

Second Annual Lessons Learned Report 2011-12 Review Cycle

Feedback on Evaluation of Distance Learning/On-line Programs

Introduction

The following report is the result of ABET Headquarters' (HQ) second annual survey requesting feedback on experiences, challenges, and observations regarding evaluation of distance learning/on-line programs. The questionnaire that was used to compile information during the 2009-10 and 2010-11 cycles was again employed in surveying 18 team members who conducted on-site review for eight programs during the 2011-12 review cycle. These programs provide over 90% of the program's instruction on-line, with correspondingly little traditional delivery mode. HQ received 13 responses over the course of four months - a response rate of about **72% (13/18)**. Though there has been only a nominal increase in the overall number of responses, the response rate has increased sharply in comparison with that of the previous cycle (26%; 12/46). HQ would like to take this opportunity to express sincere appreciation to its outstanding volunteers who have contributed their wisdom and invaluable time.

As mentioned in the first annual report, when compared with the number of traditional classroom programs that ABET has reviewed, the number of ABET-reviewed distance-learning/on-line programs constitutes a small percentage of overall reviews; the ratio of distance-learning programs vs. classroom programs was **8-627 (visits only) in the 2011-12 cycle**, 7-698 (visits only) in the 2010-11 cycle, and 9-603 (visits only) in the 2009-10 cycle.

Please see [Appendix A](#) (page 5) for the on-line programs reviewed in the 2011-12 cycle and [Appendix B](#) (page 6 through 32) for original feedback.

HQ inadvertently skipped one team chair -- who chaired an ASAC visit to Tulane University during the 2010-11 cycle for the Industrial Hygiene (MSPH) program which has about 76% to 80% of distance delivery mode -- in the previous survey. His feedback is included in [Appendix B page 31 and 32](#).

Any comments or suggestions about the survey or this report can be directed to shersh@abet.org.

Thank you!

Summary of Survey Results

About two-thirds of respondents (9/14) found differences between evaluating online programs and traditional delivery mode programs during pre-visit preparation. Almost all respondents (13/14) cited such differences noticed in on-site visits. Regardless of whether differences were found between the methods of program delivery, in general, all agreed that the need to meet the criteria is still the same. Distance-learning programs should not be held to a different standard than traditional delivery mode programs.

The major challenges with regard to evaluating distance-learning programs are highlighted below:

Challenge # 1 -- Laboratory (Lab) Experience/Applied Work

- The depth of the curriculum is often weak for on-line applied work (i.e. mathematics, programming, physics, chemistry, materials technology, etc.).
- When lab experience is not required for a distance learning program, issues with criteria compliance (Criterion 3 and Criterion 5) may arise as students are not receiving hands-on experience appropriate to the discipline.
- PEVs need guidance on standards and approaches regarding evaluating distance learning labs.
- A standard should be identified for the lab experience for the required and elective coursework. This can avoid similar difficulties with which other review teams may have to deal during their reviews and this can also assist the institution as well as the review team in developing a consistent program.
- The ABET member societies may consider providing guidance for types of lab experiences expected, especially in light of distance learning, and delineate such expectation in the corresponding discipline-specific criteria if appropriate.

Feedback regarding lab experience for on-line programs is lengthy. Please do not miss out the details that are available under [Appendix B page 6 thru 10](#).

Challenge #2 -- Transfer Credits vs. Laboratory (Lab) Experience:

- One team reported that the institution did not attempt to deliver any lab courses, but depended on transfer credits or credits earned from work experience to satisfy lab requirement.
- Distance learning is not the same at every institution. Some institutions accept bulk credits through transfer and work experience. Evaluating this type of credits is very different from evaluating distance learning credits and problems come in many different forms. Having standards for distance learning components will only address one part of the problem.
- Assessment becomes difficult when most credits are given for work experience or work at other institutions. The institution in this situation is forced to use the capstone course for all assessment information. Also, continuous improvement for courses becomes a problem when courses are not provided by the institution.
- PEVs need very specific information from the institution regarding the procedures and standards used for granting credits. It is suggested to ask additional questions to be answered in the Self-Study Questionnaire(s).

Please refer to [Appendix B page 11 thru 14](#) for detailed feedback.

Challenge # 3 -- Qualified Faculty/Staff

- One team reported that the biggest issues for the program they visited came from lack of qualified faculty with responsibility for curriculum with which to speak and the lack of a standing advisory committee to establish objectives. The result of this was that the PEVs were not able to speak to anyone or share their perspectives of what such a program should contain.
- Some on-line programs tend to use more part-time faculty members who have very little program involvement or less qualified faculty in terms of academic experience to run the program in order to reduce personnel costs for programs.
- One team reported that it was not clear for their PEVs as to how to address an instructor for a distance-learning class who was not part of the faculty when the course was actually being administered. Guidance is needed.

