



ACCREDITING BUREAU OF HEALTH EDUCATION SCHOOLS  
7777 Leesburg Pike Suite 314 N · Falls Church, Virginia 22043  
Tel. 703/917.9503 · Fax 703/917.4109 · E-Mail [info@abhес.org](mailto:info@abhес.org)

## MEMORANDUM

TO: ABHES-Accredited Institutions and Programs  
Recognized Accrediting Agencies  
State Departments of Education  
Kay Gilcher, U.S. Department of Education  
Interested Parties

FROM: Florence Tate, Executive Director

DATE: November 28, 2016

SUBJECT: Final Revisions to *Accreditation Manual*

The Commission of the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) considered carefully the comments received to its July 26, 2016, Call for Comment. The Commission acted to adopt the below final standards and/or revisions to the 17th Edition of the Accreditation Manual, effective immediately. New language is **underlined** and deleted language **struck**.

## CHAPTER II ELIGIBILITY AND CLASSIFICATIONS

### c) Master's Degree Eligibility

An institution or program currently accredited by ABHES that wishes to offer a master's degree level program is eligible to apply for and be considered for approval if it meets the following criteria: (1) currently approved to award a baccalaureate degree; (2) have current enrollment in a baccalaureate degree program; and (3) have graduated at least one baccalaureate degree cohort. (Schools are ineligible to receive Title IV funding for the master's degree level program(s) until such time as ABHES is approved for the expansion of scope by the Department of Education.)

## CHAPTER V EVALUATION STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO ALL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

### SECTION A – Goals and Oversight

*V.A.5.a. A program has an active advisory board of in-field specialists, current in the applicable specialty, representing its communities of interest, to assist administration and faculty in fulfilling stated educational objectives.*

At a minimum the institution has an advisory board comprised of at least three community representatives, not employed by the institution, for each discipline or group of related programs (e.g., medical assisting and medical administrative assisting). These individuals collectively provide a reasonable sampling of the community and are knowledgeable about the current state of the field.

Institutions offering master's degrees have a minimum of one representative, not affiliated with the institution, who possesses a terminal degree, i.e. earned doctorate, or professional degree such as J.D. or M.D.

Programs offering complete or partial content by distance education have a minimum of one representative, not affiliated with the institution, specializing in this method of delivery. The distance education specialist's role is, at a minimum, to review and comment on the method of delivery, process and infrastructure in the context of the courses or programs.

The board convenes a minimum of once per 12-month period and addresses a broad range of topics that may include the program's mission and objectives, curriculum, outcomes, program strength and weaknesses in preparing graduates, current and projected community needs for graduates in the field, annual evaluation of program effectiveness, and student, graduate, clinical externship, and employer feedback.

## **CHAPTER VI – DEGREE PROGRAM STANDARDS**

### **SECTION D -- Master's Degrees**

**Schools are ineligible to receive Title IV funding for the master's degree level program(s) until such time as ABHES is approved for the expansion of scope by the Department of Education.**

#### **Subsection 1 – General requirements**

**VI.D.1.        *The institution publishes in its catalog a stated mission that encompasses achievement of master's degree program objectives.***

The objectives of a master's degree program reflect the application of the institution's mission to its constituencies.

Master's degree programs emphasize research and analysis that contribute to student achievement of a high level of independent and critical thinking skills.

#### **Subsection 2 – Program supervision and faculty**

**VI.D.2.a.        *A qualified individual supervises the program(s) offered by the institution.***

This individual supervises faculty, oversees the programs, and collaborates with the Program Advisory Board(s). At a minimum, this individual possesses the following:

- a. an earned doctorate;
- b. administrative experience at the postsecondary level;
- c. a minimum of three years of teaching experience in the subject field or a closely related field;
- d. certification in the occupation, as applicable;
- e. meets state requirements.

**VI.D.2.b. Faculty consists of qualified individuals.**

A minimum of 50 percent of the faculty must have an earned doctorate, academic preparation in the discipline and three years of experience in the field. Faculty members, without an earned doctorate, must have an earned master's degree, academic preparation in the discipline and three years of experience in the field. Faculty members holding a terminal degree, i.e. professional degrees such as J.D. or M.D., may meet the qualification requirement with justification.

All advanced degrees must have been earned from an accredited program recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and academic preparation in the subject area of instruction, and three years of experience in the field.

The faculty member of record must have at least 18 semester credit hours or the equivalent in the subject area of instruction.

**VI.D.2.c. Faculty assignments and teaching loads must be reasonable.**

During any academic term, a faculty member must not be assigned to teach in more than two subject fields of instruction. The size of the faculty must be sufficient to support the total student enrollment in the program.

Teaching loads are reasonable and must allow time for scholarly work (e.g. research, publication, presentation) and professional activities. Responsibilities for academic advising, committee membership, and other administrative duties may be assigned as needed.

**Subsection 3 – Library and instructional resources**

**VI.D.3.a. Library resources exist to complement the program(s).**

An annual library budget to support the size and scope of the institution and the level of programs offered must be established. The allocated budget must be expended for the purchase of books, subscriptions to appropriate online databases, periodicals, library equipment, and other resource and reference materials.

The library function is shaped by the educational programs of the institution. Program related reference, research, and information resources must be available to provide support for curricular and educational offerings at the master's level to enhance student learning.

The collegiate library must contain current and relevant titles in a quantity that supports the size of the institution and the breadth of its educational programs. The library collection must include advanced holdings in the humanities, arts, math, English, and sciences; magazines; professional journals, and periodicals. These holdings may be physical holdings, online databases, virtual libraries, or a combination of these.

**VI.D.3.b. An individual who possesses professional academic education and experience supervises the institution's library.**

A professionally trained librarian holds an earned master's degree in library or information science or a comparable program and, where applicable, meets state requirements to work as a librarian. The librarian participates in documented professional growth activities.

