November 9, 2021

RE: ACCET Guidance – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Regarding the COVID-19 Temporary Flexibilities

On September 28, 2021, the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training (ACCET) announced that it had recently reviewed the continuing and emerging challenges of COVID-19 and made a decision to revisit the guidance issued following the December 2020 and April 2021 Commission meetings. Upon additional consideration of the emerging challenges and significant impact of COVID-19, the Accrediting Commission voted to keep the temporary flexibilities that have previously been issued in place until such time as they are affirmatively rescinded but no later than 180 days following the date on which the COVID-19 national emergency declaration is rescinded.

ACCET felt that a running FAQ may help provide collective clarity to membership institutions for common questions. Below are the questions most asked related to the most recent guidance provided regarding the temporary flexibilities.

**Interactive Distance Learning (IDL) Approvals**

A few schools have asked whether or not they need to submit application(s) for IDL approval based on the extension of the temporary flexibilities. As is usually the case, it depends on your specific circumstances. Here are the three main scenarios that seem to be surfacing with the most frequency:

- **What if my school is only offering IDL out of necessity due to COVID-19 complications and intends to go back to fully-residential delivery as soon as it is possible (and no other regulatory body is requiring IDL approval)?**
  - At this time, you are not required to submit an IDL application. The temporary flexibilities have been extended and will be reconsidered by the Commission at a later date. The Commission could decide to sunset the temporary flexibilities at a future date due to more favorable COVID-19 circumstances, quality assurance responsibilities, and/or other reasons; however, schools will be given adequate time to submit their applications to remain in good standing with ACCET requirements and expectations.

- **What if my school began offering IDL out of necessity due to COVID-19: however, subsequently, we have decided to continue offering portions of our programs via distance learning on a permanent basis?**
The expectation is that your institution submits goes through the application process and receives proper approvals for your IDL offerings at this time.

- What if my institution does not intend to offer IDL beyond the national emergency due to COVID-19; however, my state or some other regulatory agency is now requiring us to get approvals for distance learning?
  - ACCET remains consistent in that the institution is expected to meet all regulatory requirements as dictated by your institution’s various interested parties. ACCET’s extension of its temporary flexibilities in this regard does not absolve your responsibilities to other regulatory agency requirements. If someone other than ACCET requires you to have IDL approval, you should go through the approval process with ACCET to remain in compliance will all regulatory agencies that apply for your institution.

If your specific question or circumstance is not represented above, please reach out to us and we will talk through other situations on a case-by-case basis.

Currently Enrolled

- What does the term “currently enrolled” mean as stated in the most recent September 28, 2021 update?
  - Confusion surrounding this term is certainly understandable given its use during this national emergency period. Initially, the term was used in order to allow schools the opportunity to allow already enrolled students to continue to progress through their program with the necessary adjustments made due to COVID-19. Then, the term “currently enrolled” was replaced with specific payment periods allowing for new students to be included. Finally, in the most recent guidance, ACCET used the term “currently enrolled” once again without clarifying the difference. “Currently enrolled” in its most recent iteration is intended to mean students (to include new students), that are enrolled during this national emergency period for which ACCET has extended its temporary flexibilities. Upon further consideration of the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic at a later date, the Commission could determine it is time to sunset these flexibilities. At that time, ACCET will provide schools time to make any adjustments necessary for compliant delivery of their programs. If that sunset of the flexibilities were to no longer allow for the enrollment of new students under the temporary conditions of instruction, it will be explicitly stated.

Completion and Placement

- What does the Commission mean by “2021 year-to-date” as it relates to the Completion period?
Just to clarify, there has been no adjustment to the calendar year or completion period itself. The extension is of the temporary flexibilities around waivers specifically in place to address COVID-19 conditions, such as illnesses; needing to serve as a caregiver or first responder; economic hardship; adding work hours; homeschooling/childcare issues; inability to continue with classes via IDL; etc.

The references to 2021 year-to-date records are primarily related to schools that have had virtual visits or interim reports during the 2021 calendar year. The normal reporting for completion and placement statistics for 2021 remains May 1, 2022.

Should you have any questions or need further assistance, please email them to Kate Zulaski (kate@accet.org) or Corey Rosso at (corey@accet.org) directly.