

## **GNPEC Minimum Standards**

In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-3-250.5 (b)(2) and 20-3-250.6(b), the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (GNPEC) Minimum Standards provide specific guidance for compliance with the standards set forth in O.C.G.A. § 20-3-250.6 (a)(1).

These standards are applied equally for all institutions (sometimes self-referenced as businesses) authorized by GNPEC or seeking to get authorized by GNPEC. Application of the standards is regardless of program level, instructional modality, campus location, or accreditation status.

Responses by applicants in this GNPEC Minimum Standards document are taken to be attestations that documents, situations, and criteria have been met or exist. If requested, the applicant must provide such documentation as is required to substantiate these attestations.

**NOTE: Standards listed below may be in addition to the application requirements.**

**Institution Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Individual Completing Form on Behalf of Institution:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Standard 1: Programmatic Integrity

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(A)*

1. Each individually offered program must be approved.
2. Each program of study must include the following:
  - a. Clear objectives;
  - b. Established and appropriate entrance requirements;
  - c. A detailed curriculum outline;
  - d. Theoretical and practical components;
  - e. Assessment of knowledge gained;
  - f. Remediation services; and
  - g. Final evaluation.
3. Each program must have syllabi and lesson plans available for each course or, in the instance of single course programs, for the whole program.
4. Programmatic length must be satisfactory to ensure amount content offered is relative to the programmatic level.
  - a. Certificate—no minimum length; can be offered at any postsecondary level
  - b. Associate—requires at least 60 semester credit hours (or equivalent)
  - c. Bachelor—requires at least 120 semester credit hours (or equivalent)
  - d. Master—requires at least 30 semester credit hours (or equivalent) beyond the bachelor's degree
  - e. Specialist—requires at least 30 semester credit hours (or equivalent) beyond the master's degree (typically limited to the field of education)
  - f. Doctorate—requires at least 60 semester credit hours (or equivalent) beyond the master's degree
5. Institutions offering credit for experience and/or competency, or equivalent, must have a policy in place for how credit is granted.
6. Programmatic accreditation, or institutional accreditation including programs, must be attained in order to offer graduate degree programs.
7. The institution must be able to make available a list of potential and actual employment opportunities for which the program prepares.
8. If program leads to certification, licensure, or other state and/or national vocational approval required for employment, the institution must disclose in the enrollment agreement and catalog if the program does not meet those requirements.
9. The institution must have a system in place for evaluating and documenting student achievement such as through periodic examinations, skills assessment logs, and/or standardized achievement tests. Furthermore, the following practices must be in place:
  - a. Established grading system;
  - b. Ongoing/updated record of grades; and
  - c. Established exit criteria for determining successful completion of course work and programs.

10. The institution must incorporate teaching methods and procedures to provide for direct meaningful interaction between students and faculty.
11. The institution must periodically evaluate its ability to satisfy its mission statement through methods such as student surveys or an institutional effectiveness committee.
12. The institution must periodically survey faculty as part of an institution wide evaluation of its ability to satisfy its mission statement.
  - a. Faculty and staff must be notified of relevant institutional policy changes through regular training and/or meetings.

Comments:

I certify that I have reviewed the content of this standard and confirm that my responses are true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature:

## Standard 2: Facilities and Equipment

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(B)*

1. Adequate facilities must be available for instruction.
  - a. These should be based on programmatic content, number of students, instructional modality, and equipment needs.
  - b. Online programming, if offered, must be delivered through an adequate platform with sufficient technical support.
2. Adequate facilities must be available for supporting instruction, including administration, storage, instructional modality, and student resources.
3. Adequate and up to date equipment and materials must be available to support program content, number of students, and instructional modality.
4. The equipment, buildings, and grounds must meet all applicable federal, state, and municipal codes.
5. The institution's learning resource system (library) must include materials commensurate with the level of education provided and appropriate to the courses of study in sufficient quantity and scope to meet the educational objectives of each program. This may include resources such as the following:
  - a. relevant and current texts and periodicals;
  - b. research journals and databases;
  - c. standard works of reference;
  - d. multi-media and/or electronic resources;
  - e. electronic library resource technologies; and/or
  - f. other resource materials necessary to adequately serve students.

