Titanic II: Avoiding the Icebergs of Off-Campus and Distance Learning Non-compliance

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Presented by:
Robert E. Bicknell, Ph.D.
Accreditation Consultant
Provost Emeritus
Howard Payne University
Brownwood, TX 76801
robertbicknell@harrisbb.com
(325)647-6546
LEARNING OUTCOMES

It is expected that session participants will (1) develop heightened understanding of SACSCOC Off-campus/Distance Learning program expectations, through reference to how and where to locate Commission on Colleges’ applicable documents; and (2) increased planning skills concerning the application of these requirements to their own institutions through examination of seven potential issues regarding these requirements, whether in preparation for an Off-site Review Committee, an On-site Reaffirmation Committee, a Fifth Year Committee, a Substantive Change Committee, or an Interim Off-Campus Instructional Sites Review Committee.

INTRODUCTION

Many institutions operate, or plan to operate, off-campus and distance learning programs. The Principles of Accreditation are clear that all Commission standards and policies apply to all institutional programs and services, wherever located or however delivered. This includes programs offered through distance and correspondence education, off-campus sites, and branch campuses.

The Principles of Accreditation, December 2017
The Process of Accreditation
Application of the Requirements, page 7

Careful attention is necessary to ensure that these requirements are monitored and documented for review by Off-site Review, On-site Reaffirmation, 5th Year, Substantive Change, and Special Committees. This presentation will examine the most frequently problematic off-campus and distance learning compliance requirements.

As the number of institutions offering off-campus and distance learning programs has increased, so has the level of oversight of these programs been increased by the regional accrediting agencies, particularly through the initiation of federal encouragement to do so. Unfortunately, there are enough instances of abuses by some institutions that there is a stigma often attached to institutions that may be conducting off-campus or distance learning programs of the highest quality and integrity. Adherence to the standards and policies of the Commission on Colleges as expressed in the Principles of Accreditation and other Commission documents will help to insure that abuses will not occur. In addition, careful, constant attention must be paid to changing requirements that affect these programs.
As indicated in the introduction above, the requirements of SACSCOC apply to ALL programs. However, it is easy to assume that institutional reporting only pertains to off-campus sites which offer more than 50% or more of a degree program. Substantive Change requirements do categorize sites as (a) more than 50%, (b) 25% to 50%, and (c) less than 25%. This distinction is applicable to which form of SACSCOC Substantive Change approval/notification is required at the initiation of new locations. Once the Substantive Change process has been completed, ALL instruction at any site or distance learning program offering any coursework falls under the regular reporting requirements of the Principles of Accreditation and the supporting SACSCOC policies and documents found in the following list of SACSCOC resources.

RESOURCES

Three Primary References

SACSCOC accredits degree-granting higher education institutions and entities based on requirements in *The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement.* These requirements apply to all institutional programs and services, wherever located or however delivered. This includes programs offered through distance and correspondence education, off-campus sites, and branch campuses. Consequently, when preparing documents for the Commission demonstrating compliance with the Principles of Accreditation, an institution must include these programs in its “Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews” and address these programs in its analysis and documentation of compliance.


**Branch Campus** A branch campus is an instructional site located geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location is independent of the main campus if the location is (1) permanent in nature; (2) offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, diploma, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; (3) has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

**Correspondence Education** Correspondence education is a formal educational process under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor. Interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; courses are typically self-paced. (See SACSCOC policy Distance and Correspondence Education.)

**Distance Education** In conjunction with the federal definition, SACSCOC defines distance education as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction (interaction between students and instructors and among students) in a course occurs when students and instructors are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. A distance education course may use the Internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CDROMs, if used as part of the distance learning course or program. (See SACSCOC policy Distance and Correspondence Education.)
**Off-Campus Instructional Site** An off-campus instructional site is a teaching site located geographically apart from the main campus. A site at which an institution provides electronic delivery and where students go to access the support services needed is also considered an off-campus instructional site. The site is not independent of the institution’s main campus..


