ACCSC

Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges

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COVID-19 Guidance for ACCSC-Accredited Schools (Updated 5-27-2020)

As shared in ACCSC's March 5, 2020 guidance regarding the impact of COVID-19, ACCSC's first and foremost concern is for public health and public safety. In light of current circumstances, ACCSC understands that schools may need to continue to make substantive changes to the manner in which training is offered or may need to continue to temporarily cease operations. ACCSC remains open to a range of flexible and creative solutions that support students, schools, and public health and safety.

Additionally, if your school is scheduled for an on-site evaluation, or is otherwise currently engaged in the renewal of accreditation process, Accreditation staff will be in contact with each school and work directly with you to facilitate the renewal process.

Operational and Programmatic Changes

At this time, ACCSC is asking that schools to provide updated information or new information based on the information provided below via the ACCSC database, College 360.

Distance Education Delivery

- *Distance Education Delivery through December 31, 2020:*

  In guidance provided May 15, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education ("the Department") expanded "the broad approval for the use of distance education as provided in the April 3, 2020, EA to include payment periods that overlap March 5, 2020, or that begin on or between March 5, 2020, and December 31, 2020." As such, ACCSC institutions may continue offering appropriate instruction via distance education based **on the temporary approvals previously granted by ACCSC through December 31, 2020**.

  Required Submission: None at this time

- *Distance Education Delivery after December 31, 2020:*

  If an institution wishes to continue to offer programs via distance education after December 31, 2020, the school is encouraged to submit the appropriate applications for distance education delivery by **September 15, 2020** to provide sufficient opportunity for ACCSC to review the school's application(s). Schools are encouraged to check with their state oversight agencies regarding the agency's timeline and procedure for approval to offer programs via distance education to ensure state authorization, if applicable, is completed prior to submitting the appropriate applications.

  Required Submission: Application for Initial Distance Education or the Application for Expansion of Distance Education, as appropriate**, by September 15, 2020**.

- *Need for Temporary Distance Education Delivery Approval*

  If an institution did not previously submit information and receive acknowledgement to deliver some or all of appropriate instruction via distance education and wishes to offer courses and/or programs **temporarily** via distance education, the institution is directed to provide the following information no later than **June 15, 2020**.

  Required Submission: A copy of the school's plan to notify and assist students with modified learning environment to include the following:

  a. Description of programs/classes impacted, including didactic/lab hours as appropriate.

    b. Effective date of change in delivery method and/or cancelling face-to-face classes.

    c. Description of delivery method (i.e., Skype, Distance Education Platform, Go-to-Meeting, etc.)

    d. Support for students

       i. Management oversight;

       ii. Technology support as appropriate; and

       iii. Access to faculty (i.e., phone, email, DE platform, etc)

    e. Description of how students will access educational resources like LRS, other learning materials/resources.

- ***Need to Re-instate Temporary Distance Education Delivery Approval***

  If an institution returns to normal operations and then finds that it is necessary to again offer courses via distance education, please provide the following information within **15 days** of returning to online delivery.

  Required Submission:

  A copy of the school's plan to notify and assist students with modified learning environment to include the following:

  a. Description of programs/classes impacted, including didactic/lab hours as appropriate.

  b. Effective date of change in delivery method and/or cancelling face-to-face classes.

  c. Description of delivery method (i.e., Skype, Distance Education Platform, Go-to-Meeting, etc.)

  d. Support for students

      i. Management oversight;

      ii. Technology support as appropriate; and

      iii. Access to faculty (i.e., phone, email, DE platform, etc.)

  e. Description of how students will access educational resources like LRS, other learning materials/resources.

Disruption of Clinical, Practicum, or Externship Experiences

If schools are unable to resume clinical, practicum, or externship experiences in the fall term, schools may consider alternative delivery options to allow students to successfully complete their programs. Schools are reminded that programmatic accreditors, state higher education agencies, and state licensure boards may have specific requirements for review and approval of any alternative options for approved externships and clinical/practicum experiences. As such, schools must determine that any planned alternatives are in compliance with all oversight agencies. While alternatives may differ by program area, the options for externships or clinical/practical experiences may include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Clinical simulations, if available (per programmatic accreditor and/or state licensure board acceptance or recommendation).

2. Other virtual opportunities to create workplace-like settings for externships.

3. Utilization of a capstone module that incorporates the learning objectives of the clinical, practicum, or externship experience (per allowances of any oversight agency, including programmatic accreditor, state higher education agency, and/or state licensure board).

Required Submission: None required if changes are only temporary.

Required Submission for Permanent Modifications: If the school plans to make the changes to the clinical, practicum, or externship experiences **permanent after COVID-19**, please submit the appropriate substantive change application (Application for a Substantive Program Modification or Application for a Non-substantive Program Modification).

Facility Expansions to Accommodate Social Distancing

As students return to campus, if a school needs to add additional classroom or laboratory space to accommodate social distancing requirements, please contact any of the Institutional Development and Review staff to determine the appropriate notification/application for additional facilities.

Suspending Classes

Should a school need to continue to suspend classes, the school must provide an update as to the operational status of the school.

Required Submission:

1. Effective date with estimate of how long classes will be suspended and when the school will re-evaluate.

2. A copy of the notification to students, including the effective date and how the school will communicate the start of classes post emergency.

3. How the missed time will be made up (e.g., increase length of term; increase time/day over the period of the remainder of the term, etc.).

4. The school's plan for any information due to the Commission during the suspension (i.e., reporting, self-evaluation report, etc.).

Verification of Admissions Documentation

ACCSC's March 19, 2020 Guidance due to the impact of COVID-19 allowed schools to obtain a signed attestation by a student to serve as "documentation" that the student has met the school's admissions requirement (e.g., possesses a high school credential, college degree, GED, etc.). The signed attestation must indicate that the student has earned the credential required by the schools admissions requirements but cannot provide documentation of that credential due to a school district/school closure.

Given the on-going situation and possible challenges with obtaining official documents from secondary and post-secondary schools and school districts, the Commission extends this allowance until **December 31, 2020.**

This guidance contemplates that a school will support its admissions decisions with independent documentation – e.g., transcripts, proof of diplomas and GEDs, etc. – as soon as practicable after the district or school from which a student earned a credential reopens and can fulfill such requests.

Program Advisory Committee Meetings

ACCSC is aware that schools may have difficulty conducting at least one Program Advisory Committee ("PAC") meeting **at the school** in 2020. Therefore, schools may conduct each of the two required PAC meetings for 2020 using virtual meeting technologies. Please note that the PAC should still review all items set forth in *Section II (A)(6), Substantive Standards, Standards of Accreditation*; however, the physical review of equipment and facilities may be done virtually.

Additional Resources

- ACCSC website: COVID-19 Resources

- The Department of Education's Guidance for interruptions of study related to Coronavirus (COVID-19) (Updated March 20, 2020) and the FAQ Link found at the end of the document. The Department of Education provided additional guidance:

  o **Updated April 3, 2020.**
  o **Updated May 15, 2020.**

- **The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)** has provided **guidance for school settings**.