

INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICANTS FOR RELIGIOUS EXEMPTION

1. Religious exempt schools CANNOT use the name College or the name University as part of the school name. The name "Bible College" is NOT allowed for a religious exempt school. Any other name may be used, including Bible Institute, Seminary, Higher Education Center, etc. so long as the terms College or University are not included in the name. The terms College and University are reserved for fully authorized institutions. A religious exempt institution is an approved, legal institution, but is NOT a "fully authorized" institution.
2. If certificates or diplomas only are offered, it is not necessary to apply for formal religious exemption. However, if the institution plans to offer degrees, it must follow either the "fully authorized" track or the "religious exempt" track. The "religious exempt" track is much less expensive and requires less evaluation of administration, programs, faculty, and facilities.
3. A religious exempt school CANNOT use the following terms in the names of its degrees, certificates, or diplomas: Arts, Science, Philosophy, Counseling, Education, or any other secular term. The only exception is that the word Education may be used if preceded by the word Religious, Christian, Jewish, or the name of any other religious faith. For example, the terms Religious Education, Christian Education, Jewish Education, etc. are acceptable as program names.
4. A religious exempt school CANNOT offer any program in the field of counseling or psychology. This prohibition includes "pastoral counseling," "Biblical counseling," "Christian counseling," or other forms of religious, psychological, or secular counseling. A program is a group of courses leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree. No certificate, diploma, or degree may be offered with a major in counseling or psychology in any form without the institution being "fully authorized." However, "religious exempt" institutions MAY offer individual courses (NOT programs) in "pastoral counseling," "marriage and family counseling," "Biblical counseling," "Christian counseling," or other forms of religious, psychological, or secular counseling.
5. Full programs may NOT be offered in English, French, Spanish, or other secular fields but, if relevant to a ministerial training program, specific individual courses may be offered in these and similar subjects as part of a full program in pastoral ministry or some other religious or theological field. For example, a course or more may be needed in remedial English grammar or English composition as part of the training program of a student who is in training for ministry.
6. Four religious exemption application documents are attached herewith (or sent in a separate email). First, there is an "Application for Religious Exemption of a Nonpublic Postsecondary Institution." Second, there is an Exhibit E form. Then there are two sets of instructions for filling out these documents. The Application for Religious Exemption must be filled out completely and sent to NPEC, along with each document noted in Item 6 of the application. Full supporting documentation must also be submitted. All information required in the application form, including Exhibit E forms, must be submitted as one single package.
7. A **SEPARATE EXHIBIT E FORM** must be submitted for each and every program to be offered by the school. A program is a constellation of courses leading to a certificate, diploma, or degree. For example, an Associate degree in Biblical Studies is one program, and a Bachelor's degree in Biblical Studies is a separate program. Each requires a separate Exhibit E form. The degree Bachelor's degree in Pastoral Ministry is one program, and the degree Master's degree in Pastoral Ministry is a separate

program. Despite the fact that they are in the same “major,” each requires a separate Exhibit E form. Separate Exhibit E forms must be provided in each “major” at each “degree” level.

8. Religious exempt schools MUST be nonprofit institutions. Religious schools that are “for profit” MUST apply for full authorization. As non-profit institutions, a religious exempt institution should have its own Board of Directors with full authority to hire and fire the President or School Director. The Board of Directors should consist of at least five (5), preferably many more, Directors who are unrelated (not kin) and whose terms of service are staggered, i.e., set up in “classes” so that one small group of Directors are ending service and “new blood” is coming onto the Board on a regular basis. Expiring Board members may or may not be eligible for re-election immediately to the Board, depending upon the school’s charter. A strong Board made up of doctors, lawyers, businessmen and business women, as well as religious leaders, can be very helpful in managing an educational institution and can also be helpful in raising funds that may be needed for the school’s operation. The Board also provides continuity in case a “charismatic” religious leader passes from the scene through death or for any other reason. The school’s continuity should be protected so that the interests of its students can continue to be well-served.
9. Each school must have a 501(c) 3 letter from the IRS. This must be in place before the application is submitted. The process of securing a 501 (c) 3 from the IRS may take several months. In rare cases, an established church’s 501 (c) 3 letter may be used for the school, but only if the church’s Board is in full control of the school, including having authority to hire and fire the school’s Director or President. Generally speaking, it is better for the school to have its own Board and operate as a related, but separate institution from the church. This requires a separate 501 (c) 3 letter.
10. Each school MUST have its own nonprofit Charter. Certification as a nonprofit corporation is available from the Secretary of State’s office. Call 404-656-2817 to initiate the process yourself, or have an attorney secure a nonprofit Charter for your school.
11. Submit documentation of local church administrative and financial support. The purpose of this requirement is to demonstrate that you are NOT operating independently and that there is a community of like-minded persons who will support the institution and take care of your students in the event the school’s primary leader is no longer able to serve. “Local church” may also include a larger faith group, denomination, presbytery, deacon board, etc. A letter, official minutes, or other documentation, from an appropriate official of such a group verifying administrative and financial support should be sufficient. If a church is providing its facilities for your school’s operation at low or no cost, that would be one form of in-kind financial support.
12. Provide a sample copy of your certificate, diploma, or degree. If you have not yet had these printed, provide a draft copy showing how it will be worded. Be sure to include the name of your institution, the city and state where it is located, and a place for the institution’s Board Chairman, President, academic officer, or other school official(s) to sign. The certificate, diploma, or degree should also have the school’s seal, or if only a draft, show a place where the school’s seal will later be placed. Seals, similar to a notary’s pressed seal, may be designed and purchased at an office supply store or, alternatively, the school may purchase small gold seals to make its diploma look more official and be harder to duplicate.
13. Once your application is submitted, it could be several weeks or even months before it is processed due to the enormous volume of religious exempt schools, fully authorized schools, new programs, and student complaints that are handled by the Standards

Administrator, who represents the Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission in this process. Since applications are handled on a first-in, first-out basis, this process can be expedited only by submitting a complete, well-done application early. The longer it takes to get the 501 (c) 3 letter, the Non-profit Charter, and all the other documents required in the application package, the longer it will take to get the application evaluated and approved.

14. If you have further questions, contact Dr. Shelvey Holland, Standards Administrator, Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission, 2082 East Exchange Place, Suite 220, Tucker, GA 30084. You may email him at holland@npec.state.ga.us or call him at 770-414-3235.