

Section Title: Academic Policies
Policy Title: Off-Campus Instruction – Community Colleges and Universities
Policy Number: A 1.4A

1.4A.1A **Scope and Purpose.** Pursuant to T.C.A. §49-7-202(q)(3), the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) is to review and approve or disapprove all proposals for off-campus locations at public institutions, including the community colleges and universities.

The Commission will take action on proposed off-campus centers at Commission meetings. The Commission delegates the authority for review and approval of off-campus sites to the Executive Director. The Executive Director maintains the discretion to refer an off-campus site to the Commission for approval.

This policy fulfills the Commission's charge to develop policies and procedures for the purpose of reviewing and approving off-campus locations at community colleges and universities. In cases where a Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) is considered a part of a community college, as is the case with TCAT Chattanooga and Chattanooga State Community College, the joint institution will be considered under this policy.

1.4A.2A **Definitions.**

Off-Campus Center --is a location that is geographically apart from the main campus where students can enroll and complete academic programs. There must be a continuing administrative presence, evidenced by at least one full- time or part-time administrator housed on-site.

Off-Campus Site – is a physical space that is used to offer credit enrollment. Some examples of typical offerings at off-campus sites include, dual enrollment or dual credit offerings; workforce development opportunities; and short-term, specific instructional needs. An off-campus site does not offer all courses necessary to complete an academic program.

Academic Program – is one that culminates in a certificate (academic, technical, or graduate); associate degree, bachelor's degree, or graduate degree (master's, professional, or doctorate).

1.4A.3A **Locations Subject to Approval.** Proposals for off-campus centers and off-campus sites will be subject to review and approval under this policy. Proposal formats appropriate to the following requested action are available on the THEC website:

- Establish an Off-Campus Center; and
- Establish an Off-Campus Site.

1.4A.4A **Exclusions to the Off-Campus Instruction Policy.** The following offerings and/or locations are excluded from this off-campus location policy for both off-campus centers and off-campus sites:

- Non-credit coursework;
- Continuing education coursework;
- On-line offerings, unless the student is required to be at the location (synchronously or asynchronously) to receive instruction
- Study abroad coursework; and
- Clinical, practice, and student teaching locations.

1.4A.5A

Off-Campus Center

1.4A.5A1

Letter of Notification. A Letter of Notification (LON) informing THEC of a proposal to establish a new off-campus center is required at least 90 days in advance of any facilities acquisition, including lease execution and/or presentation to the State Building Commission or State Architect. In extenuating circumstances, the Executive Director maintains the discretion to review a LON within a shorter time period.

The LON must include signatures and approvals from the President of the institution and a system representative (where applicable). The establishment of off-campus centers must be consistent with and reference the most recently approved campus master plan and institutional mission profile approved by THEC. Upon review and approval by the Executive Director, the institution and system can move forward with the proposed off-campus center request.

1.4A.5A2

Criteria for Review of Off-Campus Centers. THEC considers the following criteria in order to maximize state resources in evaluating the establishment of off-campus center locations:

- **Needs Assessment** – Proposal requires supporting documentation of need for the new off-campus center that justifies institutional allocation/reallocation of state resources. The proposal must document the following:
 - Community or industry support,
 - A description of the target population; and,
 - How the proposed center contributes to the state's higher education completion agenda.
- **Sustainable Demand** – Proposal requires a projected headcount and full-time equivalent enrollment in the location's initial year and over the following four (4) academic years.
- **Operational Costs and Revenues** – Proposal requires supporting documentation detailing program costs and revenues associated with the proposed location. Projected costs include but are not limited to items such as leasing agreements, square footage and renovated space, equipment, utilities, instructional resources, administrative and faculty salaries, and all other items deemed necessary by the Commission. Revenues include but are not limited to items such as tuition and fees, state appropriations, and sales and services.
- **Existing Off-Campus Centers** – In the event an institution has an existing

off-campus center and another institution proposes an off-campus center at the same location, the two institutions are required to document any communications and agreements related to the proposed off-campus center request to the THEC staff. THEC staff will review the request and will render a recommendation for approval or denial. If approved, an off-campus center code will be provided for the institution with the proposed off-campus center.

