



ACCREDITING BUREAU OF HEALTH EDUCATION SCHOOLS | ABHES

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ABHES BULLETIN

To: ABHES-Accredited Institutions and Programs
Recognized Accrediting Agencies
State Departments of Education
U.S. Department of Education
Interested Parties

From: India Y. Tips, Executive Director

Date: June 15, 2021

Subject: Final Revisions to the ABHES *Accreditation Manual* – Effective January 1, 2022

At its May 2021 meeting, the Commission of the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES), upon consideration of the comments received to its [March 12, 2021, Call for Comment](#), acted to adopt final revisions to the 18th Edition of the *Accreditation Manual*, **effective January 1, 2022**. The revisions relate to U.S. Department of Education regulations.

The revised *Accreditation Manual* will be posted at <https://abhes.org/resources/#accredManual> when it becomes effective. The new language is underlined, and deleted language ~~struck~~. The changes will be incorporated into the new version to be published on January 1, 2022.

CHAPTER III – GENERAL PROCEDURES (APPLIES TO INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMS)

SECTION B – Institutional Changes

Subsection 4 – Additional requirement regarding specific changes

C. Notification

Notification to ABHES is required for:

- i. A negative action, including probation, placed upon an institution or program by a recognized accrediting agency, state ~~licensure body~~approval agency, or federal regulatory agency.

SECTION D – Other Reviews, Notification, Publication, and Reapplication

Subsection 1 – Regard for decisions of states and other accrediting agencies

ABHES will not accredit any institution or program that lacks legal authorization under applicable State law to provide a program of education beyond the secondary level.

The Commission reserves the right not to grant initial accreditation or a renewed grant of accreditation if the institution or the institution sponsoring a program is the subject of:

- a. A pending, or final action brought by a state agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education or to provide one or more of the programs offered.
- b. A decision by a recognized accrediting agency to deny accreditation.
- c. A pending, or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation.
- d. Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized accrediting agency.

The Commission will grant accreditation to an institution or program described in the paragraph above only if upon complete review of all relevant evidence the Commission concludes that the action by the other agency or body and the basis for that action does not preclude the institution or program from compliance with all ABHES accreditation criteria. If the Commission reaches this conclusion and grants accreditation to an institution or program described in the paragraph above, it will within 30 days of the action granting accreditation provide the Secretary of the United State Department of Education a thorough explanation of its conclusion.

Should the Commission grant accreditation to an institution or program subject to an adverse action by another body, the Commission will provide to the Secretary of the United States Department of Education, within 30 days of its action, a thorough and reasonable explanation, consistent with its standards, why the action of the other body does not preclude ABHES's grant of accreditation.

If ABHES learns that an institution or program that it accredits is the subject of an adverse action by another recognized accrediting agency, then the Commission will promptly review its accreditation of the institution or program to determine whether it should also take adverse action.

ABHES will share upon request from an appropriate recognized accrediting agency or recognized state agency information about the accreditation status of and any adverse actions taken against an institution or program accredited by ABHES.

Institutions and programs applying for accreditation or currently accredited by ABHES must advise ABHES immediately of any adverse or potentially adverse action, including a show cause directive or placement on probation, by another oversight agency, including a recognized accrediting agency or state ~~licensing body~~ approval agency.

CHAPTER IV – EVALUATION STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO INSTITUTIONALLY-ACCREDITED MEMBERS

SECTION G – Programs

IV.G.1. Standard academic conversion methodology is applied in calculating and awarding academic credit. (Clock-hour programs do not fall under these requirements.)

Institutions adhere to the following definitions and use the formula in calculating credit hours awarded on a course-by-course basis:

Semester - minimum of 15 weeks in length. One semester credit is equal to:

- a. one hour of lecture per week for a semester or the equivalent number of hours.
- b. two hours of lab per week for a semester or the equivalent number of hours.
- c. three hours of externship/clinical per week for a semester or the equivalent number of hours.

Quarter - minimum of 10 weeks in length. One quarter credit is equal to:

- a. one hour of lecture per week for a quarter or the equivalent number of hours.
- b. two hours of lab per week for a quarter or the equivalent number of hours.
- c. three hours of externship/clinical per week for a quarter or the equivalent number of hours.

~~Continuous-Non-Standard~~ Term - a non-traditional term length, allowing enrollment at various points in the calendar year.

