

ACADEMIC PROGRAM ENDORSEMENT POLICY

Preamble

AECT has a long history of developing standards for academic programs in the field of educational communications and technology, and providing program review based on its standards for these programs. While no longer an official accrediting body, AECT continues to be a leader in promoting academic programs in the field and encouraging excellence in the education of future professionals. Consequently, AECT has been approached to endorse such programs, including both degrees and certificates. Such endorsement is intended to validate the designated programs, which may provide a competitive advantage for the sponsoring institutions. In turn, endorsement serves to verify the integrity and standing of AECT as a leading professional association in the field of educational communications and technology. The AECT endorsement program complements the AECT Strategic Plan, in particular Goals 2 (who we are, what we do, how we serve society) and 4 (sustain an organization of professionals who study and use technology for training and education).

Article I Purpose

The purpose of this Academic Program Endorsement Policy is to provide guidelines outlining how AECT shall receive and review an application from a sponsoring institution seeking the association's endorsement of an official academic program at an accredited institution of higher education. Such programs may include degree programs or certificate programs. This policy also governs how AECT shall respond to both successful and unsuccessful applications, how endorsements are awarded, and the contents and limitations of such endorsements.

Article II Definitions

In the context of this policy:

- A. An academic program refers to an official program offered by a nationally or regionally accredited institution of higher learning.
1. A degree program is defined as one leading to a formal academic degree (bachelors, masters, specialist, doctorate). Associate degrees are not included.
 2. A certificate program, for the purposes of this endorsement, is defined as a specialized, non-degree program in which the certificate is recognized by the institution and the awarded certificate is given to successful candidates by that institution. Many certificate programs are related to aspects of technology and education, such as a specialist certificate in instructional design or distance education. While the certificate is not a degree per se, a certificate program may partially fulfill the institution's requirements for subsequently earning a degree. A certificate program may be offered on site, off site, online, or through some combination of these venues.
- B. Endorsement refers to validation by AECT of an academic program's scope and rigor consistent with both the institution's stated purposes for the program and the 2012 AECT standards for educational media, communications, and technology. AECT's endorsement, based on a thorough review of the institution's application, is focused on program purposes and content and should not be construed as an evaluation or endorsement of specific courses, certificate program outcomes, or candidates' knowledge or skills. AECT endorsement, when granted, is

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nonexclusive (see C below) and valid for a five-year period. Any valid endorsement may be renewed through a subsequent application process.

C. Nonexclusive is used in reference to the AECT endorsement, meaning that AECT may choose to endorse multiple programs of similar or overlapping character sponsored by various institutions or by the same institution. Endorsement validates each certificate program's scope and rigor on an individual basis, rather than in comparison to other similar, related, or competing programs.

Article III Application and Review Process

AECT shall follow the steps below in receiving and reviewing applications from institutions seeking the association's endorsement of an academic program.

A. Expression of interest. The institution shall indicate interest in submitting an application for a program to be evaluated with the intent of gaining AECT's endorsement of the program. Such expression of interest may be made informally, telephonically or through paper or electronic correspondence to the AECT Executive Director, and should include a brief description of the academic program as well as institutional contact information.

B. Response to interest. AECT office personnel, as assigned by the Executive Director, shall:

1. Provide the Application Protocol (Article IV) to the institutional contact with the appropriate links to the endorsement process.
2. Respond to any questions from the institution regarding the Application Protocol or submission process or contact the AECT Executive Director for guidance and further response.
3. Upon receipt of the application, the Executive Director will determine if all required documentation has been received. If applicable, more information will be requested.

C. Application for endorsement. The institution shall make formal application in accordance with the application protocol, as outlined in Article IV of this policy.

D. Formation of the review committee. The AECT President shall designate one of the AECT Board members as the Review Process liaison. When an application for endorsement is received by the Executive Director, the AECT President shall appoint a review committee composed of a chair and two to four appropriate AECT members. Two stipulations apply:

1. No review committee members shall be associated in any way with the sponsoring institution or the certificate program under review.
2. The AECT Board shall set and annually review the amount to be paid to each committee member as an honorarium in recognition of the work required to review each endorsement application. This amount shall be communicated to the committee members in advance of the review and shall be paid on completion of the committee's work.