- **Facilities** – Facilities planned or in place for the off-campus location should be appropriate for the enrollment and type of academic programs offered. In particular, facilities should meet the standards of SACSCOC, and other applicable accrediting and regulating agencies. Whenever the establishment or upgrading of a location requires substantially new facilities, which may or may not include a land purchase, the community should be willing to provide the site, access to all necessary utilities, highways, and access roads, and make a substantial contribution towards the initial planning and construction of the location. The leasing or acquisition of space or land is subject to approval by THEC and the State Building Commission and must comply with current State laws set forth in Tennessee Code Annotated §§12-1-106, - 107 or §§12-2-114 - 115, State Building Commission policy, and THEC policy numbers F4.1 - Master Plans and F4.2 - Lease Space Funding and License Agreements.
- **Administration** – Plans for administration of the off-campus center should be appropriate for the enrollment and character of the academic programming offered.

1.4A.5A3

Commission Action. Proposed off-campus centers approved by institutional or governing boards and recommended by THEC staff will be presented to the Commission for action at the earliest possible scheduled meeting.

In keeping with SACSCOC principles and federal requirements for truth in-advertising, students may not enroll in any new off-campus center nor may any off-campus center be advertised by any public institution prior to approval by the Commission to implement.

1.4A.5A4

Major Changes to Off-Campus Centers. Institutions must notify THEC of any major changes to the academic program offerings at an off-campus center at least one semester prior to the change. Changes include:

- Adding new academic programs (see THEC Policy A1.5 – Academic Actions Notification)
- Extending existing academic programs (see THEC Policy A1.2 – Extension of Existing Academic Programs); and,
- Inactivating and/or terminating academic programs (see THEC Policy A1.5 – Academic Actions Notification).

1.4A.6A

Off-Campus Sites

1.4A.6A1

Criteria for Review of Off-Campus Sites. An off-campus site is a physical space that is used to offer course credit. Some examples of typical offerings at off-campus sites include dual enrollment or dual credit offerings; workforce development opportunities; and short-term, specific instructional needs. The Commission considers the following criteria in order to maximize state resources in evaluating the creation and operation of off-campus sites:

- **Need** – Proposal requires supporting documentation of need for the new off-campus site that justifies institutional allocation/reallocation of state resources.
- **Demand** – Proposal requires projected headcount and full-time equivalent enrollment in the first semester and first year.
- **Operational Costs and External Support** – Proposal supporting documentation detailing operational costs associated with the proposed location, as well as a short narrative around any expenses and resources, including any cost sharing agreements with business or school systems.

1.4A.6A2

Executive Director Review. The Commission delegates the authority for review and approval of off-campus sites to the Executive Director. The Executive Director maintains discretion to refer an off-campus site request to the Commission for approval.

1.4A.7A1

Review of Off-Campus Locations. THEC will monitor off-campus location enrollments every three (3) years to determine that enrollments are continuous and to identify any potentially low-enrollment locations. During this review, THEC will request all institutions operating off-campus locations to provide updates in the event of any major change in offerings (e.g., shifting the purpose of a center or site from training teachers to dual enrollment) or increases and/or decreases in enrollment of twenty-five percent or more. THEC reserves the right to request an institution submit a new request for an off-campus location code in the event of a major change in offerings.

1.4A.7A2

Phase-Out and Closing of Off-Campus Locations. THEC may recommend that an institution and/or governing board phase out and close off-campus locations that experience low enrollment over time. Institutions and/or governing boards will have an opportunity to provide a justification for the lack

of enrollment and request that the location remain active until the next review period.

1.4A.7A3

No Unnecessary Duplication. THEC will not approve the establishment of an off-campus location if the proposed delivery of instructional services could reasonably occur through existing institutions or other off-campus locations.

It is expected that institutions and/or systems will resolve any conflicts between the institutions impacted by the proposed off-campus location submission prior to submission of the off-campus location request to THEC.

An institution contemplating the creation of an off-campus location, outside the county of its main campus or the contiguous county must review the THEC off-campus inventory to avoid duplication. The institution must communicate its proposal to the impacted institution(s) in writing prior to the submission of the proposal to THEC. Impacted institutions will have 10 business days to review and provide feedback to the requesting institution. Requesting institutions shall document any communications and agreements with impacted institutions in the off-campus request to THEC. Impacted institutions should also submit any unresolved objections to the proposed off-campus location to the THEC Executive Director.

1.4A.8A

This policy will be reviewed every five (5) years unless changes in off-campus location requirements are warranted.

Sources: THEC Meetings: April 22, 1988; November 14, 2002; July 26, 2007; July 27, 2017, and January 28, 2022.