

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The ATHEA Organisation

The Association for Transnational Higher Education Accreditation (ATHEA) is a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association that is dedicated to quality assurance and improvement through accreditation via peer evaluation. Accreditation by ATHEA instils public confidence in the institutional mission, goals, performance, and resources through its rigorous accreditation standards and their enforcement of those standards. ATHEA is a non-profit organisation, legally formed and registered in Austria, to promote the following activities:

- (a) To provide educational, accrediting, quality assurance and other services to its member institutions, degree/diploma granting post-secondary educational institutions offering higher education and located inside or outside the European area, including, but not limited to, the countries who are signatories of the Bologna Protocols.
- (b) To serve as an accrediting agency that is included on the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education when eligible. As such, the ATHEA will conduct voluntary, non-governmental peer review and make decisions concerning the accreditation or pre-accreditation status of member institutions based largely on accreditation standards and expectations developed from the ESG.
- (c) To promote quality assurance and improvement through voluntary accreditation via peer evaluation and instil public confidence in its institutional members' missions, goals, performance, and resources through its rigorous accreditation standards and their enforcement.
- (d) To initiate and sustain such training and research activities as may be consistent with the general purposes of ATHEA.

THEA Accreditation

The association is ATHEA; the primary service provided by the association is accreditation, which is THEA (Transnational Higher Education Accreditation). Accreditation activities fall within the purview of the THEA Board of Commissioners. The THEA Board of Commissioners includes members of the association who have volunteered to serve on the Board and have experience with higher education accreditation. We purposefully chose to differentiate the

member-based association from the accreditation service provided in order to help ensure the highest quality-based considerations relative to the accreditation actions undertaken.

The THEA Board of Commissioners' Standards and Expectations for Accreditation are adopted from the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) as approved by the Ministerial Conference in May 2015. By adopting the ESG standards for accreditation, the intent is that the ATHEA should be eligible to become recognized by European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

Part 1 of the Standards are those areas by which the academic institution will be evaluated by the THEA Board of Commissioners through the candidacy and accreditation processes. The standards form the basis of accreditation and used to develop the accreditation processes used by the THEA Board of Commissioners.

Requirements for Institutional Membership

Three levels of institutional membership are recognized by the ATHEA:

1. **Institutional Membership.** This is the entry into the ATHEA and the starting point for all institutional members who may seek accreditation. The institution must have legal authorization to operate as a tertiary educational institution, have students in a programme of higher education, be in existence for at least 1 year, and offer and teach their own institution's programmes. If, for example, an institution is teaching for another institution but has no academic programmes of its own, it could not be an Institutional Member.
2. **Candidate for Accreditation.** An Institutional Member who has completed all of the requirements for candidacy status as stated in the accreditation standards manual will be a considered a candidate for accreditation. The Institutional Member must have graduates of the programme and be in existence for at least 3 years. The specific term for candidacy is Transnational Higher Education Accreditation-Candidate, or THEA-Candidate.
3. **Accredited.** Once a Candidate for Accreditation completes a self-evaluation, passes a site evaluation, and is accepted into accreditation status by the THEA Board of Commissioners, the institution is awarded accreditation. The THEA-Candidate must have at least 2 cycles of graduates (students that start and finish the programme) from their institution. The specific term for accredited is Transnational Higher Education Accreditation-Accredited, or THEA-Accredited.

In order to become an Institutional Member of the ATHEA, an academic institution must:

1. Submit an application for Institutional Membership. Applications for the ATHEA institutional membership must be approved and signed by the institution's chief executive officer (i.e., president, chancellor, director general), affirming its commitment to abide by the accreditation policies and procedures of the ATHEA. The application form will be reviewed by the ATHEA staff and the applicant will be notified regarding acceptance.
2. Pay its membership dues to the ATHEA.
3. Provide evidence that the institution has the legal authority to operate as a tertiary educational institution. In cases where the documentation of the legal authority is written in a language other than English, the academic institution must submit a copy of the original non-English version and an English translation of the original documentation.

An Institutional Member is not allowed to claim or imply candidacy or accreditation by the THEA Board of Commissioners until candidacy or accreditation has been officially granted and awarded.

Once an academic institution has been admitted for Institutional Membership in the ATHEA, the institution may denote this status on its website, in its catalogue and official publications, and in its advertising. The following form of notice and specific language must be used relative to Institutional Membership in ATHEA:

The [institution's name] is an Institutional Member of the Association for Transnational Higher Education Accreditation (ATHEA), and has affirmed its commitment to excellence in higher education.

