

§ 116-11.4. Accreditation.

- (a) Definitions. – The following definitions apply in this section:
- (1) Accreditation cycle. – The period of time during which a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina is accredited.
 - (2) Accrediting agency. – An agency or association that accredits institutions of higher education.
 - (2a) Institutional accrediting agency. – An accrediting agency that is recognized as an institutional accrediting agency by the United States Department of Education pursuant to 20 U.S.C. § 1099b.
 - (3) Preferred accrediting agency. – An accrediting agency that meets all of the following criteria:
 - a. Is an institutional accrediting agency.
 - b. Is one of the following accrediting agencies:
 1. Commission for Public Higher Education.
 2. Higher Learning Commission.
 3. Middle States Commission on Higher Education.
 4. New England Commission on Higher Education.
 5. Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.
 6. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.
 7. Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission.
- (b) Repealed by Session Laws 2025-92, s. 2.11(a), effective September 30, 2025.
- (b1) Approved Accreditation Required. – A postsecondary constituent institution of The University of North Carolina shall maintain accreditation from a preferred accrediting agency. A postsecondary constituent institution of The University of North Carolina may also receive accreditation from an accrediting agency that is not a preferred accrediting agency as long as the postsecondary constituent institution continues to maintain its accreditation from a preferred accrediting agency.
- (c) Repealed by Session Laws 2025-92, s. 2.11(a), effective September 30, 2025.
- (d) Certain Programs Exempt. – The requirements of this section do not apply to professional, graduate, departmental, or certificate programs at constituent institutions that have specific accreditation requirements or best practices, including law, pharmacy, engineering, and other similar educational programs, as identified by the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina.
- (e) Cause of Action. – A constituent institution may bring a civil action, as follows:
- (1) Against any person who makes a false statement to the accrediting agency of the constituent institution, if all of the following criteria are met:
 - a. The statement, if true, would mean the constituent institution is out of compliance with its accreditation standards.
 - b. The person made the statement with knowledge that the statement was false or with reckless disregard as to whether it was false.
 - c. The accrediting agency conducted a review of the constituent institution as a proximate result of the statement.
 - d. The review caused the constituent institution to incur costs.
 - (2) A constituent institution that prevails on a cause of action initiated pursuant to this subsection shall be entitled to the following:
 - a. Costs related to the review conducted by the accrediting agency, including for the following:
 1. Additional hours worked by university personnel.

2. Contracted services, including outside legal counsel.
 3. Travel, lodging, and food expenses.
 4. Fees required by the agency.
- b. Reasonable attorney fees.
 - c. Court costs. (2023-132, s. 3.1(b); 2025-92, s. 2.11(a).)