Please refer to [Appendix B page 15 thru 18](#) for detailed feedback.

Challenge # 4 – Student Participation/Learning Quality

- It is not uncommon for many on-line programs to rely on equipment that students own. While an institution may be able to maintain facilities that support on-line education from a content delivery perspective, it is still hard to comprehend how students can be exposed to the latest IS/IT solutions in their living room from their own budget. Servers, applications, infrastructure, and staff are simply missing.
- More than one team reported that it was difficult to assess quality for the on-line student work without or with very minimal marks, comments, or grades - not only a helpful type of data for evaluation and assessment but also a way to provide feedback to students.
- One team reported that it is not easy to evaluate the effectiveness of on-line chat room discussions. PEVs need more guidance on this. Also, PEVs need additional guidance on evaluating interactive evaluation strategies (i.e. significant weight given to student participation in an official course discussion or chat room).
- It is suggested that live course observations for review teams may support the emphasis on discussions/student participations and virtual labs.

Please refer to [Appendix B page 19 thru 22](#) for detailed feedback.

Challenge # 5 – Constant Changes in Programs or Courses

- When courses are changed in a few months, student transcripts become difficult to interpret.
- One team reported that the catalog was viewed by the institution as an advertisement rather than a contract between students and institution. Individual programs were devised per individual student; programs could be idiosyncratic and did not adhere to the structures of the catalog. This issue not only makes transcript analysis with the catalog difficult, but also difficult to suggest how a program that has no standard course of study required can be clearly assessed.

Please refer to [Appendix B page 16 and 25](#) for detailed feedback.

Challenges #6 -- Evaluating Programs Delivered at a Large Number of Multiple Locations:

- Pre-visit preparation for review teams involves a great deal of time and planning, especially for programs delivered at multiple locations.
- When a visit involves a large number of remote locations, statistical sampling of faculty, campuses, and students for interviews should be applied. Sampling for a very large number of courses may be appropriate as well.
- There are an extraordinarily large number of courses given each quarter. Course consistency across campuses can be an issue.

Feedback regarding reviewing on-line programs delivered at a large number of multiple sites is lengthy. Please refer to [Appendix B page 23 thru 26](#) for detailed feedback.

Other challenges and suggestions:

- Self-Study Reports for distance learning programs should make clear that a program is delivered on-line, or address things differently than classroom programs.
- Programs should make sure that on-line and on the ground modes are aligned.
- Review teams should learn how the institution is set up, who its administration is, and who the leaders for assessment and curriculum are, so teams can arrange to meet with or at least speak to the key persons.
- Review teams should ensure instructional faculty, industry advisors, advisory faculty, course developers, and students are available for video interviews (alternative when face-to-face is not available) or phone interviews (minimal) and make sure to bring a small sample of these people on-site for face-to-face interviews.

Programs need to know what is necessary on their part for this type of communication to be transparent.

- If interviews must be conducted remotely, not face-to-face, the quality of video conferencing, Internet connection, or communication of all types must be well prepared in advance.

If secure licenses are required to be purchased in advanced by ABET HQ, HQ needs to do so for each involved team member well in advance and keep the licenses active for a sufficient period of time for team members to practice well before the visit. Also, each license purchased should be put in the name of each team member, that way it is clear who are participating in conference calls and if there are any e-mails sent out by the conferencing system, the e-mails can be directed to the participants without going through a third party and replying on the third party to forward messages.

In any case, HQ should support video conferencing on a regular basis and train review members to use it.

- Institutions must provide good access for review teams to review on-line components including on-line classrooms and materials.
- Training should emphasize the need for all programs to link everything back to program outcomes and include all faculty members in all processes.

Please refer to [Appendix B page 27 thru 30](#) for the remaining feedback.

Appendix A

List of Distance Learning Programs Reviewed in the 2011-12 Cycle

2011-12 Distance Learning Program List			
Comm	Institution	Program Name	Percentage
CAC	City University of Seattle	Information Systems (BS)	96-100
CAC	Idaho State University	Computer Science (BS)	86-90
CAC	American InterContinental University	Bachelor of Information Technology (BIT)	96-100
EAC	Idaho State University	Nuclear Engineering (BS)	91-95
TAC	Thomas Edison State College	Nuclear Energy Engineering Technology (B.S.)	96-100
TAC	Southern Mississippi, University of	Construction Engineering Technology (B.S.)	96-100

