PROVISIONAL APPROVAL</b>	<p>Provisional Certification means a preliminary approval status granted by Council to a new school applicant that has demonstrated substantial compliance with the provisions of §23.1 (213-229) of the Code of Virginia. A provisionally certified school must demonstrate compliance with all conditions within one calendar year of the initial grant of provisional certification.</p> <p>Once your certification application package is deemed complete and in compliance with SCHEV's minimum standards, SCHEV will present your application before Council to be "Provisionally Certified to Operate" with conditions for a period of up to one calendar year. To be fully certified, all conditions must be met within a calendar year. Provisional certification will automatically lapse one year from the date of approval by Council.</p> <p><b>You must wait to receive a response from SCHEV before submitting documents listed in the "Final Steps to Full Certification" section.</b></p>
	<b>FINAL STEPS TO FULL CERTIFICATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institution <b>MUST</b> notify SCHEV when it has met all conditions placed by Council and is ready to proceed.</li> <li>• SCHEV will contact institution to schedule a site visit</li> <li>• The final documents (listed in steps 23-26 below) must be presented to SCHEV staff during the site visit.</li> <li>• SCHEV staff will conduct a final review of the application to ensure the institution has met the requirements for full certification. After verification that all stipulations have been met, the SCHEV Director will issue full certification.</li> <li>• If the institution has not complied with all necessary standards and conditions within the period specified by the provisional certification, the provisional certification automatically lapses and the institution must begin the new school process again. It is the institution's responsibility to ensure that it meets all necessary standards and conditions <b>AND</b> be fully certified within one calendar year of the initial grant of provisional certification.</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Surety Instrument Calculation Worksheet and Surety Forms</b></p>	<p>All schools must obtain and maintain a surety instrument for the first five years of certification in accordance with 8VAC40-31-160(l) and all subsections. The surety instrument may be a Letter of Credit obtained from a banking institution or a Surety Bond from an insurance company. The surety instrument must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate to provide refunds to students;</li> <li>• In the amount of unearned non-Title IV portion of tuition and fees;</li> <li>• Sufficient for any given term.</li> <li>• The minimum acceptable surety amount is \$20,000.</li> <li>• Complete the Surety Instrument Calculation Worksheet. If you need assistance with completing this worksheet, call our Fiscal Specialist at (804) 225-2424.</li> <li>• Resources for surety bonds include: National Association of Surety Bond Producers (NASBP) – <a href="http://www.nasbp.org">www.nasbp.org</a>, The Surety &amp; Fidelity Association of America (SAA) – <a href="http://www.surety.org">www.surety.org</a>, or the American Insurance Association – <a href="http://www.aiadc.org">www.aiadc.org</a>.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Administrative Personnel and Senior Administrator Qualification Form</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit appropriate forms and supporting documentation for newly hired administrative personnel and senior administrators. See instructions in Steps 13 and 15 above.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Faculty Qualification Forms</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit appropriate forms and supporting documentation for newly hired instructors. See instructions in Step 16 above.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Certificate of Occupancy</b></p>	<p>The school must provide a copy of its Certificate of Occupancy. A certificate of occupancy is an essential document for every property you rent or own. It:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describes the classification of the property and if it is being used in a way it was intended.</li> <li>• Serves as proof that a property has complied with and conformed to all federal, state, and local standards and codes and is now fit for occupancy.</li> </ul>