

Documentation for Approval of Distance Learning Programs

Documentation to Support a Change Request

The organization's written request and supporting documentation serve as the basic reference for the Commission's decision to approve or deny a request to extend accreditation to include a significant organizational change. Approval of the request results in the modification or expansion of the organization's relationship with the Commission.

A request for approval of a proposed change needs to provide a well-written and comprehensive analysis. To assist the organization in preparing its request, the Commission poses six major questions to address and proposes narrative and documentation that should be part of the request. They need to be answered even if the organization includes copies of applications that have been submitted to other agencies, such as state governing boards.

1. What change is being proposed?

- State the specific change that is proposed.
- State the expected outcomes of this proposed change (for example, enrollment growth, enhanced services, financial growth).
- Project the impact of this proposed change on the organization's current mission, the numbers and types of students to be served, and the breadth of educational offerings.
- Identify from this list the Commission's policy/policies relevant to this change: (***see Footnote to this Document**)
 - Change in mission or structure (policy 1.C.2.a)
 - **Change in educational offering (policy I.C.2.b.)** (***see Footnote to this Document**)
 - Change in educational sites (policy 1.C.2.c.)
 - Change in relationship with the Commission (policy I.C.2d.)

2. What factors led the organization to undertake the proposed change?

- Describe the relationship between the proposed change and ongoing planning.
- Describe the needs analysis related to this proposed change.
- Describe the involvement of various constituencies in developing this proposed change.

3. What necessary approvals have been obtained to implement the proposed change?

- Identify the internal approvals required, and provide documentation confirming these actions.
- Identify the external approvals required, and provide documentation confirming these actions.

4. What impact might the proposed change have on challenges identified by the

Commission as part of or subsequent to the last comprehensive visit?

- Identify challenges directly related to the proposed change.
- Describe how the organization has addressed the challenge(s).

5. What are the organization's plans to Implement and sustain the proposed change?

- Describe the involvement of appropriately credentialed faculty and experienced staff necessary to accomplish the proposed change (curriculum development and oversight, evaluation of instruction, and assessment of learning outcomes).
- Describe the administrative structure (accountability processes, leadership roles) necessary to support this proposed change.
- Describe how the organization will make learning resources and support services available to students (student support services, library resources, academic advising, and financial aid counseling).
- Provide financial data that document the organization's capacity to implement and sustain the proposed change (projected budgets, recent audit reports, revenue streams, cost of facilities, and projected facility and equipment costs).
- Specify the timeline used to implement the proposed change.

6. What are the organization's strategies to evaluate the proposed change?

- Describe the measures the organization will use to document the achievement of its expected outcomes.
- Describe how the assessment of student learning is integrated into the assessment program.

Source: The Higher Learning Commission, *The Handbook of Accreditation* (Version 1:10/03), Chapter 7: The Ongoing Relationship, Section 7-2, Seeking Approval of Proposed Changes, pp. 7.2-3 and 7.2-4.

* **Footnote:** Under this section, for the purpose of NCA review, WSU departments and colleges and schools are to specify only one policy from the list provided. Specify **Policy I.C.2.b.** That policy is the Commission's policy referring to Changes In Educational Offerings and, in particular, degree programs offered through distance delivery methods.