

POLICY FOR NEW, REVISED, AND EXISTING PROGRAMS/COURSES

(Certificates, Occupational Associate Degrees, Interactive Distance Learning, and E-learning)

Institutions accredited by ACCET seek to provide high-quality educational programs through a methodical, ongoing process of curriculum development and revision. In so doing, these institutions enhance the benefits of the education and training provided to the public, employees, and/or member participants and thereby demonstrate their commitment to offering programs that are administratively and educationally sound.

Policy Requirements: The guidance established in this policy document is a reference point for reviewing curriculum to ensure sound practice and for establishing certain minimum threshold requirements necessary to maintain compliance with the ACCET Standards for Accreditation.

Institutions accredited by ACCET are required to do the following:

1. Seek and obtain written approval from ACCET *prior* to advertising, accepting applications for, enrolling students in, or teaching any new, revised, or converted curriculum, as required by this policy document.
2. Provide full and accurate written disclosure of information, including all required ACCET documents and supporting documentation.
3. Notify ACCET, in writing, if an approved program or course is not currently being offered and has not been offered (or will not be offered) for at least 24 consecutive months.

Initial applicants should note that any program that cannot be reviewed at the time of an on-site visit due to lack of enrollment will not be considered by the Accrediting Commission and, therefore, will not be included in any subsequent letter of accreditation.

Applications for program/course approval *cannot be accepted* if the institution meets *any* of the following criteria:

1. The institution is in reaccreditation status with ACCET. Reaccreditation status is defined as the period between the scheduled due date for receipt of the Analytic Self-Evaluation Report (ASER) and the date of the letter granting reaccreditation.
2. The main campus or any of its branch campuses is under any restrictive action by ACCET, the state, or federal agency. ACCET restrictive actions include deferral, denial, withdrawal, appeal, and "show cause" status of institutional accreditation.
3. The institution has undergone a change of ownership and, therefore, is not eligible to submit an application for a curriculum addition or revision until at least 12 months have lapsed from the date on which ACCET approved the change of ownership.

4. The institution received initial accreditation and, therefore, is prohibited from submitting a new or revised curriculum until 12 months have lapsed from the official date of accreditation.

Procedures:

In-Scope Programs: Upon receipt of an application, the ACCET staff will review the application to see that all required materials and information are included. Applications will not be processed until all required materials are received. Once a complete application and all supporting materials have been received in the ACCET office, they will be closely examined by members of the Program Review Committee. A determination will be made as to whether an outside subject specialist must be called upon to review them prior to approval. A favorable review of the application and supporting materials, including curriculum materials will result in ACCET approval to offer the new or revised course/program of study. Approval of minor program/course changes or additions (e.g., program name changes or the addition of a new stand-alone course) may be granted by the full Program Review Committee or its Chair. All major changes or additions (e.g., the offering of an already-approved program at an additional location, the addition of a new program of study, or the conversion of a program from clock hours to credit hours) must receive approval of the Executive Committee of the Accrediting Commission upon recommendation of the Program Review Committee. Alternatively, an unfavorable review will result in denial of the proposed curriculum request. The full Accrediting Commission will be apprised of all program/course approvals at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

A maximum of 45 days is usually required to process an application once it is received by ACCET and determined to be a complete application. Factors which may affect the amount of time required to process an application include the program requiring a subject matter specialist's review and/or additional information needed for completion or clarification.

Appropriate federal and state education agencies will be notified by ACCET of the program approval and its inclusion in the institution's grant of accreditation. While ACCET provides this notification, institutions that participate in Title IV student financial assistance programs are responsible for notifying the U.S. Department of Education and obtaining any required approvals to ensure that the new curriculum is "eligible" and that the institution remains in good standing.