Appendix B

Original Feedback from Page 6 through 32

**ABET
2011-12
Survey for Evaluating Distance Learning/Online Programs**

Commission: TAC

Visit Institution (optional): University of Southern Mississippi

Your name (optional): Ric Morris

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
• Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information	The use of online labs or the waiving of labs for coursework	The use of online labs or the waiving of labs for coursework	See below
• Other areas (please identify)			
Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ: See discussion below			
On-site evaluation --			
• Reviewing displayed materials	No major differences is the course display are foreseen	No major differences is the course display are foreseen	
• Interviewing faculty, staff, and students	Contact with on-line students	Contact with on-line students	This can be resolved with telephone calls to discuss the program with students and additional questionnaires
• Visiting facilities	No major differences are foreseen	No major differences are foreseen	
• Criteria compliance	Criterion 3 and 5(b) for labs	Criterion 3 and 5(b) for labs	See discussion below
• Other areas (please identify)			
Additional comments: This was an Interim Visit review, so we were working with a constrained data set. One of the comments from the previous visit concerned an IET required lab course. With the approval of the Advisory committee and the faculty, the school subsequently changed the program of study and dropped the course. Presently the complete IET program and the IET-Logistics program are taught on line and no actual classroom or lab experience is required.			

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Therefore I believe that we have an issue with both Criterion 3 and 5 as the students are not receiving hands on experience with all the activities associated with a lab from the set-up, through the testing, the data collection and the analysis.

In this specific instance it was stated the coursework is meeting the requirements of the local industry which did require the labs, so the complete on-line course program may be appropriate at this specific point in time. However, if the graduates move to another city with a different employer, the lack of a hands on classroom lab experience may be a hindrance.

As far as guidance on the evaluation of on line classes and lab. This is an issue that I believe must be addressed. Traditional on line classwork can be evaluated using the same criteria as a traditional face to face classroom environment. The only difficulty would be in ensuring that the student personally completes the homework and that all exams are proctored under a specified criteria.

However, the hands on experience with labs is a different situation. There are several potential options to resolve this opportunity. The first would be for the student to come to the school on a periodic basis during the term for the formal lab classes. Secondly arrangements could be made with another school for the students to complete their lab assignments at that location under the supervision of their lab personnel. This would involve working agreements as well as financial compensation for the time and facilities. A third alternative would be for a virtual lab program in which the students could participate. But in practice this would not duplicate the actual hands on experience (i.e., chem. or physics labs a manufacturing process or materials lab). And at this time I am not aware of any programs that will satisfy this requirement. The remaining option would be to eliminate the lab requirement, which would be a complete revision of the criteria and coursework. As this would hold true for both the traditional student as well as the online student, this is not a viable option as it defeats some of the basic student skill sets.

A standard must be identified for the laboratory experience for the required and elective coursework. In many cases, the first job for IET graduates will require basic hands on experience with lab practices and procedures. I recognize that this may be taught by many organizations, but a basic skill set is still expected for IET (and other technology) graduates. I think that this is one activity that can not presently be duplicated by an online class environment.

In order to avoid an issue of each team having to evaluate an online program, a standard should be defined and put into place. This will assist the schools as well as the evaluation team in developing a consistent program.

Of the four options listed above, I believe that the first one is perhaps the most viable. The exception would be for that student who is a 'true distance learner' based on the fact of a geographical location issue. (This is different than living 20 miles away) In that case, arrangements may have to be made to take the class at a different school and transfer in the coursework, conduct the labs as discussed in the second step above, or for required period of time on the 'home campus' for the specific lab classes. Each of these options has significant difficulties and costs which must be defined and resolved.

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Commission: TAC

Visit Institution (optional): Univ. of Southern Miss.

Your name (optional): John Wiggins

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information 	In the case that I reviewed, it was clear that there was difference in the course delivery between face to face students and distance learning students with respect to lab courses.	With respect to lab courses, at least in Construction Eng. Tech, there is a need to actually work with the construction materials such as concrete, soils and surveying. Graduates of these types of programs need to have a "feel" of the materials as the roles that they may play industry are very applied and not theoretical.	We need some kind of standard in order to have an approach to evaluating distance learning labs. i.e., what is an acceptable learning experience, how do we address the issue of different learning experiences between face to face and distance learning scenarios for the same program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ: Creation of some standard for evaluating distance learning scenarios and their effectiveness. With the creation of a new standard, training for PEV's would then need to follow. I'm not sure if this needs to come from HQ or from the technical society (in my case ASCE)			
On-site evaluation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing displayed materials 	Not a problem as the material is merely printed out as in a tradition format.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewing faculty, staff, and students 	Although this was not a part of what happened during my last		The criteria is silent with respect to distance learning. Some

