

IS THIS SCHOOL GOOD?

The Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education has developed this brochure to assist Iowans in making an informed decision about the selection of a postsecondary education school. As the various modes of program delivery, and new institutional technologies increase, more and more opportunities for obtaining a higher education become available. Unfortunately not all of these offerings are equal and some are even fraudulent. Persons selecting institutions need to know some rather basic things about the institutions that they wish to attend and this brochure is designed to identify the basic characteristics of a good school. The brochure considers the legitimacy of the institution, its accreditation status, the value of its educational programs in obtaining desired employment and the transferability of courses. While this brochure is intended for Iowans assessing institutions in Iowa most of the information is also applicable to institutions located in other states or countries.

Find Out If The School Is Operating Legally

Most postsecondary institutions that maintain or conduct one or more courses of instruction, including courses of instruction by correspondence, offered in Iowa or which have a presence in Iowa and offer courses in other states or foreign countries, should be registered with the Iowa Secretary of State's Office. If you have questions about a school meeting the requirements of this law or to see if a school is registered, call the Secretary of State at (515) 281-5204.

Certain institutions are required to seek licensure with other state agencies. These include cosmetology schools.

Find Out If A School Is Accredited

The federal government reviews and recognizes various educational accrediting associations. In order to become accredited, institutions and programs must demonstrate that they meet certain standards established by the accreditation agency. Each accreditation agency develops its own standards. There are two types of accreditation agencies: (1) institutional accreditation agencies that establish standards for the entire school and (2) specialized accreditation agencies that establish standards for programs in specific fields of study such as nursing and engineering.

Ask the school what federally recognized accreditation agencies have approved them. If you need further information about federally approved accreditation agencies you may contact the Iowa Coordinating Council at (515) 281-3939.

Contact Potential Employers

If you are enrolling in school to prepare yourself for employment in a particular occupation, you should contact potential employers and ask the following questions:

- What knowledge, skills and abilities are needed to obtain a position for the occupation you are seeking.
- Is licensure or certification required in this occupation?
- Do you make a point to recruit from certain institutions when recruiting graduates?
- Have you heard of this specific school?
- What do you think of this school?
- Have you hired graduates of this school?
- Were you satisfied with the graduates that you hired from this school?

Contact Appropriate Occupational Licensure Or Certification Organizations

If you are considering enrolling in a school to prepare for employment in a particular occupation that requires licensure or certification by a state or professional organization, you should contact these organizations and ask the following questions:

- Are there specific requirements to achieve licensure or certification?
- What are the requirements?
- How many individuals who apply for licensure or certification receive it?
- Can graduates from this school be considered for licensure or certification?
- Where were the graduates hired?
- How many graduates of this school who applied for licensure or certification received it?

Talk With Your Current Employer

If you plan to attend school for advancement in your current employment, you should talk with your employer to see if this program satisfies the requirements.

Contact The School's Placement Office Or Career Counseling Office

- Contact the placement office or career counseling office if the school has one. Ask to see placement information on the most recent graduating classes in the program area that is of interest to you. Ask for the names and addresses of some employers who have hired recent graduates, and the names and addresses of recent graduates so that you can contact them. Ask the school counselors the following questions:
- What kind of student services are available?
- How many of the students who started the program finished it?
- How many students graduated from the program that you are interested in?
- How many graduates obtained employment in this field?
- How long after graduation were they hired?
- Where were the students hired?
- What type of assistance is provided by the placement office when students look for work?

Visit The School

Visit the school you are interested in considering. Don't assume that you have to sign an enrollment agreement while you are there. While you are at the school, do the following:

- Get a copy of the school catalog.
- Look at the facilities and equipment.
 1. Are the equipment and the facilities up-to-date?
 2. Is it equipment that you would be using on the job after you graduate?
- Sit in on a class or two.
 1. Do the instructors seem knowledgeable?
 2. Are the students participating in classroom activities?
- Talk to the students in the program you are considering.
 1. How long have they been there?
 2. Do they like the program?
 3. Are they learning what they need to know to get a job?
 4. What is their opinion of the instructors?
 5. Do the instructors spend time with the students to ensure that the students understand the material?
 6. How much time do the students spend studying outside of the classroom?
 7. Have they had any problems with the school, the instructors, or the classes?
 8. What do they like most about the school/program?
 9. What do they like least about the school/program?
- Talk with some instructors in the program you are considering.
 1. How long have they been with the school?
 2. Do they teach full-time or part-time?
 3. What kind of activities are they involved in that relate to the field of study?
 4. What kind of background do they have in the field?

Find Out If Any Complaints Have Been Filed Against The School

The Iowa Secretary of State, the Iowa Attorney General's Consumer Complaint Division, the Better Business Bureau, and the state licensing board for specific occupations should be contacted.

Find Out About Transferring Courses

If you have taken courses that you would like to transfer to a new program, bring a copy of your transcript to the admissions office when you visit the school. Courses you have taken before will not automatically transfer to your new program. The receiving institution will decide whether it will accept any credits for transfer.

If you think you might want to use coursework from the institution you are considering to count toward a program at another institution at some later date, contact the future institution and ask the admissions staff or registrar's office if the credits will be transferable.

Compare Similar Programs

Find out what other schools offer similar programs. The Iowa Coordinating Council for Post-High School Education has a taxonomy of programs in the state and may be able to assist you. Call (515) 281-3939.

For additional postsecondary education information on Iowa's postsecondary educational institutions contact:

Iowa Coordinating Council for Post- High School Education
11260 Aurora Avenue
Urbandale, IA 50322-7905
(515) 281-3939 (telephone)
(515) 281-6420 (fax)

Iowa Attorney General Consumer Protection Division
1305 East Walnut
Des Moines, IA 50319
<http://www.state.ia.us/government/ag>
(515) 281-5926 (telephone)
(515) 281-6771 (fax)

Secretary of State
Capitol Bldg., 1st Floor
Des Moines, IA 50319
<http://www.sos.state.ia.us/>
(515) 281-5204 (telephone)
(515) 242-6556 (fax)

Department of Education
Grimes Bldg., 400 East 14th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319
<http://www.state.ia.us/educate>
(515) 281-5294 (telephone)
(515) 242-5988 (fax)

Iowa College Student Aid Commission
200 10th Street, 4th Floor
Des Moines, IA 50309-2036
<http://www.state.ia.us/collegeaid>
(515) 242-3344 (telephone)
(515) 242-3388 (fax)

Iowa Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
505 5th Avenue, Suite 1030
Des Moines, IA 50309-2399
<http://www.dontbeanumber.com>
(515) 282-3175 (telephone)
(515) 282-9508 (fax)

Board of Regents, State of Iowa
11260 Aurora Avenue
Urbandale, IA 50322-7905
<http://www.state.ia.us/educate/regents>
(515) 281-3934 (telephone)
(515) 281-6420 (fax)

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