



Accreditation Review Commission on Education  
for the Physician Assistant, Inc.

## NOTES TO PROGRAMS

Fall, 2013

Below are many important Notes to all programs. Some provide clarification and some refer to documents to be posted on the ARC-PA web site Accreditation Resource page (<http://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation/resources/>). Others are or will be reflected in edited versions of the Policy Documents, *Standards* and Accreditation Manual.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY EXCERPTS FROM SEPTEMBER 2013 MEETING

#### Accreditation Actions as of October 1, 2013

- Acknowledged 17 new PDs, 10 New IPD program changes, 6 new MD program changes, 4 IMD changes
- 12 Continuing program applications
- 11 Provisional program applications
- 2 Expansion to a distant campus applications
- 3 Clinical postgraduate 3-year renewal applications
- 2 Program changes
- 19 Program reports
- 25 Expedited Reviews (22 reports due, 8 program changes)  
([Accreditation actions](#) are posted on the ARC-PA web site after each meeting and after all programs have been notified of commission decisions.)

The total number of **entry-level** accredited programs as of October 1, 2013 is **181**.

The total number of **clinical postgraduate** accredited programs at present is **8**.

#### Projected Workload

- The current projected workload includes an additional **76** new programs for provisional accreditation consideration by 2018.
- While the need for PA healthcare providers remains strong, the commission remains concerned about the availability of clinical education sites for all types of healthcare students, the supply of qualified program leaders and faculty, and the concentration of programs in certain regions of the country.

### NEW STAFF

The ARC-PA has hired several new staff members since the last Notes document was published. Joining the staff are Heather McGovern, Suzanne York, and Rosann Ippolito. Heather is administrative staff based in the Georgia office. She works in the division of Accreditation Services. Suzanne and Rosann are both PA staff, serving as Assistant Directors of the ARC-PA. Suzanne was most recently faculty with the Detroit Mercy Program and is based in Detroit. Rosann was most recently the program director of the Northeastern University PA program and is based in Boston.

**APPLICATION CHANGES TO APPENDICES FOR VALIDATION VISITS**

Effective with the programs on the September 2014 commission agenda, the ARC-PA will no longer require that programs submit examples of examinations used for student evaluation as a component of the appendices. Evaluation instruments will be reviewed at time of the site visit.

**ACCREDITATION PROCESS CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION**

The ARC-PA continues its transition to the new accreditation process. Changes are being implemented over several years. **It is important for programs to note that many of the dates related to materials submission are based on the dates of their validation review site visit.** Site visits often occur months before a program is discussed at a commission meeting.

The ARC-PA distributes new application materials as they become available, with the goal of having materials to programs one year in advance of their submission deadlines. To assist programs, a Sample Application and SSR for a continuing validation visit will be posted on the ARC-PA web site by the end of October 2013. This sample will be unprotected, allowing programs to begin drafting their potential responses to questions in the application.

Below is a summary of the some of the changes and their dates of implementation by calendar and ARC-PA commission agenda.

**November 2013:** Invoice billing for 18 month period (fee structure available on [website](#))

**By commission agenda**

2014M: First provisional applicant programs began using new feasibility guidelines for submission 6 months prior to SV.

2014J: Review of clinical postgraduate programs for accreditation action, yearly as needed (new process)

2014S: Use of new SV template for validation visits (not customized by program); first provisional monitoring visit

2015M: First continuing programs to have application materials submitted 12 weeks early  
Provisional applicant programs to use Feasibility Study guidelines revised 11.2013

2015S: New continuing application, new SSR document (to be submitted with application)

2016S: Begin submitting SSR two years before visit; customized SV designed by ARC-PA for each program based on all documents submitted and reviewed during the interval between previous and current commission review.

**STANDARDS CHANGES**

At its recent meeting in September, the commission made several changes to the eligibility section, annotations and definitions within the *Standards* as summarized below. **The changes took effect immediately and will be used for all programs beginning with those on the March 2014 agenda.** Programs on that agenda will be notified of the changes and will be required to address them. New application materials not yet distributed will reflect the changes. Revised *Standards* will be posted on the web site.

