PREPARING YOUR RESPONSE

Failure to adhere to the instructions herein will result in ABHES returning the submission and assessing a late fee per Appendix G Fees of the *Accreditation Manual*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Submission Format

1. The Response to the Visit Report(s) must be submitted as **one seamless Portable Document Format (.pdf) file** to the corresponding ABHES DropBox listed at ABHES Submission Requirements. Instructions on how to create a seamless pdf can be found later in this document.

2. Prepare the .pdf file using Adobe Acrobat 7.0 Standards (or higher version) software. Please ensure that the .pdf is optimized for web and email and **has a file size limit of 50mb or less**. Any security features in the PDF document <u>must</u> be disabled. **Other file formats will <u>not</u> be accepted.**

   TIP: Scanning in documents and then creating a PDF from those scans creates large file sizes. It is best to combine documents on the computer. This document contains instructions on combining documents.

   TIP: Adobe has an option to reduce file size. See picture on the right for details. Remember to check the document after doing this to make sure none of the content has been altered in a way that hinders review.

   TIP: When creating file and folder names:

   a) Use hyphens (-) or underscores (_) instead of spaces to separate words.
      Example: I-100_RSP

   b) **Do not use** periods, commas, number signs (#) or other punctuation marks except those listed above in a file name.

   c) Choose single words or short phrases and use commonly understood abbreviations.
      Example: Response = RSP

3. The response must be labeled with the ABHES ID# for currently accredited schools or int_name of school_city/state if an initial applicant, RSP to TYPE OF RESPONSE, and month year of submission
   Example (renewal): I-100_RSPtoVisit_32025
   Example (initial): int_ABCColl_DowntownTX_RSPtoVisit_102025
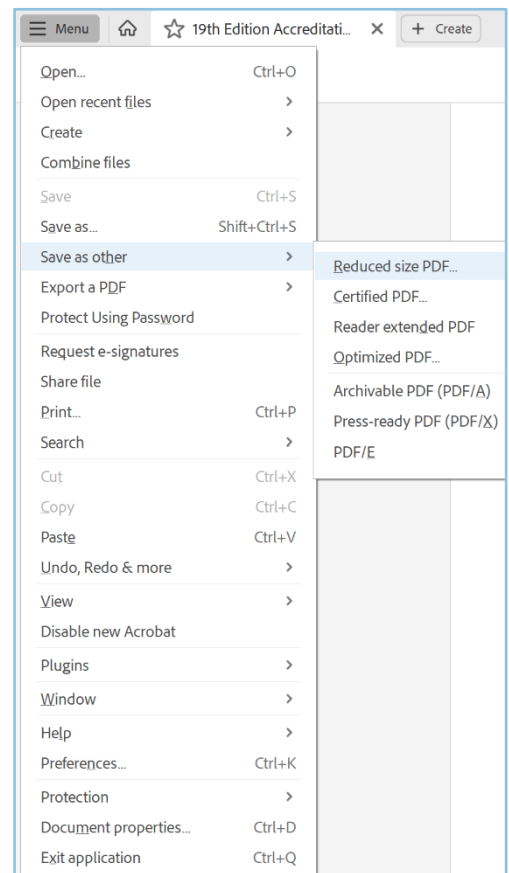
Submission Content

Responses must be legible and professional in appearance. To facilitate review, the requirements set forth below must be followed for the submission of the response.

Minimally, responses include:

1. A **cover letter** that identifies the document as the response to the Visit Report or Commission Action letter, with specific date reference.

2. A **table of contents** for the document, which includes electronic bookmarks.

3. The exact wording of each cited **accreditation standard**, including the narrative of non-compliance from the Visit Report or Commission Action Letter.

4. A detailed **narrative explanation** for each cited standard that describes the institutional changes made to correct the area of non-compliance, placed in numerical order that reflects the ABHES *Accreditation Manual*.

5. **Identified exhibits** to support the narrative explanation using **electronic bookmarks** within the document in a manner that facilitates review of the response document. A response with exhibits that are not electronically bookmarked will not be accepted. Instructions on creating and editing electronic bookmarks can be found later in this document.

    (a) Exhibit bookmarks **MUST** be labeled with its number and a description of the contents (e.g., Exhibit 3 Staff Mtg Min 32025).

    (b) If an exhibit is used as evidence of compliance for multiple standards, its contents only need to be included once within the seamless PDF response. Subsequent narratives **MUST** link or refer to the original exhibit.
    Example: If the catalog is provided as evidence of compliance for multiple standards, include it the first time and then link to that same exhibit in subsequent narratives.

