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The Database of Postsecondary Institutions and Programs

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Role of the U.S. Department of Education in postsecondary accreditation

The U.S. Department of Education does not accredit educational institutions and/or programs. However, the Department provides oversight over the postsecondary accreditation system through its review of all federally-recognized accrediting agencies. The Department holds accrediting agencies accountable by ensuring that they enforce their accreditation standards effectively. Also, as a part of the Department's oversight roles, the Secretary of Education is required by law to publish a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies that the Secretary determines to be reliable authorities as to the quality of education or training provided by the institutions of higher education and the higher education programs they accredit. The Secretary of Education also recognizes State agencies for the approval of public postsecondary vocational education and nurse education.

Please note, the Secretary's recognition of accrediting agencies is limited by statute to accreditation activities within the United States. Although many recognized agencies carry out accrediting activities outside the United States, these actions are not within the legal authority of the Department of Education to recognize, are not reviewed by the Department, and the Department does not exercise any oversight over them. (Consequently, institutions and programs outside the United States that are accredited by recognized agencies are not included in this database.)