Comments:

I certify that I have reviewed the content of this standard and confirm that my responses are true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature:

### **Standard 3: Faculty and Staff (i.e., Personnel)**

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(C)*

The faculty and staff must be qualified, based on previous education and experience, to fulfill the responsibilities of each of their institutional roles. Credentials reported must be earned from an institution with accreditation recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education, licensure recognized by the State of Georgia, or equivalent based on supporting documentation. For those educated outside the United States, additional documentation of education must be provided, including evaluation by a certified credential evaluation service. If applicable, active state licensure or certification relevant to the specific field of instruction must be maintained.

#### **Faculty (Instructor) Qualifications**

1. A certificate-granting institution must employ faculty (instructors) who demonstrate competency in the specific field for which training is offered, as evidenced by at least one of the following:
  - a. A bachelor's degree with a major in the specific field of instruction from an institution accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education; or
  - b. At least two years of teaching experience and/or work experience in the specific field for which training is offered.
2. A degree-granting institution must employ faculty (instructors) who demonstrate competency in the specific field for which training is offered, as evidenced by the following:
  - a. A degree in the specific field of instruction, at least one degree level higher than the program being taught, from an institution accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education.
    - i. A reasonable number of faculty must have earned a doctorate or terminal degree from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education.
    - ii. In some instances, as approved by the Executive Director, experience and professional recognition may be an acceptable substitute for the degree requirement.
  - b. At least two years of teaching experience and/or work experience in the specific field for which training is offered.
3. A graduate degree-granting institution must employ faculty (instructors) who demonstrate competency in the specific field for which training is offered, as evidenced by the following:
  - a. A doctorate or terminal degree in the specific field of instruction from an institution accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education.

- i. In some instances, as approved by the Executive Director, experience and professional recognition may be an acceptable substitute for the degree requirement.
    - b. At least two years of teaching experience and/or work experience in the specific field for which training is offered.
- 4. The institutional organization chart must reflect adequate personnel necessary to support programming scope.
- 5. The institution must provide orientation to familiarize new hires with institutional policies and procedures along with job requirements.
  - a. Faculty and staff must be provided with an employee handbook with confirming attestation of receipt to be documented in employee file.

### **Staff Qualifications**

- 6. A certificate-granting institution has designated a director who meets at least two of the following requirements:
  - a. A bachelor's degree from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education;
  - b. At least one year of administrative or supervisory experience; and/or
  - c. At least two years of teaching experience and/or work experience in the specific field for which training is offered.
- 7. A degree-granting institution must have a designated director who meets the following requirements:
  - a. A bachelor's degree from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by U.S. Secretary of Education;
    - i. In some instances, as approved by the Executive Director, experience and professional recognition may be an acceptable substitute for the degree requirement.
  - b. At least two years of administrative or supervisory experience; and
  - c. At least two years of teaching experience and/or work experience in the specific field for which training is offered.
- 8. Institutions with more than one (1) distinct occupational area that leads to an occupational or academic degree must have a program head on-site at the school (e.g., lead faculty, department chair, dean, etc.) who possesses an educational background equal to or exceeding the maximum credential offered in that program area, the requisite qualifications for technical faculty teaching in a degree program, and an ability to administer the occupational components of the program.
  - a. For an institution offering only one (1) program or group of programs in one distinct occupational area, a single individual may fulfill both the director of education and the program head requirements as long as the individual possesses the requisite qualifications for each position.

9. Institutions must employ administrators and supervisors who meet the following requirements:
  - a. An earned degree from an institution accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education appropriate for the programming of the institution and/or area of responsibility; and
  - b. Adequate professional experience necessary to satisfy responsibilities of the position.
10. Institutions who employ agents to recruit on behalf of an institution ensure the agents do not engage in advertising, sales, collection, credit, or other practices of any type that are false, deceptive, misleading, or unfair.

### **Personnel Records**

Information on all owners, trustees, board members, faculty, and staff persons must be made available upon GNPEC request.

11. Faculty records must, at a minimum, include the following:
  - a. Proof of employment;
  - b. Record of education and experience (i.e. resume/CV);
  - c. Proof of highest level of education (i.e. transcript/diploma); and
  - d. Proof of orientation and ongoing/continuous training.

