UNIT 1: CEA'S MISSION

PREPARING FOR YOUR
ACCREDITATION WORKSHOP

Welcome to the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation online preparation for the accreditation workshop. You may be from a program or institution that's been accepted as eligible to undergo the accreditation process, or you may be from a program or institution that's already accredited and is now beginning the re-accreditation process. Either way, your next step is to attend the workshop. These seven online units will give you the foundation or the refresher and process update you need for that workshop.

ACCREDITATION WORKSHOP GOALS

- Build your knowledge of CEA
- Build your knowledge of the CEA Standards
- Orient you to the accreditation process
- Guide you in:
  - Completing your self-study report
  - Planning the self-study process
  - Preparing for the site visit
- Answer your questions

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Before we dive into the first unit, I'd like to tell you a little bit about the workshop itself.

Over the course of 1-1/2 days, we'll address a number of goals, and by the end of our time together, you'll be able to begin planning and then carrying out your self-study process. You'll understand what you must do to complete your self-study and be able to manipulate the materials to make that happen.

To accomplish that, during the workshop we'll work to accomplish the goals you see listed here.

First, it's important to understand the foundations of CEA because its history and origins inform everything from the standards themselves to the processes we carry out to the emphasis on peer review and more.

We also want to be sure you understand the standard themselves, because they are the basis of your own self-study process and report, as well as the foundation of all CEA accreditation decisions.

We'll discuss each step you will need to take, sharing mileposts and benchmarks within the process.

And then the bulk of the workshop will be spent on providing guidance for you on the nuts and bolts of completing your self-study report to CEA's specifications, first by analyzing the standards and then preparing for the site visit which will take place in about a year and a half. If you have your calendar handy, you may wish to pause the slideshow and put a note on your calendar for 16 months from the workshop

(that you will attend) as a reminder that the site visit is likely to occur about that time.

Of course, throughout the workshop, our goal is to answer your questions and as much as possible, talk with you individually about your particular situation as it relates to the accreditation process.

GOALS OF ONLINE PREPARATION UNITS

- Introduce you to or remind you of:
  - CEA's accreditation process
  - CEA's relationship to the field
  - CEA's scope of accreditation
  - The value of accreditation
  - Purpose of standards and of CEA's 44 standards
  - Focus on planning standards
- Help you think about your questions

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In order to give us ample time at the workshop to focus on your individual needs and review the standards relative to the programs and institutions that all the participants represent, we have created seven online units to be completed before you arrive at the workshop so you can begin to become familiar with or refresh the CEA standards and processes.

The broad goals for the online units are listed here for you. Take a moment to scan them.

If you are new to the CEA process, this may seem like a lot of information! If you are undergoing reaccreditation, some of the information in these slideshows will be a refresher for you, while other things may have changed since your initial accreditation.

It will help you and us if you take the time to write down your questions and thoughts on the worksheets, for discussion at the workshop. And if you wish, feel free to send questions and thoughts to us by email before the workshop.

Now, let's look at the online unit topics themselves so you can see how the units will proceed.

PREPARING FOR THE WORKSHOP

- Watch the seven preparation unit slideshows
  1. CEA's Mission
  2. Scope of Accreditation
  3. CEA's Values
  4. Specialized Accreditation
  5. Accreditation Process
  6. The CEA Standards
  7. Planning and Review Standards
- Complete the worksheet for each unit
- Bring your questions to the workshop

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At the start of each unit, you'll see this slide listing the seven topics and letting you know which one we'll be discussing. Each lasts about ~~10~~ 15 minutes or so. We will also let you know if there are additional materials you may want to have handy.

One thing to note: Nearly everything in these units is available in writing somewhere, so you might want to have easy access to the Accreditation Handbook that was emailed to you, a copy of the CEA standards (also emailed to you and available on the CEA website), and access to the CEA Policies and Procedures, available from the CEA website as well. You may also wish to have some stickie notes or a highlighter to flag information in the Handbook.

If you do not have these materials handy or have not yet downloaded the worksheet for Unit 1, please pause the slideshow and gather those materials now.

Each slideshow will provide you with information on the topic, ask you some questions (also listed on the accompanying worksheet), and remind you to bring your questions and notes with you to the workshop.

Each worksheet has a section where you can write any questions or thoughts you have, even those that are not related to the questions we've asked you.

Now we're ready to talk about CEA's Mission!