Out of Scope Programs: An expanded program review process is required for a new program that is considered to be out of the scope for which the institution was previously accredited. A program is deemed out-of-scope if the institution is seeking for the first time to offer a degree program or to deliver a program through interactive distance learning or e-learning. A proposed program in a different discipline or field is also classified as an out-of scope program (e.g. proposed welding programs to be offered at an institution offering massage therapy). Additionally, when an institution offering avocational programs applies for approval to offer a vocational program, the program is considered to be out of the scope for which the institution was previously accredited and the addition of the vocational program changes the classification of the institution to a vocational institution.

In determining whether a program is out-of-scope, questions considered may include:

- Will courses in the proposed new program be common to currently approved programs?
- Will the proposed new program require additional instructor(s) with different expertise, education/training, certification, and/or work experience than instructors of approved programs?
- Will a new instructional supervisor or department head support the program?
- Will the proposed new program have its own separate and distinct equipment/supplies and/or dedicated space?
- Will the operation of the proposed program require new regulatory oversight (OSHA, HAZMAT, etc.) to operate effectively?
- If applicable, will students be placed in new externship sites that are separate and distinct from those established for other programs?

Upon receipt of an application, the ACCET staff will review the application to see that all required materials and information provided, including any required program template. Applications will not be processed until all required materials are received. Once a complete application and all supporting materials have been received in the ACCET office, they will be closely examined by members of the Program Review Committee. A determination will be made as to whether an outside subject specialist must be called upon to review them prior to approval. A favorable review of the application and supporting materials, including curriculum materials will result in interim approval being granted by the Executive Committee of the Accrediting Commission upon recommendation of the Program Review Committee.

Following interim approval, the institution will be required to submit a narrative program report focusing on standards pertaining to curricula, instruction, and evaluation, including Standards IV-VI and VIII, along with any required program template. The institution will also be scheduled for an on-site program visit. Typically, within six months of the implementation of an out-of-scope new program, an ACCET evaluation team comprised of a minimum of two persons will be conducted to review the program on-site. The results of this review, including the institution's response, will be presented to the Accrediting Commission. The requirement for this special on-site evaluation may be waived if the institution will be visited for the purpose of reaccreditation within a twelve-month period of the date of interim approval, in which case the program will be reviewed in the normal course of reaccreditation provided the new program and any required program template are included in the institution's analytical self-evaluation report (ASER). Following the Accrediting Commission's review, a decision will be made as to whether or not the new program will receive final approval, thereby recognizing the institution's expansion in scope. An institution is limited to seeking and obtaining approval for one out-of-scope program, until the institution can demonstrate the successful outcomes of graduates of its out-of-scope program (e.g. above benchmark completion and, if applicable, placement rates).

When an avocational institution seeks approval for a vocational program, the program is also deemed to be outside the scope of the institution's previous accreditation. Therefore, the program is processed as an out-of-scope program, with the following additions: (1) the letter granting interim program approval will notify the institution that it is now classified as a vocational institution, with all the requirements of a vocational institution and (2) the required Program

Report (mini-ASER) will be expanded to include additional standards. The specific approval process to be followed by an avocational institution seeking approval for a vocational program is as follows:

- Submission of Document 25.1 – Application for New or Revised Program/Course, along with required supporting documentation (Exhibits 1-15, as applicable) by the institution.
- Review of the application by the Program Review Committee.
- Consideration of interim approval for the new out-of-scope program by the Executive Committee. (The interim approval letter will notify the institution of its reclassification as a vocational institution, with all the requirements of a vocational institution.)
- Submission of Program Report (Standards IV-VI and VIII) by the institution. Additionally, the institution will be required to address Standards I, III, VII-A, B, & D, and IX-D.
- Conduct of an on-site visit, with a minimum of two persons.
- Consideration of final approval by the Commission.

Definitions and Explanations:

Program

A program is defined as a series of sequentially combined courses which has a terminal objective and leads to a certificate of completion, diploma, or occupational associate degree.

Course

A course is a defined instructional unit which may be offered as a component of a program or as a stand-alone unit for personal and professional development.