6. Organization with a narrative for each citation immediately followed by the exhibits for that citation (i.e., first cited standard number and language, narrative response, and exhibits for the first standard; second cited standard number and language, narrative response, and exhibits for the second standard; third cited standard…). See the sample response in this document for more details.

7. No bookmarked Excel exhibits. Excel documents should not be included within the seamless PDF itself; instead, those must be attached to the PDF by clicking on the paperclip on the left side of the Adobe window and adding the spreadsheet exhibits. Instructions on how to attach an excel to a PDF can be found later in this document.

Creating One Seamless PDF

The intent is to make it possible for reviewers to review the materials as you intend. You must merge multiple documents into a single PDF file, with the documents appearing in the order you choose.

Step 1. Prepare the documents – Make sure you've made any final edits and saved the files you want to combine as a pdf.

Step 2. Combine files into a single PDF – Select your response PDF and required Word and PDF exhibits in your File Explorer, then right click, and select "Combine files in Acrobat…" See example below.
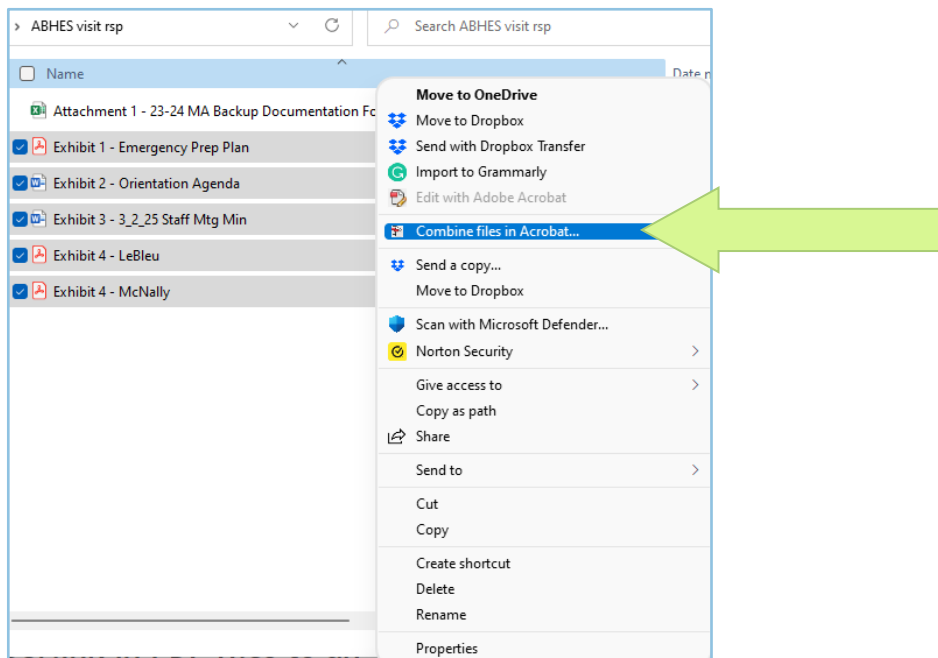
Step 3. Order the files – Choose the order you want the files to be inserted into the response PDF binder by dragging and moving them. Select Combine Files to merge them in the order selected. See example below.
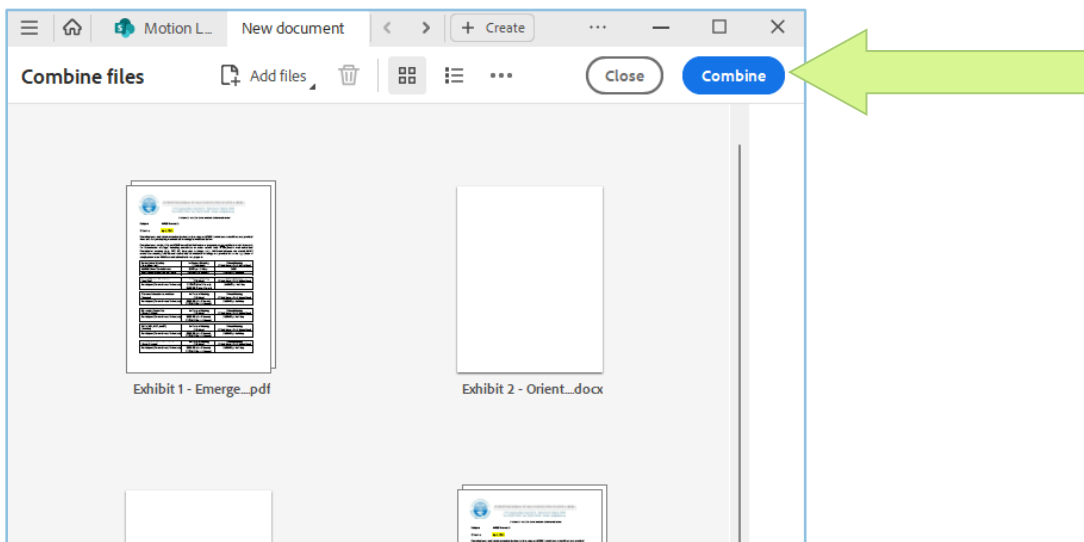
Step 4. <u>Save the response</u> – The name should include:
    (1) ABHES ID number (Renewal applicants) OR Institution name and City/State (Initial applicants)
    (2) Title "RSP to TYPE OF RSP"
    (3) The date of submission (as month year)