E. Review of the endorsement application. The review committee shall, individually and collectively, review the application, using the review protocol outlined in Article V of this policy. The following stipulations apply:

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1. The chair will conduct a pre-review to determine that all required information is present in the application. Should information be missing, the chair will communicate to the institutional contact and request the application be revised.
 2. The chairperson, acting on behalf of the committee, may at any time request clarification or additional information from the sponsoring institution in order to facilitate the review.
 3. A positive endorsement recommendation is accomplished when a majority of the committee is satisfied that all requirements have been met at a satisfactory level.
 4. The review period, under normal circumstances, shall not exceed six months.
- F. Notification of review results. The review committee chair shall notify the AECT President and Executive Director in writing of the committee's recommendation to grant or deny endorsement. The Executive Director (with approval from the Executive Committee) shall notify the institution's contact person in accordance with the procedure outlined in Article VI of this policy.

Article IV Application Protocol

The following items shall be required from an institution applying for endorsement of a certificate program:

- A. Name of the academic program. (Note: If an institution seeks endorsement of more than one program, a separate and complete application must be submitted for each program.)
- B. Institution contact information, including an individual contact name, address, telephone number, and email address, and role in the program.
- C. A detailed description of the academic program, including the following information:
 1. Purpose(s) of the program.
 2. Prerequisites.
 3. Program goals, objectives, and target proficiencies.
 4. Course requirements: titles, descriptions, and number of courses/credits required to earn a certificate. (Note: A syllabus or detailed course outline for each course in the program should be included in the application.)
 5. Instructional methods and materials.
 6. Procedures for evaluating learning outcomes.
 7. Overview description of and justification for how the program aligns with the 2012 AECT standards.
 8. Unit process for evaluating how standards are met at a programmatic level (this may be an internal departmental review or use of an external review process).
- D. A detailed description of the institutional review and approval procedures for the program, including how the program meets requirements set by the department, institution, and state, as applicable. This description also should include information about whether the program is in the planning phase or has already been offered, and in the latter case over what period of time.

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E. The nonrefundable review fee in an amount established and reviewed periodically by the AECT Board of Directors.

Article V Review Protocol

The review committee shall complete the following steps in assessing whether to recommend approval of an application for endorsement:

- A. Review the application preliminarily for completeness.
1. If necessary, the committee chair shall request any missing information or seek clarification, as needed, from the institution contact person prior to further review of the application.
 2. If an incomplete application cannot be completed in a timely manner, the Executive Director shall return the application and review fee with the missing information noted, and the institution may resubmit if it so chooses. A small processing fee shall be applied if an application is withdrawn.
- B. Review the application and assess whether the academic program should be recommended for endorsement.
1. A review template (see Appendix A) or similar documentation previously approved by the AECT Board of Directors shall be used to record the findings of the review committee. This template or comparable documentation will be provided to the sponsoring institution, on request, following notification by the AECT Executive Director pursuant to Article VI of this policy.
 2. The committee chair shall prepare a written recommendation for the AECT President and Executive Director, recommending that AECT (a) endorse, (b) endorse provisionally, provided the institution can correct deficiencies noted by the committee, or (c) deny endorsement of the academic program.
 3. The committee members shall respect the intellectual property of the individuals and institutions seeking endorsement and shall maintain confidentiality of the process and not distribute any submitted materials without express written permission.
- C. The Executive Director shall receive the review committee's recommendation and respond (with approval from the Executive Committee) in one of the following ways:
1. The Executive Director may confirm approval of the recommendation and thus notify the sponsoring institution accordingly, as outlined in Article VI of this policy.
 2. The Executive Director may request that the review committee reconsider its findings and submit a revised recommendation.
 3. The Executive Director may agree to set aside the recommendation and form a new review committee to reconsider the institution's application. In this case they shall (a) provide a summary of the concerns to the original review committee and (b) notify the sponsoring institution regarding the delay and reconsideration.

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Any appeal of the decision shall be made to the AECT Board of Directors by the chairperson of the review committee. An institution's contact person may appeal through the chair. The Board of Directors shall serve as the final arbiter of any dispute.

D. If the recommendation is to endorse provisionally (see B, 2, above) and if the Executive Committee accepts the recommendation, then the Executive Director (with approval from the Executive Committee) will notify the institution accordingly.

1. The institution will have up to six months to correct the deficiencies and to provide evidence of having done so to the review committee.
2. If after six months, the institution has not provided evidence of having corrected the deficiencies, then the review committee will be notified and the application for endorsement will be denied.

