



ABHES BULLETIN

To: ABHES-Accredited Institutions and Programs
From: India Y. Tips, Executive Director
Date: April 6, 2020
Subject: COVID-19 - Seeking Continued Approval for Initial or Expanded Distance Education

ABHES continues to monitor and assess the circumstances and impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) on our institutions and accreditation operations. Institutions should be executing their emergency preparedness protocols and continuity education/operation plans. ABHES remains open to a range of flexible and creative solutions that support students enrolled in our accredited institutions and programs, including suspending residential training and the need to deliver instructional content via distance education.

In the March 24, 2020, ABHES Bulletin, institutions and programs were notified of temporary approval to transition coursework from residential to blended or full distance education delivery through June 1, 2020. This Bulletin aligned with the U.S. Department of Education's March 20, 2020, guidance concerning interruptions of study related to COVID-19. Please note that at the discretion of the ABHES Commission, the June 1 deadline may be altered in consideration of any updated guidance released by the Department.

Therefore, the following guidance is provided for institutions and programs that intend to offer or continue to offer coursework using new or expanded distance education methods beyond June 1, 2020. Institutions and programs currently offering distance education under temporary approval through June 1, 2020, that wish to continue offering those courses/program via distance education after June 1, 2020, must submit, as applicable, a complete the: 1) *Application for Initial Distance Education Delivery*; or 2) *Application for Modification of Distance Education Delivery*.

NOTE: For institutionally accredited members, the term "institution" encompasses all campuses within a grant of accreditation, which includes the main campus and any associated non-main campuses and/or separate educational centers.

Any institution or program that does not have formal written approval from ABHES¹ to offer full distance or blended programs and wants to continue teaching in these delivery methods must submit the *Application for Initial Distance Education Delivery* and follow the substantive change approval process set forth in Chapter III, Section B, Subsection 2 of the *Accreditation Manual*.

Any institution or program that has formal written approval from ABHES¹ to offer one or more blended programs and wants to expand distance delivery to new courses or programs must complete the *Application for Modification of Distance Education Delivery*. This *Application* is required in the following circumstances:

¹ Formal written approval refers to the most recent approval letter from ABHES that lists the program(s) and the approved delivery modalities as residential, blended and/or full distance education.

- The transition of residential laboratory-based course(s) to distance delivery in a program currently approved for distance education.
- The transition of course(s) in program(s) approved as residential to distance delivery provided the institution has formal approval to offer at least one program in the blended or full distance education modalities.
- The expansion of delivery method of an approved program from residential or blended to full distance education.

Any institution or program that is offering coursework using new or expanded distance education methods under temporary approval and wants to continue such methods beyond June 1, 2020, must submit the appropriate *Application* by May 1, 2020. Both applications are available for download at <https://www.abhes.org/resources/#Applications>. Approvals will be effective June 1, 2020 and included within the current grant of accreditation.

Any institution or program that intends to continue offering programs in blended or full distance education modalities in the same manner as originally and formally approved may continue to do so without additional review.

Partnering with another institution to offer distance education

ABHES-accredited institutions and programs may also consider partnering with other accredited institutions with proven experience in providing distance education, specifically those with a history of successfully demonstrating regular and substantive interaction. Chapter I, Section B, Subsection 7 of the *Accreditation Manual* details ABHES' policies regarding third-party contracts and consortium agreements. To seek approval, the institution must submit the following: (1) a proposal that identifies the partnering organization(s) and the service(s) to be provided under the agreement or contract; (2) a copy of the proposed contract; and (3) a statement indicating that the institution or program retains responsibility for compliance with all ABHES requirements. [Click Here](#) to view the Distance Education Resource List. A sample consortium template is being created and will be posted on the ABHES website under "Resources" to assist schools in developing these agreements.

Questions

Please contact ABHES staff with specific questions concerning your institution or program's compliance or accreditation. Please visit the [Our Staff](#) page on the ABHES website for specific staff member contact information. If you are unsure of where to direct your questions, please contact India Tips, Executive Director, at itips@abhes.org or Amy Rowe, Associate Executive Director of Membership Services, at arowe@abhes.org.