Example (renewal): I-888_RSP to Visit_112025
Example (initial): int_ABC_Coll_MiamiFL_RSP to Commission_32026

Step 5. <u>Make it easier to navigate</u> – Organize the pages so that any blank pages have been deleted and all pages are oriented the best way for viewing in the tools section of Adobe. See two ways to do this below.
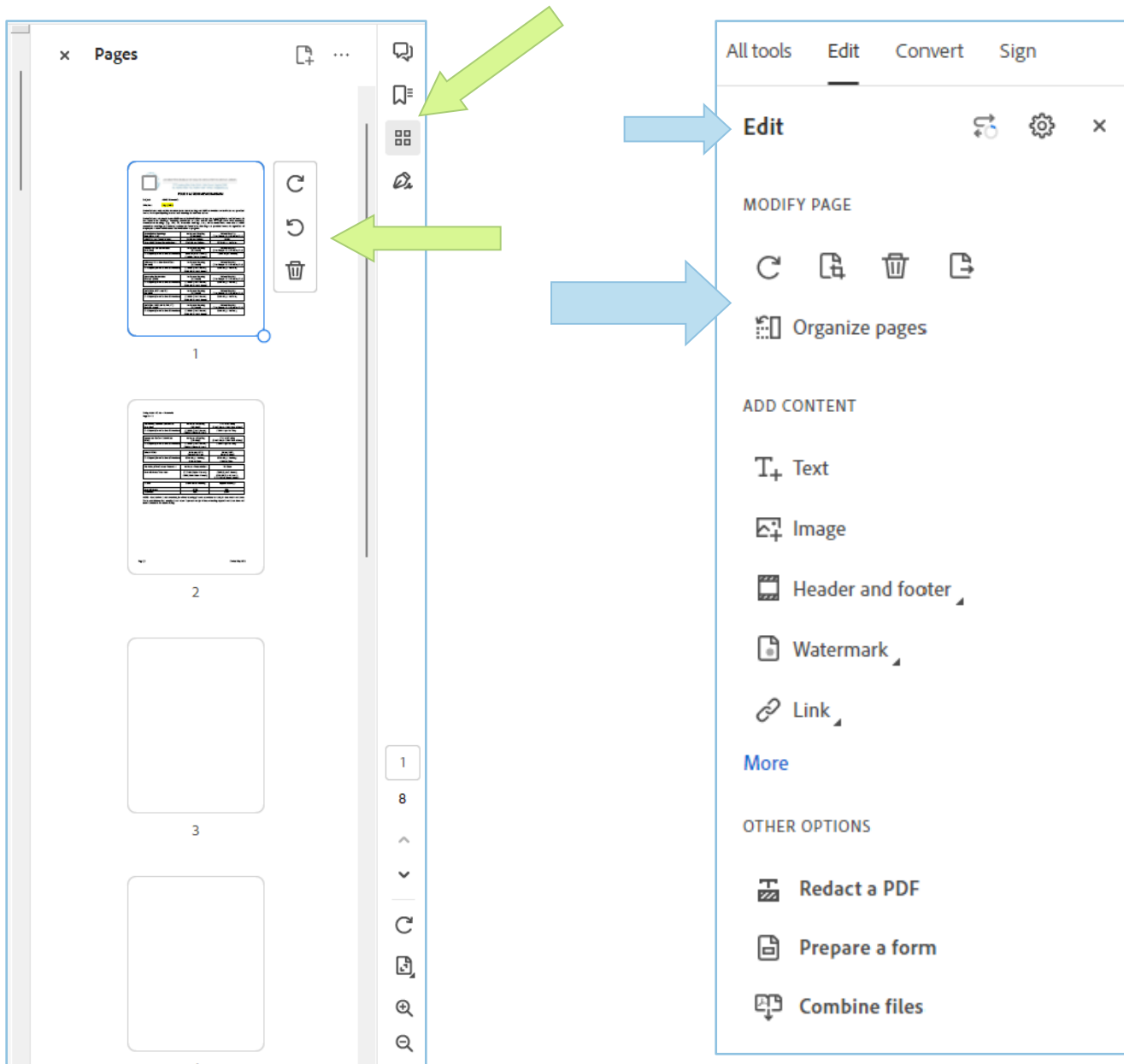
Creating Bookmarks

