



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

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**Policy on the  
Review of Off-Campus Programming**

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The Commission regards off-campus programming as an integral part of the institution and not peripheral to its objectives or other programs. It encourages and supports institutional efforts to extend higher education opportunities to previously unserved populations, and this statement is not meant to inhibit such activities or to diminish creative approaches to them.

In keeping with the *Standards for Accreditation*, off-campus programming should be consistent with the educational objectives of the institution; maintain the same academic standards as courses and programs offered on campus; receive sufficient support for instructional and other needs; and have reasonable access to appropriate learning resources. The institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of all programs and assures adequate resources to maintain quality. On-campus faculty have a substantive role in the design and implementation of off-campus programs

In conformity with revised Federal regulations, this statement is applicable to those instructional sites where 50% or more of an academic program is offered or where a degree may be completed either at a Branch Campus or an Additional Instructional Location, as defined below. It is not applicable to short-term, non-credit, community service courses, nor to traditional credit-bearing courses offered on an occasional basis in response to constituency needs or interests. It also does not apply to asynchronous distance learning activities, which are treated under separate policies and procedures. In addition, the Commission has established supplementary policies and procedures for overseas educational programs for non-U.S. nationals.

Any questions about the applicability of this policy to specific institutional off-campus activities should be referred to the Director of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

## **Branch Campus**

### **Definition**

In keeping with Federal Regulations, a Branch Campus is defined as:

A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus which meets *all* of the following criteria:

- offers 50% or more of an academic program leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized credential, or at which a degree may be completed;
- is permanent in nature;
- has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization;
- has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

### **Accreditation**

Newly initiated Branch Campuses will not be automatically included in the institution's accreditation. The following procedures must be completed before a Branch Campus is encompassed within the scope of its accreditation by the New England Association.

### **Advance Notice to the Commission**

Establishing a branch campus represents a substantive change; institutions are referred to the Commission's Policy on Substantive Change. It is the responsibility of an institution to notify the Commission about its intention to establish a Branch Campus before it becomes operational and to provide a report about its plans for the projected activity (see "Guidelines for Preparing Reports on the Establishment of Off-Campus Programming"). The report should demonstrate that it will fulfill all the *Standards for Accreditation*, but with particular regard to:

- institutional mission;
- the educational programming to be offered;
- faculty, library, academic technological support, and student services including advising and counseling;
- operation, management, and physical resources at the Branch Campus including, if appropriate, legal authorization to conduct the activity;
- contractual agreements, if any, with non-regionally-accredited organizations which will recruit students and/or provide instruction or otherwise provide academic services in support of the Branch Campus. (An institution establishing a Branch Campus through a contractual relationship in its report should address the Commission's statement on "Good Practices in Contractual Arrangements Involving Courses and Programs.")

In addition, the report should include projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow at the Branch Campus.

Three copies should be submitted to the office of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

**Commission Review**

The institution's plans will be reviewed by the Commission at the earliest possible date following their receipt. Should the Commission conclude that the plans for the new Branch Campus appear to fulfill the *Standards for Accreditation*, the new site will be considered as encompassed within the institution's accreditation. If approval is withheld, the reasons for doing so and subsequent steps will be specified.

**On-Site Evaluation**

As soon as possible, but within six months after it becomes operational, the Commission will undertake an on-site visit to the new Branch Campus. The purpose of the visit will be to assess the institution's success in implementing its plans for the new activity and to otherwise verify that the site has the personnel, facilities and resources as claimed in the report of notice to the Commission. In addition, the Commission may specify items for particular attention by the site visitor. The "Procedures for the On-Site Evaluation of a Newly Established Branch Campus or Additional Instructional Location" will be followed in these reviews.

**Ongoing Monitoring**

In taking action in reviewing a site visit report of a new Branch Campus, the Commission may specify further monitoring of the activities at the Branch Campus. Typically, the purpose of doing so will be to measure the institution's success in addressing identified concerns specific to that location.