A professionally trained librarian:

- a. supervises and manages library and instructional resources;

- b. facilitates the integration of these resources into the curriculum; and
- c. assists graduate students and faculty in the use of these resources.

During scheduled library hours, there must be a trained individual on duty at all times to supervise the library and to assist students and faculty with library functions. This individual must be competent in using library technologies and proficient in assisting graduate students and faculty with scholarly research.

**VI.D.3.c.       *The institution encourages student and faculty use of the library resources available.***

Graduate faculty and library staff are actively engaged in evaluation, selection, and acquisition of appropriate resources for the graduate program. The faculty requires and directs graduate student use of the library resources. The library's adequacy ultimately is determined by the extent to which its resources support all the courses offered by the institution.

For library resources, a recognized classification system is used. Current and accurate records of circulation and inventory must be maintained. Library staff and faculty continually evaluate the adequacy and use of the holdings.

Library materials and services are available at times consistent with the typical graduate student's schedule. If computer software is used, a sufficient number of terminals must be provided for student use. If interlibrary agreements are in effect, provisions must be practical and accessible. The use of such resources must be documented.

**Subsection 4 – Student services**

**VI.D.4.       *Institutions offering master's degree programs provide comprehensive services to support the number of programs and size and characteristics of the graduate student body.***

Student services must be provided to support the academic success of graduate students. Such services should include assistance with research methodology, scholarly writing and professional networking. The individual(s) responsible for this function must have experience in servicing graduate students.

**Subsection 5 – Advertising of degree programs**

**VI.D.5.       *Advertising and promotional materials contain clear and provable statements.***

Advertising, promotional materials, and literature accurately describe the master's degree program(s).

**Subsection 6 – Curriculum**

**VI.D.6.a.       *The program meets the required minimum credit hours and contains appropriate content for a master's degree.***

The program incorporates content that enables students to learn the theory and principles of the discipline and apply that knowledge. The program content must be rigorous and emphasize research and analytical skills relevant to the discipline of study.

A minimum of 30 semester or 45 quarter credit hours of coursework is required. An additional 3 to 6 semester or 4 to 8 quarter credit hours are required as a culminating assessment. Examples of a culminating assessment include comprehensive examination, capstone, research project or thesis.

The catalog identifies courses for a master's degree program using a distinct course numbering and sequencing system.

A student must achieve a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 (on a typical 4.0 scale) to be considered eligible for graduation. Only courses completed with a minimum grade point of 2.0 may be applied toward program completion.

*VI.D.6.b. Curriculum must quantitatively and qualitatively approximate the academic community standards for the master's degree program.*

The curriculum is relevant and current and demonstrates academic rigor appropriate for graduate studies. Emphasis is placed on high levels of critical thinking, research, and analytical skills that are essential for problem solving in the discipline of study.

*VI.D.6.c. Program enrollment is sufficient to support regularly scheduled classes.*

Enrollment is sufficient to support regularly scheduled classes that allow students to complete the program in a timely manner.

### Subsection 7 – Admissions

*VI.D.7. Students admitted to a graduate degree program possess an earned baccalaureate appropriate for the graduate area of study.*

Admission standards and processes must ensure that students are capable of succeeding in the program.

The baccalaureate must be from an institution accredited by an agency that is recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

An academic transcript to evidence the baccalaureate must be submitted prior to matriculation.

A baccalaureate from an institution located outside of the United States and its territories must be evaluated by a credential evaluation service provider. The provider must have published standards for membership, affiliations to U.S.-based international higher education associations, and be linked to and used by federal agencies, state agencies, educational institutions and employers (e.g., NACES and AICE) (Note: language from [www.ed.gov/international/unsei/edlite-index.html](http://www.ed.gov/international/unsei/edlite-index.html)).

## **GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS**

**Upper Level Course** – Junior and senior level courses (usually numbered at the 300 and 400 level) found in bachelor's degree programs, and graduate level courses (usually numbered at the 500 and 600 level) found in master's degree programs.

Additionally, the Commission of the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) considered carefully the comments received to its August 19, 2016, Call for Comment. The Commission acted to approve the below final revisions to the 17th Edition of the Accreditation Manual, effective January 1, 2017.

## GLOSSARY OF DEFINITIONS

Distance Education (Blended) – ~~Instruction within a program or course is provided in on-ground and distance education formats. Incorporation of both traditional on-campus and distance learning within a course (sometimes called hybrid course) or program of study (This is sometimes referred to as a called hybrid program or course).~~

Distance Education (Full) - All ~~instruction coursework~~ within a program is ~~delivered via~~ provided through distance education. ~~Even if a program has an on-ground laboratory, clinical or externship experience for its students at remote locations, the program is defined by ABHES as a complete distance education program. If any portion of the program is delivered on the institution's campus, the program would be defined as "blended." (Students, please note that a distance education program may require an on-ground component at an off-campus facility, such as an externship at a hospital.)~~

Laboratory- The facility/classrooms in which students are actively instructed while practicing practice skills/procedures presented in theory. Depending upon the content, a hands-on laboratory class may be taught on or off campus, in a simulated laboratory, or by using technologies outlined under the distance education definition in the Glossary.

~~Laboratory for Distance Education Programs—Depending upon the content, a hands-on laboratory class may be taught in a simulated laboratory on the campus; online or using technologies outlined under the distance education definition in the Glossary; or, via a remote or off-campus facility where the student is instructed by a designated preceptor. This differs from an externship or clinical training in that the student is actively instructed and is learning the procedures, not just supervised while working or performing tasks.~~

Residential delivery – All coursework within a program is delivered at an approved on-ground campus location.