Programs offered on a block basis or continuous term may elect either the semester or quarter formula for determination of credit. The minimum conversion formulas are as follows:

Quarter	Semester
10	15 hours of lecture
20	30 hours of laboratory
30	45 hours of externship/clinical

Partial credits for a course are rounded to the next lowest half or whole number. A course may be comprised of any combination of lecture, laboratory and/or externship. ~~A clock (or contact) hour is defined as a minimum of 50 minutes of supervised or directed instruction in any 60 minute period.~~ Care is taken in scheduling breaks.

An example of the calculation is as follows:

Quarter system			Semester system		
6 hours lecture	=	0.60	6 hours lecture	=	0.40
25 hours lab	=	1.25	25 hours lab	=	0.83
70 hours externship	=	2.30	70 hours externship	=	1.55
Total	=	4.15	Total	=	2.78

Rounding occurs following the calculation of the lecture, laboratory and externship components resulting in a total of 4.0 quarter or 2.5 semester credits when rounded down to the next lowest half or whole number.

If a program offers both a distance education and a traditional campus-based component, the quality of the education and credit awarded is equivalent in all three aspects of the curriculum: didactic, laboratory, and clinical.

Institutions should be aware that federal requirements regarding the calculation of clock and credit hours, including minimum number of weeks per academic year required for Title IV purposes, may vary from ABHES requirements.

All programs that award credit hours must include outside hours regardless of whether the institution request recognition. Minimum course-by-course outside hours for certificates, diplomas, associate of occupational science degrees, and associate of applied science degrees are calculated by using the following formula:

Semester Credit Hours- 7.5 outside hours for each credit hour of lecture/laboratory (Outside hours for clinical experiences will be reviewed and evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In general, however, clinical experiences may not require outside hours. If outside hours are awarded, the institution or program must provide justification and the rationale for these hours).

Quarter Credit Hours- 5.0 outside hours for each credit hour of lecture/laboratory (Outside hours for clinical experiences will be reviewed and evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In general, however, clinical experiences may not require outside hours. If outside hours are awarded, the institution or program must provide justification and the rationale for these hours).

Minimum course-by-course outside hours for academic associate degrees, baccalaureate degrees, and master's degrees are calculated by using the following formula:

- i. For one (1) hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction, a minimum of two (2) hours of outside preparation.
- ii. For one (1) hour of laboratory work and other academic work leading to award of credit hours, a minimum of one (1) hour of outside preparation.

The institution may elect to include more outside hours than the minimums listed above, and these will be reviewed for academic quality and rigor by course. The institution is also expected to justify outside hours and substantiate how these hours are determined. Justification of the outside additional hours must be on file for on-site evaluation teams to review.

CHAPTER V – EVALUATION STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO ALL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

SECTION D – Student Assessment

Subsection 1 – Admissions

V.D.1. *An institution adheres to its admission policies and enrolls only students who can reasonably be expected to benefit from the instruction.*

An admissions process exists to screen and evaluate each applicant's credentials before an applicant is notified of acceptance or rejection. A personal interview may be arranged at the discretion of the institution.

Admission requirements clearly state the basis for admission, which may include testing, advanced standing, experiential learning requirements, and transfer of credit. Remedial courses and refresher courses are not considered for credit. When accepting students, reasonable assurances are made that applicant qualifications and background are compatible with institutional and curricular objectives to ensure the likelihood of student success.

Applicants are beyond the age of compulsory institution attendance in the state in which the institution is located and can be reasonably expected to benefit from the training offered by the institution. Institutions that accept non-high school graduates (ability-to-benefit students) into their programs must meet the additional requirements of Appendix A, Enrollment of Ability-to-Benefit (“ATB”) Students, with the exception of any program that is 300 clock hours or less. The information relative to ATB student admission is submitted prior to enrollment.

The evidence of high school graduation or its equivalent, with the exception of high school students concurrently enrolled in another school, is supplied to an institution within 30 days after the student's first class or lesson begins, and as permissible may be a signed attestation of graduation. The evidence or signed attestation of graduation must include the name of the high school attended, city, state, graduation year. The institution has the responsibility of having a policy at the campus level to verify the high school or program was approved by the applicable governing or state authority approval agency and accrediting body (recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education or by the Council on Higher Education Accreditation), as applicable. Dual Enrollment agreements must be submitted for approval prior to implementation.