In a case where the Commission concludes it is necessary to undertake a more inclusive evaluation of the institution's off-campus programming, including Branch Campuses, the Commission will require an evaluation focused on such activities. Typically, such actions will be taken when there has been a significant growth in the number of off-campus sites and/or where there are concerns as to the institution's capacity to maintain off-campus programming in keeping with the *Standards for Accreditation*.

As a part of the fifth-year interim report required of all colleges and universities on a ten-year evaluation cycle, the institution is expected to apprise the Commission of any significant developments regarding its Branch Campuses as outlined in the relevant procedural document on fifth-year reports.

Branch Campuses, together with other off-campus programming, will be specifically reviewed through the comprehensive evaluation. The affected institution is expected to appropriately address such activities in its self-study report. Branch Campuses as well as Additional Instructional Locations will be visited as a part of each comprehensive evaluation as determined by the Commission's staff in consultation with the institution and the team chair.

## **Additional Instructional Location**

### **Definition**

An Additional Instructional Location is defined as:

any instructional site geographically apart from the main campus where 50% or more of a degree program is offered or where a degree may be completed, but which otherwise does not meet the definition of a Branch Campus.

Institutional activities at Additional Instructional Locations are regularly assessed in keeping with the details outlined under heading *Ongoing Monitoring* above. In those cases where the Commission has determined that an institution has the capacity to operate such locations in keeping with the *Standards for Accreditation*, additional sites are automatically included within the institution's accreditation upon notification being received at the office of the Commission of their establishment except as indicated below.

Additional Instructional Locations are not automatically included in an institution's accreditation when the institution:

- has three or fewer Additional Instructional Locations;
- has not demonstrated that it has a proven record of successful oversight of Additional Instructional Locations;
- has been placed on show-cause or probation.

In such cases, the following procedures must be completed before an Additional Instructional Location is encompassed within the scope of the institution's accreditation by the New England Association.

### **Advance Notice to the Commission**

Adding an instructional location represents a substantive change; institutions are referred to the Commission's Policy on Substantive Change. It is the responsibility of an institution to notify the Commission about its intention to establish an Additional Instructional Location before it becomes operational and to provide a report about its plans for the projected activity (see "Guidelines for Preparing Reports on the Establishment of Off-Campus Programming"). The report should demonstrate that the institution will fulfill all the *Standards for Accreditation*, but with particular regard to:

- institutional mission;
- the educational programming to be offered;
- faculty, library, academic technological support, and student services including advising and counseling;
- operation, management, and physical resources at the Additional Instructional Location including, if appropriate, legal authorization to conduct the activity;
- contractual agreements, if any, with non-regionally-accredited organizations which will recruit students and/or provide instruction or otherwise provide academic services in support of the Additional Instructional Location. (An institution

establishing an Additional Instructional Location through a contractual relationship in its report should address the Commission's statement on "Good Practices in Contractual Arrangements Involving Courses and Programs.")

In addition, the report should include projected revenues and expenditures and cash flow at the Additional Instructional Location.

Three copies should be submitted to the office of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education.

### **Commission Review**

The institution's plans will be reviewed by the Commission at the earliest possible date following their receipt. Should the Commission conclude that the plans for the Additional Instructional Location appear to fulfill the *Standards for Accreditation*, the new site will be considered as encompassed within the institution's accreditation. If approval is withheld, the reasons for doing so and subsequent steps will be specified.

### **On Site Evaluation**

As soon as possible, but within six months after it becomes operational, the Commission will undertake an on-site visit to the new Additional Instructional Location. The purpose of the visit will be to assess the institution's success in implementing its plans for the new activity and to otherwise verify that the site has the personnel, facilities and resources as claimed in the report of notice to the Commission. In addition, the Commission may specify items for particular review by the site visitor. The "Procedures for the On-Site Evaluation of a Newly Established Branch Campus or Additional Instructional Location" will be followed in these reviews.

*March, 2000*

*November, 2003*

(This policy supersedes the Commission's prior policy statement, dated 3/7/97, "Policy and Procedures on the Establishment of a Branch Campus.")