



Online Addendum

Online Addendum for ACSI *Inspire*

General Instructions

This addendum is designed to supplement the *Inspire* protocol, providing information specific to online education programs. This addendum will identify:

- *Modifications to Inspire* indicators that are required for all online programs
- *Additional Indicators* to be addressed that are not found in *Inspire* and are unique to online programs
- *Evidence* that is specific to the online program (beyond that which is indicated by the Evidence Guide)

How does a school know if they need to use this addendum? If:

- a) The percentage of total credits offered at high school (or other campus division in consideration) is 20% online, or greater (a sample calculation is available)
- b) Any single grade is 50% online, or greater
- c) The school has any students that are primarily online students (more than 80% of their day, or most of their academic classes for the year)

If any ONE of the above is true, then this addendum should be used at the time of the next accreditation visit. The divisional accreditation director will notify the school if it is required to use the Online Addendum. (*Note: In some cases, a [brick-and-mortar school](#) may use a [blended](#) approach and have online elements or digital content in its regular classes. In that case, even if the school does not meet one of the above thresholds, the school may want to pull in appropriate indicators while assessing themselves. The team will respond by reviewing those areas, as appropriate.*)

Please note: If a school substantially changes its delivery of education between accreditation visits (6-7 years), ACSI reserves the right to ask the school to complete either a special report and/or have a special purpose visit regarding the online components. Questions on the annual report about numbers of online classes offered help ACSI to know if either of those would be necessary.

Attached programs: In most cases, this addendum will allow ACSI to include the online program with the *Inspire* accreditation for the [brick-and-mortar program](#)'s accreditation, even if the school is jointly accredited. If an online program has become independent of the [traditional school](#) program to which it was attached, ACSI divisional staff may recommend that the program pursue separate accreditation for that program through the regional accreditor. As there are no specific benchmarks, this will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Online Schools (i.e., fully online schools): If the school desires ACSI-only accreditation, that is possible with the full *Inspire* protocol plus this addendum. If an [online school](#) wants dual accreditation, they will need to discuss the process with the divisional accreditation director. Whether or not ACSI serves as the lead accreditor varies by region.

Self-Study

If it is determined that the school needs to complete the Online Addendum, the school will create an [online subcommittee](#) to adequately evaluate the online program as part of the self-study.

Additional sections will be made active in the ePlatform. *Additional* and *modified* indicators will be included along with a text box for each domain. There will also be an area for the additional evidence suggested for the online program with each indicator listed.

Each domain will have a textbox similar to those for the main *Inspire* protocol, allowing those who work on the online addendum to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Included in this textbox should be a general

reflection that helps explain any distinctives, challenges, or context for the visiting [team member](#)(s) reviewing the online portion of the report. Those who are working on the online addendum will identify prioritized goals resulting specifically from the online addendum and share those with the steering committee.

All [online schools](#) and [attached programs](#) rate the indicators that are *additional* and *modified* along with the rest of the *Inspire* indicators. (Fully [online schools](#) will omit the *Inspire* indicator for which there is a corresponding *modified* indicator in this addendum.) See the *additional* and *modified* indicators under each domain on the pages that follow.

For the indicators where only evidence is listed, the [online subcommittee](#) should look at the rating that the [traditional school](#)'s subcommittee gave that indicator. If they see a significant difference once they look at the online evidence, they should note that in the textbox provided.

A few general questions will be asked at the beginning of the [Online Learning](#) section in the ePlatform. These are needed to provide context for the [team member](#)(s). More information will be provided with the prompts in the ePlatform:

1. Provide **demographics** (numbers and descriptions) of the students in the online program.
2. Describe the **history and administration** of the program, including how the program came into existence, the leadership structure, and how it operates in relation to the brick-and-mortar school (if an [attached program](#)).
3. Describe the **learning management system** and method of delivery ([synchronous/asynchronous](#), 100% online, [blended](#) with live sessions, [hybrid](#), mixture).
4. Describe the **curriculum used**, including courses purchased and other external entities used (developed in-house, purchased, specific company, honors, AP).
5. List the **personnel** who work with the online program, as well as their responsibilities: teachers, monitors, advisors, counselors, and any other significant positions. Provide full-time equivalents (FTEs) in your answer.
6. Describe **structures used to support online students and develop school culture** such as counselors, Bible studies, chapel, co-curriculars, clubs, resources for tech support, etc.

