

## 2005 CHEA Survey

### *The Role of Accreditation in Degree Expansion and Increase in Degree Requirements in Professional Fields*

#### BACKGROUND

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) surveyed 62 CHEA- and United States Department of Education (USDE)-recognized U.S. programmatic accrediting organizations during the spring and summer of 2005 to learn more about the role of accreditation in the expansion of education and degree requirements in professional fields. Specifically, CHEA sought to identify professions in which, during the past five years, there had been:

- Expansion or escalation of degree requirements for entry in to a profession, e.g., movement from baccalaureate level to the master's level or from master's to doctoral; or
- Increase in requirements within degree levels, e.g., more credits, time or clinical experience required at master's or doctoral levels.

If degree expansion or increase in requirements had occurred, survey respondents were asked why the expansion or increase took place, the impact on, e.g., students, curriculum and facilities, and whether the accrediting organization or the profession is the primary driver of these changes.

The issue of the substance and scope of the academic work in professional fields is increasingly important to colleges and universities as they make decisions about academic priorities and the allocation of limited resources. Degree expansion and increase in requirements have a direct effect not only on professional education and its role in a college or university, but the general society as well. They particularly affect the "professional doctorate" or terminal degrees earned in specific career fields such as those included in this survey, e.g., aviation, engineering, teacher education and a number of health-related professions.

#### SURVEY RESULTS

Of the 62 accreditors surveyed, 41 (66.13%) provided responses. Sixteen (16) of the 41 respondents indicated that the survey was not applicable to their organizations.

Of the remaining 25 organizations, 18 indicated that there had been degree expansion or increase in requirements or both in their respective fields.

With regard to the reasons for degree expansion, accreditors were most likely to cite changes within the profession or decisions by professional bodies.

Organizations surveyed	62
Survey respondents	41
Survey not applicable to organization	16
Survey applicable to organization	18
Has there been degree expansion or increase in requirements within degrees in the past five years for your profession?	
• Degree expansion	4
• Increase in requirements	10
• Both	4
If there has been expansion within degrees, what are the reasons that this has occurred?	
• Changes within profession	3
• Changes in legal or regulatory requirements within the profession	2
• Decisions made by professional bodies or societies	4
• Actions taken by accrediting organizations	3
If there has been an increase of requirements within degrees, what are the reasons that this occurred?	
• Changes within profession	10
• Changes in legal or regulatory requirements within the profession	6
• Decisions made by professional bodies or societies	7
• Actions taken by accrediting organizations	10

If there has been expansion within degrees, what is the role of your accrediting organization in degree expansion?

- The profession is the driver of these changes and the accrediting organization responds 9
- The accrediting organization is the driver of these changes 3

What is the role of your accrediting organization in degree expansion or increase in requirements?

- The profession is the driver of these changes and the accrediting organization responds
  - Degree expansion 9
  - Increase in requirements within degrees 7
- The accrediting organization is the driver of these changes
  - Degree expansion 3
  - Increase in requirements within degrees 5
- A combination of both 7

With regard to reasons for increases in requirements, accreditors also cited the profession or professional bodies, although a number mentioned legal or regulatory requirements or actions taken by the accrediting organization.

With regard to the impact of expansion on students and institutions, the accreditors said expansion had an impact on academic work, expectations associated with student competencies, curriculum, clinical or laboratory work and budgets. Increase in requirements likewise affected these areas.

With regard to the role of the accrediting organization in relation to degree expansion, the accreditors generally view themselves as responsive to the profession in driving change. A number of accreditors said that both the profession and the accreditor drove the changes.

With regard to increase in requirements, accreditors said that they and the professions had similar roles.

## KEY COMMENTS ON CHEA SURVEY

CHEA received 51 comments on the survey. In general, these comments focused on the external factors that can result in an accrediting organization's action in relation to degree expansion or increase in requirements. Some of these external factors were also cited as reasons for degree expansion or increase in requirements:

- State licensing and certification laws and regulations.
- Additional academic work (e.g., coursework) required by colleges and universities.
- New competencies required by a profession.
- Faculty shortages at all levels that lead to creation of additional pathways of entry to a profession.
- New technologies affecting a profession.
- Increased expectations of scholarship within a field (e.g., research), emerging from either the profession or a college or university.
- Calls for advanced degrees from a college or university.
- The impact of outcomes-based approaches to professional education that lead to increased degree requirements.
- Institutional accreditation requirements that faculty have doctorates.
- Pressure and limitations on faculty without doctorates in a given field.

## SUMMARY

The survey indicated that accrediting organizations are significant, although not always primary, actors in decisions related to degree expansion and increase in requirements:

- Accreditors play a major role in degree expansion and increase in requirements through sanctioning these changes in their accreditation standards or policies.
- Accreditors sometimes drive these changes, although the profession or a related professional body is more likely to be the primary driver.
- There is a need to further clarify the role of accreditors, the professions and professional bodies in decisions about degree expansion or increase in requirements.

Of the 18 accreditors that reported degree expansion or increase in requirements in their respective fields, 13 are health-related. The accreditors outside the health professions were aviation, engineering, funeral services, forestry, landscape architecture, and teacher education. This suggests that, at least for this group of respondents, health-related professions are central to questions about professional degrees.