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	visit, I'm not sure how to address a distance learning class for an instructor who may not be part of the faculty when the course is actually being run.		guidance is needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting facilities 	Not applicable if truly done on line, however, hybrid courses, such as one taught in different locations in a revolving face to face format, are also a problem as the criteria doesn't really address this.		The criteria is silent with respect to distance learning. Some guidance is needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria compliance 	The criteria never really address an acceptable learning experience in a distance learning format.		The criteria is silent with respect to distance learning. Some guidance is needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other areas (please identify) 			
Additional comments:			

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Commission: TAC

Visit Institution (optional): Note – Interim Visit

Your name (optional): J. Lookadoo

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
• Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information			
• Other areas (please identify)			
Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ:			
On-site evaluation --			
• Reviewing displayed materials			
• Interviewing faculty, staff, and students			
• Visiting facilities			
• Criteria compliance		Differentiation between reviewed performance of the population of distance learners versus the in residence population was a challenge.	For significant population groups with variant routes to a degree, assessment should include performance measures broken out for every population to highlight CQI efficacy intra- and inter-population.
• Other areas (please identify)			
Additional comments:			
The non-proscriptive nature of TAC's Criterion 5 - Curriculum from the 2009-2010 cycle does not specifically mandate laboratories, yet this is considered a hallmark of Engineering Technology programs. On the visit, questions were raised as to appropriate laboratory content for programs and how this should be evaluated for hybrid distance learning and all distance learning situations. As the range of disciplines spanned is large and to avoid prescription in Criterion 5, the professional organizations may want to provide guidance for types of laboratory experiences expected, especially in light of distance learning, in the discipline specific criteria.			

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Commission: TAC

Visit Institution (optional): Thomas Edison State College

Your name (optional): Frank Young

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information 	Very few. Main problem was doing transcript evaluation. Transcripts did not have enough information about credits that were transferred (LOTS!). But this is not really a problem with distance education.		It might be useful to ask some additional questions to be answered on the self-study - questions about how transfer credit and credit by examination (and other forms of "credit") are handled -- who authorizes, how the authorization is recorded, what appears on the transcript, where to find the info about what credit has been granted and what it is equivalent to, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ:			
On-site evaluation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing displayed materials 	Transfer courses were a problem.		We needed specific information about the procedures and standards used when granting transfer (et al) credit.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewing faculty, staff, and students 			<p>We did phone interviews with distance learning tutors. It might be useful to indicate that such interviews are expected to be possible.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visiting facilities 	<p>Since there were no facilities, this was not a problem.</p>		<p>How does one evaluate facilities when they are all located at other institutions?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria compliance 			<p>Assessment is difficult when most credits are given for work at other institutions or work experience. The institution is sort of forced to use the capstone course for all assessment information. There is also a problem with continuous improvement. How can one "improve" courses that are not given at the institution? Again, this is not distance learning specific but is a transfer credit, etc. issue.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
<p>Additional comments: Distance learning is not the same at every institution. At TESC the bulk of credits are obtained thru transfer and work experience. Evaluating such credits is very different from evaluating distance learning credits. Evaluation problems come in many different forms! Self Studies must deal with ALL of the possible ways credit can be obtained. Having special procedures and questions for distance learning will only deal with one part of the problem.</p>			

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Commission: TAC

Visit Institution (optional): Thomas Edison

Your name (optional): Mike Robinson

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
• Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information	No different than a campus based institution.		
• Other areas (please identify)			
Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ:			
On-site evaluation --			
• Reviewing displayed materials	The display materials were paper records in notebooks shelved in a room adjoining the team conference room during the visit. Not really different than for an on campus institution.		
• Interviewing faculty, staff, and students	We interviewed students by telephone, and some staff was also not available other than by telephone.	Interviewing remotely is more difficult due to lack of visual feedback. However, this is similar to interviews of faculty members who are not available for on-campus interviews during a visit.	
• Visiting facilities	Facilities visit was not different than a typical program,		

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	<p>excepting that there were no classrooms that students occupied during instruction. The program delivered no laboratory courses; all laboratory experiences were by transfer credit. So visiting labs was not an issue.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria compliance 	<p>Our focus was on whether students / graduates achieved outcomes / objectives. Evidence for these could be reviewed as with any other program. Our approach was very similar to a campus-based institution. The major difference was more due to the large amount of transfer credit that the institution grants, rather than the use of distance media. The institution did not attempt to deliver a laboratory experience, but instead depending on transfer credit to satisfy this requirement.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
<p>Additional comments:</p>			