Article VI Notification

On accepting a recommendation from the review committee, the AECT President shall disband the review committee:

A. If the program is endorsed, the Executive Director (with approval from the Executive Committee) shall provide notice of the endorsement to the institution, including (a) a certificate of endorsement suitable for framing and (b) guidelines for the use of the endorsement, as outlined in Article VII and Appendix B.

B. If the program is endorsed provisionally, the Executive Director, (with approval from the Executive Committee) shall provide notice in accordance with Article V, D, of this policy.

C. If the program is denied endorsement, the Executive Director (with approval from the Executive Committee) shall provide notice to the institution, including a summary of reasons for denial. In the event that the sponsoring institution requests further information, the Executive Director (with approval from the Executive Committee) may provide the documentation submitted by the review committee with their identifying information removed, as outlined in Article V, B, 1, of this policy.

D. In the event that an institution seeks reconsideration of its application, such request shall be considered an appeal and referred to the AECT Board of Directors, which may grant or deny the request and refer the matter to the review committee for further action.

1. If the appeal is granted, the President may form a new review committee to consider the application anew. (Note: The institution shall not pay any additional fee for this review.)
2. If the appeal is denied, the Executive Director (with approval from the Executive Committee) shall so inform the sponsoring institution. No further appeal shall be granted; however, the institution may submit a new application at a later date. (Note: The institution shall pay the full review fee on submission of the new application.)

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Article VII Endorsement

AECT endorsement of an academic program includes the following elements, which shall be provided to the sponsoring institution by AECT staff as assigned by the Executive Director (with approval from the Executive Committee):

- A. A letter formally notifying the sponsoring institution of the approval of its application for AECT endorsement of an academic program. Such notification will identify the name of the endorsed program and be signed by the Executive Director.
- B. A certificate of endorsement, suitable for framing, that includes the name of the endorsed academic program and the five-year period during which the endorsement will be valid.
- C. A copy of the “Guidelines for Using the AECT Endorsement of an Academic Program” (Appendix B).
- D. A listing on the AECT web site indicating the program is one endorsed by AECT through formal review of its design, rigor, and application of 2012 AECT standards.

Article VIII Renewal of Endorsement

Endorsement of an academic program may be renewed after the initial five-year period for an additional five-year period on completion of a renewal application process identical to that outlined in Articles III, IV, and V of this policy, except:

- A. The sponsoring institution must provide evidence of a program self-evaluation and, at minimum, a summary of the results of that evaluation and a description of any program change from the previous endorsement.
- B. The sponsoring institution must pay a renewal review fee in an amount established by the AECT Board of Directors. The amount may or may not be the same as the initial review fee. Notification and endorsement shall follow the procedures outlined in Articles VI and VII of this policy. There is no limit on the number of times an academic program may be granted AECT’s endorsement at subsequent five-year intervals.

Article IX Summary of Responsibilities

Following are the principal responsibilities of the AECT parties identified in this policy.

- A. The AECT Board of Directors shall:
 1. Review and approve this policy and any substantial rules or regulations devolving from it.
 2. Establish, review, and revise as necessary, a schedule of fees due from sponsoring institutions related to the implementation of this policy.
 3. Establish, review, and revise as necessary the honorarium to be paid to volunteer reviewers.
 4. Arbitrate disputes arising from the review and endorsement-granting process.

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- B. The AECT Executive Director and AECT President shall:
1. The Executive Director shall receive and respond to expressions of interest by sponsoring institutions.
 2. The President will appoint a board liaison to the review committee, the review committee chair, and members on receipt of a formal application for initial or renewal endorsement and monitor the committee's work.
 3. Receive the review committee's findings and recommendation, and respond accordingly.
 4. The Executive Director submits the final recommendation as communicated by the review committee chair to the Executive Committee for action.
 5. The President will refer disputes arising from the review and endorsement-granting process to the AECT Board of Directors.
 6. The Executive Director will notify the sponsoring institution regarding the disposition of its application and provide any documents required by this policy.
- C. The review committee shall:
1. Be guided by its appointed chair, who will facilitate communication and scheduling of review activities.
 2. Report, through its chair, to the Executive Director regarding all matters germane to the application review, including the need to gain additional information from the sponsoring institution.
 3. Bring to the attention of the President and Executive Director any dispute that cannot be resolved through the normal committee process.
 4. Provide to the President and Executive Director a written recommendation regarding approval or denial of endorsement, including accompanying documentation as required by this policy.
 5. Apply appropriate ethical and confidentiality to the review process.

