



PREPARING A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide tips and suggestions for schools submitting substantive change applications. While each type of substantive change application may ask for a variety of information and documentation, successful applications provide sufficient narrative to respond to the interrogatories in the application and include all requested back-up documentation. Following this overview are sample applications with notes to assist the school in preparing a complete application.

PLEASE NOTE

While Institutional Review and Development staff are willing to answer specific questions as you prepare your application, due to our workload, we are unable to provide an in-depth analysis of your application prior to submission.

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

- Download the application directly from the ACCSC Website (under Forms and Reports) prior to starting the application to ensure you are using the most up-to-date application.
- If the school submits an application **changing academic level** (i.e., first associate degree and /or baccalaureate degree program), the application will be forwarded to the Commission for review. Note that all master's degree level applications will be forwarded to the Commission. Ensure to review the substantive change deadlines available on the ACCSC website in preparation of the submission.
- Review the information requested on the cover page of the application and make certain that all information provided is accurate and complete:

Examples

A new program application: the cover page asks for detailed information about the new program, such as title, credential, clock hours, credit hours, externship/clinical experience. Complete everything and make sure all clock and credit hours align with the program outline included later in the application.

A non-substantive program modification or substantive program modification: Make sure the current program title, credential, clock hours, credit hours, and externship hours match what is currently approved by ACCSC. You can check the web directory if you are unsure of the current approved program information.

- Provide evidence of **payment**. When mailing payment, include the Payment Submission Form with the check to ensure the payment is credited to the correct school and application.
- The completed application must be **one continuous, bookmarked PDF**. Also, take time to turn scanned pages in the correct direction. It is good practice to review the completed application to ensure all questions have been answered and all documentation is included. When reviewing the completed application, it helps to review the application from an “outsider” perspective:

In some applications, “Not Applicable” may be an acceptable response, i.e., externship information – the program may not have an externship; general education faculty for a non-degree program with no general education courses. Otherwise please provide all information requested.

- **Narrative responses** – provide a narrative that directly addresses the information requested in the application. No need to make it a dissertation! More is not necessarily better; however, the response should provide sufficient information to specifically address the item.
- In new program applications, when providing information about a **proposed program’s viability**, use local, and/or national data, when applicable. For example, if a program is offered 100% online and enrolls applicants from outside your state, national data may support the viability of the program. However, for residential programs, local data within the state or region is required to ensure graduates have employment opportunities in the geographical area that the program is offered.
- Include the most up-to-date program outline as appropriate for the type of program (See the ACCSC website – Forms and Reports). Also do not try to change the outline as it will result in incorrect calculations of clock and/or credit hours for the program.
- When completing the table for **technical faculty**, be sure to include the complete information for the type and level of degree earned and when documenting work experience, include the month and the year:

Example

If you report 2018-2021 for years of work experience it appears to be 3 years, but if the person worked from 12/2018-1/2021- it is only 2 years and one month.

- If the application asks for a draft catalog, be sure to only include the items requested:

Example

- A new program - include only the ACCSC Catalog Checklist items as requested in the application.
- The following applications require a complete draft catalog and/or enrollment agreement (each cross-referenced with the ACCSC Catalog Checklist and ACCSC Enrollment Agreement Checklist, respectively):
 - Application for Change of Name – Part I
 - Application for Branch Campus – Part II
 - Application for a Branch Realignment – Part II
- The following applications require a final catalog and enrollment agreement (each cross-referenced with the ACCSC Catalog Checklist and ACCSC Enrollment Agreement Checklist, respectively):
 - Application for Change of Name – Part II
 - Application for Use of “University” in School Name – Part II

- Incomplete and inaccurate applications delay the approval process. The analyst will need additional information and that slows the process.

AVOID THE MOST COMMON APPLICATION ERRORS

The list below identifies the most common reasons ACCSC staff request additional information. It helps to review each application with these often missed steps in mind to ensure you have provided all required information prior to submission.

Non-substantive Program Modification and Substantive Program Modification:

- Current program information is incomplete or does not match what is currently approved.
- Proposed changes to the program do not align with the information on the non-degree program outline or the degree outline included as documentation for the application.

New Program Applications (Non-degree and Degree):

- Proposed program information does not align with the information on the state approval, non-degree program outline or the degree outline.
- The narrative responses do not specifically address the areas requested.
- Program viability assessment utilizes national data.

- Program Advisory Committee:
 - Meeting minutes not included;
 - Meeting did not have at least 3 members present;
 - Meeting did not have 3 members in attendance representing the program area; and
 - Minutes do not include documentation that the PAC reviewed and commented on the appropriateness of curriculum objectives, program length, and curriculum content of the proposed program.
 - Academic Administration:
 - The current director of education does not have sufficient credentials to oversee the proposed program (i.e., proposed program is a baccalaureate degree and current director of education only has an associate degree).
 - Technical Faculty Charts:
 - Courses that faculty will teach not included;
 - Credential information for faculty incomplete;
 - Work experience incomplete – does not include Month/Year as requested; and
 - Faculty do not have sufficient work experience (instructional experience does not qualify as work experience)
 - Applied and/or Academic General Education Faculty:
 - Courses that faculty will teach not included;
 - Degree information for faculty incomplete; and
 - Insufficient graduate and/or undergraduate courses taken to meet eligibility (at least 15 semester hours or equivalent in the subject area for each course area) to teach the proposed course(s).
 - Program Outline:
 - Not filled out correctly or modified
 - Catalog:
 - Complete catalog submitted – please only provide required areas.

Distance Education Applications

- Program information does not align with current approval (or proposed program if submitted with a new program application);
- Program outline (degree outline or non-degree outline) not filled out correctly or modified;
- No response regarding state approvals or school's plan to obtain necessary state approvals;
- No access provided for the Learning Management System ("LMS") or access limited to short period of time and it expires before the application is reviewed;
- No sample courses in the LMS;
- No information about training faculty to teach online is provided;
- No assessment tool to establish the student's technical skills, competencies, and access to technology necessary to succeed in a distance education environment prior to their enrollment in the program or course of study; and
- No assessment tool to establish the student's capability to benefit from enrolling in a distance education program prior to enrollment.

Applications for a Branch Campus

- Part I:
 - Proposed budget for branch not included;
 - Program Charts for both main school and proposed branch not filled out or filled out incorrectly (wrong programs or wrong clock and/or credit hours); and
 - Lease not included.
- Part II:
 - State approval not included;
 - Certificate of Occupancy not included;
 - Administrative team incomplete (usually need at least a Director, Director of Education, Director of Admissions); and
 - Application(s) for Initial Distance Education (if new branch will offer hybrid delivery or 100% online programs), Application(s) for any programs not offered at the main, or Application(s) for any program modifications for programs different from the main not provided.