**Commission Policies**
Definition: A policy is a required course of action to be followed by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) or its member or candidate institutions. SACSCOC policies may also include procedures, which are likewise a required course of action to be followed by SACSCOC or its member or candidate institutions. The Principles of Accreditation require that an institution comply with the policies and procedures of SACSCOC. Policies are approved by vote of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. At its discretion, the Board may choose to forward a policy to the College Delegate Assembly for approval.

**Commission Guidelines**
Definition: A guideline is an advisory statement designed to assist institutions in fulfilling accreditation requirements. As such, guidelines describe recommended educational practices for documenting requirements of the Principles of Accreditation and are approved by the Executive Council of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees. The guidelines are examples of commonly accepted practices that constitute compliance with the standard. Depending on the nature and mission of the institution, however, other approaches may be more appropriate and also provide evidence of compliance.

**Commission Good Practices**
Definition: Good practices are commonly-accepted practices within the higher education community which enhance institutional quality. Good practices may be formulated by outside agencies and organizations and endorsed by the Executive Council of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees or the Board itself. Good practice documents are available on the SACSCOC website (www.sacscoc.org). SACSCOC

**Commission Position Statements**
Definition: A position statement examines an issue facing the SACSCOC membership, describes appropriate approaches, and states the SACSCOC stance on the issue. It is endorsed by the Executive Council of the SACSCOC Board of Trustees or the SACSCOC Board of Trustees.
Commission on Colleges Documents

All of the following references are to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges Website: www.sacscoc.org. With the December 2017 approval of the revision to the Principles of Accreditation, most forms and documents were updated during 2018. Pay careful attention to the “Recent Changes to the Web Site” section of the SACSCOC website to be sure you are aware of ongoing revisions to Commission documents.

*Principles of Accreditation: Foundation for Quality Enhancement* (December 2017 Edition)


Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards (July 2018)

Credit Hours (August 2018)

Distance and Correspondence Education (August 2018)

Dual Enrollment (June 2018)

Faculty Roster Form (April 2018)

Full-time Faculty (Revised June 2019)

General Instructions for Completing the Faculty Roster Form (April 2019)

Guidelines for Addressing Distance and Correspondence Education (December 2011)

Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews (January 2018)

Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports (June 2018)

Reports Submitted for SACSCOC Review (June 2019)

Substantive Change for SACSCOC Accredited Institutions (December 2018)
Two Detailed Guides for Off-campus/Distance Learning Preparation for SACSCOC Review


This guide provides assistance for peer reviewers when preparing to serve as evaluators of distance and correspondence education and also off-campus instructional sites and branch campuses, especially as part of the reaffirmation process. It should be used in conjunction with the Principles of Accreditation, the Resource Manual, and the Handbook for Peer Evaluators as well as the Commission policy Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports.

The underlying rationale for these reviews is that the Principles of Accreditation applies to all institutional programs and services, wherever located or however delivered. This includes programs offered through distance and correspondence education, off-campus sites, and branch campuses. The institution must have incorporated an assessment of its compliance with appropriate standards for these circumstances. Furthermore, federal mandates require that on-site reaffirmation committees explicitly review distance and correspondence educational programs as well as all branch campuses. The committee must also visit a representative sample of other off-campus instructional sites where 50 percent or more of the coursework for a program is offered.

Generally, issues of compliance with the Principles of Accreditation as related to off-campus sites and distance/correspondence education will appear in a committee’s deliberations and in its report of findings within the standard of the Principles where there is an issue. If the issue is specific to location or mode of delivery, the narrative and the wording of the finding should make that clear. For example, the institution may have provided sufficient and acceptable information concerning distance education as it relates to physical resources, academic and student support services, library and learning resources, and the like, but totally omitted any reference about student access to full-time faculty or what role the faculty played at the locations or via the delivery mode. In that case, the review committee might find the institution in noncompliance with Standard 6.1 (Full-time faculty) and/or Standard 6.2.b (Program faculty), specifically citing that the issue is related to the location and/or modality of instruction, with details in the narrative of the report. However, if the nature of the issue is a general lack of attention in the institution’s materials to distance or correspondence education, or to off-campus sites or branch campuses, there is a separate standard specific to that concern: Standard 14.3, which reads as follows:

The institution applies all appropriate standards and policies to its distance learning programs, branch campuses, and off-campus instructional sites.