Article X Review and Revision

This policy shall be subject to review and revision annually, or more often, as determined by the AECT Board of Directors.

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Appendix A

Sample Academic Program Review Template

Evaluative Statements

Ratings for statements: S-Satisfactory M-Marginal* U-Unsatisfactory*

1. The purposes of the academic program are clearly stated and aligned with 2012 AECT standards.
 - a. The standards alignment to assessments is clearly articulated.
 - b. The justification for the alignment is provided.
2. The purposes of the academic program are consistent with the purpose of the AECT endorsement program.
3. The prerequisites are appropriate to the academic program.
4. The program goals are comprehensive, appropriate, and clearly articulated.
5. The program goals, objectives, and target proficiencies are consistent with the purposes of the academic program and 2012 AECT standards.
6. Course requirements are consistent with the purposes, goals, objectives, and target competencies.
7. Individual courses provide appropriate scope and rigor for students to achieve the target competencies.
8. Instructional methods and materials are appropriate to the courses in which they are used.
9. Evidence that evaluation procedures are appropriate, consistent with the goals and objectives, and comprehensive at both the individual student level and at a programmatic level.
10. Evidence that the institutional approval process for the academic program demonstrates thoroughness and appropriate rigor.

Note: Standards alignment is expected to be in keeping with the type of academic program being reviewed. Endorsed degree programs must incorporate all standards but the target level of achievement may vary (i.e., a masters program may place more emphasis on creation, design, and/or management while a doctoral program focuses on conducting and applying research). To achieve endorsement, certificate programs may employ only some of the standards but the application should clearly indicate why other standard elements were not appropriate to the program purpose and goals. Every program must include an ethical component which is part of all the AECT standards elements.

*Explain in detail deficiencies noted in “marginal” or “unsatisfactory” items.

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Appendix B

Guidelines for Using the AECT Endorsement of a Certificate Program

By endorsing an academic program, the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) grants to the sponsoring institution limited permission to use the name and logo of AECT solely in connection with the endorsed certificate program. The AECT endorsement is nonexclusive and may be granted to similar or competing programs.

The following guidelines apply:

- A. In announcing or advertising the endorsed academic program, the sponsoring institution may use the phrase, “Endorsed by the Association for Educational Communications and Technology” or “Endorsed by AECT,” in its listing or description of the endorsed program.
- B. The endorsement language above may be accompanied by use of the AECT logo, which will be provided by AECT, on request, as an electronic file (.jpg or .tiff). The logo may not be altered, except that (a) it may be used larger or smaller, consistent with the overall design of the information piece, and (b) it may be used in black-and-white, gray scale, or the colors provided by AECT. The logo must appear freestanding and may not be rendered transparent or semi-transparent or used over or under text or other image(s). Nor shall any background be allowed to obscure the logo image.
- C. Neither the endorsement language nor the logo may be used in connection with any other program or course not specifically included in the endorsement, nor shall either be used in an ambiguous manner that might allow readers/viewers to conclude that the endorsement applies more broadly than intended. Endorsement is applicable to the entirety of the specific academic program endorsed, not to separate elements within the program.
- D. Endorsement of an academic program is valid only for the five-year period stated in the endorsement notification. Use of endorsement language or the AECT logo beyond this period shall constitute grounds for legal action for infringement and misrepresentation.
- E. Any valid endorsement may be renewed for one or more additional five-year periods, following an application process similar to the initial application and review, with the added requirement that the institution provide evidence of a program evaluation during the preceding five years. Renewal applications should be initiated at least six months prior to the end of the five-year endorsement period to ensure continuity.
- F. Substantial alteration of the endorsed academic program, as determined by the AECT Executive Committee, will render the AECT endorsement invalid, in which case neither the endorsement language nor the AECT logo may continue to be used. A new application may be submitted for endorsement of the altered certificate program. If questionable circumstances arise, the AECT board may review an endorsed program to reconsider an endorsement.
- G. Nothing in the endorsement notification or in these guidelines should be deemed as granting to the sponsoring institution any kind of license to AECT content, either expressed or implied, or to any intellectual content belonging to AECT members, divisions, or affiliates.