

*GUIDELINE-12*  
**PRINCIPLES IN THE ACCREDITATION OF DISTRIBUTED EDUCATION**

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## **PREAMBLE**

All education programs, including those with distributed education sites, must demonstrate compliance with Physiotherapy Education Accreditation Canada (PEAC)'s Accreditation Standards in order to be granted accreditation status.

An education program is considered a distributed education site of an existing program if and only if it meets the conditions outlined in PEAC's policy ACC-05 Distributed Education. In addition, the education program must have applied for and have been deemed eligible by PEAC to be added to the parent program's accreditation status. Once a distributed education site has been added to the established program's accreditation status any accreditation decisions made by PEAC regarding the accreditation status of the parent program will apply to the parent program and to any associated distributed education sites. Conversely, any accreditation decisions made by PEAC regarding a distributed education site will apply to the parent program and to any other associated distributed education sites. The established program and all of its distributed education sites are considered a single program for accreditation purposes.

## **DEFINITIONS**

PEAC, for accreditation purposes, defines Distributed Education as the delivery of a substantially equivalent physiotherapy education program in its entirety, at a geographical location different than the parent program. The group of students at the distributed education site are considered part of the cohort of the parent program (see ACC-05 Distributed Education).

## **ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS**

During preparation of the Self Study Report by the education program, during review of the program by Peer Review Team members, and during review of a Substantive Change Request by the Accreditation Committee, the unique nature of distributed education requires special thought in the following areas:

1. The institution should support the ongoing development of distributed education programs and the related academic and administrative requirements.
2. Students who are recipients of distributed education must benefit from consistency in course design, communication, technology, and assessment.
3. Students participating in distributed education should have access to support services (such as library resources, and counselling services) which are substantially equivalent to those available to students in the parent program.
4. Faculty/staff should have access to appropriate and adequate resources for instructional design and delivery of distributed education coursework.
5. Program faculty/staff must be able to support the implementation and maintenance of distributed education.
6. All courses offered at a distributed education site must

- Be part of a comprehensive curriculum plan that demonstrates effective integration between educational components offered at the established program and in the distributed education sites/courses,
  - Be taught by qualified faculty in accordance with the college/university standards,
  - Result in learning appropriate to the rigor and breadth of the diploma awarded,
  - Include appropriate pedagogy to match the mode of delivery, the content, and the level of student, and
  - Include evaluative components to assess student performance appropriate to the method of delivery and appropriate to the knowledge skills and behaviours being assessed.
7. Technology must be adequate to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the learning environment.
  8. Evidence of substantial interactivity between students and faculty is expected even in situations without full-time or conventional faculty. The delivery methods must contribute to and enhance the creation of academic community among students and between students and faculty. For example:
    - a. the program/course design and the course syllabus make appropriate provisions for instructor-student and student-student interaction; and the instructor maintains a presence and interacts with students in a variety of ways throughout the courses.
      - The instructor fosters a supportive learning environment for students.
      - The instructor sets and meets expectations for instructor responsiveness and availability (e.g., turn-around time for email and discussion forum postings, feedback on assignments, etc.)
    - b. the technologies used to achieve interactions among faculty and students (e.g., email, telephone office hours, phone conferences, voicemail, fax, chat rooms, web-based discussions, computer conferences and threaded discussions) are adequate.

See Appendix 1 for explanatory notes relating to distributed education within the Accreditation Standards.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR EDUCATION PROGRAMS

While preparing the Self Study Report, education programs offering distributed education are required to address the quality of those programs in the Self Study Report, as described in the explanatory notes for each criterion.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR PEER REVIEW TEAMS

Peer Review Team members must interview intentionally in order to confirm/verify that education programs provide the evidence to prove that graduates from programs offering distributed education are equivalent to those graduating from more traditional learning environments. Samples of interview questions specific to programs with distributed education sites are included in the examples available in the Peer Review Team Handbook.

Guideline Number: GUIDE-12	
Date of last revision	Associated documents
<i>November 2014</i>	ACC-01 Accreditation Decisions
	ACC-05 Distributed Education

## APPENDIX 1

### PEAC 2012 Accreditation Standards

Explanatory notes related to distributed education

Standard/Criterion	Explanatory Notes (additions in italics)
<b>Standard 1: The Educational Program and Its Environment</b>	
1.3 (CORE) The program has adequate financial resources to achieve its stated goals and objectives and assure its continuing operation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The budget and financial reports adequately <i>d) confirm a commitment institutionally (in budgets and policies) to provide and maintain the necessary technological and training resources for programs which offer distributed education, and to supplement them as necessary.</i></li> <li><i>e) demonstrate that faculty/staff have access to appropriate and adequate resources for instructional design and delivery of distributed education coursework</i></li> </ul>
1.4 The program has adequate administrative and technical support staff and services to meet the needs of the faculty and students and achieve the goals and objectives of the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The number and skills of administrative, secretarial and technical personnel assigned provides sufficient support services for the program. <i>including adequate support for any portion of the program offered by distributed education.</i></li> </ul>
1.5 The program provides adequate learning resources to enable students to achieve learning objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>For programs offering distributed education, the counseling services, library services, academic services, disability services, technical support services, and financial aid services available to those students are substantially equivalent to those available to students in traditional education delivery models, and enable those students to achieve the learning objectives.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Standard 2 – Program Development and Evaluation</b>	
2.2 The curriculum includes: 2.2.1 An integrated curriculum plan that reflects the theoretical foundation, educational principles and values for the program. 2.2.2 A statement of overall expected attributes of the graduates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Programs offering distributed education ensure a comprehensive curriculum plan that demonstrates effective integration between educational components offered at the established program and in the distributed education program.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Delivery methods are appropriate to course content and design.</i></li> </ul>