The intent of using bookmarks is to make it possible for reviewers to quickly locate and navigate the content and exhibits. Bookmarks provide an overview of the document and act as a clickable table of contents to quickly move between different parts of the document.

Step 1. Review automatic bookmarks – Open the seamless PDF response document. By combining the files in the manner described in the preceding section, bookmarks will automatically be created for each document with its original title. See example below.

Step 2. Edit existing bookmarks – In the bookmark pane, you can rearrange, delete, rename, and edit as needed to ensure the bookmarks are as clear as possible and align with how they are described and organized in the narrative.

Step 3. Create new bookmarks –

(1) Open the page where you want the bookmark to link to (you can also adjust the view settings).

(2) Select the bookmark under which you want to place the new bookmark. If you don't select a bookmark, the new bookmark is automatically added at the end of the list. You can always drag the new bookmark to reorder it, if necessary.

(3) Choose Add a new bookmark.
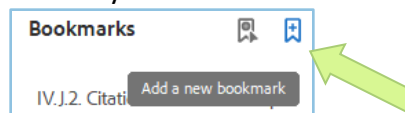
(4) In the Bookmarks panel, type or edit the name of the new bookmark.

ABHES PREPARING YOUR RESPONSE
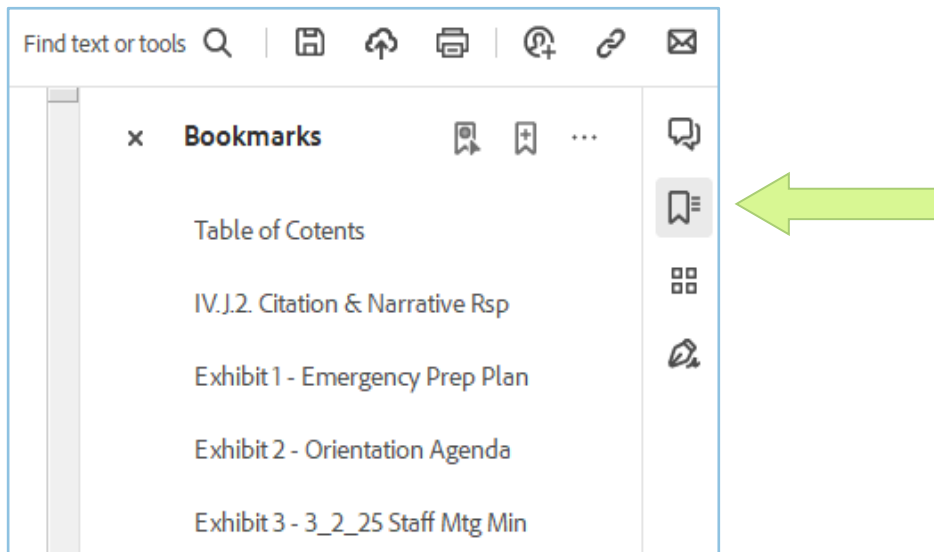
Creating Hyperlinks

The intent of hyperlinks in the text is to make it possible for reviewers to quickly locate and navigate content and exhibits. Hyperlinks are clickable ways to navigate within the document to other pages.
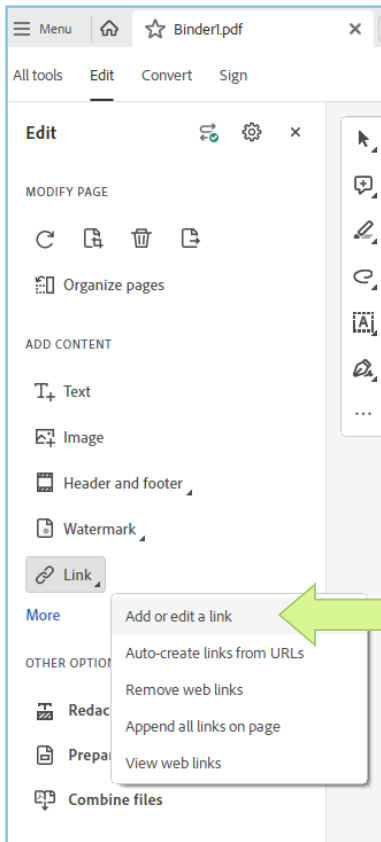

Step 1. <u>Select Add or create a link</u> – Under edit, select link. The pointer becomes a crosshair, then you can navigate to the place where you want to create the hyperlink.