Eligibility Section: All conditional footnotes removed.

All programs must be housed in institutions with regional accreditation. All programs accredited prior to 2013 that do not currently offer a graduate degree must transition to conferring a graduate degree.

Standard A1.02

Added wording to the annotation about who should sign the agreements: *Agreements are expected to be signed by an authorized individual(s) of each participating entity.*

Standard A2.02

Added wording to annotation clarifying the medical director as principal faculty if 0.6 FTE or greater: *If counted as principal faculty, the medical director does not substitute for currently certified PA principal faculty.*

Standard A2.12

Changed annotation to provide flexibility to role of the medical director: The medical director ~~is~~ *may be* actively involved in developing the mission statement for the program; providing instruction; evaluating student performance; designing, implementing, coordinating and evaluating curriculum and evaluating the program.

Standard A3.14 a&c

Added annotation to a: The program is expected to post on its web site the accreditation status statement provided the program by the ARC-PA. (Such statements will be sent to all accredited programs by the end of the year.)

Removed requirement for aggregate PANCE performance and rearranged wording of annotation for c: The program is expected to publish on its web site the PANCE performance data of its graduates by publishing the NCCPA PANCE Pass Rate Summary Report, as provided by the NCCPA through its program portal, of the most recent ~~five-year first time and aggregate graduate~~ performance report.

Clarification reminder for A 3.14c

To be in compliance the information must be:

- The NCCPA PANCE Pass Rate Summary Report, as provided by the NCCPA through its program portal
- Available on the home page of the PA program (as a link)
- Easily recognized (Graduate Performance on Certification Exam), not hidden within other categories
- Linked to either a pdf document or other section within the web site that directly presents the information

Standard E1.09

Edited wording now requires that programs *“must inform and/or receive approvals required from the ARC-PA”* for changes as detailed in the standard.

Rescinded “e” concerning maximum aggregate student enrollment. This required editing the annotation to remove the reference to “maximum aggregate student enrollment.” The standard reference “E1.09e” will no longer be used. Sub-sections were not reordered and “f” remains.

#### Definitions

Deleted the definition of maximum aggregate student enrollment.

Edited definition for distant campus.

<b>Distant Campus</b>	A campus geographically separate from the main program at which didactic, preclinical or clinical instruction occurs for all or some of the students <del>enrolled</del> matriculated to that campus.
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Added definition

<b>Interprofessional practice</b>	Practice involving individuals from different health care professions working together to provide patient centered care in a collaborative manner.
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#### **POLICY CHANGES**

The following represent policy changes approved by the commission at its September 2013 meeting.

Policy 2.3 Commissioner Responsibility has been renamed to be “Commissioner Responsibility and Duty of Care.” Duty of care is defined in the footnote as “The duty of care stands for the principle that directors and officers of a corporation in making all decisions in their capacities as corporate fiduciaries, must act in the same manner as a reasonably prudent person in their position would.” The requirement that commissioners must “be familiar with” was changed to must “follow” commission rules.

Policy 9.1 Program Accreditation: Change involved clarifying that the ARC-PA does not accredit any degree offered by the PA program’s sponsoring institution or any institution with which it collaborates to offer a degree.

Policy 10.8 Voluntary Inactive Status: Changed so that the wording is now consistent with other policies regarding a status awarded to a program by action of the ARC-PA. Added to the policy: “Programs holding an adverse accreditation status will not be awarded voluntary inactive status.”

#### **NEW REPORT DUE: PANCE REQUIRED REPORTS FOR LOW FIRST TIME TAKER PASS RATES**

Beginning with class cohorts that graduate in 2013, the ARC-PA will review the PANCE first time pass rate percentages by student cohort. Any program with a PANCE pass rate percentage of 82 % or less for their 2013 cohort, must submit an analysis of its PANCE performance to the ARC-PA by July 1, 2014. From that point forward, in any year that the PANCE pass rate for first time takers by cohort for that year has a pass rate percentage of 82% or less, the program must submit an analysis of PANCE performance by July 1 of the following year. The NCCPA usually provides programs their previous year’s data in February.

