



ACCET Document 25 – Policy for New, Revised, and Existing Programs/Courses

(Certificates, Occupational Associate Degrees, Applied Bachelor's 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 (ACCET Document 25.1 & 25.2 – Application for New or Revised Program/Course and Corresponding Checklist), 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. Inactivation is required, by campus, for all programs/courses that have not had active enrollment for 24 consecutive months. Once inactive at all locations, a new program application is required, as outlined in this document.

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 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 that 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 US 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 allied health programs). 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 are 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 Program Review Committee.

Following interim approval, the institution will be required to submit a narrative program report focusing on standards pertaining to curriculum, instruction, and evaluation, including Standards IV–VI, Standard VII.A, Standard VIII, Standard IX.A, Standard IX.C if the program prepares graduates for certification and/or licensure, and Standard IX.D if there will be program graduates by the time of the program visit, along with any required field-specific program template. The institution will also be scheduled for a program visit, which may be conducted virtually, typically within six months of the implementation of an out-of-scope new program. An ACCET evaluation team comprising at least two persons (a content specialist and an ACCET Commission Representative) will conduct the visit. The results of this review, including the team report and the institution's response, will be presented to the Accrediting Commission for final approval. The requirement for this special evaluation may be waived if the institution will be visited for the purpose of reaccreditation within a 12-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. New out-of-scope programs will be required to adhere to ACCET's annual reporting requirements in the normal course.

Substantive program changes that represent a significant departure from the institution's previously approved scope and overall mission will result in a full on-site evaluation (ASER and full team visit). As an example, 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 a complete ASER and full team visit, as noted above.

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 that 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 that 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 Hour.*¹ 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).

¹ 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.

- 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 that may affect the implementation of one system over the other. All 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. 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 that 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 that 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 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 student 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), the Associate of Applied Technology (AAT), and the Associate of Occupational Studies (AOS). 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 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 general education courses necessary to meet the specific degree requirements. All OAD 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. Note that the executed articulation agreement must be provided for ACCET approval along with the completed ACCET Document 25.OAD 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. The institution must offer general education courses in multiple disciplines, and students must take at least one general education course in each of the following three disciplines: (1) natural and physical sciences (e.g., mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry); (2) social and behavioral sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology, history, geography, economics); and (3) humanities and fine arts (e.g., English, written and oral communications, literature, foreign language).

Applied Bachelor's Degrees

ACCET initiated a pilot project to review and approve applied bachelor's degree programs to be offered by selected accredited institution(s), with an assessment to be made subsequently as to whether to continue the approval of additional applied bachelor's degree programs. ACCET is not accepting new applications at this time.

An applied bachelor's degree program has a comprehensive curriculum that appropriately balances general education and occupationally related coursework to prepare graduates for gainful employment and career development. Institutions awarding the applied bachelor's degree 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 applied bachelor's degree program from the graduate of a similar program offered at the certificate or associate degree level.

The curriculum for the applied bachelor's degree program must demonstrate the appropriate academic rigor and include both the vocational and the general education courses necessary to meet the specific degree requirements and the measurable educational objectives of the program. The general education component of the applied bachelor's degree program(s) supports the requirements of the vocational objectives both in scope and in number. The curriculum includes a course numbering system that incorporates course sequencing, including prerequisites. The following policy guidelines govern applied bachelor's degree programs:

1. An applied bachelor's degree program must include a comprehensive curriculum with appropriate coursework to achieve the educational objectives of the program. The curriculum must provide an appropriate balance between general education courses and technical, occupationally-related courses. There must also be an appropriate balance between lower-division and upper-division coursework, with the program comprised of a minimum of 60 semester hours or 90 quarter hours of upper-level coursework.
2. An applied bachelor's degree program must be a minimum of four academic years in length and must be measured in quarter or semester credit hours, with each degree requiring a minimum of 120 semester credit hours or 180 quarter credit hours. The program is typically offered over a period of eight semesters, twelve quarters, or equivalent.
3. An applied bachelor's degree program must include a minimum of 30 semester credit hours or 45 quarter credit hours of general education courses that are designed to develop essential academic skills for enhanced and continued learning. The institution must offer general education courses in multiple disciplines, and students must take at least two general education courses in each of the following three disciplines: (1) natural and physical sciences (mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry, etc.); (2) social and behavioral sciences (psychology, sociology, history, geography, economics, etc.); and (3) humanities and fine arts (English, written and oral communications, literature, foreign language).
4. An applied bachelor's degree program must include a minimum of 60% of the coursework (at least 72 semester credit hours or 108 quarter credit hours) in the occupational field for which the degree is awarded. Within those occupationally related courses, an institution may offer one or more concentrations, which provide a focus area of training and establish specialized learning experiences beyond the generalist level. Concentrations must consist of at least 24 semester credit hours or 36 quarter credit hours of occupationally specialized coursework.
5. Courses required to complete the bachelor's degree program must be offered on a schedule that allows students to progress through the program and complete their degree requirements in a timely manner, without unscheduled interruption.

6. An applied bachelor's degree program may be structured as a 2 + 2 program, with students completing an occupational associate degree that transfers into the applied bachelor's degree. In such cases, the more rigorous requirements of the upper-level degree apply to the lower-level degree, including the minimum qualifications for instructors of general education courses.

Distance Learning

Distance Learning is educational delivery conducted through a digital environment to students who are fully or partially separated from the instructor.

- **Interactive Distance Learning**

Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) is communication and instruction delivered partially or entirely through digital technologies and online platforms that support both synchronous and asynchronous engagement. IDL requires regular and substantive, predictable and scheduled student-to-instructor and student-to-student interaction.

IDL programs and courses are educationally sound and appropriate in content and length. The institution must demonstrate that clock-hour requirements are met through a time-on-task analysis. For programs recognized by credit hours, the credit hours must represent an amount of academic work reflected in planned learning outcomes and validated by student achievement, and contain required regular and substantive interaction. Additionally, the institution must be able to verify that the total amount of instructional activities, faculty interaction, learning assessments, and student academic work required in each distance education course is equivalent to that required in comparable face-to-face instruction.

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.

Types of Interactive Distance Learning

- o **Fully Online**

Programs in which all instruction is delivered online, with no requirement for in-person attendance, are considered fully online. All course content is available to students in a learning management system and/or other educationally sound platforms. All learning activities and assessments take place online. Fully online courses include consistent interaction between instructors and students and amongst students. A program remains classified as fully online even if it includes a required internship or externship that takes place off campus.

o Hybrid Learning

Programs in which components take place both online and in person are classified as hybrid. Traditional classroom pedagogy and approaches, such as lectures and student discussions, may be supported and/or replaced by online components utilizing a structured LMS or other educational platform that demonstrates consistent interaction and is managed by the institution.

- **Structured Asynchronous Learning (SAL)**

Only avocational courses/programs are eligible for delivery via SAL.

Structured Asynchronous Learning (SAL) is delivered through digital technologies in which students engage with content and complete activities and assessments within a specified timeframe. It is intentionally designed to support specific objectives using a range of learning strategies.

In SAL environments, interaction between instructors and students is typically limited, not regularly scheduled, and often initiated by the student. Opportunities for student-to-student interaction may also be limited or absent. As a result, SAL is generally self-paced and does not meet the standard for regular and substantive interaction required for interactive distance learning.

Institutions that have never offered SAL courses/programs (defined as any course or program with at least a portion offered via SAL) must seek prior approval from ACCET for an out-of-scope program, including situations involving the application of SAL methodology to already-approved courses/programs of study. To be eligible for approval of additional SAL 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.

THE APPLICATION

What application forms are to be used?

An institution must use one of the application forms noted below to seek and obtain prior ACCET approval for a new or revised program/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
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 that 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, 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., the addition of an externship or change from self-paced instruction to lecture delivery).

Submit Documents 25.1, along with Exhibits 1-6, and 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, 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, 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 12-month period.

Submit Documents 25.1, 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, along with Exhibits 1, 3, 4, and 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, 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, 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, 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 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,
- Students do not earn credit for transfer into the vocational program of which the course is a part, and
- State approval has been granted, where required.

Note: Enrollment data for these individual short courses must be included in ACCET Document 12.b - 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 that require ACCET approval:

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