Step 2. <u>Make the link</u> – Drag a rectangle where you want to create a link. This will be the area in which the link is active.
Example: In your narrative, where you identify Exhibit 3, you can draw the link and set the link to go to the page where Exhibit 3 begins.

Step 3. <u>Design the link</u> – In the Create Link dialog box that appears, choose your link appearance. Choose the link type and highlight style, as well as the line type, thickness, and color.

Step 4. <u>Set the destination</u> – Select the destination for your hyperlink. Since you want a hyperlink that links to a page view, click Next to set the page number and view magnification for the current document, and then click Set Link.

Attaching Excel Workbooks

The intent of this technique is to make it easier for reviewers to view Excel spreadsheets than when embedding them within the seamless PDF. Attach Excel exhibits to the PDF by clicking on the paperclip icon and adding the spreadsheet exhibits.

Step 1. Edit the PDF to attach a file – Under edit, select Attach file. You may have to select More to see the paperclip Attach file option (see the first image for example).

Step 2. Select the file you want to attach – Navigate to the correct Excel attachment, select it, and press open to attach it to the PDF.

Step 3. Edit the attachment – Make sure the name is correct and add more attachments in the pane that appears on the right using the paperclip icon under the bookmarks.
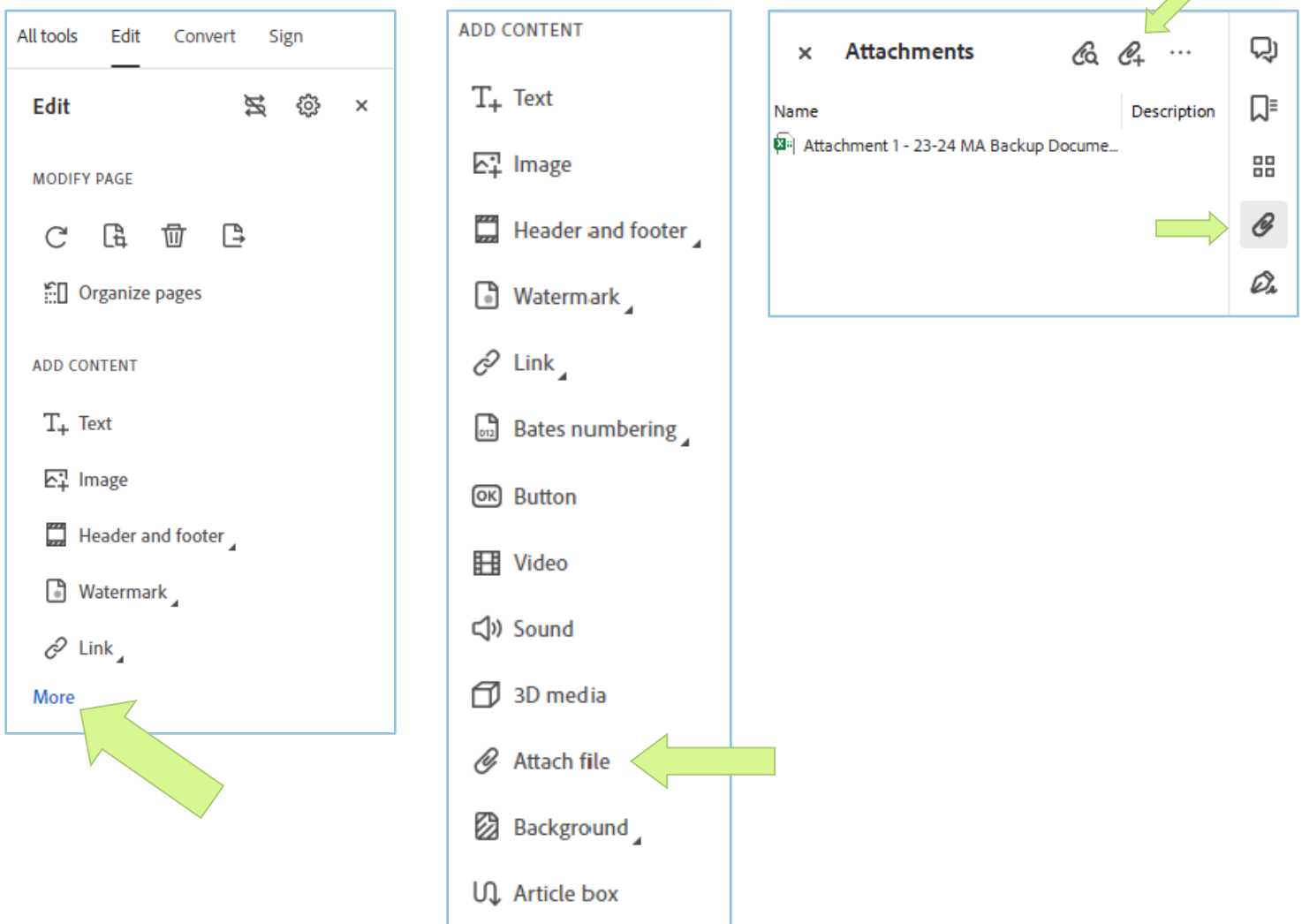
Demonstrating Compliance