The cut-off score was chosen because it is one standard deviation from the mean first time pass rate across programs over a review of multiple years of data. Over a 10 year period, that percentage did not vary by more than a few percentage points. Realizing that the number of new programs rapidly entering the list of

accredited programs may impact the history of results, every three years the commission will evaluate the minimum percentage score requiring a report.

Based on history, it is estimated that 15-20 programs per year may be required to complete PANCE Analysis Reports. Some of those may be required to complete such reports for several years in a row.

The basis for the report will be the ARC-PA's [Four Key Elements of Analysis](#). The report format will be the same as that used within the self-study report.

#### **POSTING OF ACCREDITATION ACTIONS**

In an attempt to provide additional transparency for the public the ARC-PA has changed its policy about posting accreditation actions. The commission will continue to post the results of accreditation actions for program applications for accreditation. The commission will

- Not post any adverse actions of the commission until such are final. This allows programs the benefit of reconsideration and appeal by the commission prior to a final accreditation action.
- Not list programs applying for initial provisional or initial clinical postgraduate that have been denied accreditation.
- Not list programs that applied for expansion to a distant campus but were denied.
- Include a listing of programs that have had "Reports accepted without further reports due," or "Reports accepted with further reports due."
- Include programs that have been approved for expansion to a Distant Campus by posting "Approved for Expansion to a Distant Campus."
- Include programs that have been approved for an increase in class size, to include the new class size.
- Not post changes acknowledged.

#### **ARC-PA WORKSHOPS**

The ARC-PA is holding a new site visitor workshop April 4-6, 2014. Anyone interested in applying to become an ARC-PA site visitor should read the [workshop announcement](#) and site visitor responsibilities. As per the announcement, all applications are due no later than Friday, December 20, 2013.

The ARC-PA encourages currently accredited programs to consider sending program representatives to its summer accreditation workshop in St. Louis, Missouri, June 22-24, 2014. This year's workshop will include a separate break out session for those entering data into the ARC-PA Program Management Portal and a session for deans or others involved with the institutional sponsorship of the program. More information will be posted on the ARC-PA website later this year.

#### **ACCREDITATION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT PORTAL UPDATE**

All accredited programs should be maintaining their Program Management Portal data. The Program Required Annual Report to the ARC-PA will be due December 31, 2013. (Reports for entry-level programs that were first accredited in September 2013 and all clinical postgraduate programs are due March 31, 2014.) A separate Portal Pointers document will be forthcoming from the ARC-PA.

This year and this year only, programs will not be required to update the SCPE tab of their portal data as part of the report due December 31, 2013. The ARC-PA has determined that those entering this data into the portal could benefit from additional HELP to assure that the data entered is consistent across programs and usable by the ARC-PA. For that reason, the ARC-PA is developing a supplement to the HELP manual with more specific directions and screen captures to assist those entering the data. The SCPE tab data will be required by all programs for a July 1, 2014 submission due date.

***Only those authorized by the program director should enter or edit data in the portal. Sharing of log-in and password information is a violation of the terms of usage for the portal.***

The ARC-PA refers to the program portal data routinely for contact information for program faculty and institution administrators, as well as other data that was in the past collected via the Institution and Program Data Sheet. **It is imperative and required that programs keep their portal data accurate, particularly in terms of personnel.** Programs should **NOT** delete personnel from the portal who are leaving the program, but should contact Mercedes Beard for assistance.

The link to the Portal is found in the upper right hand corner of the [ARC-PA](#) web site. Questions about use of the portal should be submitted to the portal team at the email located on the bottom of each page of the portal ([portalfeedback@arc-pa.org](mailto:portalfeedback@arc-pa.org)).