(Comprehensive institutional reviews)
When citing this standard of the *Principles* as in noncompliance (off-site committees) or in writing a recommendation on this standard (on-site committees), the review committee is essentially saying that the presentation was largely devoid of material that allowed a review of distance or correspondence education, and/or off-campus sites to include branch campuses. Such a finding or correspondence education, and/or off-campus sites to include branch campuses. Such a finding or recommendation would then entail a rather substantial institutional response directed specifically Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement 187 at the mode of delivery or location of delivery, and covering a broad array of standards from the Principles. However, the standards in the rest of the *Principles* where information was omitted could be found in compliance if the submitted materials support compliance for the locations and modes of delivery not covered by the finding in Standard 14.3.

See Appendix C of the Resource Manual for the full section, with its references to applicable specific standards.

**Commission on Colleges Visiting Committee Expectations** ("Off-campus Site Purpose and Process" instructions given to On-site Reaffirmation Committees). This document is not found on the SACSCOC web site and has not yet been updated in its references to the numbered standards of the *Principles of Accreditation*. Thanks to Dr. Crystal Baird, Commission on Colleges Vice President, for providing the document.

**Visiting Off-Campus Sites**

**Purpose of Visiting Off-Campus Site**

Federal regulations require visits to off-campus sites as part of the reaffirmation of accreditation. The purpose of the visit is to determine if the institution has adequate personnel, facilities, and resources to operate all off-campus sites. The visit assures that the student learning outcomes are comparable to those on the main campus, and resources supporting student success and the educational programs are adequate.

**Process:**

You will tour the facilities, talk with faculty and staff, and review the support activities relative to the educational programs offered at the off-campus site. During your visit, if you find comparability to programs (or similar programs) on the main campus, and adequacy of /access to appropriate support services and physical resources you will report as such to the full committee and your visit will be noted in the Reaffirmation Report (Appendix B). If you determine that there is non-compliance in any standard, you will report as such to the full committee, and draft the appropriate narrative and recommendation for consideration and review by the full committee. Any area found non-compliant will be noted in the body of the Reaffirmation Report and the appropriate recommendation written.

**Directions:**
Consider the questions below as a guide to the areas applicable to the off-campus site. First, record the name and address (number, street, city, state, zip code) of the off-campus site. Write a few short paragraphs describing and summarizing your findings, which will be Appendix B of the Reaffirmation Report. You do not need to write to specific standards but do include the concepts in these standards in your narrative. See last page of this document.

Questions and standards to consider in conducting your visit and writing your findings; additional questions may be appropriate depending on the off-campus site.

