



March 20, 2020

Statement from ARC-PA regarding COVID-19 (REVISED)

Please note that the notice sent earlier today was not to be a joint statement from ARC-PA and PAEA, but solely from ARC-PA. Our apologies to you and to PAEA.

Sharon Luke

The COVID-19 pandemic situation is evolving rapidly in the United States and has had unprecedented impact across the globe. In the past week, the President of the United States has declared a national emergency, and we have seen case numbers and death tolls continue to rise in Europe and elsewhere. Faculty, students, and university administrators – and indeed virtually all people – are feeling the stress of the unknown and the need to adapt rapidly to fast-changing circumstances.

Most recently, the CDC and the White House have endorsed a 15-day plan to “slow the spread” of the coronavirus, which, along with local decisions being made by hospitals and health systems, may impact the ability of students to see patients. We know that institutions and faculty members are working diligently to find ways to continue the education of their students during this difficult time. Some PA programs have had their students removed from clinical sites over the past week, while others have been able to continue their students’ clinical education. Some students are weeks away from graduation, and others are just starting their clinical year. What we know is that the situation seems to be different for each program.

The ARC-PA has reviewed the guidelines provided by many of our accreditation colleagues in other health professions and we are actively seeking solutions to the problems facing our programs and their students. The ARC-PA has reflected on the March 17, 2020, guidelines proposed by the AAMC and agrees and understands that a 15-day hiatus may be effective for re-focusing, regrouping, and developing plans to move programs forward.

Due to safety reports that indicate a lack of proper personal protection equipment (PPE) for healthcare providers, including PA students, *the Commission strongly supports programs removing students from clinical sites until the end of March 2020.* At that time, the Commission will reevaluate the COVID-19 situation and communicate with programs.

Additionally, the ARC-PA would like to clarify concepts that may help PA faculty to make decisions while maintaining compliance with the ARC-PA *Standards of Accreditation* and determining whether students have met the program's learning outcomes. A good starting point for these considerations is to begin with the outcomes in mind and ask yourself, "What is it we want students to learn?" This is the essence of competency-based education. More specifically:

- Please be reminded that the ARC-PA does not dictate the length of supervised clinical practice experiences (SCPEs) (see B3 standards). Each program determines the amount of experience needed for students to achieve the program's expected learning outcomes. Some programs are adjusting the length of their SCPEs while still ensuring students meet expected learning outcomes in an expedited manner.
- The ARC-PA would like to provide clarification on the statement made in the March 10, 2020 Joint ARC-PA/PAEA statement, "Waiving SCPE hours is not acceptable and if necessary, graduation time may need to be extended." We are revising that statement as follows:

"Waiving program requirements for students to meet SCPE learning outcomes is unfortunately not an option. Programs that are unable to ensure that all students meet their learning outcomes due to the temporary suspension of SCPEs may need to delay the date of program completion until they are able to do so."

Programs that need to extend their completion dates should notify the ARC-PA.

We hope that programs will use this time to develop plans that provide for student safety while ensuring student achievement of program competencies in order to meet graduation requirements.. Thank you for your patience as we continue to travel these uncharted waters together.

Sharon Luke, EdD, PA-C, Executive Director, ARC-PA