Documentation to support the institution's or program's explanations and to demonstrate compliance with the accreditation standard(s) cited is required. Failure to provide adequate documentation to evidence correction of each deficiency may result in a deferral, the issuance of a program-specific warning or show-cause directive, a denial of the institution's or program's application, or withdrawal of the current grant of accreditation.

Submissions to support the response narrative(s) may include the following:
- Evidence of completed activities or actions taken (as opposed to planned future action)
- Copies of student surveys and analysis of deficiencies, including implemented actions for improvement
- Revised policies and procedures with evidence of implementation (executed forms or documents in use)
- Records to support of graduate placement categorization
- Minutes of meetings (e.g., faculty, staff, advisory board)

The required documentation will depend on the specific cited standard and the reason for the violation.

TIP: If you are responding to a Commission Action letter and you want to reference information provided in a previous response submission, you must resubmit that documentation within the new response. The Commission will not reference previously submitted responses.

March 5, 2030

Ms. India Tips
Executive Director
ABHES
6116 Executive Boulevard, Suite 730
North Bethesda, MD 20852

Re: I-555-01 ABC College – Falls Church, VA
      Response to February 12-13, 2030 Visit Reports

Dear Ms. Tips:

Following this letter is ABC College's response to the accreditation standards cited in the ABHES visit reports for the evaluation conducted February 12-13, 2030.

Sincerely,

Penelope Brown
Executive Director

Table of Contents   page

Cited Accreditation Standards

IV.J.2. CITATION

IV.J.2. **An institution has a written emergency preparedness plan that is available to all students and staff.**

The emergency preparedness plan includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 a. Risk Assessment and Planning
 b. Policies and Procedures (including evacuation plans, sheltering in place, and tracking students, faculty, and staff during an emergency)
 c. Communication Plan (including communication with staff, students, designated emergency contact (if applicable), visitors, and media during an incident to minimize or mitigate risks as well as immediately post-incident)
 d. Instructional Continuity Plan (including strategies to ensure students may resume coursework in the event of catastrophic events or emergencies)
 e. Responsible Person(s) designated to confirm emergency and execute communication plans
 f. Training and Testing (including method and timeframe for orienting staff and students and conducting tests of plan elements)

Compliance Rating:	☐ Meets Standard	☒ Violates Standard	☐ Not Applicable

Method of Assessment: ABC College does not have a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan in place.

IV.J.2. RESPONSE

The lack of a written emergency preparedness plan (one document) for our institution was an oversight. We are grateful to the ABHES evaluation team for bringing this matter to our attention. Although we had written policies and procedures that addressed emergency evacuation and communication during emergencies, and what steps to follow if there was a sudden threat to students on campus, we admittedly did not have all these policies and procedures collectively in one streamlined, comprehensive document. The institution now has the Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP) (**EXHIBIT 1**) that includes all the requirements. We are confident the Plan provides a sound and effective strategy to follow in case of emergency. The Plan is available for reference at the Reception desk in our lobby and has been placed on the instructor's desk in every classroom and is available as well in the student and faculty lounges. The Plan will now be provided to new staff and new students during their required orientations. **EXHIBIT 2** provides copies of the updated Student Orientation Agenda with the EPP noted as agenda item #5. The institution has not on boarded new faculty to document their orientation to the plan, but at the most recent staff meeting, the EPP was disseminated and discussed, per **EXHIBIT 3**.