Composition of the Team

For [attached programs](#), the chair of the combined visit will be appointed approximately 12-18 months prior to the team visit. That person will be an expert in the *Inspire* standards and indicators. An additional [team member](#) (or members, depending on size of the program) will be appointed to serve on the team with experience in online programs. The online team member will assist the chair to assess the overall readiness of the program for the visit. He or she will also serve as the contact or resource person for the online staff as they prepare the self-study in preparation for the team visit.

Readiness Checklist for the Online Program

Approximately eight weeks prior to the team visit, the team chair and at least one [team member](#) responsible for the online program will perform a visit readiness check to determine if the visit can go forward. That check may be virtual or in-person. They will be looking for a basic level of compliance or effectiveness on these components. Especially if it is a first visit, the online program will not be expected to have the level of maturity of an established program.

[Attached programs](#) should be aware that the visit readiness check will be completed along with a Standard 11 Checklist. Standard 11 Checklist items do not require many modifications for online programs. However, the school's [online subcommittee](#) should obtain appropriate documents and be prepared to submit them for their program.

Evidence

The school will need to provide evidence that pertains specifically to the online program for all indicators that are *additional*, *modified*, or marked for additional evidence. The visiting [team member](#) for the online program will review the evidence to determine if the online program is effectively meeting each indicator. If an *Inspire* indicator is not listed, no evidence needs to be provided that is specific to the online program (for attached programs). For fully [online schools](#), all evidence included for the *Inspire* indicators as well as the addendum indicators will be related to their online programs.

Team Visit

When the school hosts the visiting team, at least one additional [team member](#) with expertise in online instruction will participate on the team (for [attached programs](#)). For fully [online schools](#), all team members will be experienced in online instruction and participate fully in the accreditation process. The team member will observe classes in whatever way works best. That may include live sessions if opportunities are available. It also may mean that the online teachers walk that observer through a selection of [asynchronous](#) classes examining teaching sequences, activities, graded work, and viewing of student projects.

[Team member](#)(s) will rate the *additional* and *modified* indicators, evaluate the additional evidence, and draft their team report during the visit. The team will complete a reflection for each domain in which they will comment on their observations and additional evidence. A school may receive commendations or recommendations that pertain specifically to the online program.

Icons used throughout this Addendum:

Please note: When there is a specific online indicator, [online schools](#) and online programs should rate the *additional* and *modified* indicators and not the original *Inspire* indicators.



Modifications to Inspire for Online Programs:



Additional Indicators required for Online Programs:



Additional Evidence needed: These notes apply to both fully [online schools](#) and [attached programs](#). For fully online schools, this clarifies what the evidence should include. For attached programs, this clarifies what specific evidence is needed for the addendum in addition to the evidence the school's subcommittees provided for regular sections of *Inspire*.



Definitions

This Online Addendum is intended to be used as a side-by-side document with Inspire.

Domain 1: PURPOSE



Additional Evidence

Indicator 1.2: Evidence for this indicator will be slightly different for online programs. The focus of the indicator is still that the mission and other documents are “written, reviewed for effectiveness, and communicated.”

Indicator 2.2: Evidence of mentoring, discipleship, and outreach is needed specific to the online program.

Indicator 3.1: Evidence should demonstrate that the school is clearly committed to online pedagogy and sees it as a way to achieve the school’s mission. Professional development concerning governance should include specific training related to online education.

Indicator 3.2: For [attached programs](#), evidence is needed to show that all aspects of 3.2 involve the online program and that strategic planning specifically includes the online program.

Indicator 3.5: Evidence should show that while the governing body provides direction to the online program, the leader of that program has the necessary autonomy to pursue goals to accomplish the student outcomes.



Additional Indicators

OL Indicator 3.7 The school has clearly defined policies, standards, and procedures for how the online program relates to the rest of the school if it is a separate division. (This includes when students are allowed to take courses online, who pays for which courses, how online courses are developed, etc. Mark N/A if school is not related to any traditional program or division.)