Clock Hour

For institutions that represent their training in clock/contact hours, a clock hour is defined as a 60-minute span of time with no less than 50 minutes of actual class instruction. Students must be given breaks which represent sound educational practices. No more than 1.0 clock hour can be assigned to any discrete 60-minute period.

Total Clock Hours

All hours of instruction representing the length of the full program which include lecture, laboratory, and externship/internship.

Clock Hour/Credit Hour¹

Conversions from clock hours to credit hours are only permitted for programs of study that meet at least ten weeks for quarter credit-hour programs and at least fifteen weeks for semester credit-hour programs. For academic purposes, ACCET institutions must use the following Carnegie clock-to-credit hour conversions for lecture, laboratory, and externship/internship:

Lecture Hours

Instructional hours consisting of theory or new principles.

Lecture Credit Hours

Semester Credits – Must teach a minimum of 15 lecture hours to award 1 semester credit hour (divide lecture hours by 15).

Quarter Credits – Must teach a minimum of 10 lecture hours to award 1 quarter credit (divide lecture hours by 10).

Laboratory Hours

Instructional hours consisting of supervised student practice of a previously introduced theory/principle during which practical skills and knowledge are developed and reinforced.

Laboratory Credit Hours

Semester Credits – Must teach a minimum of 30 laboratory hours to award 1 semester credit (divide laboratory hours by 30).

Quarter Credits – Must teach a minimum of 20 laboratory hours to award 1 quarter credit (divide laboratory hours by 20).

Externship/Internship Hours

Instructional hours consisting of supervised work experience activities related to skills/ knowledge acquired during the training program.

Externship/Internship Credit Hours

Semester Credits – Must teach a minimum of 45 externship hours to award 1 semester credit (divide externship/internship hours by 45).

Quarter Credits – Must teach a minimum of 30 externship hours to award 1 quarter credit (divide externship/internship hours by 30).

When institutions consider which system of measurement is most appropriate for their academic offerings, it is important that the differences between the two systems be clearly understood as well as some external issues which may affect the implementation of one system over the other. All

¹ **NOTE:** For purposes of Title IV Federal Financial Aid, ACCET institutions must comply with Federal requirements for clock-to-credit hour conversions which may be different from those required by ACCET for academic purposes.

standards for measuring satisfactory academic progress must include qualitative and quantitative standards by which student progress is evaluated. Action must be taken by the institution if students fail to meet the institution's minimum standards of progress.

For institutions utilizing a credit-hour measurement, ACCET requires work outside of class such as homework to be documented in the curricular materials and syllabi, including an approximation of the time required for the student to complete the assignments. Further, the evaluation of homework or work outside of class must be identified as a grading criterion and weighted appropriately in the determination of a final grade for a course or module.

Externship/Internship/Practicum:

An externship, internship, or practicum is defined as training-related work or practical experience which is: (1) formally part of a program; (2) based upon a preplanned outline of experience/skills to be acquired; (3) an application of previously studied knowledge and skills; (4) formalized through a signed agreement between the institution and site; (5) systematically supervised by a qualified individual at the institution and the externship/internship/practicum site; and (6) evaluated by both the on-site supervisor and the institution's staff member based on established criteria.

Institutions offering programs of study which include an externship/internship/practicum or those wishing to implement such programs must ensure that the work experience is pre-planned, well-designed, and has written monitoring procedures. Essential elements of an externship, internship, or practicum include the following:

1. Written confirmation verifying that on-site arrangements have been made with externship/internship/practicum providers.
2. Externship/internship/practicum policies and procedures, including what is expected of the student.
3. Monitoring systems which must include the responsibilities of the school's field inspector and the on-site supervisor at the externship/internship/practicum site.
4. A list of written skill expectations and the assessment of progress toward final mastery.

Occupational Associate Degrees:

Occupational associate degrees are designed to provide the specific knowledge and skills to prepare graduates for gainful employment and career development. This category of associate degree includes, but is not limited to, the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Degree, the Associate of Applied Technology (AAT) Degree, and the Associate of Occupational Studies (AOS) Degree. Institutions awarding the OAD must clearly demonstrate, through their mission, planning, curricula, faculty, and student services, the heightened commitment required to ensure student outcomes that distinguish the graduate of the OAD program from the graduate of a similar program offered at the postsecondary certificate or diploma level.

