CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Purpose

Institutions are reminded of the regulatory requirement that they must ensure that the Department has an accurate listing of their Title IV-eligible GE programs. GE programs are those educational programs that, under sections 101(b)(1) and 102(b) and (c) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (the HEA), "prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation."

GE Program Updating

Under the regulations at 34 CFR 600.10(c) and 600.21(a), each institution must update information about its GE programs using the "Application for Approval to Participate in Federal Student Financial Aid Programs" (E-App) so that its Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR) is current. For information on completing the E-App, contact the School Participation Group for your region.

GE Program Certification

Under the regulations at 34 CFR 668.414, each institution must certify that each Title IV-eligible GE program that it offers:

1.   Is approved by a recognized accrediting agency or is otherwise included in the institution's accreditation by its recognized accrediting agency or, if the institution is a public postsecondary vocational institution, is approved by a State agency recognized to approve such programs in lieu of accreditation;

2.   Is programmatically accredited if such accreditation is required by a Federal governmental entity or by a governmental entity in the State in which the institution is located or in which the institution is otherwise required to obtain State approval under 34 CFR 600.9; and

3.   In the State in which the institution is located or in which the institution is otherwise required to obtain State approval under 34 CFR 600.9, satisfies the applicable educational prerequisites for professional licensure or certification requirements in that State so that a student who completes the program and seeks employment in that State qualifies to take any licensure or certification examination that is needed for the student to practice or find employment in an occupation that the program prepares students to enter.

Consistent with Subpart Q of the Student Assistance General Provisions for new GE programs for which the institution seeks to establish eligibility for Title IV, HEA program funds, an institution must also certify that the program is not substantially similar to a program offered by the institution that, in the prior three years, became ineligible for Title IV, HEA program funds under the debt-to-earnings (D/E) rates measure or was failing, or in the zone with respect to, the D/E rates measure and was voluntarily discontinued by the institution. For these purposes, a program is substantially similar to another program if the programs share the same four-digit Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) code.

Accreditation and Licensure Requirements in Gainful Employment Certification

Institutions have asked for two clarifications on the certification requirements in 34 CFR 668.414(d)(2) and (d)(3) as they relate to programmatic accreditation, as follows:

Question: Can an institution certify that a GE program meets the programmatic accreditation requirements in 34 CFR 668.414(d)(2) if the institution has not yet obtained full programmatic accreditation for the program?

Response: Generally, an institution must obtain full programmatic accreditation for a program that requires programmatic accreditation in the State in which the institution is located before it may certify that the program meets the requirements in 34 CFR 668.414(d)(2). For the purpose of the transitional certification which must be provided to the Secretary on or before December 31, 2015, an institution may certify that a program that has not yet received full programmatic accreditation meets the requirements in 34 CFR 668.414(d)(2) if the State in which the institution is located permits the institution to offer that program to students in that State as of the date that the institution's certification is provided to the Secretary.

Question: Because some States require that a program be programmatically accredited in order for graduates of that program to be eligible to obtain professional licensure or certification (or sit for a licensure exam) in that State, may an institution certify that a program meets the requirements in 34 CFR 668.414(d)(3) if the program has not yet obtained full programmatic accreditation?

Response: An institution can certify that the requirements in 34 CFR 668.414(d)(3) are met under these circumstances if, on the date the certification is made, the State requiring programmatic accreditation for licensure would permit graduates from the program to apply for the relevant licensure.

Deadlines and Submission Requirements:

Currently Participating Institutions that offer GE programs must submit to the Department a Transitional Certification no later than December 31, 2015, unless the institution has submitted an E-App that resulted, or will result, in a new Program Participation Agreement (PPA) executed between July 1, 2015 and December 31, 2015. Those PPAs will have the required GE program certification included; therefore no Transitional Certification will be required.

New or Returning Institutions that have an E-App in process for Initial Certification or Reinstatement will have the required certifications included in the PPA that results from that application.

In all instances, prior to signing the PPA, the institution should verify that all of its GE programs are listed on the E-App and that the institution's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) can make the required certification regarding all of the GE programs listed. If the institution needs to make changes to the E-App, it should contact the School Participation Division Analyst processing the application.

On an ongoing basis the Department will monitor the certifications for accuracy and completeness.

After the transitional certification requirement has been met, an institution adding or revising GE program information on an E-App that does not result in a new PPA will need to provide a new certification each time the E-App is updated. This includes when establishing the eligibility or reestablishing the eligibility of a program; discontinuing a program's eligibility under 34 CFR 668.410; ceasing to provide a program for at least 12 consecutive months; losing program eligibility under 34 CFR 600.40; or when changing a program's name, CIP code, or credential level.