CEA MISSION STATEMENT

CEA's mission is to **promote excellence** in the field of **English language teaching and administration**, as well as to **protect the interests of students**, through accreditation of **English language programs and institutions worldwide**. CEA achieves its mission by advancing **widely-held standards** to foster **continuous program development** through a rigorous process of **regular self-assessment** and **peer evaluation**.

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Here you see CEA's mission statement. You can also find it on the CEA website, and it is the first item in section one of your Accreditation Handbook.

I won't be reading directly from every slide, but this one bears reading because it is not simply an aspirational collection of hopes and dreams for CEA.

It's like a haiku: every word or phrase has a lot of useful meaning, revealed when opened up and examined.

CEA's mission is to **promote excellence** *in the field of* **English language teaching and administration,** *as well as to protect the interests of students, through accreditation of* **English language programs and institutions worldwide**. *CEA achieves its mission by advancing* **widely-held standards** *to foster* **continuous program development** *through a rigorous process of* **regular self-assessment** *and* **peer evaluation**.

So let's open up CEA's mission statement and see what these phrases reveal about the process you're preparing to undergo.

UNPACKING CEA'S MISSION

... **promote excellence** in the field ...

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There are various reasons for accreditation. For some accreditation agencies, it is a means for licensure or certification, for others it is about program improvement and quality assurance, and in some cases, it is also about compliance with regulations. CEA's focus is on quality assurance, with one of its foundational objectives being to raise the bar on the quality of programs and institutions across the profession. So CEA uses a quality assurance approach designed to improve the field one program at a time, and to do this by identifying and recognizing good practices in teaching, assessment of learning, student services, and administrative areas. And as we all know, importantly, CEA accreditation also provides a means for institutions to establish compliance with federal, and in some cases state, regulations and laws.

In the next phrase of the mission statement, you see that the CEA accreditation process embraces the whole enterprise for your program or institution – it is not just about ESL teaching.

Of course, there are sets of standards that relate to the academic side of the house, the academic product: the curriculum, evidence of the quality of student achievement and teaching.

But we are also interested in ensuring sound administrative processes and student services. So, you'll see that there are groups of standards that relate to these practices as well.

CEA focuses on both the *teaching and learning* side of our field, as well as *sound administration* in our field.

Importantly, CEA focuses on the welfare of students, seeking to ensure that students are well-served through accurate information, effective teaching, appropriate assessment, useful co-curricular activities, and sound student services. There are standards devoted to each of these matters. This part of the mission is enshrined in CEA Policies and Procedures, which state "the focus of CEA accreditation is students. . . . The CEA philosophy is that an English language program or institution worthy of accreditation demonstrates that it provides the student services and programs described in its materials; is student-centered; provides a program that supports its mission, and has the resources, fiscal and human, to assure that students are well served. This philosophy prevails throughout the review process."

Another thing you'll notice is that the mission and CEA's documents, policies and procedures, and standards all talk about programs and institutions.

For accreditors, these two terms are not generic; they are used in a specific way.

Programs are those that have a direct reporting line within an accredited institution or government agency.

Institutions are everything else, such as standalone, independent schools.

We'll be talking about this distinction in more detail, including implications for you, later in the online units and also in the workshop.

What's important for right now is to know that CEA accredits both programs and institutions.

UNPACKING CEA'S MISSION

... English language programs and institutions **worldwide**. ...

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And although CEA was originally designed by its founders to do quality assurance reviews for U.S.-based programs and institutions, in 2004, CEA began to review and accredit programs and institutions outside the United States.

Today, about 8- 10% of CEA's accredited programs & institutions are in non-U.S. settings, with many more in process. The countries where CEA currently has accredited sites are shown on the map. And there are many additional international sites in process!

UNPACKING CEA'S MISSION

... advancing
widely-held
standards ...

Looking at the next part of CEA's mission statement, it seems to go without saying that accreditation is based on standards. But how can CEA claim that these forty-four standards are widely-held? Because of both the history of how they were developed and the fact that they are regularly reviewed with input from the field.

Soon after its inception, a diverse set of professionals from various programs and institutions gathered to serve on an advisory committee to design an initial set of standards. They then fielded drafts of the standards in discussion at various professional meetings over a two-year period. (You may have been at some those sessions!)

The standards were honed to be both specific to the necessary quality practices in the field and also widened and expressed in a way that they could be applied fairly and objectively to the wide range of program and institution models.

The Commission has a standing Standards Review Committee that regularly reviews each standard and each standards area, and also collects data and public input when amending the standards.