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Commission: **CAC**

Visit Institution (optional): **City University of Seattle**

Your name (optional): **Leonard Fisk**

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information 	The SSR for the online program was <u>much</u> less informative than that of more traditional program	The biggest issue came from lack of qualified faculty with responsibility for curriculum to speak to: it was really just two faculty members, neither of whom had academic preparation in the discipline. A second problem stemmed from the lack of a standing advisory committee to establish objectives: they felt that their use of part-time instructors who had daytime jobs made this group the equivalent of an industrial advisory committee.	Obviously, this distance program wished to field a program without incurring the expense of using faculty from within the IS discipline; economic necessity appears to have encouraged them to develop a curriculum and deliver it using individuals who lack advanced degrees and academic experience in the area. The result was that the PEVs were unable to speak to anyone who shared their perspective of what such a program should contain. Members of a “real,” standing advisory committee would have been useful to speak to.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) Students & catalog 	The catalog was viewed by the University as being an advertisement rather than as a contract between students and institution: consequently, the catalog was only a general target	I struggled for a long time to find online copies of their catalog, and wondered how students were able to cope with the absence of such essential documentation of the current	It is difficult to suggest how a program that has no standard course of study required can be clearly assessed. In this case, many students have the same programs, but there is no

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	for graduation, and individual programs were devised per individual student. This means that student programs could be idiosyncratic, and did not adhere to the strictures of the catalog: a major disadvantage that makes transcript analysis with the catalog quite difficult.	program, especially considering the large changes in the program from year-to-year. Their answer was as described already: the catalog is just an advertisement, and the “real” program is developed individually for students in the form of their “program plans.”	apparent rule for what program any student will have on their transcript. More should be formalized here. I don’t know if this is a common characteristic of distance programs, but is a first for me.
<p>Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ:</p> <p>The University did not really understand what was expected of them. For example, multiple requests for program assessment reports were not responded to with any real assessment reports. I suspect the problem was simply that they had no faculty who were professionally qualified in the area of IS, and had no experience that prepared them adequately for the visit. I think that they would have benefited from real exposure to what a quality program (one that is accreditable) really contains. In short, I think that the many of the problems stemmed from the ignorance of the persons submitting the request for accreditation, and this is where better preparation might be of advantage.</p> <p>Training in how a distance program might encounter difficulties, compared to a brick-and-mortar program might also be of use to PEVs, especially training that contained examples of where a distance program might encounter difficulties in providing comparable experiences to its students. Such training might also prove instructive to distance learning purveyors.</p>			
On-site evaluation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing displayed materials 	<p>These were not at all adequate: Syllabi lacked many of the things we normally expect to see, like schedules of materials covered, and the actual assignments. Because all student materials were submitted online, there were no editorial marks to indicate how student work was graded. This was the one program that I have seen that lacked marked work from students, and it was difficult to assess quality.</p>	<p>The distance program places relatively low priority on testing, perhaps because they do not bother with proctoring exams to ensure that the students are who they claim they were rather than “ringers.” The other work provided was not grade-marked, and much of it seemed shallow. In all, there were too few materials to feel comfortable that the program was actually a substantive one.</p>	<p>I don’t think that exceptions should be made for distance programs on this count. Distance programs need to provide clearly marked work for PEVs to see, and the fact that it is a distance program is not an excuse to dispense with such materials. Certainly, if students are to receive adequate feedback, such materials must be provided to them, and must be available for evaluation as well.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewing faculty, staff, and students 	<p>The faculty who were responsible for the curriculum</p>	<p>Again, I do not believe that the distance programs should be</p>	

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	<p>were not academically prepared as IS professionals, and the instructors were generally not involved any more deeply in the discipline than as simple, low-level practitioners. All were dedicated, but none were really capable of the kind of research and professional development we would expect of an academic faculty. These were trade-school teachers, and many of the topics that a PEV would ordinarily cover in discussion with a regular academic faculty could not be covered with these faculty members. Moreover, we talked to a number of offsite faculty members at a distance, and this was not as informative as face-to-face meetings.</p>	<p>held to a different standard than regular academic programs.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting facilities 	<p>The library of the distance program was more involved than a normal academic library in that the librarians were charged with keeping track of whether the current texts were the most recent. This fills an important need, because the lack of professionally qualified faculty creates a gap in keeping curricula current. The librarians fill in for the absence of faculty with in-depth technical knowledge in their chosen areas</p>	<p>Distance programs do not provide laboratory facilities; they are simply not present. Many of the tools used to facilitate “face-to-face” meetings among students and faculty were needlessly clumsy and dysfunctional, and depended entirely on whether students had cameras for their computers and could deploy them. Students were unable to do effective, face-to-face, synchronous meetings with</p>	<p>Again I see no need for relaxing expectations for distance programs. It would be useful to include detailed assessment of the performance of the outsourced services, or include those organizations in the visit. The more that is outsourced, the more that is invisible to PEVs under the current model.</p>