1. Does the institution have adequate personnel, facilities, and resources to operate the off-campus site?
2. Has the off-campus site developed expected student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs? Is the expected student learning outcomes at the off-campus site comparable with those offered on the main campus?
3. What kind support activities relative to the educational programs offered at the off-campus site are available to students? Are the resources supporting student success and the educational programs adequate?
4. Is the number of full-time faculty adequate to ensure the quality and integrity of the academic programs offered at the off-campus site? (Core Requirement 2.8)
5. Does the institution and/or the off-campus site provide student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections and services and to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered? (Core Requirement 2.9)
6. Does the off-campus site provide student support programs, services, and activities that promote student learning and enhance the development of students? (Core Requirement 2.10)
7. Are the physical facilities adequate to support the scope of the programs and services offered at the off-campus site? (Core Requirement 2.11.2)
8. Does the off-campus site have qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience, competence, and capacity to provide the programs and services offered? (Comprehensive Standard 3.2.8)
9. Are there expected student learning outcomes for all educational programs, administrative support services, academic and student support services, research within its mission, and community/public service within its mission at the off-campus site? Have these outcomes been assessed on the extent to which they are achieved at the off-campus site? Is there evidence of improvement based on analysis of assessment results at the off-campus site? (Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1, 3.3.1.2, 3.3.1.3, 3.3.1.4, and 3.3.1.5)
10. Are appropriate academic support services provided at the off-campus site? What academic support services are available to students enrolled at the off-campus site? (Comprehensive Standard 3.4.9)
11. Do students enrolled at the off-campus site have access to and training in the use of technology? What forms of technology are available at the off-campus site? (Comprehensive Standard 3.4.12)
12. Is the effectiveness of all faculty members who teach at the off-campus site evaluated in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status? (Comprehensive Standard 3.7.2)
13. Are the facilities at the off-campus site appropriate to support educational programs and services? (Comprehensive Standard 3.8.1)
14. Do students at the off-campus site have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources? (Comprehensive Standard 3.8.2)
15. Are there a sufficient number of qualified library staff to serve the students enrolled at the off-campus site? (Comprehensive Standard 3.8.3)
16. Is there appropriate control over all its physical resources at the off-campus site? (Comprehensive Standard 3.11.1)
17. Are reasonable steps taken to provide a healthy, safe and secure environment for all members of the campus community at the off-campus site? (Comprehensive Standard 3.11.2)
18. Do the physical facilities at the off-campus site appropriately serve the needs of the educational programs, support services, and other mission related activities? (Comprehensive Standard 3.11.3)
19. Does the institution make available to students at the off-campus site current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies? (Federal Requirement 4.3)
20. Is the program length appropriate for each of the educational programs offered at the off-campus site? (Federal Requirement 4.4)
21. Are there adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints at the off-campus site? What evidence is there that the institution follows its procedures to resolve student complaints at the off-campus site? (Federal Requirement 4.5)

Report:

A summary narrative is needed for each off-campus site in Appendix B of the Reaffirmation Report. Summarize, in a few short paragraphs, your findings to the questions above and others you may have explored; below is a suggested outline

1. Personnel – brief description of faculty, staff, and administrators at the off-campus site
2. Physical Facilities – brief description of facilities that support educational programs and services offered at the off-campus site and scope of safety/health measures taken at the off-campus site
3. Library resources – brief description of library services and personnel that support educational programs offered at off-campus site
4. Technology – brief description of technology resources, services, and personnel that support educational programs offered at off-campus site
5. Financial – annual operating budget (adequacy of budget) for the off-campus site
6. Access to student support programs, services, and activities that promote student learning and enhance the development of students at the off-campus site
7. Institutional effectiveness – brief description of IE efforts at the off-campus site
ICEBERGS TO AVOID

ICEBERG #1: “Nobody’ll ever look at these sites”. When can an institution expect its off-campus and distance learning programs to be reviewed?

1. The Commission reaffirms the accreditation of an institution as a totality. This accreditation extends beyond the parent campus to include all centers, branches, campuses, or other sites at which postsecondary degree or non-degree work is offered as well as all work offered though distance learning and correspondence education. The institution must include the review of all its operations in its Compliance Certification and the Commission will review them during the institution’s reaffirmation. (*Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports - Policy*)

2. Required Committee Visits
The following four types of substantive changes require on-site committee reviews within six months after implementation:

1. The initiation of an additional off-campus site/location at which a student can earn at least 50 percent of the credit toward an educational program, if any of the following applies: (a) the institution has a total of three or fewer additional locations, or (b) the institution has not demonstrated, to the satisfaction of SACSCOC, that it has a proven record of effective educational oversight of additional locations, or (c) the institution has been placed on sanction by SACSCOC or is subject to some limitation on its accreditation, or (d) the institution has been accredited by SACSCOC for less than ten years.

SACSCOC will conduct visits to the first three off-campus locations initiated by an institution that offer 50 percent or more of the credit for at least one program.

