

LEGITIMACY AND ACCREDITATION OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

PROCESS REVIEW

Agency:	Organization:
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References: [5 CFR 5.2](#), [5 CFR 5.3](#) and [5 CFR 731](#); [General Schedule Qualification Standards](#)

INSTRUCTIONS: Use this checklist to review the legitimacy and accreditation of educational institutions.

“RED FLAGS” OF DIPLOMA MILLS:

- Employee has no undergraduate degree, high school diploma or GED, but the job application shows advanced degrees, e.g., master's and PhD degrees.
 - Graduate or doctorate received before the lower degree.
 - Multiple degrees received in the same year, e.g., bachelor's, master's, and PhD all completed within a few months.
 - Most of college credit is for life experience instead of course work.
 - Same or similar name to legitimate school but located in a different state.
 - Application/resume shows full time employment during the college period, particularly if college and employment, were in different geographical locations.
- Institution operates in a state with little or no licensing laws (e.g., Hawaii, Louisiana).
 - Institution has been in existence for only a short time or previously existed under another name.
 - Institution not accredited by a legitimate accrediting institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.
 - Faculty lacks appropriate advanced degrees from recognized, accredited colleges/universities.
 - Faculty not listed in catalog.
 - Backdated degrees.
 - Tuition is charged on a degree basis (e.g., \$2,000 for a PhD) rather by credit hours, course, or semester.

[Quick Link to "Case File Summary/Comments:"](#)

Y	N	Review Item	Comments
		Agency has a system in place for verifying the legitimacy and accreditation of educational institutions:	
		1. Agency has written guidance for verifying education	
		2. Guidance addresses adjudicating fraudulent degree claims, including the obligation to refer each case to OPM where there is a material false statement or deception or fraud made in connection with educational claims [5 CFR 5.2, 5 CFR 5.3 and 5 CFR 731]	
		3. Agency uses sources such as the following to verify that degrees are from accredited institutions: <u>Web sites:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • www.ed.gov – U.S. Department of Education • The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (aacrao.org) – American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers 	

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Y	N	Review Item	Comments
		<u>Reference Books and Material:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Bears' Guide to Earning Degrees by Distance Learning2024 Higher Education Directory	
Case File Summary/Comments:			

Reviewer/Title: _____

Date: _____