



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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**Guidelines for the Review of Off-Campus and Distance Education
Programming during a Comprehensive Evaluation**

Commission policy requires that an institution's off-campus programs and distance education programming be reviewed as part of its comprehensive evaluation. This requirement applies to:

- any instructional site other than the main campus at which at least 50 percent of an educational program is offered;
- Title IV-eligible certificate programs and degree programs for which students may earn 50 percent or more of the credits for the program through technologically mediated instruction; and
- degree completion programs offered on-line.

Arrangements for the review of off-campus sites and distance education programming should be made during the chair's preliminary visit to the campus. Visits to off-campus sites can take place during the comprehensive visit or at other times, depending upon the location and number of sites to be visited. It is preferable to complete visits to off-campus sites before or during the comprehensive visit. Evaluators will want an opportunity to speak with faculty and students at the site, as well as to review the resources available at the site. It will also be important for evaluators to assess the capacity of the institution to administer its off-campus sites and distance education programs.

Evaluators who visit an institution that offers distance education are encouraged to review the C-RAC Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education (On-line Learning).

In keeping with federal requirements, evaluators who visit an institution that offers distance education programs are asked to verify that the institution: (1) has in place effective procedures through which to ensure that the student who registers in a distance education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit; (2) makes clear in writing that these processes protect student privacy; and (3) notifies students at the time of registration and enrollment of any projected additional student charges associated with the verification procedures.

Through its review of the institution's off-campus and distance education programs, the Commission seeks assurance that these programs fulfill the *Standards for Accreditation*; specifically that:

- Off-campus and distance education programs are consistent with the mission and educational objectives of the institution.
- Planning for off-campus and distance education programs is integrated into the regular planning processes of the institution.

- The institution provides sufficient resources – financial, human, physical, technological – to support its off-campus and distance education programs.
- Operation of off-campus and distance education programming is incorporated into the governance system of the institution.
- The institution’s academic unit exercises oversight of off-campus and distance education programs, ensuring both the rigor of the program and the quality of instruction.
- Courses and programs offered at off-campus locations and via distance education maintain the same academic standards as those offered on the main campus.
- On-campus faculty have a substantive role in the design and implementation of off-campus and distance education programs.
- The institution evaluates the educational effectiveness of each off-campus and distance education program, including assessment of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student and faculty satisfaction, to ensure comparability to campus-based programs.
- Students enrolled at off-campus sites or in distance education programs have adequate access to and make effective use of learning resources, including library, information resources, laboratories and equipment.
- Students enrolled at off-campus sites or in distance education programs have adequate access to student services, including financial aid, academic advising, course registration, and career and placement counseling.
- Publications and advertising for off-campus and distance education programs are accurate and contain necessary information such as the program’s goals, requirements, academic calendar, and faculty.
- Contractual relationships and arrangements with consortial partners, if any, are clear and guarantee that the institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of off-campus and distance education programs. Where the institution has entered into contractual relationships involving credits and degrees, it has obtained Commission approval for the substantive change per the eponymous policy.

*August 26, 2004
July, 2009*