Q: If our institution meets all requirements, are we exempt from authorization?
A: Any institution that wants to offer post-secondary degree programs (defined as literary honors usually granted by universities or colleges—certificates, associate’s, bachelor’s, master’s, or doctorate degrees) to Montana citizens must be legally authorized by the State of Montana to do so. If your institution is not offering post-secondary degree programs your institution will be considered “exempt” from this legal requirement.

Q: Are religious institutions exempt from authorization?
A: Pursuant to 34 CFR 600.9, authorization requirements do not apply to religious degrees or certificates that are offered by an institution that is owned, controlled, operated and maintained by a religious organization lawfully operating as a non-profit religious corporation that awards only religious degrees or certificates.

Q: Is there a specific form I need to fill out and submit for state authorization?
A: Yes. Please fill out the Montana State Authorization Application Form and email it to the Montana State Authorization Compliance Agent at stateauthorization@montana.edu.

Q: Are there any fees associated with the Montana University System’s authorization process?
A: No, the Montana University System does not currently charge any fees for state authorization. Note that there may be fees for processes that involve the Montana Secretary of State. Also note that the Secretary of State processes are handled directly through the Office of the Secretary of State.

Q: For private institutions, what triggers the need to file with the Montana Secretary of State as a business entity?
A: At the time the first Montana student enrolls in your online program, you must contact the Montana Secretary of State. It is up to the Montana Secretary of State to determine what constitutes transacting business. For more information, visit http://sos.mt.gov/Business/Forms/index.asp.

Q: Does Montana have a separate standard for physical presence?
A: No, Montana regulates providers offering instruction to individuals residing in Montana regardless of physical presence. All postsecondary institutions must seek authorization.

Q: Does the State of Montana have regulations regarding solicitation of students via email, direct mail, phone, or advertising for online programs?
A: No. Currently, the State of Montana does not have regulations restricting the solicitation of students via email, direct mail, phone, or advertising for online programs.
Q: Does the State of Montana have regulations regarding an online program that requires students be placed in clinicals, internships, or practicums?

A: No. State authorization in Montana only applies to degree programs, not individual courses or clinicals. Note though that individual boards may have approval authority over the placement of students enrolled in an out-of-state program to undertake clinical practice in a Montana facility. All requests for approval should be directed towards those boards. For more information, go to http://bsd.dli.mt.gov/license/license.asp.

Q: Does my school need to report its accreditation status to the Montana University System on an annual basis?

A: No. You do not need to report to the Montana University System on your accreditation status or your business entity status (for private institutions) as long as your institution is in good standing.

Your state authorization approval status will continue indefinitely or until your approved status changes. You must contact the Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education immediately if your accreditation status changes to either a probationary or denied status.

Your business entity status is solely required by the Montana Secretary of State. It is not a requirement of the Montana University System.

Q: How does a candidate for accreditation gain authorization?

A: Institutions formally accepted as candidates for accreditation (i.e. pre-accredited status) by any of the agencies listed in BOR Policy § 221 shall be treated as accredited for as long as they remain in that status.

Q: When does the Montana University System consider state authorization applications?

A: Applications are considered on a rolling basis.

Q: How long will it take your agency to act on a completed, submitted application?

A: We attempt to respond to applications within 20 days of receipt.