Policy and Procedures Federal Prison Education Programs (PEPs)

Introduction
The federal Prison Education Program (PEP) provides Pell Grant access to confined or incarcerated individuals. A confined or incarcerated individual is an individual who is serving a criminal sentence in a Federal, State or local penitentiary, prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, juvenile justice facility, or other similar correctional institution. An individual is not considered incarcerated if that individual is subject to or serving an involuntary civil commitment, in a halfway house or home detention, or is sentenced to serve only weekends.

Institutional participation in the federal program is voluntary. To participate, institutions (1) enter into an agreement with an oversight entity (as defined below), (2) secure COA substantive change approval for a Prison Education Program (PEP), and (3) secure federal approval. The institution is responsible for coordinating the approval processes and monitoring the program with (a) the oversight entity, (b) the ABHE Commission on Accreditation, and (c) the U.S. Department of Education.

Not all programs serving confined or incarcerated individuals are PEPs. This policy applies only to federal PEP programs. All other sites serving confined or incarcerated individuals are reviewed and approved as additional locations. (See the Policy and Procedures for Educational Sites Separate from the Main Campus.)

Oversight Entity Agreement
The institution enters into a written agreement with an oversight entity or entities responsible for the site where the PEP will be delivered. The oversight entity may be a state department of corrections or other entity responsible for overseeing correctional facilities, the Federal Bureau of Prisons, or other oversight entity consistent with federal regulations. The institution is responsible for securing the agreement before submitting a substantive change application for PEP approval to the COA; a copy of the signed final written agreement is submitted as part of the prospectus.

Prison Education Program Substantive Change Approval
An institution must receive approval for its first program at its first two PEP instructional sites. The Commission reviews an institution’s capacity, financial stability, planning, and resources to initiate and sustain PEPs to ensure the quality and integrity of curricula, instruction, learning support, library and information resources, faculty qualifications, and plans to ensure ongoing comparability of PEP versus non-PEP programs at the institution.

Establishment or relocation of a PEP is considered a substantive change to be processed in accord with the Policy on Substantive Change. Prior to establishment or relocation of a PEP, an institution is required to submit for Commission on Accreditation (COA) approval a comprehensive written proposal addressing the location’s compliance with the Standards for Accreditation and the Policy and Procedures for Educational Sites Geographically Separate from the Main Campus, and appropriate documents specifying:
1. Organizational and administrative relationships between the PEP and the parent institution.
2. The institution’s fiscal and administrative capacity to operate the PEP, including a specific PEP budget.
3. Institutional processes for regular evaluation of the PEP.
4. Programs and related curricula that will be offered at the PEP.
5. Evidence that the PEP will meet all Standards for Accreditation that pertain to educational sites geographically separate from the main campus.
6. Evidence that the institution, in collaboration with the oversight entity, has developed plans for determining that the PEP meets the same standards as substantially similar programs at the institution that are not PEPs.
7. Verification of the following:
   a. Academic control of the PEP is clearly documented by the institution.
   b. The institution has adequate faculty, facilities, resources, and academic and student support systems in place for the PEP.
   c. The institution is financially stable.
   d. The expansion is the result of institutional planning.

Because ABHE requires review and approval of all PEP instructional sites, institutions may need to submit more than one substantive change application when establishing PEPs—one to secure approval for participation in the federal PEP program at the first location and subsequent applications to approve offering the PEP at other locations. An institution may submit no more than two sites in one PEP substantive change application. A substantive change application to add a federal PEP program includes approval to offer 50% or more of a program at the site, regardless of delivery method. All substantive change requirements, policies, and Institutional Accreditation Standards apply to PEP programs, without exception.