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	of research. Other facilities were absent. Labs, for instance were not necessary to visit, as all the action happened on students' own machines. The campus outsourced their help-desk function, and maintained no local expertise to assist students in dealing with computer problems. Servers were also, for the most part, outsourced. We were unable to assess the quality of these outsourced services.	teams or to do presentations. What was used to substitute was really not comparable to live meetings. The challenge will be to have the program demonstrate that their technology, deployed on student machines, can be as effective as live, face-to-face presentations by students in the classroom. If librarians are providing some of the functions normally provided by faculty, they need to be scrutinized more carefully.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria compliance 	I began the visit with deficiencies marked in virtually every criterion on y worksheet, and although I removed some of them during the visit, many remained checked at the close.	I do not believe that the shortcomings we observed should be relaxed because this is a distance program. I believe that the criteria are appropriate for any program, remote or brick-and-mortar.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
<p>Additional comments: I was shocked by the number of departures from normal standards the distance program I evaluated presented. I do believe that a quality distance program may be possible, although there are some strong technical and organizational difficulties that will hamper such programs for some time to come. These difficulties include: (1) the absence of means of providing truly effective multi-person (greater than two, preferable) synchronous meetings over the Internet with unsupported student machines, (2) the absence of good control of the computing environment offered to individual students both in terms of consistency, and quality, (3) the paucity of truly qualified faculty members who play a significant role in maintaining a curriculum in their own areas of technical expertise, (4) the paucity of classroom instruction from those same faculty members, who can provide depth and perspective beyond that provided by technical trainers, (5) the problem of recruiting a dedicated Industrial Advisory Council for a distance program as opposed to a brick-and-mortar program, (6) the problem of providing a stable program assessment process that is driven by faculty with sufficient academic and technical knowledge in the program's content areas to have a clear perspective of the program objectives, and (7) an appreciation of the need to provide program assessment data, like the ICCP or MFT, or surveys of employers, that link program quality to outside standards for validation and/or benchmarking of internal measures.</p>			

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Commission: CAC

Visit Institution (optional): City University of Seattle

Your name (optional): Janos Fustos

I concur with my esteemed colleague, Lenonard Fisk with every aspect he wrote – we went through the same exercise as we visited the program together. Some additions to his well-written comments:

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information 		In several cases we were told that materials are only available online (course descriptions, student materials etc.) but we did get access to them. We were given login credentials during the visit but it was too much for two days.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ: Evaluating distance-earning programs should not be any different. If the same standard applies and applicants follow the guidelines, the SSR template, and provide all the required materials the process should be the same.			
On-site evaluation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing displayed materials 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewing faculty, staff, and students 		We had to do online interviews with a limited number of	

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		students where technology was a barrier. We could not see the students and the interaction was not flawless (I had to control equipment, speakers, mic).	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visiting facilities 		Online programs rely mostly on equipment what students own. The campus maintains facilities that support online education (email, course management system, online communication solutions) from a content delivery perspective but it is hard to comprehend how students can be exposed to the latest IS/IT solutions in their living room from their own budget. Servers, applications, infrastructure, and staff are simply missing.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria compliance 	I hope I am wrong but my feeling is that traditional programs are using accreditation as a quality mark while online (for-profit) programs look at it as an additional marketing tool.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
Additional comments:			

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Commission: CAC

Visit Institution (optional): American Intercontinental

Your name (optional): J.J. Ekstrom

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information 	More data to look at since the automated systems log all interactions and on-line courses seem to have significantly more 1on1 between instructors and students.	How does one evaluate the effectiveness of chat sessions? What is a good one?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ: Additional guidance on the evaluation of interactive evaluation strategies, i.e. significant weight given to "student participation" in an official course discussion board or chat room.			
On-site evaluation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing displayed materials 	Much less reason for a site visit, materials are generally on-line could be reviewed remotely on a more flexible time schedule.	Evaluating on-line materials is a mixed bag depending on how the materials are organized. Need directed examples, let's have the school tell us the A, B, and C examples rather than pointing to the entire group of assignments, with additional artifacts available for	

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		verification.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewing faculty, staff, and students 	Much less need for a site visit, since all are typically interviewed over a web cam anyway.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visiting facilities 	Much less need for a site visit, Evaluation of the student-facing facilities should be done against the same modality as the students use...		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria compliance 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
<p>Additional comments: My opinions may be colored by the fact that I have never done anything but visit institutions that specialize in on-line delivery, though I teach in a face-to-face program and some of the visited programs</p>			