The Institutional Member is allowed to use the following logo on its website and other related documents to signify its Institutional Membership with the ATHEA:



Affiliated Institution

An Affiliated Institution is a status for being associated with ATHEA and reserved for academic institutions and corporations that are associated with higher education that wish to learn, be informed, and potentially receive assistance from ATHEA relative to quality improvement in

higher education. Affiliated Institutions are not necessarily on an immediate path for accreditation; rather perhaps at a later time the Affiliated Institution's institution will be ready to embark on THEA accreditation. An Affiliated Institution may seek to obtain a Certification in Institutional Effectiveness from ATHEA, which includes application and a site visit. The purpose of the Certificate of Institutional Effectiveness is to recognize quality in higher education for academic institutions that are not quite ready to pursue accreditation or ineligible for accreditation based on the institution's structure (e. g., a school that only offers programmes from other institutions without any programmes of their own). Affiliated Institutions may also be corporations who wish sponsor and support the activities of ATHEA.

If you are interested in being an Affiliated Institution, please complete the *Affiliated Institution Application Form*. The annual dues for an Affiliated Institution are 1,500 € per year, with proportional quarterly adjustments as shown in the following Institutional Membership dues. An affiliated member cannot use the ATHEA logo without the express written consent of the ATHEA Board. Additional fees apply if the Affiliated Institution desires to seek the Certification in Institutional Effectiveness.

Membership Remuneration for New Institutional Members

The annual membership period is July 1 – June 30 of each year. The annual remuneration for the 2015-2016 membership year is 3,000 € (1,500 € membership dues plus 1,500 € for administration costs). For new members of the ATHEA, the annual remuneration for 2015-2016 is prorated according to the date of joining as follows:

July 1 – September 30: 3,000 €

October 1 – December 31: 2,500 €

January 1 – March 31: 1,500 €

April – June 30: 1,000 €

Accreditation Fees

Institutional Members who wish to seek accreditation must first become a Candidate for Accreditation and then if the candidate is awarded accreditation by the THEA Board of Commissioners, the Candidate Member becomes an Accredited Member and designated appropriately. Costs for candidacy and accreditation are as follows:

- a. Application to become a Candidate: 5,000 € (paid with the submission of the member's *Candidacy Application*). Travel expenses for the Candidacy Site Visit will also need to be reimbursed by the applying institution.
- b. Accreditation: 10,000 € (paid with the submission of the *Candidate's Self-Evaluation*). Travel expenses for the Accreditation Site Evaluation will also need to be reimbursed by the applying institution.
- c. Annual Accreditation Maintenance: 2,000 € (paid each year starting the year after accreditation is granted). Additional fees and expenses apply for reaffirmation of accreditation following the initial accreditation.

Ongoing Membership

The purpose of membership for the academic institution is to facilitate a quality assurance based accreditation process. Therefore, progression from Institutional Member, to Candidate for Accreditation, to Accredited is expected. If such progression is not met, the Institutional Member may need to revert to a previous membership category as follows:

- An Institutional Member who does not obtain candidacy status within 3 years will need to reapply for Institutional Member.
- A Candidate Member who does not obtain accredited status within 5 years from the date when candidacy was granted will revert to Institutional Member and will need to resubmit the Candidacy Application.

Once accreditation is awarded, the Accredited Member will need to submit an annual report on the anniversary date of the accreditation and will be subject to a reaffirmation of accreditation in 7 years.

THEA ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The world of higher education is dynamic and often very complex with varying rules and regulations depending upon the location. Also, there are many types of governance structures used to manage and delivery higher education. ATHEA recognises this wide variety of academic institutions and governance structures.

Many academic entities and institutions are eligible for ATHEA Institutional Membership and the entity can proceed on a path towards obtaining THEA Accreditation. Some, however, are not eligible for institutional accreditation from ATHEA and other alternatives need to be considered.

Examples of the more common types of academic entities are:

- a) **Education corporations with subordinate degree granting institutions.** The corporate organisation is not eligible for ATHEA Institutional Membership; however, the subordinate degree granting institutions may be eligible. For example, Bridgepoint Education is the parent organisation for Ashford University and the University of the Rockies. Bridgepoint Education is not eligible for ATHEA Institutional Membership; however, the two subordinate universities would be eligible since they are independent academic institutions.
- b) **Education institutions that have branch campuses and the degrees or diplomas are awarded by the parent institution.** In this case, the parent institution may be eligible for ATHEA Institutional Membership and THEA Accreditation, which would include the branch campuses. For example, Strayer University has multiple campus locations and once Strayer is accredited, then all branches are included with that accreditation. Please note that during the accreditation process, the quality assurance program at branch locations will be evaluated and all branch locations must follow the same quality assurance process as the accredited parent institution.
- c) **Academic institutions that offer joint degrees with other academic institutions.** Typically, such institutions are eligible for ATHEA Institutional Membership and THEA Accreditation provided that the entity under consideration has its own faculty and determines its own academic curriculum with associated governance structures in place for quality assurance. Please note, however, that the accreditation only applies to the member's degrees and diplomas, not to those of the partner school. The entity must have its own faculty and have control over curriculum.
- d) **Academic institutions that only offer another institution's degrees and diplomas without any unique degrees or diplomas of their own.** Typically, such institutions are