When an institution initiates its fourth off-campus site/location where 50 percent or more of a program’s credits are offered, SACSCOC may, at its discretion, choose not to conduct visits to any of these additional sites at the times of their initiation if the institution has previously demonstrated a record of effective oversight of its off-campus educational locations and has not been placed on sanction. However, SACSCOC will require visits to a representative sample of sites at the fifth-year interval between scheduled reaffirmations if (1) the additional sites have been initiated since the last scheduled reaffirmation and (2) the sites have not been visited.

At any time, SACSCOC may choose to authorize visits to new sites developed between the fifth-year review and the next scheduled reaffirmation of accreditation.

At the time of reaffirmation, SACSCOC will conduct a thorough review of a representative sample of additional locations/sites where a student can obtain 50 percent or more of course work toward an educational program. The extent of the review will depend, in part, on whether there has been a recent review of the site(s). (*Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions of the Commission on Colleges – Policy Statement (May 2018 Revision]*)

3. The Fifth-Year Interim Report consists of several parts: (1) Signature Attesting to Integrity; (2) Institutional Summary Form; (3) Fifth-Year Compliance Certification, an abbreviated compliance report that addresses 17 standards of the Principles of Accreditation; (4) Fifth-Year Follow Up Report (as requested by the Board of Trustees), an additional report on standard(s) identified during an institution’s previous monitoring that require an update for
ensuring continued compliance (not applicable to all institutions); (5) a QEP Impact Report; and (6) Review of off-campus instructional sites initiated since last reaffirmation but not reviewed by a committee. An institution is requested to undergo a COC committee review of previously unvisited off-campus instructional sites that were initiated since the institution’s last reaffirmation and where students can obtain 50% or more of coursework toward the completion of an educational program. The areas of evaluation as applicable to the off-campus instructional site(s) include: (1) faculty qualifications and access, (2) qualifications of administrative and academic officials leading activities and programs at the site(s), (3) student services, (4) library/learning resource accessibility and sufficiency, (5) physical facilities supporting the programs, and (6) student learning outcomes compared to similar programs offered on the main campus. The institution should use the Commission form: Reports Submitted for SACSCOC Review, Documentation for an Interim Off-Campus Instructional Sites Committee Review. In preparation for notifying institutions regarding their upcoming Fifth-Year Interim Review, SACSCOC staff will determine the number of new Off-Campus Instructional Sites (sites offering 50% or more of an educational program) that have been approved since the institution’s most recent comprehensive visit. If that number is five (5) or more, the institution will be required to host an Interim Off-Campus Instructional Sites Committee. That committee will conduct visits to a sampling of the institution’s new sites.

ICEBERG #2: “My full-time faculty is already overloaded, we’ll never go to [fill in blank].” What provision needs to be made for student access to full-time faculty at an off-campus location or in a distance learning program?

1. The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs. (Principles of Accreditation: CR 6.1 Faculty).

2. Expectation. CR 6.1 expects an institution to (1) define full-time and part-time faculty; and (2) identify the expected role, responsibilities, and functions of full-time faculty, as well as addressing any work overloads. Standard 6.2.b expects an institution to (1) define faculty oversight of its academic programs (beyond just broad areas such as social sciences or humanities, or broad degree categories such as Associate in Arts or Bachelor of Science) and academic processes; (2) describe the distribution/disaggregation of full-time and part-time faculty by academic program; (3) describe the responsibilities and functions of full-time faculty charged to support and ensure the quality and integrity of each academic program; and (4) provide persuasive evidence that the number of full-time faculty in each academic program is adequate to fulfill those responsibilities. (Full-Time Faculty – Revised June 2019)

3. The faculty assumes responsibility for and exercises oversight of distance and correspondence education, ensuring both the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction. (Distance Education - Policy Statement)

4. Provide a narrative with supporting evidence that the number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the program, and describe the impact of the new initiative on faculty workload (Substantive Change Prospectus)

5. The purpose of the visit to the off-campus site(s) is to determine whether or not the institution has adequate personnel, facilities, and resources to operate the off-campus site(s). The evaluation committee, therefore, will interview relevant faculty and staff at the site(s) with particular attention to student access to full-time faculty, student achievement, review facilities, and review appropriateness of other support activities such as library/learning resources and student services vis-à-vis the programs offered at the
site(s), and any other pertinent compliance issues emerging from the Off-Site Committee report. (Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports - Policy Statement)

ICEBERG #3: "The high schools where we have dual-enrollment sites have plenty of good teachers – let them teach all our courses." How does the “full-time faculty” requirement apply to dual-enrollment off-campus sites and distance learning?