Degree expansion and increase in requirements are having a significant impact on the professional fields in which this is occurring. The CHEA survey may be used as a baseline to aid accreditors, institutions, graduate deans and professionals to address key questions related to these changes:

- What types of institutions are experiencing degree expansion and increase in requirements?
- What are threshold criteria for professional degrees?
- How do these criteria for professional degrees compare with criteria for the research doctorate?
- What are effective practices associated with degree expansion and increase in requirements?
- What is the future role of accreditation in decisions about professional degrees?

These key questions provide a foundation for additional review and consideration of decisions about the future of the professional degree in higher education.

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The 41 accrediting organizations that responded to the CHEA survey are listed below. The 18 accreditors in fields in which degree expansion or increase in requirements are taking place are indicated with a ▲.

American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Council for Accreditation ▲	Commission on Massage Therapy Accreditation
AACSB International -The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business	Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs
Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc.	Council on Aviation Accreditation ▲
Accreditation Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine ▲	Council on Education for Public Health
Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education ▲	Council on Naturopathic Medical Education ▲
American Association of Nurse Anesthetists Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs ▲	Council on Rehabilitation Education Commission on Standards and Accreditation
American Board of Funeral Service Education Committee on Accreditation ▲	Council on Social Work Education Division of Standards and Accreditation Commission on Accreditation
American College of Nurse-Midwives Division of Accreditation ▲	Joint Review Committee on Education Programs in Radiologic Technology
American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation ▲	Joint Review Committee on Educational Programs in Nuclear Medicine Technology
Dietetic Association Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education ▲	Liaison Committee on Medical Education
American Library Association Committee on Accreditation	Midwifery Education Accreditation Council
American Optometric Association Accreditation Council on Optometric Education	National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences ▲
American Osteopathic Association Bureau of Professional Education	National Association of Industrial Technology ▲
American Physical Therapy Association Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education ▲	National Association of Schools of Art and Design Commission on Accreditation
American Podiatric Medical Association Council on Podiatric Medical Education	National Association of Schools of Dance Commission on Accreditation
American Psychological Association Committee on Accreditation	National Association of Schools of Music Commission on Accreditation, Commission on Non-Degree-Granting Accreditation and Commission on Community/Junior College Accreditation
American Society of Landscape Architects Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board ▲	National Association of Schools of Theatre Commission on Accreditation
American Veterinary Medical Association Council on Education	National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education ▲
Association for Clinical Pastoral Education	National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, Inc. ▲
Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs	Society of American Foresters ▲
Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education ▲	

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Council for Higher Education Accreditation  
**Survey on Accreditation and Additional Education and  
Degree Requirements in the Professions**

*May 2005*

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is examining the issue of accreditation and the expansion of education and degree requirements in the professions. Specifically, we are interested in:

Expansion or escalation of degree requirements that are required for entry to a profession, e.g., movement from baccalaureate level to the master's level or from master's to doctoral;

and

Increase in requirements within degree levels, e.g., more credits, time or clinical experience required at master's or doctoral levels.

We need to learn more about the professions that have pursued or are pursuing expansion of requirements. As a specialized accreditor, your comments with regard to the following questions will be valuable.

1. Has there been degree expansion or increase in requirements within degrees in the past five years for your profession? Please check all that apply.

- Degree expansion
- Increase in requirements within degrees

2. If there has been degree expansion or increase in requirements within degrees, what are the reasons that this has occurred? Please indicate all that are applicable.

Changes within the profession, e.g., new technology, new fields

- Degree expansion
- Increase in requirements within degrees

Changes in legal or regulatory requirements for the profession (e.g., licensure)

- Degree expansion
- Increase in requirements within degrees

Decisions made by the professional bodies or societies that affect practice in the profession

- Degree expansion
- Increase in requirements within degrees

Actions taken by the accrediting organization for the professional field

- Degree expansion
- Increase in requirements within degrees

Other. Please explain. [Add comments here]

3. Please describe the impact of degree expansion or increase in requirements within degrees on students and institutions, e.g., has this involved additional academic work, additional clinical or laboratory work or development of new competencies? What has been the impact on the budgets of the program and institution?

Degree expansion [Add Comments Here]

Expansion of requirements within degree levels [Add comments here]

4. What is the role of your accrediting organization in degree expansion or increase in requirements within degrees?

The profession is the driver of these changes and the accrediting organization responds. Changes first take place within the profession and this leads to changes in accreditation standards, policies or practices based on the advice of accrediting commissions, practitioners and professional bodies.

- Degree expansion
- Increase in requirements within degrees

The accrediting organization is the driver of these changes. Accreditors provide leadership for change in the profession through altering standards, policies or practices in response to changing conditions (e.g., changing technology, development of new fields) and applying these standards to bring about change in professional practice.

- Degree expansion
- Increase in requirements within degrees
- A combination of both statements above.

Other. Please explain.

5. Additional comments or suggestions?

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

Name

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Accrediting Organization

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Phone

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Email

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**Thank you for your assistance.**

We will share the results of the survey with you and keep you informed of any further developments regarding this issue.

**Please send this survey as an email attachment to [riggs@chea.org](mailto:riggs@chea.org)  
or fax it to CHEA at 202-955-6129.**