#### **REMINDER: DISTANT CAMPUS EXPANSION POLICY AND PROCESS**

Programs considering expansion to a distant campus should review the requirements, diagram, required feasibility study components and format, and application materials currently available on the web at <http://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation/resources/program-change-forms/>

The timing for approval in advance of student enrollment at the distant campus is six months:

- E1.08 The program *must* obtain ARC-PA approval at least six months prior to implementing any intended program expansion to a *distant campus*.

ANNOTATION: Programs providing information about expanding to a *distant campus* do so using forms and processes developed by the ARC-PA for this purpose. A site visit will be required as a component of the application process to expand to a distant campus.

Programs with an accreditation status of Accreditation-Continued are eligible to apply for expansion to a distant campus if, at the time of application submission, they have maintained five successive years of Accreditation-Continued without an adverse action.

Programs with an accreditation status of Accreditation-Provisional are eligible to apply two years after completion of the provisional accreditation process as long as they have not had an adverse action during that period of time.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Programs with provisional accreditation awarded prior to September 2012 have different eligibility requirements and should contact the ARC-PA for clarification.

The rate at which programs can initiate new distant campuses cannot be more frequent than once every two to three years, depending on the length of the PA program. A program must have outcomes from the first cohort of students at any distant campus before applying for another distant campus.

#### **STANDARDS CLARIFICATION AND INTERPRETATION**

At the fall 2013 PAEA meeting in Memphis, TN, the ARC-PA discussed the concept of program-defined expectations. This Power Point Presentation is available in the Accreditation Resources section of the ARC-PA web site at <http://www.arc-pa.org/accreditation/resources/accreditation-manual/>

Programs are reminded that this same topic was initially addressed in the Notes from Spring 2013, in the section on *Standards* clarification.

#### **THANK YOU FOR WEIGHING IN ON WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS**

The Executive Committee summer 2013 retreat included several topics related to requirements for accrediting bodies to be more transparent in their actions and for programs to be more open about their outcomes. The ARC-PA solicited comments about these topics. Many responses were received, from programs and collaborating organizations. The discussion covered:

- The line between transparency and confidentiality of accreditation actions and program outcomes.
- Requiring an expected PANCE minimum percentage pass rate.
- Posting an adverse accreditation action prior to reconsideration or appeal on the ARC-PA web site list of accredited programs.
- Requiring programs undergoing reconsideration or appeal for an adverse accreditation action to post that information prominently on their web sites and to notify current students and active applicants for a class position of such status in writing.
- Eliminating the concept of maximum aggregate enrollment (Standard E1.09) and clarifying the 15% rule for the *Standards*, with limited or no variance above the approved class size.

Outcomes of these discussions affecting programs are found within this document, the *Standards* and ARC-PA policies. They also will be posted on the ARC-PA web site.

#### **ARC-PA NEW SITE VISITOR PREPARATION WORKSHOP**

The ARC-PA will hold a new site visitor workshop in April, 2014. Individuals interested in becoming a volunteer site visitor will find more information about site visitor responsibilities along with information about the application process on the ARC-PA web site in the News section at <http://www.arc-pa.org/news/>. The deadline for receipt of applications is Friday, December 20, 2013. The ARC-PA will notify applicants of the status of their application in early February, 2014.

#### **DEGREE DEADLINE REMINDER**

The *Standards* require that programs not currently offering a graduate degree *must* transition to conferring a graduate degree upon all PA students who matriculate into the program after 2020. The degree *should* be awarded by the sponsoring institution.

Programs housed in institutions unable to offer a graduate degree, those that do not yet offer a graduate degree or those that currently affiliate with institutions separate from their sponsoring institutions should

review the ARC-PA document about the *Standards* degree deadline, available on the ARC-PA web site [Accreditation Resources Page](#).

Programs should review the [Change forms page](#) of the ARC-PA website to find the forms and steps needed to demonstrate compliance with the degree requirement. There are separate forms for programs changing degrees within their own institutions and those affiliated with a separate institution.

#### **QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?**

Programs that have questions or comments about these Notes or any issue related to the accreditation process are encouraged to contact the ARC-PA by email or phone. All contact information is posted on the ARC-PA web site at <http://www.arc-pa.org/contact/staff/>.