

**PROVISIONAL ACCREDITATION**

**ARC-PA Site Visit Rationale for**

**Initial Provisional Site Visit Sessions**

October 2021

**SPECIAL NOTE:**

The application submitted by the program to the ARC-PA office is considered the program's application of record. It is one component of the official program record used by the commission throughout the accreditation review process. Site visitors have been instructed **not** to accept any new or revised application materials from the program at the time of the visit. **If,** during the process of the visit, the site visitors suggest additional information or materials be submitted to the ARC-PA office, these materials should be sent with the program’s response to observations.

A site visit team can conduct a thorough and accurate assessment of the educational program for physician assistants within two days or less. The program provides the site visit team members information on the program, and the opportunity to meet and discuss the proposed program with its administration, faculty, staff, instructors, who have been involved in the development of the proposed program.

***The primary responsibility of the site visit team is to verify, validate, and clarify, if necessary, the information supplied by the program in its application materials.*** The purpose of the site visit is to assess the program's demonstrated or planned compliance with the *Standards.*

Site visitors should have a private conference room for use throughout the visit.

**NOTE:** The outline below provides the rationale for each session of the site visit. This is for the program’s use in understanding what to expect from each session. It is possible, depending on the actual visit agenda and design of the program, that each session as described below will not be used for every program.

The actual schedule should not vary from the ARC-PA Site Visit Schedule template without discussion with the assigned site visit team chair. The template represents a starting point for programs to use as they prepare to discuss the schedule with the site visit team chair.

This rationale document is best reviewed and used in conjunction with the Site Visit Protocol for Program Directors document, the Site Visit Schedule Template that is used to develop the actual agenda that will be provided to the visitors, and the Organizing Materials document. Those documents are available on the ARC-PA web site.

The Program Director **must** consult with the site visit team chair before finalizing the site visit schedule. This is best handled when the team chair has a copy of the proposed site visit schedule.

**NOTE:** *Visitors have found that reviewing the documents prior to meeting with program faculty and students is very beneficial. This approach can provide the team with information that allows for more productive visits with key individuals during the visit. It also provides an opportunity for the team to indicate to the program which documents it may not be able to locate, thus giving the program time to assist the team in finding what it needs to make its assessment.*

The rationale below is for sessions, regardless of where the sessions are found in the actual site visit agenda. The recommended sequencing is found on the ARC-PA web site as “Site Visit Schedule Template.”

## EVENING BEFORE THE SITE VISIT BEGINS:

**Meeting of Members of the Site Visit Team**

Purpose: Allows visitors to meet one another, review the site-visit schedule, discuss their perspectives of the program on the basis of the information provided in the application, and identify areas which merit special attention. (This is customarily a dinner meeting and is ***restricted to site visit members***. The site visit team chair coordinates this activity.)

FIRST DAY

The program is expected to arrange for transportation of visitors from the hotel to the program offices each morning and back to the hotel at the end of the first visit day. The visit should conclude by mid- afternoon and *no later than 3:30 p.m. of the second day.*

**Meeting with Program Director**

Purpose: To review the schedule for each day as planned by the program and site visit chair and make desired adjustments when feasible and not excessively disruptive.

**Review of Documents, Files, and Records Requested in the Application and by the Site Visit Team**

Purpose: To assess the adequacy of course syllabi, student manuals, institution and program policies and other documentation requested in the application that must be available for visitors.

Document review occurs prior to and on both days of a visit. This may be divided into two blocks of time, such as 60 minutes in the morning of the first day and 30 minutes later in the day and should be discussed with the site visit team chair. The team continues its review of documents on the second day.

**Meeting with Key Senior Institutional Officials** (such as President, Provost, Dean, whomever the Institution wishes to represent the sponsoring institution)

Purpose: To assess institutional support for the program and obtain clarification of institutional information appearing in the application.

**Review and Clarification of the Application and Appendices**

Members of the site visit team meet with the Program Director, Medical Director, Principal Faculty and staff.

Purpose: To allow the site visit team to state briefly the function of the site visit, the ARC-PA, the type of accreditation status available to the program, and what that status represents.

This session provides the team an opportunity to discuss and clarify the program's application and supporting materials with the program faculty in order to obtain a more complete understanding of the program. This includes reviewing program goals, philosophies, course objectives, operational procedures, student selection criteria, student evaluation protocols, preceptor selection criteria, processes for monitoring preceptors' performance, etc. Additional supporting documentation maybe required to be reviewed or provided as a result of this session.