Instructions for Providing Transitional Certification

<u>Currently Participating Institutions:</u>

1.   Open the E-App web site at www.eligcert.ed.gov;

2.   Select the link to "Display the institution's PPA/ECAR";

3.   Enter User Name and Password;

4.   Click to display the Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR);

5.   Print or scroll to the "Educational Programs Section" (Page F-1); and

6.   Confirm that all of the institution's GE programs are correctly listed and that the certification can be signed regarding those GE programs.

If the Educational Programs list is complete and accurate and the institution has an open E-App that will result in a new PPA (Recertification, Change in Institutional Ownership) it may wait for the new PPA, which will include the certification language or it may provide a Transitional Certification as described below. Note: The institution must ensure that if a new PPA is not signed by December 31, 2015, it has provided the required Transitional Certification by that date.

If the Educational Programs list is complete and accurate and the institution does not have an open E-App, or will not sign a new PPA by December 31, 2015, it must submit a Transitional Certification by:

1.   Creating a certification on institutional letterhead with language substantially similar to the language in the attached sample certification;

2.   Printing the Educational Programs Section of the institution's ECAR;

3.   Having the certification signed by the institution's President/Chancellor/CEO; and

4.   Scanning and emailing both documents (the Educational Programs Section of the institution's ECAR and the Transitional Certification) to GECertification@ed.gov. In the subject line of the email include the institution's name, OPEID, and the state where the main campus of the institution is located.

The original signed certification, which is an addendum to the institution's PPA, must be maintained with the institution's copy of its original PPA.

If the Educational Programs Section needs to be corrected or updated before the institution can complete the Transitional Certification, the institution must:

If the institution does not have an open E-App:

1. Complete and submit a new Update Application for Degree Program, Nondegree/Vocational Program, and/or Short-Term Training Program;

2. On the E-App Index, select the option to "Display Application";

3. Print Section E, Question 27 (all parts showing details of all educational programs reported);

4. Create a Transitional Certification on institutional letterhead with language substantially similar to the language in the attached sample certification;

5. Have the Transitional Certification signed by the President/Chancellor/CEO; and

6. Scan and email both documents (Section E, Question 27 of the E-App and the Transitional Certification) to GECertification@ed.gov. Include in the subject line of the email the institution's name, OPEID, and the state where the main campus is located.

The original signed certification, which is an addendum to the institution's PPA, must be maintained with the institution's copy of its original PPA.

If the institution has an open E-App:

1. For any changes not already made on the E-App, contact the School Participation Division that is processing the application and request that update access be opened, make any necessary corrections to the Educational Programs in Question 27, and resubmit the application;

2. When the GE programs on the application are complete and accurate, return to the E-App Index and select the option to "Display Application";

3. Print Section E, Question 27 (all parts showing details of all educational programs reported);

4. Create a Transitional Certification on institutional letterhead with language substantially similar to the language in the attached sample certification;

5. Have the Transitional Certification signed by the President/Chancellor/CEO; and

6. Scan and email both documents (Section E, Question 27 of the E-App and the Transitional Certification) to GECertification@ed.gov. Include in the subject line of the email the institution's name, OPEID, and the state where the main campus is located.

The original signed certification, which is an addendum to the institution's PPA, must be maintained with the institution's copy of its original PPA.

Sample GE Transitional Certification Language

The institution certifies that –

1. The attached Educational Programs Section from its Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR) or Application for Approval to Participate in Federal Student Financial Aid Programs (E-App) includes an accurate and complete listing of the eligible gainful employment programs (GE programs) it offers under 668.403;

2. Each eligible GE program included on the attached ECAR or E-App is approved by a recognized accrediting agency or is otherwise included in the institution's accreditation by its recognized accrediting agency, or, if the institution is a public postsecondary vocational institution, the program is approved by a recognized State agency for the approval of public postsecondary vocational education in lieu of accreditation;

3. Each eligible GE program included on the attached ECAR or E-App is programmatically accredited, if such accreditation is required by a Federal governmental entity or by a governmental entity in the State in which the institution is located or in which the institution is otherwise required to obtain State approval under 34 CFR 600.9; and

4. For the State in which the institution is located or in which the institution is otherwise required to obtain State approval under 34 CFR 600.9, each eligible GE program included on the attached ECAR or E-App satisfies the applicable educational prerequisites for professional licensure or certification requirements in that State so that a student who completes the program and seeks employment in the State qualifies to take any licensure or certification exam that is needed for the student to practice or find employment in an occupation that the program prepares students to enter.

