Accreditation Standards for
Clinical Postgraduate PA Programs ©

Third Edition

Approved by the ARC-PA
September 2019

Published November 2019

Effective January 2020

Clarifications 10/2021

Table of Contents

PREFACE

The Physician Assistant (PA) profession is based on the model of broad-based, generalist medical education provided by accredited entry-level PA programs. This preparation, when supplemented with practice-based training and appropriate *program faculty* collaboration, allows PAs to integrate into various medical and surgical specialties or practice settings throughout their careers.

The fact that PAs continue to refine their knowledge and skills via practice-based training is a hallmark feature of the PA profession. With the ever-changing health care needs, including changes in physician staffing, this model allows PAs to adapt rapidly to the medical needs of their communities. Employers, physicians and patients benefit from this model.

PAs may choose to receive additional, formal training in a particular area of interest through a *Clinical Postgraduate PA program*. This additional training is a concentrated, protected phase of supervised learning set apart from the staffing needs of the institution. For uniformity the Standards will refer to the PA enrolled in a *clinical postgraduate PA program* as a *PA trainee*, whose clinical title may vary with institutional preference e.g. resident or fellow.

Clinical postgraduate PA program curricula are designed to build upon the knowledge and experience acquired during entry level generalist medical education for the PA, and provide one means of enabling the graduate PA to assume a more advanced role on a specialty health care team. *Clinical postgraduate PA program* accreditation is designed to assess the program's compliance with the *clinical postgraduate* Standards established by the ARC-PA.

These Standards were initially adopted in 2007 and were revised in 2012 and 2019. ARC-PA commissioners include individuals nominated from the collaborating organizations of the ARC-PA which include:

- Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant
- Association of Post-Graduate Physician Assistant Programs
- Society of Emergency Medicine Physician Assistants
- American Association of Surgical Physician Assistants
- Physician Assistant Section of the Society of Critical Care Medicine
- Physician Assistants in Orthopedic Surgery
- Public Member

These Standards constitute the requirements to which an accredited program is held accountable and provide the basis on which the Accreditation Review Commission on Education, Inc. for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) will confer of deny program accreditation.

Standards Format
- The term "*PA trainee*" as used in this document refers to the graduate PA who is NCCPA-eligible or who holds current NCCPA certification and current state licensure (unless exempted by federal or state law) and is enrolled in a clinical postgraduate PA program. This clinical title may vary with institutional preference e.g. resident or fellow.

- *Italics* are used to reflect words and terms defined in the glossy of this document.

INTRODUCTION

The ARC-PA is the recognized accrediting agency that protects the interests of the public, current and *prospective PA trainees* and the PA profession by defining the standards for PA education and evaluating PA educational programs within the territorial *United States* to assure their compliance with those standards. The ARC-PA establishes, maintains and promotes appropriate standards of quality for clinical postgraduate education of PAs and provides recognition for *clinical postgraduate PA programs* that meet the requirements outlined in these accreditation standards. These accreditation *Standards* are to be used for the development, evaluation and self-*analysis* of *clinical postgraduate PA program*s.

The *clinical postgraduate PA program* accreditation process conducted by the ARC-PA is a voluntary one entered into by institutions and programs that sponsor a structured educational experience. The process gives applicant programs the opportunity to demonstrate compliance with the approved accreditation standards. While the process is voluntary, it provides programs an external validation of their educational offering. Additionally, the process offers *prospective PA trainees* one means by which they can judge the quality of the educational experience offered by the program or institution.

These accreditation standards reflect the evolution of the PA profession and endorse competency-based education as a fundamental tenet of PA education. They allow *clinical postgraduate PA program*s to be creative and innovative with the designs and methodologies used to enable *PA trainees* to achieve program *goals* and acquire defined *competencies*. While the accreditation standards require that program mission statements be consistent with the *Standards* and the mission of the sponsoring institution, they acknowledge the underlying rights and responsibilities of the sponsoring institution as it works with the program to meet the standards.