Exhibit 1 – EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

RISK ASSESSMENT

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EVACUATION PLAN (ALSO SEE DIAGRAM ON PAGE 2)

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INCLEMENT WEATHER PROTOCOL

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LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES

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COMMUNICATION PLAN

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INSTRUCTIONAL CONTINUITY PLAN

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MEDIA PROTOCOL

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TRAINING PROCEDURES

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EMERGENCY PLAN

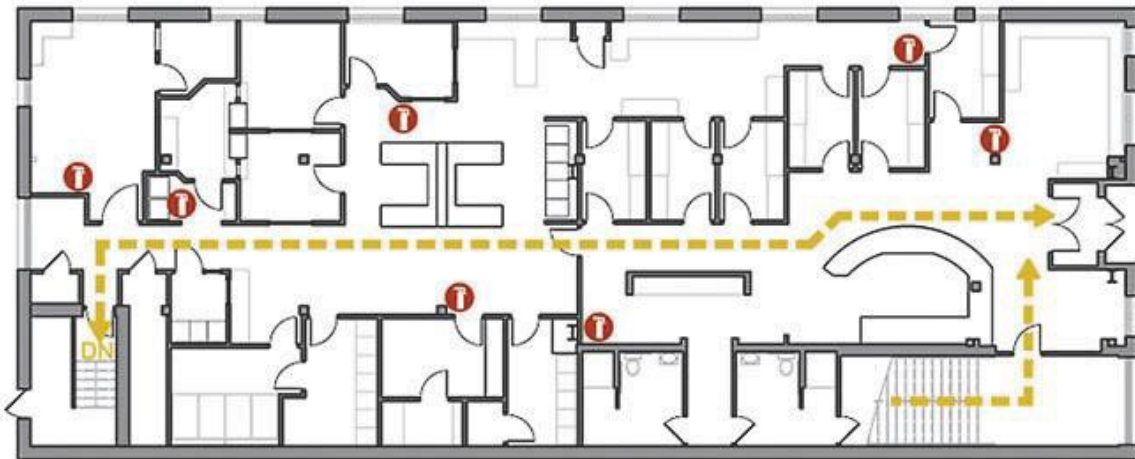### 600 ALABAMA STREET
GROUND FLOOR

- - - - - **EXIT PATH**

- -▶ **EXIT**

🔴 **FIRE EXTINGUISHER**

POLICE, FIRE, AMBULANCE: 911

BUILDING MANAGEMENT: (415) 401-9200

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:
PROCEED TO STAIRWELL AND AWAIT HELP

Exhibit 2 – STUDENT ORIENTATION AGENDA

1. Fusce aliquet pede non pede. Suspendisse dapibus lorem pellentesque magna. Integer nulla.

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3. Proin nec augue. Quisque aliquam tempor magna.

4. Maecenas porttitor congue massa.

5. Emergency Preparedness Plan: Discussion of plan and location as well as hand out provided.

Exhibit 3 – March 2, 2025 Staff Meeting Minutes

Staff Meeting – March 2, 2030

Attendees: Liam, Noah, William, James, Logan, Benjamin, Mason, Elijah, Oliver, Jacob, Lucas, Emma, Olivia, Ava, Isabella, Sophia, Charlotte, Mia, Amelia, Harper, Evelyn

General Topics

1. Emergency Preparedness Plan: Discussion of plan and location as well as hand out provided.

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3. Donec blandit feugiat ligula. Donec hendrerit, felis et imperdiet euismod, purus ipsum pretium metus, in lacinia nulla nisl eget sapien.

On-Going Project Updates

1. Proin nec augue. Quisque aliquam tempor magna.

2. Maecenas porttitor congue massa.

Unfinished Business

1. Proin nec augue. Quisque aliquam tempor magna.

2. Maecenas porttitor congue massa.

Program-specific break outs (see separate faculty meeting minutes)

V.I.1.d.   *A program demonstrates that graduates are successfully employed in the field for which they were trained.*

An institution has a system in place to assist with the successful initial employment of its graduates. A graduate must be employed for 15 days, and the verification must take place no earlier than 15 days after employment.

At a minimum, an institution maintains the names of graduates, place of employment, job title, employer telephone numbers, and employment and verification dates using the ABHES Back-Up Documentation Form. Additionally, an institution must maintain additional documentation and rationale to justify all graduates placed when the graduate's job title does not match the title of the approved program. If the institution utilizes a graduate attestation, it must have a policy at the campus level to validate the attestation in place. All graduate attestations must be signed and dated by the graduate.

