

Policy on Independent Accreditation Status

Key to Changes: **Delete**, **Add**

Introduction

In order to make education more accessible, ABHE-member institutions have increasingly taken steps to establish educational opportunities at a distance from the parent campus. This is accomplished through use of various educational modalities and through the establishment of off-campus instructional sites. The ABHE Policy ~~on Alternative Academic Patterns and Procedures for Branch Campuses and Additional Locations~~ recognizes three types of off-campus instructional sites: 1) extension classes; 2) additional locations; and 3) branch campuses. The policy defines the latter two in a manner suggesting a level of permanence that enables a student to complete a major portion of an academic program. Indeed, it may be possible for a student to earn a credential at the site.

In the course of time, it is possible that the stature of an additional location or branch campus could grow to the point that the administration of the parent institution and/or the key stakeholders in the local site would wish to establish the site as a free-standing educational institution and to pursue accreditation as an independent entity. Should such a situation arise, a spirit of Christian unity, professional collegiality, and integrity should guide all stakeholders. Specifically, the Commission on Accreditation (COA) expects that the following procedures will be followed:

- The “new” independent entity must be a COA-approved additional location or branch campus.
- Personnel representing the “new” independent entity must provide written documentation demonstrating that the parent institution either endorses the establishment of a free-standing entity or, at a minimum, that its governing board is fully apprised regarding the plans of those who seek to establish the new institution.
- Where the new institution is being formed upon the initiative or blessing of the parent campus, the COA may recognize the parent institution’s postsecondary courses and degree programs conducted at the site towards satisfaction of the ABHE Conditions of Eligibility. The new institution must document its compliance with the Conditions of Eligibility and otherwise exhibit the characteristics of an independent entity.
 1. The emerging institution must establish a business operation separate or distinguishable from that of the parent campus that will sustain the institution once it becomes independent.
 2. The emerging institution will develop its own mission statement and institutional goals, conduct its own assessment of both student learning and institutional effectiveness, form its own governing board (although the authority of this governing board may be muted until it is independent of the parent campus), develop its own administration, submit its own financial audit, develop its own enrollment practices, deliver its own student services, provide its own faculty, and provide its own learning resources. These must

- be compatible with that of the parent institution for as long as the emerging institution remains an additional location of the parent institution.
3. Curriculum, faculty selection, and academic decisions will remain subject to the oversight of the parent campus until the emerging institution declares independence from the parent campus and is no longer an additional location of the parent institution.
 4. The emerging institution will go through a normal process of evaluation and review, but official status with the COA (applicant, candidate or accredited) will remain under the accreditation status of the parent institution until the emerging institution is recognized as independent. The parent institution's accreditation status and oversight no longer applies to the emerging institution once independence has been declared.
- In instances where the new institution is being formed over the objection of the parent campus, the new entity will be required to satisfy ABHE's eligibility requirements without reference to its history with the parent institution. This requires that the new entity assume responsibility for securing its resources independent of the parent:
 1. Curriculum – it will need to establish its own curriculum or provide evidence that the parent has given it permission to use the curricula historically taught.
 2. Governance – it will need to establish a separate corporate identity, nonprofit status, enabling documents, and board of control. (This principle does not preclude it from establishing a separate identity with another organization, i.e., a sponsoring church.)
 3. Faculty – it will need to employ its own faculty. Individuals will, of course, be free to retain their relationship with the parent institution or seek employment with the new entity.
 4. Students – it will need to recruit its own student body. Existing students who were enrolled in the programs of the parent entity at the time of the separation should be encouraged to complete their studies with the parent entity. (They will normally want to do this since it will take time for the new entity to achieve accreditation.)
 5. Learning Resources – it will need to establish its own learning resources and/or enter into a contract with the parent institution regarding the use of its resources.
 6. Campus Facilities – it will need to work out an acceptable arrangement with the parent entity over the use of the campus facilities. The range of potential arrangements will vary widely depending on the legal obligations in place at the time of independence.
 - Unless the parent institution is a participant in the development of the instructional site as an independent entity, the new institution will be required to satisfy Condition of Eligibility 14, Program Completion, without reference to its prior connection with the parent institution.

Adopted February 2011; Revised June 2017, June 2018, **PROPOSED January 2023**