Certified by: _____

       Signature

       _____

       Printed Name

       _____

       Title

       _____

       Date Signed

Submission Time Frame and Processing

Upon the successful submission of the institutions GE Transitional Certification to GECertification@ed.gov, the institution will receive the following auto-response e-mail:

> *"Thank you for your email to the GE Certification mailbox. We will respond to your inquiry or submission of your GE Certification as soon as possible."*

The GE Transitional Certification Team will review and process each institution's GE Transitional Certification in the order in which it was received by the Department (Date Order). If an institution has a currently open and pending E-App with the Department's Program Compliance Team, priority will be given to those GE Transitional Certifications so the Department and its Eligibility Analysts can meet their regulatory timeframe requirements in processing the institution's E-App.

During the review process by The GE Transitional Certification Team, if an institution has failed to provide one or more of the requirements outlined under Gainful Employment Electronic Announcement #54 - Certification Requirements for Gainful Employment Programs, The GE Transitional Certification Team will prepare a Return Notice e-mail (Subject Line: **GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT**, from Gainful Employment share-alerts-no-reply@ed.gov) to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/President/Chancellor of the institution, along with the Chief Fiscal Officer/Financial Officer, Chief Financial Aid Director, and e-mail sender of the GE Transitional Certification from the institution. Please check your spam or junk folder if you do not get this email.   A sample of the Return Notice e-mail is referenced below:

Sample GE Certification Return Notice

The Federal Student Aid office of the U.S. Department of Education has completed its review of your GE Certification submission in accordance with the regulations at 34 CFR 668.414 and as described in Gainful Employment Electronic Announcement #54 - Certification Requirements for Gainful Employment Programs. We have found the GE Certification submitted for Sample University 00000000 California, OPEID# 00000000 is missing one or more of the following:

- *Transitional Certification*

- *School Letterhead*

- *Appropriate Signature*

- *List of Programs from ECAR or E-App*

- *Complete required language*

Please submit a complete GE Certification to GECertification@ed.gov prior to December 31, 2015.

Please contact GECertification@ed.gov for any questions or concerns.

After the Return Notice e-mail has been sent, the institution is reminded they must submit a complete GE Certification package prior to December 31, 2015 and no further tracking will be performed by the Department for unacceptable GE Certifications. It is the responsibility of the institution to resubmit their GE Certification.

If an institution submits a complete GE Transitional Certification outlined under [Gainful Employment Electronic Announcement #54 - Certification Requirements for Gainful Employment Programs](#), The GE Transitional Certification Team will prepare a Complete Notice e-mail (Subject Line: **GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT**, from Gainful Employment share-alerts-no-reply@ed.gov) to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/President/Chancellor of the institution, along with the Chief Fiscal Officer/Financial Officer, Chief Financial Aid Director, and e-mail sender of the GE Transitional Certification from the institution. A sample of the Complete Notice e-mail is referenced below:

Sample GE Certification Complete Notice

The Federal Student Aid office of the U.S. Department of Education has completed its review of your GE Certification submission in accordance with the regulations at 34 CFR 668.414 and as described in Gainful Employment Electronic Announcement #54 - Certification Requirements for Gainful Employment Programs. We have found the GE Certification submitted for Sample University 00000000 California, OPEID# 00000000 is complete.

On or after the date and time of this e-mail, if the institution adds or revises GE program information on an E-App that does not result in a new PPA, the institution will need to provide a new certification when the E-App is updated. This includes when establishing the eligibility or reestablishing the eligibility of a program; discontinuing a program's eligibility under 34 CFR 668.410; ceasing to provide a program for at least 12 consecutive months; losing program eligibility under 34 CFR 600.40; or changing a program's name, CIP code, or credential level.

Please contact GECertification@ed.gov for any questions or concerns.

Monitoring

The GE Transitional Certification Team will be monitoring all Post-Secondary Institutions to ensure a GE Transitional Certification was received by the Department. The Department will be sending reminder notices in Fall 2015 of the institutions' responsibility to submit their GE Transitional Certification prior to the December 31, 2015 deadline.

Contact Information

If you have questions about the information in this chapter or the referenced sample certification statement, please contact the School Eligibility Service Group at (202) 377-3173. You may also email GECertification@ed.gov.