1. SACSCOC defines an “instructor of record” as the faculty member qualified to teach the course. This person has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of the syllabus and for issuing grades. The faculty member will provide direct instruction for the course.

The institution ensures appropriate faculty qualifications for those who provide instruction for dual enrollment courses; these faculty members possess the same academic credentials and/or documented professional experience required by the institution of all of its faculty. Graduate teaching assistants, if they are the instructor of record and providing direct instruction, should meet the same academic and/or professional criteria. In all cases, the institution bears responsibility for documenting and justifying the qualifications of its dual enrollment instructors, and they are included on the Faculty Roster when appropriate for review by a SACSCOC committee. (Please refer to the Resource Manual, Standard 6.2.b, for a broader discussion of faculty qualifications.)

An institution offering dual enrollment courses or programs ensures that a sufficient number of full-time faculty members teach and/or provide appropriate oversight for the courses/programs. Materials submitted for review by SACSCOC explain the nature of faculty oversight that ensures the quality and integrity of the courses offered. The institution has clear criteria for the evaluation of faculty teaching dual enrollment courses and demonstrates the use of these criteria. (Dual Enrollment – Policy Statement)

2. The website for Dr. Crystal Baird contains an excellent, detailed presentation concerning dual enrollment programs. Her website is accessed through sacscoc.org/staff/cbaird.

ICEBERG #4: “The adequacy and appropriateness of the physical facilities and support services back home are fine – we don’t need to worry about off-campus or distance learning.” How do the “physical facilities” and “student support services” requirements apply to off-campus sites and distance learning programs?

1. The institution ensures adequate physical facilities and resources, both on and off campus, that appropriately serve the needs of the institution’s educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities. (Principles of Accreditation: CS 13.7 Physical Resources).

2. Appropriate academic and student support programs and services apply to both undergraduate and graduate programs, although the mix of appropriate services may differ for students seeking degrees at different levels. Similarly, the mix of services may differ by location or mode of delivery. Regardless of the type of student, however, the expectation is that an institution recognizes this important component of student learning and student development, and that, in the context of its mission, the institution provides an appropriate range of support services and programs to all students.
3. The institution takes reasonable steps to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all members of the campus community. (Principles of Accreditation: CS 13.8 Institutional environment)


5. How does the institution evaluate the appropriateness and sufficiency of physical resources at off-campus instructional sites, whether or not such sites are under the direct control of the institution? (Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation, p. 137)

ICEBERG #5: “This is a snap; we only meet one night a week for five weeks” How should off-campus locations/distance learning courses relate to federal requirements concerning “Definition of a Credit Hour?” Do compressed time-frame courses meet the federal standard for awarding academic credit?

1. Federal Definition of the Credit Hour. For purposes of the application of this policy and in accord with federal regulations, a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutionally established equivalency that reasonably approximates
   1. Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out of class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time, or
   2. At least an equivalent amount of work as required outlined in item 1 above for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours. (Credit Hours – Policy Statement)

2. For a program offered in compressed time frames, describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies comparable to those required in traditional formats have been achieved. (Substantive Change Prospectus.)

3. As part of the response, include a description of how the institution is monitoring the quality of the program(s) at the sites to be visited. Summarize current procedures for the assessment of learning outcomes and achievement, and how results are being or will be used to improve the programs offered at the sites to be visited. Include examples of related existing programs if the new site(s) follows existing practices at the main campus. (Documentation for the Substantive Change Committee – Template)

ICEBERG #6: “What library; isn’t a Google search all anyone needs to know?” What level of learning resources support should be provided to off-campus students and faculty?