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Commission: **CAC**

Visit Institution (optional): **Phoenix, Capella, AIU**

Your name (optional): **Gayle Yaverbaum**

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater percentage of information is online; very professional and well organized. Part time or adjunct faculty involvement in the assessment process is minimal. There are disconnects due to the adjunct nature of the faculty. Online courses are very professional and consistent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty members were always asked for feedback regarding books, assignments, etc. but the institutions did not integrate them well into the actual assessment process. Attempting to link the parts of the assessment process together was difficulty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training should emphasize (does so but may need more emphasis due to the transient and part time nature of online) the need for all programs to link everything back to program outcomes and include all faculty members in all processes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparation for a visit involves extraordinary planning. If a program is managed in one location, the preparations are not as time consuming or involved as those programs with multi locations and multi modes of delivery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On line interviews and selection of faculty to interview. Selection of campuses (where there are hybrid, online and onsite courses on many campuses), faculty and students for interviews. Students are part time and 	Minimally: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All faculty interviews should be video or face-to-face. Student phone conferencing may be all that are possible. However, in today's world we should be moving towards video conferencing even for student interviews. I find this

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		<p>non traditional. Many do not have the technology for multi-person or video interviews.</p>	<p>to be much more rewarding and informative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABET to support video conferencing on a regular basis and train volunteers to use it. • Programs need to know what is necessary on their part for this form of communication to be transparent. • Statistical sampling of faculty should be the rule for very large programs. • There are a very large number of courses given in any quarter. Sampling may be appropriate here also.
<p>Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Video Conferencing • Sampling that can be supported by ABET 			
<p>On-site evaluation --</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing displayed materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online programs and disperse programs tend to be inconsistent if there are multi modes of presentation. • The courses are a “moving” target with constant changes to courses. This has advantages and disadvantages as far as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The challenge on line is linking of resource room materials. • Course consistency across campuses is an issue. • Comments/feedback of graded student work are typically brief. • There are an extraordinarily large number of courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed suggestions for online resources.

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	<p>accreditation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to rapid and sometime major change within a few months, student transcripts become difficult to interpret. 	<p>given in any quarter. Sampling may be appropriate.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewing faculty, staff, and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a large number of interviews of faculty and students on-line. • The number faculty members is large, especially those that are part time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primarily part time faculty members make it difficult to schedule meetings. • Some faculty members have very little program involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize the importance for faculty involvement in the interview and CQI processes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support facilities were excellent. • Classrooms were primarily virtual making the visit a challenge to reviewers. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live course observations to support the emphasis on discussion and virtual labs.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The depth of the curriculum was typically weak for online applied course work. • Subjects such as math and programming seem to be difficult for students online. • The programs relied much on papers and discussions, failing to require much applied work. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily available student resources such as online texts, exercises, and graded discussions and team observations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other areas (please identify) 			
Additional comments:			

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Commission: CAC

Visit Institution (optional): U of Phoenix and American
Intercontinental University

Your name (optional): Jim Leone

Comments:

Let me share a few rambling thoughts based on my experiences with Univ. of Phoenix and American Intercontinental University...

Faculty Interviews - They must take place with the ABET interviewer in a secure location using video communication. And to be safe, Skype is insecure. Our experiences with Webex from Cisco was outstanding. However, The ABET team needs to practice so the licenses for each team member must be purchased two weeks prior to the visit so they can practice on one another setting up conference calls with one another. Our team used a single license that was approved early to have our conference calls. But I was the only member of the team that gained experience. The other issue had to do with the way the licenses were acquired. They were all purchased on a credit card in the name of Lance Hoboy. So all of us were making calls to online faculty as Lance Hoboy. Furthermore, when a call is set up, the person that initiates the "conference call" (even if only one faculty member is being called) has an option of receiving an email confirming the appointment. But that email would have gone to Lance Hoboy. ABET needs to figure a way of purchasing licenses for each team member early, keeping them active for a period of time, and putting the licenses in the name of the team members.

Display Material - Both UoPX and AIU had very inadequate displays. After the UoPX, Gayle and I were extremely careful to notify AIU about these materials knowing full well that most of them would be online. But AIU failed almost as badly as UoPX. Have Gayle meet with ABET folks to get chapter and verse.

Administrative Interviews - It is important that the ABET team learn the way the school sets up its administration and where the leaders are for assessment, and curriculum. For our AIU visit (BS IT review) the person who oversaw the BS IT program was not scheduled for key meetings. We worked with a Dean who had responsibility for all academic programs. We needed to have more time with the lead person for IT.

If Gayle Yaverbaum comes a calling, she can expand on these ideas.