Standard/Criterion	Explanatory Notes (additions in italics)
2.3 There is a documented plan for program evaluation and re-evaluation that is based on clearly defined and measurable goals, and includes evaluation of impact when changes are made.	➤ <i>In programs offering distributed education, reliable and valid performance measures for distributed education programs are identified within the program's evaluation plan.</i>
2.5 The program analyzes and synthesizes program evaluation data to identify need for change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>In programs offering distributed education to one cohort, while another cohort receives a traditional delivery method, an analysis is provided demonstrating that the outcomes for the different cohorts of graduates are substantially equivalent.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>In programs offering distributed education, analysis includes assessment of the quality and effectiveness of the delivery method, and availability and suitability of technical and other supports.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Standard 3 – Faculty</b>	
3.1 The number and qualifications of faculty are sufficient to meet the program's mission and goals, through educational administration, curriculum development, instructional design and delivery, research and evaluation of outcomes.	➤ Faculty expertise in the aggregate covers all areas of content in the curriculum, <i>and includes knowledge of the content delivery method (eg. distributed education).</i>
3.2 The university and the program encourage and support appropriate professional and career development of faculty relevant to their roles in the program, including support for new/junior faculty.	➤ The faculty development activities are linked to the needs of the program. <i>In programs offering distributed education, professional development activities promoting technological skills are provided/supported where appropriate.</i>
3.3 Faculty members are evaluated in accordance with university policies and with reference to clearly outlined criteria using multiple sources of information.	➤ <i>Faculty evaluation in programs offering distributed education includes evidence that faculty are adequately trained and skilled to use distributed education technology and methodologies</i>
3.5 The program faculty have the responsibility and authority for curriculum development, implementation, and evaluation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>In programs offering distributed education, regardless of the source of courseware development, the ultimate knowledge, skills, and competency levels contained in the courseware should be determined by faculty possessing the appropriate academic and professional experience.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Where a program is offered both in the classroom and via distributed education, there is a clear and integral relationship between those faculty and instructors responsible for electronically offered course(s)/programs and the classroom-based academic structure.</i></li> </ul>

Standard/Criterion	Explanatory Notes (additions in italics)
<b>Standard 4 – Students</b>	
4.1 The program ensures student participation in program planning, development, and evaluation.	➤ <i>Programs ensure those students receiving distributed education have equal opportunity to participate as other students who are on campus.</i>
4.3 The program has a required mix of clinical education experience that is designed to encompass essential areas of practice and settings across the lifespan, and that enables students to achieve the required competencies.	➤ <i>Programs offering distributed education must include the required hours for supervised clinical placement experiences. This component of the education program cannot be offered using a distributed education delivery method.</i>
4.6 The program ensures students have timely and confidential access as required to academic support and/or psychosocial counselling.	➤ <i>Professional and career counseling and academic support are available to students enrolled in the program, including those students in distributed education programs.</i>
<b>Standard 5 - Accountability</b>	
5.1 Information available to prospective students, enrolled students, and the public about the university and the program is current and complete and accurately reflects the program's vision, mission, and goals.	➤ <i>In programs offering distributed education, potential students are fully informed about:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>the technological requirements of participation and the technical competence required of them;</i></li> <li>• <i>the nature of learning and the personal discipline required in anytime/anywhere environment;</i></li> <li>• <i>any additional costs, beyond tuition and ancillary fees, associated with e-learning aspects of course/program delivery; and</i></li> <li>• <i>the kind of support and protection available to them.</i></li> </ul>
5.3 The program provides an environment that is safe and protects the rights of all individuals, including students, faculty, staff and others participating in activities associated with the program.	➤ <i>In programs offering distributed education, the program has clear processes and policies to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>establish that the student who registers for the course(s) is the same student who participates in and completes the course(s) and receives the academic credit, while at the same time protecting student privacy,</i></li> <li>2. <i>verify the identity of the individual being evaluated, while at the same time protecting student privacy,</i></li> <li>3. <i>ensure the secure destruction of personal data when it is no longer needed, and</i></li> <li>4. <i>demonstrate risk assessment and planning, including a disaster recovery plan, back-up and storage technology protocols, and a requirement for historical logs and physical documentation.</i></li> </ol>