1. The institution provides adequate and appropriate library and learning/information resources, services, and support for its mission. (Library and learning/information resources) … (Principles of Accreditation: CR11.1 Library and Learning/Information Resources and Services.)
2. **Relevant Questions for Consideration:**
What access to collections and services is provided for off-campus sites and distance learning courses? *(Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation, p.113)*

3. The institution provides (a) student and faculty access and user privileges to its library services and (b) access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources. The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources. *(Principles of Accreditation: CS 11.3 Library and learning/information access)*.

4. Describe specifically how students enrolled in a new program and/or enrolled in a program at an off-campus location and/or enrolled in a distance education program access these discipline-specific learning resources.
   - Describe how students and faculty members will access information electronically.
   - Describe how faculty and students are instructed in the use of online resources as well as on-site library resources.
   - Describe resources to support students in access to and use of learning resources *(Substantive Change Prospectus)*

5. Students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources. Access is provided to laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs. *(Distance and Correspondence Education - Policy Statement)*

**ICEBERG #7:** “IE? We don’t do that here, that’s back home on the main campus.”

Does Institutional Effectiveness need to include off-campus locations and distance learning?

1. The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission. *(Institutional Planning)* *(Principles of Accreditation: CR 7.1 Institutional Planning)*

2. The purpose of the visit to the off-campus site(s) is to determine whether or not the institution has adequate personnel, facilities, and resources to operate the off-campus site(s). The evaluation committee, therefore, will interview relevant faculty and staff at the site(s) with particular attention to student access to full-time faculty, review facilities, and review appropriateness of other support activities such as library/learning resources and student services vis-à-vis the programs offered at the site(s), and any other pertinent compliance issues emerging from the Off-Site Committee report. The visitors will insure that the institution has demonstrated sufficiently the comparability of student learning outcomes with those for the same or similar programs on the main campus. The institution would have included and addressed its instructional sites and campuses in its Compliance Certification. The Compliance Certification would have been reviewed by the Off-Site Committee before these site visits. *(Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports – Policy Statement)*

3. An institution is requested to undergo a COC committee visit to previously unvisited off-campus site(s) that were initiated since the institution’s last reaffirmation and where students can obtain 50% or more of coursework toward the completion of an educational program. The areas of evaluation as applicable to the off-campus site(s) include: (1) faculty qualifications and access, (2) qualifications of administrative and academic officials leading activities and programs at the site(s), (3) Student services, (4)
library/learning resource accessibility and sufficiency, (5) physical facilities supporting the programs, and (6) student learning outcomes compared to similar programs offered on the main campus. (An Overview: the Fifth-Year Interim Report Review Process)

4. Briefly discuss the rationale for the change, including an assessment of need, evidence of inclusion of the change in the institution’s ongoing planning and evaluation processes, and documentation that faculty and other groups were involved in the review and approval of the new site or program. (Substantive Change Prospectus)

5. Describe how the institution assesses overall institutional effectiveness as well as the means used to monitor and ensure the quality of the degree program(s), off-campus site(s), or other changes. Summarize procedures for systematic evaluation of instructional results, including the process for monitoring and evaluating programs at the new site, as well as using the results of evaluation to improve intuitional programs, services, and operations. For compressed time frames describe the methodology for determining that levels of knowledge and competencies comparable to those required in traditional formats have been achieved. (Substantive Change Prospectus)

6. Long-range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes reflect the facilities, staffing, equipment and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance education program. (Distance Education - Policy Statement)

7. Both the assessment of student achievement and evaluation of the overall program take on added importance as new techniques evolve. For example, in asynchronous programs the element of seat time is essentially removed from the equation. For these reasons, the institution conducts sustained, evidence-based and participatory inquiry as to whether distance learning programs are achieving objectives. (Best Practices for Electronically Offered Degree and Certificate Programs)

Best Wishes for smooth sailing through your institution’s next SACSCOC Review!!

For Additional Information, Contact:

Robert E. Bicknell, Ph.D.
Accreditation Consultant
Provost Emeritus
Howard Payne University
Brownwood, TX 76801
robertbicknell@harrisbb.com
(325)647-6546