SECTION H – Disclosures

V.H.3. *All representations regarding the program are accurate, complete, and not misleading.*

All statements made by personnel are based on accurate, verified facts and are provided in a manner and in a context to assure that a reasonable recipient is not misled. Any information ~~with regard to~~ regarding salary, employment opportunities and employment information provided to students, prospective students, and the public is accurate and realistic.

~~The following disclosures are required to be provided directly to students prior to admission.~~

~~i.—Any credentialing or licensing requirements necessary for employment in the field.~~

~~ii.—Determination if the program fulfills the educational requirements for a specific professional licensure or certification required for employment in the field.~~

~~This must be determined for each state, and the program must publish, in a public manner, whether the program does or does not meet such requirements, or whether the institution has not made such a determination.~~

~~If the determination changes, currently enrolled students must be notified in writing within 14 calendar days if the program does not meet state licensure or certification requirements for the state in which the student is located.~~

V.H.4. All disclosures regarding educational requirements for specific state licensing or credentialing are clearly communicated.

A program designed to meet educational requirements for specific licensing or credentialing that is required for employment, or is advertised as meeting such requirements, must:

- i. Provide general disclosures regarding whether completion of that program would be sufficient to meet licensure requirements in the state where the student is physically located for that occupation by placing each state in one of these categories:
 - a. The institution determined that its curriculum meets the state educational requirements for licensure or certification.
 - b. The institution determined that its curriculum does not meet the state educational requirements for licensure or certification.
 - c. The institution has not determined whether its curriculum meets the state educational requirements for licensure or certification.
- ii. For each prospective or enrolled student located in the states described in (i)(b) and (i)(c)m the institution must provide direct notice of whether completion of that program would be sufficient to meet licensure or certification requirements as follows to:
 - a. Prospective students prior to program enrollment.
 - b. Enrolled students within 14 calendar days after a determination that the student's location has changed to another state or the program no longer meets the original determination made at the time of enrollment.

V.H.5. Publish the process for submitting complaints to the appropriate state authorities or state approval agencies where the institution is located and where enrolled students reside.

Publication is readily accessible to students and includes contact information for receipt of consumer complaints by the appropriate state authority or state approval agency.

CHAPTER IX – DISTANCE EDUCATION EVALUATION STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO ALL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS OFFERING DISTANCE EDUCATION

The Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools is recognized to accredit programs delivered utilizing distance education methodologies. ABHES defines distance education as a formal educational process that uses technology to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and to support regular and substantive interaction between ~~the instructor and~~ students, and ~~among students~~ instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously. Correspondence education is not within ABHES' scope of recognition and therefore is not eligible for accreditation by ABHES.

This chapter contains additional standards specifically applicable to distance education. Institutions or programs seeking or holding accreditation by ABHES that offer blended or full distance education must comply with remaining accreditation standards described throughout the *Accreditation Manual*, including Chapter IV for all institutions, Chapter V for all programs, Chapter VI for degree-granting programs, Chapters VII and VIII for specialized programs, and all appendices, as applicable.

SECTION B – Curriculum, Competencies, and Clinical Experiences

IX.B.1. ~~*Provide in the distance education coursework*~~ *Distance education course design provides for timely, regular and substantive interaction between faculty and students* ~~*and among students.*~~

An institution or program demonstrates that interaction between faculty and students ~~and among students~~ is built into the distance education coursework regardless if the course is offered in a blended or full distance education format. Students receive opportunities for substantive interactions on a predictable and scheduled basis commensurate with the length of time and the amount of content in the course or competency. Substantive interaction engages students in teaching, learning, and assessment and includes all of the following:

- i. Providing direct instruction.
- ii. Assessing or providing feedback on a student's coursework.
- iii. Providing information or responding to questions about the content of a course or competency.
- iv. Facilitating discussion regarding the content of a course or competency.

SECTION E – Program Management

Subsection 2 – Faculty

IX.E.2.b. ~~*Distance education faculty engage students in*~~ *Document timely, regular and substantive interactions between faculty and students* ~~*and among students within the distance education courses*~~ *environment.*

~~Faculty evidences this~~ Regular and substantive interactions between faculty and students are evidenced within the distance education ~~delivery system through the use of a variety of synchronous or asynchronous techniques~~ environment. The quality of interaction should approximate the residential instructional environment. This applies to both blended and full distance education delivery.

