

In most countries, education providers are nationally controlled and regulated, usually by a single government agency, such as a Ministry of Education. Accreditation in the U.S., however, is constitutionally reserved for the states, and is a voluntary, private system or process wherein oversight of educational institutions is shared among states, federal government, and accrediting agencies. Institutions may choose to apply for accreditation. By applying, institutions invite accrediting agencies to scrutinize many aspects of the school, such as program offerings, course content, faculty and staff qualifications, financial responsibility, and admissions practices.

Accreditation is important for three reasons:

1. It is required for students to qualify to receive federal funds, including grants, and loans to finance college education
2. It makes transfer of credit among colleges and universities possible
3. Employers consider the accreditation status of the institution when evaluating credentials of job applicants and determining compensation for new hires

Two types of accreditation are commonly used throughout the world: (1) institutional accreditation and (2) specialized, professional, or program accreditation.

Institutional accreditation is awarded to the college or university, when it demonstrates attainment of standards prescribed by the accrediting agency. Standards vary among accrediting agencies, but generally include measures of the overall effectiveness of the university operations, including academics, administration, and related services.

Specialized, professional, or program accreditation focuses on a narrower set of standards specific to a field of study. The American Council of Education identifies 76 specialized accrediting agencies ranging from acupuncture to veterinary technology, including such fields as law, social work, and teacher education. Some states have licensing boards to regulate the professions, and require that candidates for state certification earn degrees from accredited programs.

An institution generally chooses to apply for accreditation through the national or regional accrediting agency that best supports their mission. For example, many bible colleges are accredited through the National Association for Biblical Higher Education. That agency accredits colleges that offer certificates, diplomas, associate, and/or baccalaureate degrees aimed at preparing students for Christian ministries through biblical, church/vocational, and general studies. The Distance Education and Training Council accredits postsecondary distance or home study education institutions offering non-degree and degree courses and programs through the master's degree level. Specialized accredited institutions generally accept transfer credit from institutions who are accredited through the same agency.

Regional accrediting bodies are the most widely recognized, and the agencies through which most public institutions are accredited. Credit earned at a regionally accredited institution is generally accepted in transfer by any institution. Regional accrediting bodies include; Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, New England

Association of Schools and Colleges; North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The American Council on Education, in cooperation with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, publishes an annual directory of accredited institutions of postsecondary education. For more detailed information pertaining to institutional accreditation, visit their web site, <http://www.chea.org>.

Accreditation information is usually published by the academic institution and is likely to be found under the “Academics” link from the university’s home page. Information pertaining to Assemblies of God endorsed colleges and Universities may be accessed by visiting www.ag.org, and selecting “Education”.

In selecting a college, it is important for prospective students to consider their career goals, and research the licensing requirements in the state or country in which they plan to work.

Choosing a college is one of life’s major decisions. The choice of a college is so important, for it is during not just because it will likely represent the second greatest “purchase” of one’s life (a home is usually the first) the college years that most young people choose the career path they will follow and select a life’s mate. While those decisions may be difficult for most families, Missionary families have an even more difficult time, when beginning college for MKs generally means separation from family, experiencing culture differences, and striving to find their place as one of a large group of new freshmen.

Leaving a young freshman at an Assemblies of God endorsed institution lessens the anxiety of separation when Missionary parents are assured their students will receive godly career counseling, have residence life personnel, faculty, administrators and staff who will pray regularly for their students, and support, rather than challenge the Christian value systems they have worked 17 years to instill.

When the time comes to consider college, students should ask themselves the following questions, and have honest discussions about them with their parents.

Do I clearly know the call God has placed on my life? Many college students, not just MKs, know they are “called” but often are unsure of exactly what that call is. Relax, and enjoy the journey of discovery during your college years. Choose an area of study that is of personal interest, and trust God to direct your declaration of a major when that time arrives.

What programs of study are available at the institution? MKs often grow up hearing college stories from their parents and automatically assume they will attend their alma mater. They are sometimes disappointed when the desired degree program is not available at a given college.

What is the geographic location of the prospective college? Is it located in proximity to an airport with convenient flights home? Do you prefer a city or rural setting?

What are the overall costs? What financial aid is available? Does the institution offer any discount or benefit to MKs?

What are the admissions requirements?

Personal Considerations – Campus culture, opportunities for ministry, proximity to family, work availability, academic and physical support services

What is the accreditation of the institution?