OL Indicator 3.8 The governing authority establishes and assesses policies and procedures for validating the authenticity of student performance, awarding course credits, and meeting graduation requirements. (A student must earn at least 25% of their high school credits directly from the school itself in order to be eligible for a HS diploma from the school.)



Definitions

Indicator 2.2: “Outreach” might be harder for students in the online community to visualize. For the purposes of Indicator 2.2, it is meant to encourage students to extend themselves in volunteer service to work with or assist those who are beyond their normal boundaries of friends and family. This work could have a spiritual focus, as in teaching Sunday School or Vacation Bible School, or it could be simply helping needy people directly or behind the scenes.

Domain 2: RELATIONSHIPS



Additional Evidence

Indicator 4.2: Evidence should be provided that demonstrates there is an effective structure to provide students in the online program with adult support for their social, emotional, spiritual, and emotional needs.

Indicator 5.1: Examples provided for evidence should include two-way communication specifically with families in the online program.

Indicator 5.3: In online programs, the collaboration mentioned will look different than in a traditional program. Evidence in [asynchronous](#) programs is more likely to include a student involving one other person in an interview rather than a classroom discussion.



Modified Indicators

Modification for Indicator 6.1: The online program provides or encourages students to engage with their local community and ministries, as appropriate. (Additional information will be provided as suggestions for online programs.)

Modification for Indicator 6.2: The online program encourages or provides opportunities for students to connect with national or global communities, in order for students to serve. (Additional information will be provided as suggestions for online programs.)

Domain 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING



Additional Evidence

Indicator 7.1: Evidence for the online program demonstrates that essential learning outcomes are the same for courses, including those focused on biblical worldview, whether they are a part of the brick-and-mortar program or the online program (if an [attached program](#)). Courses chosen for the online program should be shown to be a satisfactory alternative to the school's own curricular offerings, including the development of a biblical worldview.

Indicator 10.3: Evidence should demonstrate professional development and teacher evaluation that prepares faculty to work effectively in the online environment.



Additional Indicators

OL Indicator 7.7: The online program uses a variety of well-chosen active, interactive, and reflective learning activities that cover a broad range of learning levels (Blooms, Depth of Knowledge) and use a wide variety of learning inputs.

OL Indicator 7.8: The online program ensures that services or coursework from external sources will be monitored for perspective, rigor, and biblical worldview such that they would be similar to any provided in-house.

Domain 4: EXPERTISE



Additional Evidence

Indicator 12.2: In addition to the qualification requirements, evidence should demonstrate that teachers are prepared to work effectively in the online environment. The school may wish to complete the School-Based Professional Development or certification charts together or separately for [attached programs](#).

Indicator 13.2: Evidence should provide examples of career exploration and academic counseling specifically from the online program.



Modified Indicator

Modification for Indicator 13.3: The online program has processes in place to identify and meet individual student learning needs, as can be accommodated by the technology, resources, and personnel of the program. (See also Indicator 3.6)

Domain 5: RESOURCES



Additional Evidence

Indicator 14.2: The budget should demonstrate that the online program is equitably resourced, appropriate to its needs. Examples provided for evidence should demonstrate that input is given and student outcomes are considered for the online program.

Indicator 17.2: Evidence for this indicator should show that the school has policies and practices to ensure compliance with intellectual property rights (including copyright laws), attribution, and expectations regarding plagiarism. There should also be examples showing that students and faculty are instructed in the ethical and moral use and evaluation of resources.



Modified Indicators

Modification for Indicator 16.1: This indicator may be marked N/A if the school has no physical presence. If the students, families, or even the staff come to a facility of any kind, for any amount of time, that environment needs to be “safe, secure, and well-maintained.” Evidence would need to be available for whatever period of time any members of the school community are present.

Modification for Indicator 16.2: This indicator may be marked N/A if the school never uses any physical facility or mode of transportation. If either is used, then a written safety plan must include policies and procedures and those must be appropriately followed, maintained, and documented.



Additional Indicators

OL Indicator 16.3: The online program has a crisis management plan for its technology that includes a backup for its critical functions as well as separate contact information (and procedures) for students and staff should the main communication systems fail.

