

Program Review Guidelines for Evaluations of Programs with Online Components or Multiple Sites

(Intended for use by societies, team chairs, program evaluators, and programs.)

ABET often evaluates programs offered in face-to-face mode only. However, it is becoming more common that programs are offered online (100%) or in hybrid mode (both face-to-face and online). It is also common for a program to be offered at more than one site.

WARNING: This document amplifies the Accreditation Policy and Procedure Manual (APPM) for programs with online components or multiple sites. The information in this document does not replace the policies of the APPM. If there is any perceived conflict between this document and the APPM, the APPM takes precedence.

Below are recommendations for societies, team chairs, program evaluators, and programs for reviews of programs with online components or multiple sites.

- The team chair (TC) should have chaired at least one previous visit and the program evaluator (PEV) should have participated in at least one prior visit.
- For a review of a program with online components, the PEV should have prior personal experience with the delivery or creation of online courses or webinars. If he or she does not have such experience, training provided by ABET will be required. That training will include working with a web-conferencing tool and learning how learning management systems (LMS) function.
- For online or hybrid reviews, the team should be briefed on the use of the program's LMS prior to the visit and have access to the LMS for review of supplemental materials at least 30-days prior to and during the visit. The team chair should retain access to the LMS throughout the evaluation.
- Successful evaluation of a program with online components is likely to require additional time and effort by the team before the visit. Activities such as learning how the program operates in its different modes, understanding and investigating the program's LMS, and coordinating the logistics of the visit will add complexity to the visit process.
- For online or hybrid programs, interviews with program faculty and students may be accomplished using web-conferencing and may occur prior to the visit, if necessary.

The review will be conducted to verify that a program complies with the appropriate accreditation criteria, policies, and procedures. For a program to be accredited, all paths (including all modes to completion of the program) must satisfy the appropriate criteria. (APPM I.E.1)

For programs offered at multiple sites, the program must be able to demonstrate that each path to the degree satisfies the appropriate criteria, policies, and procedures. Visits to multiple sites may be required and may add to the length of the visit.

The following information provides guidelines for programs based on the *Accreditation Policy and Procedures Manual* (APPM) and the appropriate criteria.

- A program with online components or multiple sites should expect a greater time commitment for preparation and evaluation than is normal for a single-site program delivered face-to-face. Additional time may be needed prior to the visit and the visit dates may be extended.
- The institution submitting a Request for Evaluation of one or more programs with online components or multiple sites should understand the following points:
 - The “weakest link” concept applies to the program evaluation. If an issue is found within one delivery mode or at a specific site, the finding and resulting accreditation action will apply to the program in its entirety.
 - If a program is delivered by more than one mode (for example, online and face-to-face) or at multiple sites, the program by each delivery method and at each site must satisfy all appropriate criteria and APPM requirements. It is important that each mode and each site be included in the continuous improvement processes. (APPM I.E.1)
 - If a program or one or more required courses supporting the program are delivered by more than one mode or at different physical sites, the evaluators expect to see separate supporting materials for each delivery method and location. This includes representative examples of graded student work. (APPM I.E.5.b.(2))
 - If the program is delivered either by face-to-face or electronic delivery to multiple student-group locations, the program should facilitate team visits to the locations, if the team deems it necessary.
 - If it is not practical to bring some faculty members, course instructors, students, program administrators, or constituents to the visit site, the institution and the team should arrange for video conferencing between team members and those persons or groups identified by the team for interview. If video conferencing is not possible, other electronic methods may be used provided those methods are approved by the team. Visits to multiple sites can be requested by the team. This may increase the length of the ABET team’s visit. (APPM I.E.4.a.(5))
 - If students are expected to arrange for facilities or equipment for laboratory or other experiential components of the curriculum, the requirements of the APPM must still be met. (APPM I.E.5.b.(1))
 - If required courses or portions of a course, including but not limited to, an experiential laboratory component, must be taken at another institution, the program must have and enforce policies, procedures, and agreements to ensure that these student experiences support student attainment of related student outcomes. The program must be able to provide any related contracts or service agreements. (APPM I.E.5.b.(1))
 - If a program uses a LMS for course delivery, student work, or other instructional components of the program, team members must be provided with necessary access to the course materials, discussion boards, chat rooms,

and graded student work at least 30-days prior to the visit. This access should be available to the team throughout the evaluation. (APPM I.E.5.b.(2))

- If the curriculum for a program allows that one or more courses be taken at another institution and transferred to the program's institution, there must be appropriate policies, procedures, standards, and agreements for such academic credit transfers; and these must be enforced. (Criterion 1)