



# ABHES BULLETIN

To: ABHES-Accredited Institutions and Programs  
From: India Y. Tips, Executive Director  
Date: March 24, 2020  
Subject: COVID-19 Update

ABHES continues to monitor and assess the circumstances and impacts of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) on our institutions and accreditation operations. As such, we would like to provide the updates below in hopes that we can quickly address your questions and concerns.

## **General Guidance**

All institutions must continue to follow guidance issued by federal and state agencies and local public health authorities. Institutions must maintain documentation of required campus closures, temporary waivers of regulations received from state or other regulatory bodies governing the operation of the institution and/or program(s).

ABHES remains open to a range of flexible and creative solutions that support students enrolled in our accredited institutions and programs.

## **Distance Education**

Effective immediately, institutions and programs have ABHES approval to transition coursework from residential to a blended or full distance delivery through **June 1, 2020**. This temporary approval may be altered at the discretion of the ABHES Commission.

Within the coming week, ABHES will be releasing more details regarding how institutions will need to seek formal approval in order to continue to provide education via blended or full distance education beyond June 1, 2020. The *Application for Distance Education Delivery* and *Application for Modification of Distance Education Delivery* are being modified and will be reposted with a revision date of March 2020.

ABHES-accredited institutions and programs that did not hold approval for blended or full distance education prior to COVID-19 are encouraged to 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 third party and the services to be provided under the 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**.

### **Clinical Experiences**

Programs with a required clinical experience (externship) must continue to demonstrate that students complete the required coursework as a basis for program completion in compliance with applicable federal, state and credentialing requirements.

While the Commission understands that some experiences cannot continue as originally planned, there is no blanket waiver of the expectations relative to completion of clinical experiences. The Commission expects institutions to ensure that students demonstrate required competencies for entry level employment prior to program completion.

### **On-Site Evaluations**

All on-site evaluations scheduled through May 1, 2020, are being rescheduled to future dates. ABHES will continue to assess the number of visits to determine how such delays will impact the accreditation timeline relative to the Commission's next review.

Institutions should remain in direct contact with their designated ABHES staff member for any potential updates, changes, or postponements. Institutions that have undergone on-site evaluations are expected to submit online responses to visitation reports as described below. Any general questions related to visits and those institutions requiring additional time to submit a visit response should email details regarding the need for an extension to Amy Rowe, Associate Executive Director of Membership Services, at [arowe@abhes.org](mailto:arowe@abhes.org).

### **United States Postal Service (USPS)/FedEx/UPS**

Please note that staff are primarily working remotely and therefore unable to sign for deliveries requiring a signature. If you would like to continue to send correspondence to the ABHES office, you must send it without a signature required upon receipt to avoid couriers from returning mail to the sender. See below for more information relative to preferred methods for submitting information to ABHES.

### **Self-Evaluation Reports**

Self-evaluation reports (SER) due May 1, 2020 have been provided an extension and are now due June 1, 2020. SERs must be uploaded via [DropBox SER](#) and in compliance with the following submission instructions:

- [Instructions for the Institutional Self Evaluation Report](#); or
- [Instructions for the Programmatic Self Evaluation Report](#)

### **Response Directives**

- Responses related to show-cause, program-specific warning, deferrals, or additional information requests due May 1, 2020, per letters received in February 2020 must be uploaded via [DropBox Commission Responses](#).
- Responses related to reporting or requests for additional information related to outcomes and the last submitted Annual Report due May 12, 2020, must be uploaded via [DropBox Outcome Responses](#).

- Responses related to reporting or requests for additional information for financial information due May 1, 2020, must be uploaded via [DropBox Financial Responses](#).
- Responses related to reporting or additional information requests for Surgical Technology programs due May 12, 2020, must be uploaded via [DropBox Surgical Technology Responses](#).
- Responses related to degree requirement status letters for Surgical Technology programs due May 1, 2020, must be emailed to [ST@abhес.org](mailto:ST@abhес.org).

All responses must be submitted in accordance with the directions in [Preparing Your Response](#) and the file name must include your ABHES ID#, type of response (ex. show-cause\_rsp, outcomes\_reporting\_rsp, st\_reporting\_rsp), and date of submission.

### **New Application Submissions**

Any new applications should be submitted to ABHES online via [DropBox New Applications](#). All applications must indicate the type of application and the file name must include your ABHES ID#, type of application, and date of submission (ex. I-100\_DEModification\_ 3 2020).

### **Fees**

Payment of any fees can now be remitted electronically via bank transfer in lieu of a hardcopy check, or by credit card where a 2.9% convenience fee is to be applied. Please contact the Accounting Department at [accounting@abhес.org](mailto:accounting@abhес.org) or (571) 282-0076 to obtain your invoice.

### **April Accreditation Workshop**

Details regarding the April Accreditation Workshop are forthcoming. Due to the importance of this workshop to our member institutions, we are exploring the feasibility of delivering this workshop via GoToTraining.

Participants already registered will receive an email from ABHES with more information. Those who wish to register for the virtual workshop may do so by visiting [Workshop Registration](#).

Under these challenging and unique circumstances, ABHES will continue to respond to all communications and correspondence submissions; however, given the high volume of questions and requests at this time, we ask for your patience as we carefully review each submission and request. We are committed to working with you during this challenging time. Additional updates will be provided as new or changing guidance is published.

### **Questions**

Please contact ABHES staff with specific questions concerning your institution'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@abhес.org](mailto:itips@abhес.org) or Amy Rowe, Associate Executive Director of Membership Services, at [arowe@abhес.org](mailto:arowe@abhес.org).