THEC

Virtual Site Visit Guidelines
April 16, 2020

Virtual site visits will follow the typical site visit format with several key changes as outlined below:

- The introductory meeting between THEC and external reviewers will be coordinated by THEC staff.
- All meetings will take place via Zoom or a comparable video conferencing platform and links to the meetings need to be included on the site visit agenda.
- The campus will be responsible for setting up all meetings and will provide a contact person for THEC staff and external reviewer(s) in case any technical issues arise during the meetings.
- Campus will designate a lead person in each of the meeting sessions and will allow THEC staff to co-host the meeting to allow for discussion fairness. In larger meetings, participants will be asked to use the "Raise Hand" feature of Zoom (or something similar depending on the platform) to indicate when they want to speak or respond to a question.
- Virtual meeting sessions will not be recorded to ensure privacy of participants.
- A representative from facilities and/or architect should be included in the facilities discussion. Depending on the program, a follow-up site visit may be requested to tour facilities once campuses are open virtually or in-person. This session can include virtual campus tours, campus maps, photos of spaces, etc.
- Depending on the program, the site visit may be scheduled over the course of a couple of days.
- External reviewers will be asked to complete the standard "Review Questions for External Reviewer" which is included in this document.

Suggested Site Visit Agenda Sessions
- Introductory meeting between THEC and external reviewers (coordinated by THEC staff prior to scheduled site visit)
- Meeting with campus leadership (Provost, Dean of the School/College, and in some cases, the President)
- Meeting with departmental leadership (department chair, program director, and/or Dean)
- Meeting with program faculty and others involved in drafting the program proposal
- Facilities tour (the importance of this meeting is dependent upon the nature of the proposed program).
- Meeting with external community partners and collaborators
- Meeting with prospective students
- Dedicated time for THEC and external reviewers to meet prior to exit meeting (1 hour)
- Exit meeting with campus/department leadership and program director

Tennessee Higher Education Commission
Review Questions for External Reviewer

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the review of all proposed new academic programs. The Tennessee Higher Education Commission values your expertise and appreciate your generous professional assistance in determining (1) whether or not the program should be approved as proposed and (2) how the program might be strengthened before approval is granted.

THEC expects external reviewers to:
- Copy THEC staff on any communication with the institution pertaining to the proposed program
- Conduct a thorough program review
- Submit a comprehensive report and recommendation 30 days after the site visit utilizing the questions below.
- Inform THEC of any external pressures that infringes on the integrity of the review

Based on your professional review of the proposal, your visit to the institution, and other information, please provide a written report addressing, among other things, the following questions:

1) Does the proposed program appear to align with the stated goals of the state master plan and the institutional mission? Please identify any discrepancies.

2) Is the proposed curriculum for the program sufficiently extensive and sophisticated for a program in this field at this level of offering? If it is, what are its strengths? If it is not, where is the curriculum lacking and, most importantly, how can the proposed program be strengthened?

3) Are admission standards appropriate? If not, how should they be strengthened?

4) Are degree requirements sufficiently specific to ensure that the proposed program will meet stated objectives? If not, what additional degree requirements do you recommend?

5) Are the level and quality of the faculty adequate to ensure that the proposed program will meet its stipulated objectives?

6) There are other programs in this field available in the United States and in Tennessee. As presently proposed, is this program appropriately distinctive to attract students from in-state and from out of state as well? Is there evidence to suggest, if not ensure, that there will be sufficient enrollments in the proposed program? Please comment on the proposed recruitment plan for the program and suggest marketing recommendations for consideration.

7) Are the projected number of enrollments in and graduates from the proposed program reasonable? If not, why and how should the projections be modified? If the attrition level proposed is not reflective of the field, please make recommendations for a more appropriate level.

8) If the proposed program is to be offered via distance learning, is the faculty adequately trained in on-line delivery as described and are the institutional facilities and supports sufficient to provide quality delivery?

9) Based on the supporting documentation provided and your knowledge of the field, is the level of national demand for graduates of such programs sufficient to ensure employment?

10) Based on your review, does the curriculum provide sufficient opportunity for graduates to demonstrate both knowledge and skills needed for successful employment?

11) Are the support services (e.g., advisement, financial aid advisement, available technology, library, etc.) adequate for the proposed program? If not, how may they be improved?

12) Are the facilities (e.g., physical space, equipment, etc.) adequate for the proposed program? If not, how may they be improved?

13) Are the projected budgets adequate to support the proposed program and sustain development during the initial years to maturity (7 years)? If not, please suggest and explain appropriate adjustments.

14) Based on your best professional judgment, is the proposed program needed? If so, is the institution ready, in terms of faculty and other institutional resources, to successfully implement the proposed program?

15) Do you recommend approval of the proposed program and why? If not, what modifications would be minimally required before you could professionally recommend approval?

Note: Please feel free to address other issues that you believe should be considered in the approval process. The Commission, campus administration, and the faculty will appreciate any suggestions that you may wish to make to improve and strengthen the proposed programs.

If you would like to see additional information prior to or during the site visit, please request this through the University contact. Submit your final review directly to the institution and Betty Dandridge Johnson, Chief Academic Officer, Tennessee Higher Education Commission at Betty.dandridge.johnson@tn.gov.