ACCET accredited institutions wishing to add an OAD degree program must make application using ACCET Document 25.OAD – Application for Occupational Associate Degree Program. They must also be authorized by the appropriate state education agency to confer the associate degree or must demonstrate that no such authority exists by specific reference to state statute and/or regulation.

The curriculum for the OAD program must include the vocational and the general education courses necessary to meet the specific degree requirements. All occupational degree programs must address the development of competencies in general education that enhance essential skills for career development and continued learning. These competencies must relate to and support the vocational objectives of the OAD program in both substance and number. An ACCET accredited institution that offers OAD programs must provide the general education courses necessary to meet the specific degree requirements by: (1) delivering the general education courses through the institution and/or (2) establishing an executed articulation agreement with a degree-granting institution that is accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the US Department of Education whereby the degree-granting institution delivers the general education course required for the OAD degree. Note that the executed articulation agreement must be provided for ACCET approval along with the completed ACCET Document 25.OAD – Application for Occupational Associate Degree Program and must demonstrate that the quality of all general education courses delivered by the third-party degree-granting institution is comparable to that required by ACCET standards, policies, and practices.

The following policy guidelines govern occupational associate degrees:

1. All OAD programs must be two academic years in length and must be measured in quarter or semester credit hours, with each degree requiring a minimum of 60 semester credit hours or 90 quarter credit hours. The programs are typically offered over a period of four semesters, six quarters, or the equivalent.
2. All occupational degree programs must include a minimum of 70% of the coursework directly related to the specific vocational objective.
3. A minimum of 15 semester credit hours or 22.5 quarter credit hours of general education courses must be included. Examples of general education courses include natural and physical sciences (mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry, etc.); social and behavioral sciences (psychology, sociology, history, geography, economics, etc.); humanities and fine arts (English, written and oral communication, literature, foreign language, etc.).

Interactive Distance Learning:

Interactive Distance Learning is a means of providing educational delivery which is conducted through an electronically facilitated environment, such as online instruction or video conferencing, accessible to participants who are separated by physical distance for all or part (blended) of the offering. Interactive distance learning supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously, as well as student-to-student interaction. Computerized electronic technologies utilized for IDL instruction, interaction between

students and instructors, and interaction between students may include the internet, audio-conferencing, and one-way and two-way transmission through cable, fiber optics, and/or satellite or wireless communication devices. E-learning, correspondence, and self-study are not interactive distance learning, in that there is insufficient interaction between instructors and students.

To ensure that IDL training is appropriate in content and length, ACCET will review IDL programs and/or courses, including those offered in an online, asynchronous delivery mode, to verify that clock hour requirements are met and that the length of the programs and/or courses (clock hours and/or credit hours) is appropriate and educationally sound. In conducting its review, ACCET will consider various methods utilized by institutions to demonstrate that their IDL training meets clock hour requirements and assigned clock hours and/or credit hours are appropriate, including providing: (1) a comparison of IDL training with comparable training offered in a traditional face-to-face delivery mode and/or (2) a time-on-task analysis such as those completed by publishers for their online curriculum and made available to their end-users. Methods utilized by institutions to track and monitor student progress and attendance for online, asynchronous training frequently involve the verifiable tracking of student log-in time in conjunction with active student participation. For example, institutions record and track student participation in online activities (e.g. faculty facilitated discussions forums) and direct assessments (e.g. testing, assignments, projects).

Institutions that have never offered IDL courses/programs (defined as any course or program with at least a portion offered via IDL technology) must seek prior approval from ACCET for an out-of-scope program, including situations involving the application of IDL methodology to already-approved courses/programs of study. To be eligible for approval of additional IDL courses/programs, an institution must first demonstrate the successful outcomes of graduates of its initial approved IDL program/course (e.g. above benchmark completion and, if applicable, placement rates), based upon the submission of a comprehensive report.

