

Abstract

Handling of Blended Learning and Distance Learning Programs by AHPGS within the Framework of Program Accreditation

There is an increase in blended learning and distance learning programs, which has been further fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic. The term "blended learning" has an ambiguous definition and is used in various forms by different universities. The thematic analysis at hand explores the distinctions between blended learning and distance learning programs, including their differentiation from on-campus programs, in terms of program organization. This serves as a starting point to examine how program accreditation can effectively address these types of programs.

For the thematic analysis, the institutional self-reports and accreditation reports prepared by AHPGS were reviewed from various universities, focusing on program organization and workload distribution. It was found that there are significant overlaps in the extent of in-person study and self-study. This means that the usage of different learning environments does not necessarily indicate whether it is a blended learning, distance learning, or on-campus program. Furthermore, it became clear that the categorization of programs into one of these categories was not always clearly defined in both the self-definition of the university and the treatment by the reviewers. This is due to the heterogeneous use of terms like blended learning and the lack of guidelines for defining distance and on-campus learning within the framework of program accreditation.

It should be noted that the gaps in program organization identified in the accreditation reports should be addressed in future processes. At the same time, an individual evaluation of the programs needs to be achieved. To ensure this, a questionnaire has been developed. It serves as a guide for reviewers and evaluators during assessments, but can also be used by universities to prepare their self-reports.