SECTION H – Disclosures

~~**IX.H.5.** Disclose in writing, prior to enrollment, any material circumstance that may adversely impact an applicant's ability to complete a distance education program.~~

~~An institution or program publishes in its catalog the states in which it is authorized to deliver distance education.~~

~~An institution or program publishes in its catalog a policy that includes:~~

- ~~i. The process by which the student's physical location at the time of enrollment is determined.~~
- ~~ii. The process by which students notify the institution of a change to their physical location.~~
- ~~iii. The basis for determination of the student's physical location.~~
- ~~iv. A disclosure that student relocation to a state in which the institution does not have approval to operate may adversely impact the student's ability to complete the program.~~

~~Basis for determining student's physical location may include, but is not limited to, government issued identification, signed student attestation, or other documentation of physical location. The policy must be consistently applied to all students participating in distance education.~~

IX.H.56. *Disclose in writing, prior to enrollment, any material circumstances that may adversely impact an applicant's ability to gain employment in the field for which the applicant is trained.*

If the institution or program offers distance education outside the state in which the institution or program is physically located, it must disclose to the student prior to enrollment, in writing, any barriers to ~~credentialing, licensure, or~~ employment for students receiving education in those states.

GLOSSARY

Academic Engagement – Active participation by a student in an instructional activity related to the student’s course of study that is defined by the institution in compliance with applicable state and accreditation requirements including attending a synchronous class, lecture, externship, or clinical or laboratory activity, physically or online, where there is an opportunity for interaction between the instructor and students; submitting an academic assignment; taking an assessment or an exam; participating in an interactive tutorial, webinar, or other interactive computer-assisted instruction; participating in a student group, group project, or an online discussion that is assigned by the institution; or, interacting with an instructor about academic matters.

- Academic engagement does not include living in institutional housing, participating in the institution’s meal plan, logging into an online class or tutorial without any further participation, or participating in academic counseling or advisement.

Clock Hours – A period of time consisting of:

- A 50- to 60-minute class, lecture, or externship in a 60-minute period;
- A 50- to 60-minute faculty-supervised laboratory or clinical experience in a 60-minute period; or,
- In distance education, 50- to 60-minutes in a 60-minute period of attendance in:
 - A synchronous or asynchronous class, lecture, clinical or externship where there is opportunity for direct interaction between the instructor and students; or
 - An asynchronous learning activity involving academic engagement in which the student interacts with technology that can estimate the amount of time that the student participates in the activity.

Contact Hours – See Clock Hours.

Credit Hours – A credit hour is an amount of student work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement, defined by an institution, as approved by the institution’s accrediting agency or state approval agency, that is consistent with commonly accepted practice in postsecondary education that reasonably approximates:

- Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class work each week for a minimum of fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or a minimum of ten weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different period of time; or,
- At least an equivalent amount of work as required in this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution, including laboratory work, externships, clinicals, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours; and,

In determining the amount of work associated with a credit hour, institutions are permitted to consider a variety of delivery methods, measurements of student work, academic calendars, disciplines, and degree levels.

Direct Instruction – Academic approaches that are structured, sequenced, and overseen by faculty, including the presentation of educational content to students by faculty, such as in a synchronous or asynchronous lecture or demonstration.

Direct Notice – Notification provided to an individual on a one-to-one basis through an appropriate mailing or publication, including direct mailing through the U.S. Postal Service, campus mail, or electronic mail. Posting on a website alone is not sufficient notice.

Distance Education (Distance Learning) – A formal educational process that uses one or more of the following technologies listed below (i-iv) to deliver instruction to students who are separated from ~~the~~ instructors and to support regular and substantive interaction between students and the instructor or instructors, either synchronously or asynchronously.

- i. the ~~I~~Internet;
- ii. one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices;
- iii. audioconferencing; ~~or~~
- iv. ~~video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in 1 through 3~~ other media used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed in i.-iii.

Program – A combination of courses and related activities (e.g., laboratory, externship, competency achievement) that lead to the awarding of an academic, professional, or vocational degree; a certificate; or another recognized educational credential.

State(s) – The 50 United States of America including the District of Columbia and the U.S. Territories.