E-learning:

E-learning is instruction delivered through computerized electronic technologies, such as the internet, intranet, compact disc, mobile devices, or other digital media. Designed specifically to support distinct learning objectives through a variety of instructional strategies, e-learning requires active engagement and interaction by the student with instructional materials to meet course/program objectives and achieve intended learning outcomes. E-learning is one method of instruction; it can be combined with other methods such as instructor-led training to reinforce learning.¹ E-learning provides educational delivery which is conducted through an electronically facilitated environment to students who are separated by physical distance for all or part (hybrid) of the offering. However, e-learning is not interactive distance learning, in that interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Student-to-student interaction is also often limited or absent. Additionally, e-learning is typically self-paced instruction.

¹ Programs/courses that include units or courses delivered predominately or exclusively through e-learning require approval as an e-learning offering. Generally, no such approval is required for programs/courses that utilize e-learning resources to supplement and enhance instructor-led classroom and/or laboratory instruction delivered in a traditional face-to-face or interactive distance learning mode.

To ensure that e-learning is appropriate in content and length, ACCET will review e-learning programs and/or courses, including those offered in an online, asynchronous delivery mode, to verify that clock hour requirements are met and that the length of the programs and/or courses (in clock hours) is appropriate and educationally sound. In conducting its review, ACCET will consider various methods utilized by institutions to demonstrate that their e-learning meets clock hour requirements and assigned clock hours are appropriate, including providing: (1) a comparison of e-learning with comparable training offered in a traditional face-to-face delivery mode and/or (2) a time-on-task analysis such as those completed by publishers for their online curriculum and made available to their end-users. Methods utilized by institutions to track and monitor student progress and attendance for online, asynchronous e-learning frequently involve the verifiable tracking of student log-in time in conjunction with active student participation. For example, institutions record and track student participation in online activities and direct assessments (e.g. testing, assignments).

Institutions that have never offered e-learning courses/programs (defined as any course or program with at least a portion offered via e-learning) must seek prior approval from ACCET for an out-of-scope program, including situations involving the application of e-learning methodology to already-approved courses/programs of study. To be eligible for approval of additional e-learning courses/programs, an institution must first demonstrate the successful outcomes of graduates of its initial approved e-learning program/course (e.g. above benchmark completion), based upon the submission of a comprehensive report.

Institutions may only seek and obtain approval for avocational courses and/or avocational programs to be offered in whole or in part by e-learning. Vocational programs and courses will not be approved by ACCET to be delivered through e-learning.

THE APPLICATION

What application forms are to be used?

An institution must use one of the five application forms noted below to seek and obtain prior ACCET approval for a new or revised programs/course. The requirements for occupational associate degree programs, interactive distance learning programs/courses, and e-learning courses/programs will vary from those of other types of programs/courses. Select the appropriate application listed below and complete, sign, and submit to ACCET:

1. Document 25.1 - Application for New or Revised Program/Course;
2. Document 25.OAD – Application for Occupational Associate Degree Program;
3. Document 25. IDL – Application for Interactive Distance Learning Program/Course; or
4. Document 25.E-learning – Application for E-learning Program/Course.

What requires a full application?

The following substantive program changes require the submission of a full application, including: (1) the appropriate application from the listing above and (2) the application processing fee.

1. A *new* program of study.
2. Any revision of a currently approved program of study resulting in an increase or decrease in the total number of published/approved clock hours greater than 20%, either by itself or cumulatively with previous revisions during the preceding 12 month period.
3. A revision to a currently approved program of study which constitutes a substantial modification to the educational goals and objectives of the approved program, even if the change results in an increase or decrease of less than 20% of total number of published/approved clock hours.

What requires a partial application?