OL Indicator 17.3 - The hardware, software, infrastructure, and [learning management system](#) that is used by the school is adequate to support quality teaching/learning for all students enrolled in online programs.

OL Indicator 17.4 - Sufficient staff are in place to assist students/parents with the technology and [learning management system](#).

OL Indicator 17.5 - Technology and instructional resources are adequate to support a safe and educationally challenging environment for the online program (media, technology infrastructure, filter, instructional materials).

OL Indicator 17.6 - Incoming students and their families are prepared for the [online learning](#) environment through required orientation sessions.

OL Indicator 17.7 – Each course has an appropriate course overview that contains information about the course, the instructor, types of support, and course expectations.

Domain 6: WELL BEING



Additional Evidence

Indicator 18.2: There must be clearly defined harassment, bullying, and conduct expectations for students, staff, parents, and volunteers. In an online program, evidence will need to demonstrate that the technology infrastructure supports students’ ability to study in a safe online community along with appropriate policies and procedures.

Indicator 18.3: Child safety policies and procedures should be specific to the online program. Examples provided for evidence should be specifically from the online program.

Indicator 19.1: Evidence should include specific examples of a Christ-centered working environment in the online program.

Indicator 20.1: Examples of the school promoting an emotionally healthy environment should come from online students and their experiences.

Indicator 20.3 Evidence for online programs should demonstrate a unique, Christ-honoring, school culture through [synchronous](#) and [asynchronous](#) activities promoting spiritual formation, friendship, fun, and service. [Attached programs](#) should include information about eligibility for on-campus activities related to students in the online program.

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Glossary of Online Terms used throughout the Addendum

Asynchronous Learning – a learning program which allows the instruction to occur on the learner’s schedule with materials provided by a teacher. (Most often refers to lessons organized in modules through a [learning management system](#) including online lectures, discussions, blogs, podcasts, e-mails, messages, videos, and other resources, etc.)

Attached Program – an online program that has a significant connection to a brick-and-mortar school. The school and the attached program may share services and students, or they may simply have grown up together and share a common history. Some attached programs may be so independent that it would be best if they pursued separate accreditation because they have become a completely separate entity.

Blended Learning – blended learning is the combination of student learning in part with teachers at a brick-and-mortar location away from home and at least in part through online delivery.

Brick and mortar school (traditional) – a common way to describe a school where students attend primarily face-to-face classes.

Hybrid Program – may be a synonym for “[blended learning](#)” or it may mean a specific program where a student studies half the week with teachers on campus and the other half, completing the teacher-directed instruction at home.

Learning Management System (LMS) – most often web-based software for the delivery of an [online course](#). Usually manages the presentation of material, organization of modules, calendar, grading, discussions, resources, assessments, etc.

Online Learning or Instruction – instruction that is delivered to a student wholly or partially through electronic means such as the Internet, or any similar media in a structured course, usually for credit. This education may be organized in a [synchronous](#) or [asynchronous](#) method of presentation of materials and either type includes submission of coursework, grading, feedback, dialog, and guidance of a qualified instructor.

Online course provider – an organization for learning that provides courses for instruction in partial fulfillment of their schooling needs. Since these institutions do not identify as a school, they would not be expected to offer services usually associated with a school.

Online school (fully online school) – an institution for learning that offers full-time instruction through the Internet. Students may be enrolled for full or partial completion of their schooling requirements. As a school, it is assumed to have services such as admissions, counseling, chaplain, and other support services one would expect in a school, depending on the grade levels covered.

Online subcommittee – a group of individuals at an [online school](#) or [attached program](#) who are tasked with evaluating the online program or some portion of it. They should have firsthand knowledge of how the program operates and how it accomplishes its objectives.

Synchronous Learning – [online learning](#) in which the participants interact at the same time in the same space, even if virtual, using some form of technology to connect students over a distance. A [Learning Management System](#) may be used to organize the student’s learning experience, but the synchronous components are facilitated through video conferencing or other types of simultaneous communication.

Team member (or visiting team member) – an individual assigned to represent ACSI in validating the school’s self-study with a goal of providing commendations and recommendations for the school in order to help it continue to

improve. The team makes a recommendation about whether or not the school should be accredited to the appropriate commission.

[Traditional school \(see Brick-and-mortar\)](#)

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