So the CEA standards can be considered widely-held because they came from the field, were developed by professionals from the field, were vetted by other active professionals, and now are regularly reviewed with appropriate data and public input when necessary.

This approach to standards development and review is typical of the pattern of CEA operations designed to ensure that your program or institution and its mission get a

fair review based on good practices in the field.

The standards themselves will be discussed in a later online unit and at length during the workshop.

The way the standards were developed and are maintained is one of the important elements that makes CEA yours!

UNPACKING CEA'S MISSION

… foster **continuous program development** …

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While everyone wants to be that perfect program or institution that has earned accreditation, the goal for CEA is not to freeze things in place for all time. Programs and institutions are living enterprises that have to be responsive to various and changing situations, including fluctuating student populations and world conditions. So the CEA standards emphasize a quality assurance and continuous improvement approach. They ensure that mechanisms are in place within programs and institutions that allow them to flexibly respond to change while maintaining quality, as they go through the ups and downs that programs and institutions in our field inevitably experience. Some of the standards relate directly to having continuous program review and improvement practices in place.

In fact, we will expect you to make changes and improvements during the self-study process and consider that appropriate, even important. And we ask you to say what you'll do to improve your program in the future in specific areas.

UNPACKING CEA'S MISSION

...a rigorous process of **regular self-assessment** and peer evaluation...

If you are undergoing re-accreditation, you already know that the process is indeed rigorous. If you are new to the process, you should know that it takes planning for the time and resources to do a meaningful self-study, if you conduct the process the way CEA envisions it. Among other things, we expect that you will engage a wide range of personnel at your program or institution.

The process typically takes 12 to 14 months. It is not simply a checklist; in fact, self-study includes systematic reflection as well as reporting and action. The value of the accreditation process derives from participating in the self-reflection and self-assessment process as much as in its outcomes if improved practices and compliance with particular standards are to result.

Over the past 20 years, CEA has collected feedback from sites being accredited, and we know that the process yields many benefits to programs and institutions beyond the accreditation certificate itself. Those we have documented are listed in your Accreditation Handbook.

We'll be talking throughout the online units and the workshop about the self-assessment process and how it is structured.

Not only the self-study process but also the review process is rigorous. It is important to remember that CEA grew from the field and continues to be governed and delivered by your peers from our professional field.

And that means, among other things – and the mission is clear on this point – that the review of your program or institution – the site visit and the commission decision – will be conducted by people who know and understand the professional world in which you function.

Peer evaluation is an essential component of CEA's ethos as well as practice. It results not only in knowledgeable reviewers and commissioners making decisions that affect your program or institution, but it also means that CEA contributes to the professional development for the field itself through the involvement of peers.

Therefore, an important outcome of CEA's principle of peer evaluation is not solely that you get a fair and knowledgeable review. CEA is also developing knowledge within – and adding to – the professional development of the field.

Peer reviewers and commissioners are drawn from the full spectrum of program and institution types. Despite the differences among programs and institutions, what we have found is that good quality exists wherever good practice can be documented. It is clearly not predetermined by ownership model, geographic location, financial support, type of student, level of instruction, or other variable structural, academic, or governance factors.

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Like all effective organizations, CEA's mission has been carefully developed to guide its work with ample consultation with its stakeholders. In fact, you'll soon see (if you haven't already noticed) that the first standard among CEA's 44 is the Mission standard. It requires that you consider your own mission statement and how it guides your work and defines the nature of your program or institution and the students it serves. CEA subscribes to a mission-driven approach to accreditation.

REVIEW: CEA'S MISSION

- What does CEA's mission tell you about your professional community?
- Did any aspects of CEA's mission surprise you?
- Knowing the importance CEA places on mission, what are your thoughts about the guidance provided by your mission statement?
- What questions or thoughts do you want to raise at the workshop about the CEA mission?

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As you've seen, CEA's mission is richly detailed and has depth beyond the words themselves. And we hope it has become apparent that, regardless of the reasons that brought you to the accreditation process, you are now part of a process conducted by an organization with a mission that includes improving the field.

If you haven't been using your worksheet already, you may want to pull it out now.

Consider these review questions. Note your answers, and write down your own questions and thoughts.

If you are interested in learning more, you may like to review CEA's history. You can find it in the preface of the standards and on the CEA website.

We welcome your thoughts and questions before the workshop, but in any case be sure to bring them to the workshop for discussion.

Thank you for your participation!

When you are ready, you can move on to Unit 2: Scope of Accreditation.