1. A program name change only.
 - ◆ Submit Documents 25.1 – Application for New or Revised Program/Course, along with Exhibits 1, 3, 4, 10 or 11 as identified on the Document 25.1 Checklist, and the appropriate processing fee.
2. A change in the instructional delivery format/methodology or an additional delivery method added to the program (e.g. addition of an externship or change from self-paced instruction to lecture delivery).
 - ◆ Submit Documents 25.1 - Application for New or Revised Program/Course, along with Exhibits 1-6, 14 (if applicable) as identified on the Document 25.1 Checklist, and the appropriate processing fee.
3. An offering of an already-approved program at an additional location that is out of the general market area of those sites approved to offer the program. (e.g. different Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), city/town, or county).
 - ◆ Submit Documents 25.1 - Application for New or Revised Program/Course, along with Exhibits 1-7 and 14 (if applicable) as identified on the Document 25.1 Checklist, and the appropriate processing fee.
4. Discontinuation of a program.
 - ◆ Submit Documents 25.1 - Application for New or Revised Program/Course, including the date of discontinuation/deactivation (the date the last students completed their program). No processing fee is required.
5. Any revision of a currently approved program resulting in any increase or decrease of 20% or less in the total number of published/approved clock hours during a twelve month period.

- ◆ Submit Documents 25.1 - Application for New or Revised Program/Course, along with Exhibits 1, 3, 4, 10 or 11 for revised program and former program, 14 (if applicable) as identified on the Document 25.1 Checklist, and the appropriate processing fee.
6. A new stand-alone course.
 - ◆ Submit Document 25.1- Application for New or Revised Program/Course, along with Exhibits 1, 3, 4, 9 as identified on the Document 25.1 Checklist, and the appropriate processing fee.
 7. A course change within an approved program.
 - ◆ Submit Document 25.1 -Application for New or Revised Program/Course, along with Exhibits 1, 3, 4, 10 or 11 for the revised program and former program as identified on the Document 25.1 Checklist, and the appropriate processing fee.
 8. An offering of an already-approved program at an additional location that is within the general market area of those sites approved to offer the program (e.g. same Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA), city/town, or county).
 - ◆ Submit Document 25.1 -Application for New or Revised Program/Course, along with Exhibits 1, 3, 4, 10 or 11 as identified on the Document 25.1 Checklist, and the appropriate processing fee.
 9. A conversion from credit-to-clock hours.
 - ◆ Submit Document 25.1 - Application for New or Revised Program/Course, along with Exhibits 1, 3, 4, 8, 10 or 11, 13 as identified on the Document 25.1 Checklist, and the appropriate processing fee.

Note: New programs or changes in instructional delivery format/methodology may require the additional submission of a narrative response with supporting documentation to field specific criteria, if available, for the new/revised program of study.

What requires a different application?

1. A review of clock hour-to-credit hour conversion based on work outside of class.
 - ◆ Submit Document 25.9 and appropriate processing fee for a review of clock hour-to-credit hour conversion based on work outside of class (homework) for institutions seeking to measure a program for federal financial aid purposes utilizing the federal clock hour-to-credit hour conversion (30:1 semester credit or 20:1 quarter credit).
2. A conversion from clock hour to credit hour.

- ◆ Submit Document 25.11 and appropriate processing fee.

What requires no approval or processing fee?

1. Individual courses that are *part of a program already approved by ACCET* may be taught, without prior approval or processing fee, provided that the institution submits written notification of the course name and hours to ACCET prior to offering the course and the course(s) meet the following characteristics:

- The length of the course(s) does not exceed 100 clock hours;
- Title IV funds are not used to fund students enrolled in these short courses; and
- State approval has been granted, where required.

Note: Enrollment data for these individual short courses must be included in ACCET Document 12b - Annual Report and Enrollment Statistics.

2. Institutions may make minor modifications to programs, such as those listed below, provided that these changes are not made in conjunction with other curriculum changes which require ACCET approval:

- Tuition changes
- Changes in instructors and/or instructional supervisors
- Updates of teaching aids, classroom materials, equipment, and/or textbooks