PROPOSED CHANGES

Key to Changes: Delete, Add

Policy and Procedures for Branch Campuses and Additional Locations

Introduction

A branch campus is a geographically separate unit, independent of the main campus, with its own core facilities, curricula, faculty, administrative or supervisory personnel, and instructional resources. General oversight is provided by the parent institution. A branch campus (1) is permanent in nature; (2) offers academic programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized credential; and (3) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

An additional location is defined as a location remote from the main campus where students and faculty regularly meet in classes and where students may complete 50% or more of course work toward requirements for one or more of the institution's educational programs. Institutions must carefully monitor the course offerings provided at a given off campus location to ensure that they are aware of any circumstances where the offerings may be approaching the 50% level.

The establishment or relocation of a branch campus or additional location will be considered a substantive change to be processed in accord with the Policy on Substantive Change. A change of physical location for an established branch campus or additional location is considered a relocation. An institution is required, prior to implementation, to submit for Commission on Accreditation (COA) approval a comprehensive written proposal addressing the additional location’s compliance with the Standards for Accreditation and the Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns. A site visit is required within six months of implementation of a new or relocated branch campus or additional location.
Purpose

The purpose of a site visit for a branch campus or additional location is to ensure that the educational program(s) offered and credential(s) awarded at the site are: well designed and consonant with the institution’s mission and scope; properly authorized and validated by internal and external governing entities; adequately supported by financial, human, educational support, and facility resources; and adequately controlled and supervised by administrative oversight of the parent campus. The visit should also verify that the branch campus or additional location does not compromise the institution’s stability and resources.

The Visit

Normally, ABHE visits to branch campuses or additional locations will be made by one representative of the COA staff who spends no more than one day at the site. Indeed, given the small size and limited offerings of the additional locations visited thus far in ABHE’s experience, the visit may last only two or three hours. For a site with limited offerings, the visit may last only two or three hours. Regardless of the length of the visit, the ABHE evaluator should give special attention to institution should prepare written answers to the following questions for the evaluator to review in preparation for the visit:

1. To what extent are the offerings at the additional location consonant with the institution’s mission?

2. Is the additional location adequately accounted for in institutional budgeting and adequately supported by the institution’s financial resources?

3. How has internal (i.e., board, faculty) and external (i.e., state or provincial) authorization for the offerings at the additional location been documented?

4. How does the institution provide administrative oversight of the location?

5. How does the institution ensure that the instruction offered at the location is at least comparable in quality to instruction offered at the parent campus?

6. How does the institution ensure that students at the location will be able to take needed courses within a reasonable time frame?

7. Do instructional faculty have qualifications consistent with the requirements of ABHE-standards?
8. Are faculty at the site adequately oriented regarding the mission of the institution?
   a. Are they encouraged to attend faculty meetings?
   b. Are opportunities for professional development provided them?
   c. Is instructional performance systematically evaluated?

9. What types of services are available at the site to support the instruction?
   a. Are mechanisms available to address concerns or problems?
   b. Do students have adequate access to academic advisement?
   c. Do students have timely access to library and computing services?
   d. Are students adequately served with respect to admissions, registration, records, financial aid, and business affairs?
   e. How are textbooks and course materials provided?

10. Are the services and materials offered by the site delivered in a timely fashion?

11. How is student learning at the site assessed?

12. How are assessment findings used to improve instruction at the site?

13. Are the facilities utilized for the instruction adequate?

14. Do the facilities provide adequate access for the disabled, parking, and security?

15. Is appropriate public information regarding offerings at the site available?

16. Is integrity exercised in the site’s efforts to recruit students?

17. Are students appropriately informed regarding their ability to apply work taken at the site towards one of the credentials offered by the institution?

1. If the site is being reviewed because of a substantive change, to what extent are the facilities, resources (human, financial, physical, technological), and services consistent with the information in the approved Substantive Change Request? Discuss any changes since implementation from the plan described in the Substantive Change Request. If the review of this branch campus/additional location is part of a reaffirmation cycle rather than a new location, how have the facilities, resources, and services changed since the location was last reviewed?

2. Are there any courses or programs offered at the branch campus/additional location that are not available on the main campus? If yes, discuss how these are congruent with the mission of the institution.
3. **What are the current financial, human, facility, and technological resources that support the additional location?** Have any of these changed since the approved Substantive Change Request or last review? Describe how these are adequate to support the current offerings at the branch campus/additional location.

4. **Describe the current library and learning resources available to students taking courses at this location.** How are these adequate for the educational offerings delivered through this location?

5. **Discuss and provide evidence that the additional location is adequately supervised by the main campus as well as appropriately administrated by the personnel at the branch campus/additional location.**

6. **Provide a complete faculty roster documenting the courses that were taught at the branch campus/additional location since its inception (or in the past three years, if a reaffirmation visit), the instructor teaching each course, and the documented expertise the faculty member has in the area of course content.** Discuss and provide evidence that any faculty members qualified by means other than an academic credential have the appropriate expertise for the subjects they teach.

7. **Describe the student services currently provided to students taking classes at this location.**

8. **Discuss and provide evidence that the additional location/branch campus is properly and currently authorized to operate in this location and offer the credentials that the institution makes available to students through this location.**

**The Report**

Following a site visit, the COA ABHE representative is expected to prepare a brief written report outlining his or her findings with respect to the above questions. The report will be shared with both the institution and the ABHE Commission on Accreditation COA. Upon receipt of the report, the institution will have opportunity to issue a response outlining its concerns with or any needed corrections to the report.

**Commission on Accreditation Review**

At its regular meetings, the Commission on Accreditation COA will review reports and related responses of visits made to additional locations or branch campuses by ABHE COA representatives. Following each meeting, institutions will be notified of any special COA concerns based on visit findings. The notification process will follow the same procedures employed for notifying an institution of any COA action. The site visit report, the institution’s response, and the record of any COA action taken relative to the report will become part of the institution’s permanent file.
**Commission on Accreditation Procedures for Additional Location Visits During an Accreditation Cycle**

In accordance with the ABHE Policy on Alternative Academic Patterns, “ABHE will conduct site visits to a representative sample of at least 25% of an institution’s additional locations during an accreditation cycle.” Only visits completed during the 36 months preceding the Commission on Accreditation’s COA’s review of the institution for candidacy, initial accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation may be considered in the representative sample. The following procedure will be applied to ensure a mechanism for implementation of this policy.

- When the Fall and Spring evaluation team schedules are prepared, the Commission on Accreditation COA staff will review institutions scheduled for candidacy, initial accreditation, and reaffirmation of accreditation visits and notify the COA Director, Commission on Accreditation of the additional locations operated by these institutions.

- The COA Director, Commission on Accreditation will identify a representative sample of at least 25% of each institution’s additional locations based on the number of locations and nature of programs offered, and specify locations to be visited.

- Once a visiting team chair has been identified, the COA Director, Commission on Accreditation will confer with the chair to determine whether an evaluation team member or Commission on Accreditation COA staff member should conduct the site visit(s).

- The COA Director, Commission on Accreditation will notify the institution of the required visit(s), location(s) to be visited, and assigned evaluator(s). The institution and evaluator(s) will schedule a mutually agreed date and time for the visit(s). The institution will be sent a copy of the Commission on Accreditation’s COA’s Questions for Additional Location Visits by the Commission on Accreditation COA Director.

- If the evaluation is conducted by an evaluation team member and prior to submission of the evaluation team report, the report on the additional location may be folded into the evaluation team report; otherwise, a separate report will be prepared for Commission on Accreditation COA review.
Note that a site visit is required to all branch campuses during an accreditation cycle following the process above for additional locations.


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