ineligible for ATHEA Institutional Membership and THEA Accreditation. Instead, ATHEA offers Affiliated Member status to such institutions and provides a process to obtain a certificate in institutional effectiveness based on several important quality assurance processes. If your institution falls within this category, ATHEA encourages you to promote ATHEA to the degree or diploma granting partner and if that entity obtains THEA Accreditation, then your institution could be included.

- e) **Standalone academic institutions that have the legal authority to grant degrees or diplomas and control their own curriculum and faculty.** Such entities are generally eligible for ATHEA Institutional Membership and can seek THEA Accreditation provided that the institution meets all related requirements.

Another way to think through your eligibility is to consider where the specific decisions are made with regard to the programme content and the faculty. If your entity controls programme content and curriculum and manages the faculty assigned to teach the program content, generally your entity is eligible for ATHEA Institutional Membership (provided that your entity meets the other eligibility requirements). ATHEA's focus is on institutional accreditation for entities that grant their own degrees and diplomas, control their own curriculum, and manage their own faculty.

Academic entities that only grant another institution's degrees or diplomas, do not control the curriculum, and have limited control over the faculty are not eligible for ATHEA Institutional Membership and THEA Accreditation. However, such academic institutions can apply for Affiliated Member status and could pursue a Certificate in Institutional Effectiveness from ATHEA as a way to demonstrate that the entity has recognised quality assurance processes in place. This is not accreditation, but it is a valid way to recognise quality programmes in higher education and further advance quality assurance processes.

Some academic entities award another's degrees or diploma, but also have one or more programmes of their own. In such situations, the entity would be eligible for ATHEA Institutional Membership and may proceed on a path towards THEA Accreditation; however, the accreditation only applies to the degrees or diplomas that the entity awards, not to those from other institutions unless that institution also obtains accreditation through ATHEA.

To help you understand if your specific academic institution is eligible for ATHEA Institutional Membership can seek THEA Accreditation, please consider the following questions:

1. Does your specific entity have the legal authority to award degrees or diplomas?

Yes - Go to Question #3

No - Go to Question #2

2. Does your specific entity have subordinate entities that have the legal authority to award degrees or diplomas?

Yes - Go to Question #4

No - Your specific entity does not qualify for ATHEA Institutional Membership and is ineligible to obtain THEA Accreditation. The focus for ATHEA is for degree-granting institutions; however, please consider becoming an Affiliated Member and through that membership, you may seek a Certification in Higher Education Institutional Effectiveness that can be used to demonstrate quality.

3. Are the degrees or diplomas your entity awards include your own degrees or diplomas?

Yes - Eligible for Institutional Membership and can proceed on a path towards THEA accreditation provided that you meet all of the related requirements.

No - Go to Question #5.

4. Are the degrees or diplomas awarded by the subordinate entity joint degrees or diplomas with another university?

Yes - The subordinate entity is eligible for ATHEA Institutional Membership and can proceed on a path towards THEA accreditation, but please note that the accreditation only applies to the subordinate entity's degrees and diplomas, not the partner entity nor to the parent corporate entity.

No (offer your own degree programs) - The subordinate entity is eligible for Institutional Membership and can proceed on a path towards THEA accreditation since the entity does offer its own academic programmes, degrees, or diplomas.

5. Does your specific entity have control over the curriculum and faculty associated with the degrees and diplomas?

Yes - Eligible for Institutional Membership and can proceed on a path towards THEA accreditation provided that you meet all of the other related requirements.

No - Your specific entity does not qualify for ATHEA Institutional Membership and is ineligible to obtain THEA Accreditation. Please consider becoming an Affiliated Member and through that membership, you may seek a Certification in Institutional Effectiveness.

