

POLICY #16 PROGRAM CLOSING

CLOSING AN INSTITUTION, NURSING PROGRAM, OR AN OFF-CAMPUS INSTRUCTIONAL SITE, OR BRANCH CAMPUS WHERE A NURSING PROGRAM IS OFFERED

When a governing organization makes the decision to close (a) the institution, (b) an institution makes the decision to close a nursing program, or (c) an off-campus instructional site or branch campus where 100% of a nursing program is offered, the institution governing organization/nursing program must make a good faith effort to assist affected students so they experience minimal disruption in the pursuit of their nursing program of study. In all cases, nursing students should be notified of the decision as soon as possible so they can make appropriate plans. Nursing students who have not completed their nursing program of study should be advised by faculty or professional counselors regarding suitable options, including transfer to comparable programs.

When a governing organization makes the decision to close (a) the institution, (b) an institution makes the decision to close a nursing program, or (c) an off-campus instructional site or branch campus where 100% of a nursing program is offered, a Closing Report that fully describes the plan for closing the nursing program must be submitted to the ACEN. The Closing Report must include a teach-out agreement and/or teach-out plan.

The institution governing organization closing the institution, nursing program, or off-campus instructional site or branch campus where 100% of a nursing program is offered may fulfill its educational commitment to currently enrolled nursing students through either:

1. A teach-out agreement with another institution(s) governing organization(s); or
2. A teach-out plan whereby the institution governing organization educates its currently enrolled students until all nursing students graduate from the nursing program, off-campus instructional site, or branch campus that is closing.

A teach-out agreement is a written agreement between institutions governing organizations that provides for the equitable treatment of nursing students and a reasonable opportunity for nursing students to complete their nursing program of study if an institution or an institutional location that provides 100% of at least one (1) program offered ceases to operate before all enrolled students have completed their program of study with the governing organization(s) willing to teach-out the nursing students from the governing organization or nursing program that is closing. A teach-out agreement requires approval from the ACEN prior to implementation of the agreement. If the ACEN approves a teach-out agreement, the ACEN must notify the governing organizations' accrediting agency of its approval.

A teach-out plan is a written plan developed by an **institution governing organization** that provides for the equitable treatment of **nursing students** if an **institution or an institutional location** that provides 100% of the program of study ceases to operate before all students have completed their program of study and a reasonable opportunity for nursing students to complete their nursing program of study through the governing organization that is closing the nursing program. A teach-out plan requires approval from the ACEN prior to implementation of the plan. If the ACEN approves a teach-out plan, the ACEN must notify the governing organization's accrediting agency of its approval.

Arrangements for the teach-out agreement or teach-out plan must be consistent with the requirements of ACEN Policy #14 Reporting Substantive Changes.

The ACEN may require an **institution governing organization**/nursing program that it accredits to enter into a teach-out agreement as part of its teach-out plan.

The ACEN must require an **institution governing organization**/nursing program that it accredits that enters into a teach-out agreement, either on its own or at the request of the **agency ACEN**, with another **institution governing organization** to submit that teach-out agreement for approval.

If an **institution governing organization**/nursing program closes without a teach-out plan or agreement, the ACEN must work with the U.S. Department of Education and the appropriate state agency, to the extent feasible, to assist students in finding reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charges.

When the ACEN serves as the Title IV gatekeeper for a nursing program, a teach-out agreement is required upon the occurrence of the following events:

1. The U.S. Department of Education Secretary of Education notifies the ACEN that the Secretary has initiated an emergency action against an **institution governing organization**, in accordance with section 487(c)(1)(G) of the HEA, or an action to limit, suspend, or terminate an **institution the governing organization from** participating in any Title IV, HEA program, in accordance with section 487(c)(1)(F) of the HEA.
2. The ACEN acts to withdraw/**remove**, terminate, or suspend the accreditation of the program.
3. The **institution governing organization** notifies the ACEN that it intends to cease operations entirely or close an **location off-campus instructional site or a branch campus** that provides 100% of the nursing program.
4. A state **licensing regulatory** or authorizing agency notifies the ACEN that an institution's license or legal authorization to provide the **nursing** program has been or will be revoked.

When the ACEN does not serve as the Title IV gatekeeper for a nursing program, a teach-out agreement and/or teach-out plan is required upon the occurrence of the following events:

1. The ACEN acts to withdraw/**remove**, terminate, or suspend the accreditation of the program;
2. The **institution governing organization** notifies the ACEN that it intends to cease operations entirely or close an **location off-campus instructional site or a branch campus** that provides 100% of the nursing program.
3. A state **licensing regulatory** authorizing agency notifies the ACEN that an institution's license or legal authorization to provide the nursing program has been or will be revoked.

Based on the information provided in the Closing Report, the accreditation status of the nursing program, and the date of the next scheduled accreditation visit, **the Commission will take** one (1) of the following actions **will be taken**:

1. When the **nursing** program is accredited without **qualification stipulation**, the **ACEN Commission Chief Executive Officer** will:
 - a. Cancel the next visit and **extend** continuing accreditation **until closing** if the **nursing program is scheduled to close within 24 month after the scheduled visit**; or
 - b. Reaffirm the originally scheduled visit.
2. When the current status of the **nursing** program is continuing accreditation with conditions or warning, the **ACEN Commission Chief Executive Officer** will:
 - a. Extend the conditions or warning status if the **nursing** program is scheduled to close within 12 months after the scheduled visit; or
 - b. Determine the date of a next visit if the **nursing** program is scheduled to close beyond **a year 12 months** after the scheduled visit.
3. **When the current status of the nursing program is continuing accreditation with good cause, the ACEN Chief Executive Officer will refer the nursing program to the ACEN Board of Commissioners for a determination of the action(s) that should be taken.**
4. If a **nursing** program planning to close fails to submit a Closing Report to the ACEN or comply with **Commission any** request(s), such action will constitute a declaration to **have accreditation status withdrawn, and the Commission will take action accordingly** **the ACEN that the program is voluntarily withdrawing the nursing program from ACEN accreditation.**