Comments:

I certify that I have reviewed the content of this standard and confirm that my responses are true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature:

## Standard 4: Catalog and Enrollment Agreement

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(D)*

1. Catalog must include the following:
  - a. Institutional Mission Statement;
  - b. Institutional contact information including address, phone number, and website;
  - c. Description of facilities and equipment;
  - d. Program offerings including each objective, length, curriculum outline, and applicable tuition and fees including all miscellaneous charges and expenses applicable to program completion;
    - i. Disclosure regarding noncompliance with state or national vocational certifications, licensures, etc. must also be provided.
  - e. Administrative policies;
    - i. Student conduct and complaint policies;
    - ii. Withdrawal, refund, cancellation and readmission policies;
    - iii. Grading, Standard Academic Progress (SAP) and graduation policies; and
    - iv. Extenuating circumstances policy.
  - f. Admission policies;
    - i. Degree programs must require completion of a high school education or equivalent.
    - ii. Transfer Credit Policy.
  - g. Descriptions of Supporting Services such as career services and learning management system use/instructions.
2. Students must be provided documentation of the following:
  - a. Prior year's enrollment, graduation, and job placement rates;
  - b. Accreditation status; and
  - c. Any disclosures specified by the Executive Director.
3. The Enrollment Agreement, or Student Contract, is the contractual agreement between the institution and the student. It must, at a minimum, include the following:
  - a. Name and contact information of the institution;
  - b. Program name, length, schedule of sessions (days/hours);
  - c. Program start date and anticipated end date;
  - d. Student name, date of birth, contact information;
  - e. Tuition, registration fee, other fees listed, total cost of program;
  - f. Method of payment;
  - g. Externship, clinical, or other field experience, if required;
  - h. Career services;
  - i. Refund policy; and
  - j. Disclosures.

- i. GNPEC Student Disclosure Form, if enrolling in an unaccredited institution, must be included; and
- ii. Disclosure regarding noncompliance with state or national vocational certifications, licensures, etc. must also be provided.

Comments:

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Signature:

## Standard 5: Credential

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(E)*

1. Upon completion of program, each student must be issued a certificate or diploma that, at a minimum, must include the following:
  - a. Name of institution;
  - b. City and state of institution;
  - c. Level of credential awarded;
  - d. Name of program;
  - e. Full name of student;
  - f. Date of issuance; and
  - g. Signature from authorized institutional representative.
2. Upon request, each student must be able to request a transcript that, at a minimum, must include the following:
  - a. Name and address of institution;
  - b. Full name of student;
  - c. Program enrolled;
  - d. Enrollment dates;
  - e. Student status; and
  - f. Grades (by course and, if applicable, overall GPA).

Comments:

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Signature:

## Standard 6: Student Records

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(F)*

1. Student records must include the following:
  - a. Attendance record or equivalent measure of progress;
  - b. Ongoing grade records for current students;
  - c. Transcripts for students that are no longer enrolled (graduated or withdrawn) reflecting courses taken with credit and/or grades earned;
    - i. The transcript must be held by the institution as a permanent record.
  - d. Financial ledger;
  - e. Previous education and training documents (e.g., high school diploma, GED, college transcripts, etc.); and
  - f. Application and/or Enrollment Agreement.
    - i. GNPEC Student Disclosure Form required for unaccredited institutions.
    - ii. Entrance exam results (if required).
2. The institution, while operating, must provide for the permanent storage, retrieval, confidentiality, and adequate protection of student academic records including the following:
  - a. The protection of hard copies of student academic records against pilferage, fire and tampering via digital cloud storage or a second copy off-site.
3. The institution must have established internal policies and procedures guiding the record keeping of attendance, grades, finances, enrollment, and program/course completion.
4. Should an institution cease operation in Georgia, it must surrender transcripts for all former students and full student records of students that were active at the time of closure.

Comments:

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Signature:

## **Standard 7: Business Compliance**

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(G)*

1. The institution must provide Georgia Secretary of State Annual Registration for this entity and the most recently issued Georgia Secretary of State Certificate of Authority.
2. The institution must be compliant with ADA regulations.
3. The institution must meet all applicable federal, state, and municipal codes.

Comments:

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Signature:

## Standard 8: Financial Viability

To ensure the institution is capable of satisfying commitments made to students, GNPEC will review institutional finances annually and may require additional financial documentation.