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Commission: EAC, TAC

Visit Institution (optional): ISU

Your name (optional): Jane LeClair

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information 	The online programs need to address things differently than traditional classroom programs to ensure they are specific to the online classroom for evaluators who are not familiar with 'specifics'.	Online programs Will need to submit for review the materials and specifics relative to working at a distance with faculty and students, and in many cases developers. Need to ensure it is clear that it is an online program in the self-study at various points providing specifics.	Team chair could ensure clarity and understanding upon first visit. This would enable TC to assist others in their understanding. Many 'issues' appear to stem from lack of clarity and/or the self-study lacking reference to specific differences with distance/online programs that should be stated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ:			
On-site evaluation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing displayed materials 	Materials are in the room from.	Materials need to be pulled from LMS and put in the room for review by PEV/TM.	Set up room the same as for face-to-face college to include those items needed in place of sitting in on classroom instruction (review of online courses).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewing faculty, staff, and students 	Meetings are face-to-face.	Meetings need to be set up ahead of time on the phone or	Ensure instructional faculty, industry advisors, advisory

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		through a webinar or Skype with faculty, staff and students.	faculty, course developers are available and set up for phone interviews. Make sure to bring a small sample of these people to site for face-to-face interviews.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visiting facilities 	Visit the campus, including classrooms, labs, etc.	Need to visit the facility, and although PEV/TM cannot visit face-to-face classrooms, they need to be able to review the courses in the LMS and have faculty there to ask questions if needed. This would also be true with developers (subject matter experts) who may have developed the course if different. This could also include instructional designers or others who have been instrumental in shaping the course from a technical standpoint or who may have helped with design/layout, etc.	Team needs to visit the 'campus'.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria compliance 	Review self-study and materials, interview, etc. No difference between the two delivery methods as to requirement to meet criteria.	Review self-study and materials, interview, etc. No difference between the two delivery methods as to requirement to meet criteria.	Compliance with criteria may be done somewhat differently in some cases, but needs to comply.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
<p>Additional comments: While there are numerous differences in face-to-face deliver and online delivery, the need to meet all criteria, perhaps through a different method in various cases, still is required.</p>			

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Commission:CAC

Visit Institution (optional):AIU

Your name (optional):

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information 	the online program and the traditional classroom program was different.	the online and on the ground programs need to be better aligned.	Make sure to have more details from the on the ground program before the visit.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ:			
On-site evaluation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing displayed materials 	none	none	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewing faculty, staff, and students 	none	none	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visiting facilities 	none	none	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria compliance 	the on the ground program was more in line with compliance than there online program.	should have had more details from their on the ground programs.	include how the on the ground program complies similar to the online program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			
Additional comments:			

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Commission: **CAC**

Visit Institution (optional): _____

Your name (optional): _____

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
• Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information	None noted		
• Other areas (please identify)			
Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ:			
On-site evaluation --			
• Reviewing displayed materials	Lots of display material is online, which can be difficult to access	This past fall, some of the team's accounts did not work sufficiently well for all team members to access the material	
• Interviewing faculty, staff, and students	Some interviews are completed via teleconferencing technologies	In one instance, the interviewed faculty member was traveling and her Internet connection was not very good and the video conferencing did not work well. We communicated via the telephone.	Recommend that those interviewed have access to a good high-speed Internet connection during the interview process
• Visiting facilities	Difficult to see the classrooms in action	Access to the courses has not been granted	Obtaining visitor access to their online classrooms can be helpful
• Criteria compliance			
• Other areas (please identify)			
Additional comments:			
Please note that I have only been a PEV for online programs, so it is difficult for me to truly understand the differences.			

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Commission: ASAC

Visit Institution (optional): Tulane U (2010-11)

Your name (optional): Bret Clausen

	Differences noted in evaluation between online programs and traditional classroom programs	Challenges and issues specific to evaluating online programs	Suggestions
Pre-visit preparation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing SSRs and obtaining additional information 	Minimal. The self-study simply had some expanded description of the on-line delivery methodology and associated instructor/student interactions.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 		Ensuring adequate delivery facilities so that on-line content is as effective as classroom delivery. Evaluation of instructor/student interface effectiveness as well as student to student interaction.	
Resources and training for evaluating distance learning programs which you would like to receive from HQ:			
None at this time.			
On-site evaluation --			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing displayed materials 	In some ways on-line content was easier to evaluate since full lectures, course materials etc. were all on the server. It was possible to select and review actual class sessions rather than just looking at assembled course		

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	materials.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviewing faculty, staff, and students 	Some of the student interviews was done via teleconference/video conference instead of in person. This was not a problem and is fairly common when interviewing advisory board members who are often scattered geographically.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visiting facilities 	No issue. All facilities, including distance learning delivery facilities were available for review.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria compliance 	No issues related to distance learning. The same mapping and content assessment and evaluation were in place of classroom and distance learning modes of delivery.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other areas (please identify) 			

Additional comments:

The distance learning delivery mode was well organized and designed to deliver the same content and learning experience as the classroom delivery mode. Students, graduates and employers were universally satisfied with the quality of the program and graduates of both the classroom and distance learning delivery modes. (and combined) delivery modes.