Finally, if you are still uncertain regarding the eligibility of your specific academic entity, please contact us to arrange for a time to discuss your specific situation. We may be able to find an appropriate solution for you.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

INSTITUTION INFORMATION	
Name of Institution	
Mailing Address	
Physical Address	
Main Switchboard Telephone Number	
Institution's Website URL	
If the institution has multiple locations or campuses, list the addresses of the locations	

INSTITUTION CHIEF EXECUTIVE	
Name and Title	
Mailing Address	
Physical Address	
Telephone Number	
E-mail Address	

INSTITUTION GOVERNANCE	
What is the Institution's Ownership Type?	
What is the Institution's Legal Authority to Operate as a Tertiary Educational Institution?	
When did the Institution Begin Operations?	
Briefly Describe the Institution's Governing Board	
What is the Website URL for the Institution's Mission/Purpose Statement?	

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES	
What is the Website Address for the Institution's Academic Programme Catalogues, Curriculum, etc.?	
What Academic Programmes does the Institution Offer?	
Average Number of Graduates Per Year	
What was Your First Year with Graduates?	
What is the Approximate Total Student Enrolment at the Time of this Application?	
Describe all forms of Academic Programme Delivery (e. g. on-campus, blended, online)	
Approximately, how many full-time Teaching Faculty do you have?	
Approximately, how many part-time teaching Faculty do you have?	
Briefly describe your learning resources for students and faculty	

INSTITUTION HISTORY
Provide a brief overview of the history of the institution sufficient to assist the reviewer of the application towards understanding the nature of the institution and any unique features.

FUTURE ACCREDITATION INTENTIONS
Briefly describe why you are seeking membership with the ATHEA and your intentions relative to seeking accreditation.

MEMBERSHIP STIPULATIONS AND AGREEMENTS		
Stipulation	Agreement	Yes/No
1. The institution has the legal authority to operate as a tertiary educational institution within the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates. It should be noted that authorization to operate as a corporation is different from, and does not necessarily guarantee, authorization to operate as a tertiary educational institution. The latter is required for accreditation. Government licensure requirements often differ significantly from Commission accreditation standards, and government licensure does not guarantee that an institution meets Commission standards.	<i>I understand this requirement and the legal authorization is included with this application.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
2. The institution is operational, with students actively pursuing its academic programmes. The institution will graduate at least two classes before the evaluation team visit for initial accreditation takes place.	<i>My institution is operational with students actively pursuing academic programs and I understand that we must have at least two graduating cycles at the time of the evaluation team visit.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
3. The institution's representatives are able to communicate with the Commission in English, both orally and in writing.	<i>Our institution's representatives to ATHEA can communicate in English.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
4. The institution complies with all applicable government policies, regulations, and requirements.	<i>Our institution complies with all applicable government policies, regulations, and requirements to the best of my knowledge.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
5. Institutional planning integrates all institutional areas including academic, personnel, information resources and technologies, learning resources, and financial development.	<i>Our institutional planning does include all aspects of the institution.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
6. The institution has documented financial resources, funding base, and plans for financial development adequate to support its educational purposes and programs and to assure financial stability. The institution devotes a sufficient portion of its income to the support of its educational purposes and programs.	<i>Our institution has the required financial resources for sustainable operations.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
7. The institution's governing body is responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out.	<i>Our institution's governing body is responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
8. The institution has a core of faculty with sufficient responsibility to the institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution's programs.	<i>Our institution's faculty have sufficient responsibility to the institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution's programs.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
9. The institution will allow an evaluation team the necessary access to the institution's documents for purposes of verifying the self-evaluation.	<i>We will allow an evaluation team access to the necessary documents for the purpose of verifying the self-evaluation.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
10. The institution is prepared to declare, in writing, that the institution will make freely available to the Commission accurate, fair, and complete information on all aspects of the institution and its operations as necessary towards the evaluation of the institutions relative to the Standards of Accreditation. ATHEA will maintain confidentiality of materials as described in ATHEA's privacy policy.	<i>We agree to provide the documentation necessary relative to the fulfilling the Standards of Accreditation.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

If you checked “NO” to any of the 10 Membership Stipulations and Agreements, institutional membership could be denied. Please explain any unique circumstances associated with any of your “NO” responses.

PAYMENT INFORMATION

Institution: _____

Billing Address: _____

City, State or Province, Zip or Postal

Code: _____

Country: _____

ATHEA will invoice your institution after it has been accepted as an Institutional Member.

Preparer's Acknowledgement:

I certify that the information provided is accurate and complete.

Signed:

Name/Title/Date

Document Submission Requirements

Please include with the Membership Application the institution's legal authorization to operate as a tertiary educational institution.

Please submit an electronic copy of the membership application and the institution's legal authorization to operate as a tertiary educational institution to the ATHEA Executive Director at g.singer@athea.org

The ATHEA Office is located at:

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