5. If a **nursing** program previously scheduled to close extends its operation beyond the original closing date, a site visit will be scheduled at the earliest possible date. The procedure to be followed will depend on the **nursing** program's status at the time the announcements about the closing and the change of plans were made.
6. If a **nursing** program closes in the interim between **ACEN Board of Commissioners** meetings and without prior notice to the ACEN, the closing automatically terminates ACEN accreditation.

FORMATTING AND SUBMITTING THE CLOSING REPORT

1. ~~The number of text pages should not exceed 50 pages.~~
2. ~~The appendix has no page limit.~~
3. ~~Confidential records (e.g., faculty transcripts, student records) should not be included.~~

DIRECTIONS

1. One (1) electronic copy of the Closing Report is to be sent to subchange@acenursing.org as a single searchable PDF or Word file. Alternately, the Closing Report may be sent on a single flash drive and mailed to the ACEN office. If the electronic file is submitted via email, then receipt of the submission will be confirmed. Therefore, if a confirmation is not received, the file(s) were too large for network firewalls. The electronic file(s) will then need to be mailed to the ACEN office on a flash drive. The Closing Report is to be sent to the ACEN **no later than four (4) months prior to the planned implementation date.**
2. Nursing programs with questions regarding substantive changes should contact the Coordinator of Substantive Change for guidance.
3. In addition to the submission of the Closing Report, a letter confirming the program's final closure **is to must** be submitted to the ACEN within 10 calendar days of the actual closing date.

REQUIRED INFORMATION IN THE CLOSING REPORT

A. Type of Closing by Type

1. Closing a **governing organization and/or closing a nursing** program
2. Closing an off-campus instructional site or branch campus

Refer to [Policy #14 Reporting Substantive Changes](#) and the Closing Report Templates: <https://www.acenursing.org/resources-reporting-substantive-change/templates/>"

B. Teach-out Agreement

The ACEN may approve the teach-out agreement only if the agreement:

1. Includes a description and timetable demonstrating how all current nursing students will have the opportunity to successfully complete their nursing education and ensures that all current nursing students have the opportunity to successfully complete their nursing education within a specified timeframe.
2. Ensures that **nursing** students are no longer being admitted into the **governing organization**, nursing program, **or** off-campus instructional site or branch campus where a nursing program is offered.
3. Is consistent with the program-specific **ACEN** Standards and Criteria.
4. Is between **institutions governing organizations** that are accredited by **a nationally recognized** an accrediting agency **recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or Council on Higher Education Accreditation**.
5. Provides for the equitable treatment of **nursing** students, specifies any additional charges, and provides for notification to the students regarding any additional charges.
6. Ensures/demonstrates that the teach-out **institution governing organization(s)** has the necessary experience, resources, and support services to:
 - a. provide a **nursing** program of study that is of acceptable quality and reasonably similar in content, structure, and scheduling to that provided by the **nursing** program of study that is closing;
 - b. remain stable, carry out its mission, and meet all obligations to **nursing** students currently enrolled in the **nursing** program of study that is closing;
 - c. provide **nursing** students currently enrolled in the nursing program, off-campus instructional site, or branch campus where a nursing program is offered that is closing access to their **nursing** program of study and academic/student support services without requiring them to move or travel substantial distances; and
 - d. provide **nursing** students with information about additional charges, if any.
7. Specifies appropriate plans for the maintenance of the records pertinent to the nursing program and each **nursing** graduate such as **but not limited to** student files, notification of **nursing** graduates, provision for security and confidentiality, and processing of requests for information.

~~If the ACEN approves a teach-out agreement, that includes a program of study that is accredited by another recognized accrediting agency, the ACEN must notify that accrediting agency of its approval.~~

C. Teach-out Plan

The ACEN may approve the teach-out plan only if the plan:

1. Includes a description and timetable demonstrating how all current nursing students will have the opportunity to successfully complete their nursing education and ensures that all current nursing students have the opportunity to successfully complete their nursing education within a specified timeframe.
2. Ensures that **nursing** students are no longer being admitted into the **governing organization**, nursing program, **or** off-campus instructional site or branch campus where a nursing program is offered.
3. Is consistent with the program-specific **ACEN** Standards and Criteria.
4. Demonstrates that there will be an adequate number of appropriately qualified **nursing** faculty to carry out instructional **and educational** activities in the **nursing** program of study until all **nursing** students graduate.
5. Demonstrates that there will be a continuation of essential academic and student support services (e.g., learning center, counseling, financial aid, health, and housing) to facilitate the **nursing** students' success in the **nursing** program of study until all **nursing** students graduate.
6. Specifies appropriate plans for the maintenance of the records pertinent to the nursing program and each **nursing** graduate such as **but not limited to** student files, notification of **nursing** graduates, provision for security and confidentiality, and processing of requests for information.

~~If the ACEN approves a teach-out plan that includes a program of study that is accredited by another recognized accrediting agency, the ACEN must notify that accrediting agency of its approval.~~

Policy #16 History
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