The responsibility for the format of the session rests with the site visit team.

**Luncheon Team Executive Session**

(The program is expected to provide lunch as requested in advance by site visit team. This is a working lunch limited to site visit team members.)

Purpose: To allow the team time to discuss the progress and findings of the visit and plan for the remainder of visit.

**A Tour of Facilities**

Purpose: To familiarize the site visit team with the classroom and laboratory facilities to be used by students during the didactic and supervised practice components of the curriculum.

**Meeting with Members of the Program Planning or Advisory Committee**

Purpose: To determine the involvement of these individuals in the development of the program, gain perception of the community's support of the program and their understanding of their advisory function; establish how often the committee meets and what types of matters have been addressed, etc.

**Interviews with Key Members of the Faculty**

Interviews may be in groups or individually, as preferred by the site visit team, with key instructors for the didactic courses and supervised units of instruction which are designed to educate students and teach laboratory and other clinical skills in the program.

Purpose: To discuss the course selection and content, the instructional objectives and methods, the frequency and means of assessing and reporting to students on their progress, and other instructional related information.

**Brief Meeting with the Program Director**

Purpose: To obtain and clarify information and to review the schedule for the second day of the site visit.

**ADJOURN FIRST DAY** (Program is expected to provide transportation back to hotel and confirm time for pick-up on next day of visit.)

**EVENING OF THE FIRST DAY*:***

Purpose: The site visit team uses the dinner and evening hours for discussion of the information they acquired throughout the day, to identify areas requiring further review and exploration the following day, and to begin preparing a draft of the site visit report. The latter process serves to highlight what additional information or clarification is needed. (This is *restricted to site visit team members*. The site visit team chair coordinates this activity.)

SECOND DAY

**SECOND DAY:** The program is expected to arrange for transportation of the visitors from the hotel to the program offices. The visit should conclude by mid-afternoon and *no later than 3:30 p.m.*

Purpose: The initial and major portions of the morning are to be devoted to a review of plans for the supervised clinical practice components of the curriculum. It is beneficial for the team to meet by phone or in person on campus with individuals who will be involved in providing clinical practice experiences. The format for this component is discussed in advance between the program director and site visit chair.

**Meeting with Program Director**

Purpose: To review the schedule for the day as planned by the program and site visit chair and make desired adjustments when feasible and not excessively disruptive. To discuss any additional documentation that needs to be reviewed by the site visit team.

**Interviews with Members of the Faculty Who Will Be Responsible for Planning or Precepting the**

**Supervised Clinical Practice**

(This should include already identified preceptors and faculty who will teach and supervise students during the supervised clinical practice components of the curriculum.)

Purpose: To allow visitors to assess the faculty and preceptors’ understanding of their teaching responsibility; their contacts with the program administration; their teaching methods; the nature of the supervision, direction, and evaluation they will provide to students in the clinical setting.

**Preparation of the Site Visit Report (Working lunch)**

The program is expected to provide lunch in the conference room as requested in advance by site visit team. Lunch should be a simple one, thereby maximizing the time available for preparing their report.

The Program Director should be available to the site visit team in the event questions arise or if clarification is needed.

**Close Visit:** *Transportation arrangements for the visitors should have been previously arranged by the program.*

The site visit team indicates it is ready to depart the program. The site visit team will take a few moments to express thanks to the program for its assistance in facilitating the team’s completion of its task. The site visit team does not give an oral exit report at the conclusion of the site visit. The site visit team chair reads a script to close the visit. The script covers all the important points about next steps. Ten days to two weeks prior to the program’s site visit the designated senior institutional official(s) will be reminded of the upcoming visit by the ARC-PA. The notification letter will detail the process and address the fact that the ARC-PA does not give an Oral Exit Report.

The site visit team does not have the authority to speak on behalf of or bind the ARC-PA regarding a program’s compliance with the Standards, as these responsibilities and decisions rest solely with the ARC-PA.

The filed written report of observations from the visit will be sent as an attached e-mail document to the

Program Director from the ARC-PA within 21 days of the visit in most cases.

The Program will be offered the opportunity to respond to any of the observations noted in the site visitor report. The purpose of the program’s response is to eliminate errors of fact or challenge perceived ambiguities and misperceptions. The program is not to submit new information with the observations. The program may submit documents seen on site by the site visitors if so directed by the site visit team.

Any communication about the visit after the visit must be directed to Accreditation Services [accreditationservices@arc-pa.org](mailto:accreditationservices@arc-pa.org) or the executive director of the ARC- PA, not to the site visitors.