The placement rate is determined by using the ABHES required method of calculation, for the reporting period July 1 through June 30, as follows:

Placement Rate = (P)/(G-U)

Acronym	Term	Definition
P	Placed graduates	Those employed in a position wherein the majority of the job functions are related to the skills and knowledge acquired through successful completion of the training program.
G	Total graduates	
U	Graduates unavailable for placement	Only as documented: health-related issues, military obligations, incarceration, continuing education status, or death. Institutions must have on file additional documentation and rationale to justify graduates identified in this category. Examples of documentation may include but is not limited to a doctor's note, military orders, arrest documentation, enrollment agreement, acceptance letter, or death certificate.

NOTE: Graduates pending required credentialing/licensure in a regulated profession required to work in the field should be reported through back-up information required in the Annual Report. This fact will then be taken into consideration if the program placement rate falls below expectations and an Action Plan is required by ABHES.

Compliance Rating:	☐ **Meets Standard**	☒ **Violates Standard**	☐ **Not Applicable**

Method of Assessment: The team reviewed ABC College's Medical Assisting – Certificate Program Effectiveness Plan and its supporting ABHES Backup Documentation Form. ABC College had 5 graduates during the 2028-2029 reporting period and reported a placement rate of 100%. However, the team was unable to verify the 100% placement rate as the following graduates' "unavailable for placement" statuses were not justified by additional documentation: Graham Alexander, Sally McNally and Richard LeBleu. Alexander, McNally and LeBleu were designated as unavailable for placement due to death, continuing education and incarceration, respectively.
Was the program placement rate(s) verifiable based upon the completed ABHES Backup Documentation Form?
☐ Yes ☒ No
The Medical Assisting – Certificate program reported a 100% placement rate that was unverifiable.

Was there additional documentation presented to evidence students noted as <u>unavailable</u> for placement as indicated on the ABHES Backup Documentation Form?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Three graduates (Graham Alexander, Sally McNally & Richard LeBleu) were noted as unavailable for placement on the institution's 2028-2029 ABHES Backup Documentation Form. No additional documentation was presented to the team.

V.I.1.d. RESPONSE

We are grateful to the ABHES evaluation team for bringing this matter to our attention. This was the first reporting year that our Medical Assisting – Certificate program had graduates marked as unavailable for placement. As such, we were unfamiliar with the ABHES requirements in these instances. The institution will now retain the required documentation, per V.I.1.d., within the graduates' file indefinitely. The rationale and additional documentation for our Medical Assisting – Certificate program's graduates are as follows:

(1) Sally McNally had decided to further her education by enrolling in our Medical Office Administration – Associate of Applied Science program. Ms. McNally's ABC College offer letter evidences this fact (**EXHIBIT 4**).

(2) Richard LeBleu was arrested for wire fraud shortly after graduating from the Medical Assisting program. Mr. LeBleu faxed his arrest documentation (**EXHIBIT 5**) upon request.

(3) Graham Alexander was mistakenly marked as unavailable for placement due to death and has been recategorized as not placed on the attached copy of the Medical Assisting – Certificate program's 2028-2029 ABHES Backup Documentation Form (**ATTACHMENT 1**).

Exhibit 4 – Sally McNally Continuing Education Documentation

July 31, 2029

Dear Ms. McNally,

Congratulations!

I am thrilled to inform you that you have been accepted into the Medical Office Administration - Associate of Applied Science program at ABC College. On behalf of the Admissions Committee, I extend a warm welcome to you, and we are delighted that you have chosen to pursue your education with us.

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Program Details:
Start Date: August 21, 2029
Program Duration: 2 years

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If you have any questions or require any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact our Admissions Office at (555) 555-5524 or admissions@abccollege.com . Our dedicated staff will be more than happy to assist you with any queries you may have.

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Wishing you all the best as you embark on this exciting chapter of your life!

Sincerely,

Penelope Brown
Executive Director
ABC College
Falls Church, VA

Exhibit 5 – Richard LeBleu Incarceration Documentation

Arrest Record Documentation

Subject: Richard LeBleu
Date of Birth: 04/20/1998
Social Security Number: ███████████████
Driver's License Number: ████████████████

Arrest Details:

Name: Richard LeBleu
Date of Arrest: 06/12/2029
Location of Arrest: Alexandria, VA
Arresting Officer: Sgt. Luke Rogers
Badge/ID Number: AVA582121145
Arresting Agency: Alexandria Depart

Charges:

Charge: Wire Fraud
Date of Offense: 06/12/2029
Charge Status: Convicted

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Legal Proceedings:

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