

Frequently Asked Questions About Accreditation

INFORMATION FOR MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

What is “educational equivalency” regarding admissions criteria?

The ATS Commission on Accrediting defines educational equivalency as the “range and breadth of courses that would normally comprise a given degree.” Equivalency cannot be satisfied solely by numbers of credits. It must include similar course work, program goals (academic or professional), and level (undergraduate or graduate).

How many copies of our self-study should we send to the Commission?

Send three coil-bound, double-sided hard copies of the self-study report, one coil-bound, double-sided hard copy of the supporting documentation (budgets; handbooks for faculty, students, and board; etc.), plus one electronic copy of each to [Caitlin Rohrer](#).

Do we need Commission on Accrediting approval to offer a course online? What about several courses?

See [Procedures VI.G](#).

How do we get Board approval to offer a new degree program?

A new degree program cannot be announced without prior approval by the Board of Commissioners. The institution must [petition the Commissioners](#) for approval following the guidelines found on the website under [Commission on Accrediting > Procedures \(V. Procedures for Approval of New Degree Programs\)](#). Deadlines for the submission of petitions are April 1 for the spring meeting of the Board of Commissioners and November 1 for the winter meeting. If the proposed degree is at the doctoral level, preliminary approval will be considered only after a focused evaluation visit has been conducted. In order to schedule these focused visits in a timely fashion, petitions for new doctoral programs must be received for consideration at the Board meeting three semesters prior to the anticipated start-up date for the program.

After a degree program has been offered for a sufficient period of time to permit extended evaluation, usually requiring the completion of all degree requirements by at least one group of students, the institution shall seek “ongoing approval” for the program by petitioning the Board and supplying appropriate documentation of its comprehensive evaluation of the program.

How do we get approval to establish a new extension site?

Both approval of a complete degree site and an ongoing course offering site require a written petition for approval to the Board of Commissioners. A link is provided under [Commission on Accrediting > Procedures \(V. Procedures for Approval of Programs Involving Multiple Locations \[Extension Sites\] and Distance Education\)](#). A focused visit is also required

for a complete degree site. An ongoing course offering site is a location where a school intends to offer a variety of courses over time, and a petition requesting approval must be submitted prior to the first offering of ongoing courses. Sites where courses are offered on an ongoing basis may be visited and evaluated as part of the Commission review cycle (the institution's comprehensive evaluation visit). If as much as half of the course work required for any COA-approved degree may be completed at the site, a site visit shall be conducted. If courses are offered less frequently than on an annual basis, neither prior approval from the Board nor notification to the Board is required. These occasional course offerings should be reported on the Annual Report Forms. Complete degree sites and ongoing course offering sites outside the United States or Canada must have prior approval of the Board and require a site visit prior to approval. International occasional course offering sites do not require notification nor approval but should be reported on the Annual Report Forms.

Are there guidelines for sending a report required by the Board of Commissioners?

Guidelines for writing reports to the Board can be found on the website with helpful suggestions regarding planning, financial issues, degree duration, etc. at the link under [Commission on Accrediting > Useful Information](#).

How many copies of a petition or report to the Board of Commissioners should we send?

Send two hard copies of the petition or report, single-sided, unbound (paper clipped), and one hard copy of any supporting materials, plus an electronic copy of each to [Sue Beckerdite](#).

What are the due dates for submitting a petition or report to the Board of Commissioners?

November 1 for the winter meeting and April 1 for the spring meeting.