Federal regulations stipulate that:
1. An institution subject to adverse action (i.e., withdrawal, suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation or candidate status) by the ABHE Commission on Accreditation
   a. will have its PEP approval rescinded,
   b. must submit teach-out plans for closure approval for all PEP programs and PEP off-campus instructional sites, and
   c. is ineligible for PEP re-approval (by submitting a new PEP prospectus) for five years commencing on the date of the adverse action.
2. Subsequent to its initial PEP approval, an institution adding a method of delivery not previously used in its PEPs must secure approval prior to implementation (See the Policy on Substantive Change, Change in Modality/Delivery Method, 5.C)

Because federal Prison Education Programs may constitute multiple types of substantive change, related substantive change applications may need to address multiple requirements. Relevant substantive change types include:
• Participation in the federal Prison Education Program (first program(s) at first and/or second site)
• Initiation of a second Prison Education Program site (first program(s) at second site)
• Initiation of additional PEP sites beyond the first two or relocation of any PEP site
• Addition of a method of delivery not previously used for PEPs (distance education, competency-based education course-credit, competency-based education direct assessment, mixed modality)
• Addition of a program at a PEP site that represents a significant departure from existing programs at the institution
• Other substantive change types as defined in the Policy on Substantive Change as determined by the institution.

Substantive change applications for PEP sites are reviewed by the Committee on Progress Reports and Substantive Change and then sent to the Commission on Accreditation for final action. Submission deadlines are provided in the Report Guide available at https://www.abhe.org/accreditation/accreditation-documents/.

Required PEP Site Visits
All PEP sites must meet ABHE Standards for Accreditation and requirements of the Policy and Procedures for Educational Sites Geographically Separate from the Main Campus, including a required site verification visit within 6 months of site implementation.

ABHE site verification visits to PEP sites are conducted by a Commission Staff Representative (CSR) who spends approximately a half-day at the site. In preparation for the visit, the institution should prepare and submit written responses for the items below to the CSR at least two weeks prior to the visit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Federal Prison Education Program (PEP) sites – Verification Visit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Provide a current and complete listing of all courses and programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential offered at the PEP site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Describe any changes in the financial, human, facility, and technological resources that support the PEP site since the approved Substantive Change Request. Describe how these resources are adequate to support the current offerings at this site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Describe any changes in the library and learning resources made available to students studying at the PEP site since the approved Substantive Change Request. How are these resources adequate for the educational offerings delivered at this site?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Describe any changes in the student services provided at the PEP site since the approved Substantive Change Request. How are these services adequate for the educational offerings delivered at this site?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Provide a complete faculty roster for the PEP site since its inception with courses taught and evidence of appropriate faculty qualifications.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Discuss and provide evidence for any changes in authorization to operate at the PEP site or to offer the credentials that the institution makes available to students through this location since the approved Substantive Change Request.

7. Provide evidence that the main campus exercises control of the PEP site and that the site has adequate administrative personnel.

8. Document how the institution, in collaboration with the oversight entity, plans to determine that the PEP meets the same standards as substantially similar programs at the institution that are not PEPs.

Evaluation team visits for initial accreditation and reaffirmation accreditation will include visits to all PEP sites. Institutional self-studies should include the following information for each PEP site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Federal Prison Education Program (PEP) sites – Evaluation Team Visit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Provide a current and complete listing of all courses and programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential offered at the PEP site.</strong> Highlight changes in offerings since the last review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Describe and document the financial, human, facility, and technological resources that support the PEP site.</strong> Have any of these changed since the last review? Describe how these resources are adequate to support the current offerings at the site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Describe and document the library and learning resources made available to students studying at the PEP site.</strong> How are these resources adequate for the educational offerings delivered at this site?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>Describe and document the student services provided at the PEP site.</strong> How are these services adequate for the educational offerings delivered at this site?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>Provide a complete faculty roster for the PEP site with courses taught for the past three years and evidence of appropriate faculty qualifications.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>Discuss and provide evidence for authorization to operate this PEP site and to offer the credentials that the institution makes available to students at this site.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <strong>Provide evidence that the main campus exercises control of the federal PEP site and that the site has adequate administrative personnel.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. <strong>Document how the institution, in collaboration with the oversight entity, determines that the PEP meets the same standards as substantially similar programs at the institution that are not PEPs.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adopted August 2023