



VETERANS EDUCATION SUCCESS

Why should you care about accreditation when picking a school?

The reason that accreditation matters so much is because that's going to tell you about the quality of the school and whether your degree will be respected by employers, as well as whether your credits will be honored by other schools if you decide to transfer. In fact, some careers require specialized accreditations and you might find yourself out of luck if you go to a school that doesn't have the specific accreditation needed to work in your chosen field.

Just because a school is "accredited," that's probably not enough. Of course, all schools must be accredited to be eligible for federal and state financial aid programs. But not all accreditations are equally respected. Some accreditations aren't respected by employers or by other schools.

There are different types of accreditation. These are "regionally accredited" schools and "nationally accredited" schools. Regional is the more prestigious and highly regarded of the two accreditations. In contrast, "national accreditation" was created by a handful of schools that weren't good enough to qualify for regional accreditation. Therefore, "national accreditation" isn't respected by most colleges and universities, and it is often not good enough for employers. If you decide to attend a school with "national accreditation," remember this: Your credits are not likely to be good enough to transfer to any school except another one that is nationally accredited. This is because of the different academic standards and differing courses of study.

The second important thing to know is that there are two levels of accreditation: One for the college as a whole, and a second accreditation for your specific program of study within the college. This is because certain careers require specialized accreditation. And, once again, there are some accreditations that are respected and some that are not. Therefore, it's important to check that your individual program of study is accredited by the accreditation that is most respected in your field of study. If you want to be a nurse, you'd better be sure that your nursing program has the right accreditation, in addition to the overall accreditation of the college. Same thing with most health fields, including massage, dental assisting, and more. It's also true for legal jobs, as well as truck driving, plumbing, electricity, and more. This is critical, because state licensing exams often require specific accreditation for you to be eligible.

Whether you are interested in being a student of an online university, traditional "brick and mortar" college, or an online training program, be sure you ask employers and other colleges if the program you're considering has the accreditation most respected in your field.