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(H)*

1. The institution must have adequate cash on hand to ensure it can fulfill all commitments to students. The following cash on hand standards are recommended:
  - a. Unrestricted funds available in at least the amount of 30 days projected expenses for authorized institutions; or
  - b. Unrestricted funds available in at least the amount of 90 days projected expenses for institutions seeking initial authorization.
2. A Certified Public Accountant (CPA) prepared financial documentation, which may include an audit or review, of the most recently completed fiscal year must be provided by institutions reporting gross tuition over \$500,000.
3. The institution must provide any documentation received from its accreditor or the United States Department of Education relative to adverse actions taken against the institution, if applicable.
4. The institution must provide supplemental documentation requested as part of the Financial Viability Assessment (ex. Financial Improvement Plan, Teach-Out Plan, CPA review and/or CPA audit).

Comments:

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Signature:

## **Standard 9: Advertising**

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(I)*

1. All institutional documentation, including advertisements, must present only accurate information.
  - a. Any photos used must not be misleading.
  - b. Job placement cannot be guaranteed.
  - c. No service or equipment provided to enrolled students can be represented as “free”.
2. The institution and its agents will abide by all applicable consumer protection laws to ensure the fair and equitable treatment of all constituents (potential and enrolled students).

Comments:

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Signature:

## **Standard 10: Owner and Employee Character**

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(J); 20-2-250.6(a)(2)*

1. Any owner, agent, trustee, board member, faculty, and staff person must be of good moral character.
  - a. All communication, written or verbal, with GNPEC, students, and other stakeholders must be truthful.
2. Any owner, trustee, board member, faculty, and staff person must have adequate and appropriate education and/or experience required by his/her institutional role.
3. All ownership changes must comply with the requirements set forth in O.C.G.A. § 20-3-250.8(f).

Comments:

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Signature:

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## **Standard 11: Housing**

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(K)*

1. Housing affiliated with or recommended by the institution must be adequate and safe.
2. Institutional housing must meet all applicable federal, state, and municipal codes.

Comments:

I certify that I have reviewed the content of this standard and confirm that my responses are true, complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature:

## **Standard 12: Refund Policy**

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(L)*

The institution must have a clear refund policy to ensure students access to reasonable refunds for tuition and fees paid for programmatic offerings for uncompleted programs.

1. The refund policy must be included as part of the institutional enrollment agreement and catalog.
2. The refund policy must include steps for requesting refunds and it must require submission in writing.
3. The institution must document (ex. withdrawal form) the withdrawal process including acknowledgements from the institution and the student.
4. Tuition and fees, if applicable, must be refunded at a prorated amount, based on percentage of paid segment (i.e., module, semester, or total program) completed, should the student withdraw before 50% completion of the course/program.
5. All refunds must be remitted within 45 days of the request.

### **Fees**

1. If stated as such, a nonrefundable Application Fee of up to \$150 is permitted.
2. If stated as such, nonrefundable fees for goods and/or services provided by third-party vendors purchased on behalf of the student are permitted should the institution be unable to reuse the equipment or cancel the service.

Comments:

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Signature:

## **Standard 13: Cancellation Policy**

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(M)*

1. All tuition and fees paid, excluding nonrefundable fees, must be fully refunded should a cancellation request be made within 72 hours of signing the enrollment agreement.
2. The institution that cancels or changes a program of study or course (time or location) in such a way that a student who has started the program or course is unable to continue:
  - a. makes arrangements, in a timely manner, to accommodate the needs of each student enrolled in the program; or
  - b. refunds all money paid by the student for the program of study or course if alternative arrangements determined by NPEC to be equitable to both the institution and the student are not possible.

Comments:

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Signature:

## **Standard 14: Complaint Policy**

Statutory Authority: *O.C.G.A. §§ 20-3-250.5(b)(2); 20-3-250.6(a)(1)(N)*

1. Complaint procedure must include the following:
  - a. Steps for filing a complaint
    - i. Submission requirements;
    - ii. Institutional review process, including response times; and
    - iii. Notification of right to appeal final institutional decision to GNPEC.
      1. GNPEC contact information, including agency name, phone number, and website link for the complaint form, must be provided.
2. Complaint procedure must be provided as part of the catalog and enrollment agreement.
  - a. If the institution has a website, the current catalog must be posted.
3. For institutions with physical facilities for students, the complaint procedure must be posted prominently in a public place where students congregate (i.e. student break room).

Comments:

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Signature: