

# Essential Requirements for Initial Accreditation

Essential Requirements are nine foundational, non-negotiable conditions for entry into Cognia Accreditation. These requirements establish institutional legitimacy, governance integrity, financial responsibility, safety and safeguarding practices, instructional readiness, staffing capacity, and operational infrastructure necessary for an institution to begin the accreditation process. Essential Requirements are evaluated on a yes/no basis and verified through documentation and evidence submission during Entry activities. All nine Essential Requirements must be met before an institution may proceed to Initial Accreditation.

## Essential Requirement 1

The institution affirms that it has read, understands, and complies with all Cognia Accreditation and Certification Policies and Procedures.

## Essential Requirement 2

The institution complies with all applicable governmental laws, regulations, and statutory requirements necessary for operating as an educational institution.

## Essential Requirement 3

The governing authority maintains and adheres to written policies that guide ethical conduct, decision-making, and defined roles and responsibilities. The governing authority also engages in training aligned with these expectations.

## Essential Requirement 4

The institution undergoes annual financial oversight conducted by a qualified external accounting authority or other legally licensed body and receives a written annual financial report documenting the results. Institutions must also demonstrate financial sustainability through documented budget projections and identified funding sources sufficient to support planned operations.

## Essential Requirement 5

The institution maintains current, written management plans for security, crisis response, health, safety, and protection across both on-site and virtual environments and reviews these plans at least annually.

## Essential Requirement 6

The institution maintains governing-authority-approved written policies for child protection, safeguarding, and conduct that:

- Prevent harm to children
- Define expectations for appropriate and inappropriate behavior
- Specify procedures for responding to allegations of abuse or misconduct
- Comply with applicable reporting laws
- Communicates to relevant stakeholders

## Essential Requirement 7

The institution maintains a documented educational program, including curriculum or instructional design, that guides teaching and learning supported by a plan for assessing and monitoring student learning.

## Essential Requirement 8

The institution employs or contracts personnel whose qualifications and credentials align with their assigned roles and maintains documentation validating those qualifications. The institution also maintains a clear organizational structure identifying leadership roles and operational responsibilities.

## Essential Requirement 9

The institution maintains facilities, resources, and technological infrastructure sufficient to support delivery of its educational program and institutional operations.