These accreditation standards constitute the requirements to which an accredited c*linical postgraduate PA program* is held accountable and provide the basis on which ARC-PA will confer or deny *clinical postgraduate PA program* accreditation.

The standards apply to all accredited *clinical postgraduate PA program*s.

ELIGIBILITY

*Clinical postgraduate PA program*s are formal educational programs in a medical or surgical specialty that offer structured curricula, including didactic and clinical components, to educate graduates of an ARC-PA accredited entry level PA program who are *NCCPA* eligible or certified. Programs typically involve full time study of 12-24 months duration.

The ARC-PA accredits only qualified c*linical postgraduate PA program*s offered by or located within institutions chartered by and physically located within, the *United States* and where *PA trainees* are geographically located within the *United States* for their education.

Accredited c*linical postgraduate PA program*s *should* be established in
       a) schools of allopathic or osteopathic medicine,

      b) colleges and universities affiliated with appropriate clinical teaching facilities,
      c) medical education facilities of the federal government, or
      d) hospitals, medical centers or ambulatory clinics.

The sponsoring institution *must* either be accredited
      a) as an institution of higher education by a *recognized regional or specialized and professional accrediting agency*,
      b) by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC),
      c) by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitative Facilities (CARF) or,
      d) by the Joint Commission as a hospital/medical center or ambulatory clinic.

Eligible programs *must* follow the process of and use the forms provided by the ARC-PA.

Eligible programs *must* be operational with at least one enrolled *PA trainee* at the time of application for accreditation.

Graduate degree programs and master's completion programs without a strong focus on clinical education in a recognized clinical specialty discipline are not eligible to apply for accreditation.

CLINICAL POSTGRADUATE PA PROGRAM REVIEW

Accreditation of *clinical postgraduate PA program*s is a voluntary process that includes a comprehensive review of the *clinical postgraduate PA program* relative to the accreditation standards. Accreditation decisions are based on the ARC-PA's review of information contained in the accreditation application, the site visit evaluation reports, any additional requested reports or documents submitted to the ARC-PA by the *clinical postgraduate PA program*, and the *clinical postgraduate PA program*'s past accreditation history. Additional data to clarify information submitted with the application may be requested at the time of the site visit. New unsolicited information submitted after a site visit will not be accepted or considered by the ARC-PA as part of that accreditation review process.

STANDARDS FORMAT

This version of the *Standards* includes *annotations* for some individual standards. *Annotations* are considered an integral component of the standards to which they refer. They clarify the operational meaning of the standards to which they refer and may be changed over time to reflect current educational or clinical practices. *Annotations* are not suggestions for methods of compliance. Such suggestions may be found in the Post Graduate Accreditation Manual.

NOTES: The term *"(PA) trainee(s)"* as used in this document refers to those individuals enrolled in the *clinical postgraduate PA program*.

The term "program" as used in this document refers to *clinical postgraduate PA program*.

Italics are used to reflect words and terms defined in the glossary of this document.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCREDITATION

SECTION A: ADMINISTRATION

INTRODUCTION
The administrative operation of a *clinical postgraduate PA program* involves collaboration between the *program/instructional faculty*, the *administrative support staff*, and the sponsoring institutional leadership. Therefore, the sponsoring institution *must* be explicitly committed to the success of the program. The program *must* provide an environment that fosters intellectual challenge and a spirit of inquiry. Policies *must* be well defined and align with the mission and *goals* of the program and sponsoring institution. Program documents *must accurately* reflect the institutional, programmatic, and individual responsibilities of each participant. Institutional resources *must* support the program in accomplishing its mission.

A1 Sponsorship, Accreditation, Location

A1.01   A clearly identified single institutional sponsor such as a university or healthcare entity *must* assume ultimate responsibility for the *clinical postgraduate PA program*.

A1.02   There *must* be *written* and signed agreements between the postgraduate training program and each facility involved in the training, defining the responsibilities for each institution involved in the supervised clinical practice of the *PA trainees.*

A1.03   The sponsoring institution, together with its affiliates, *must* be capable of providing didactic and clinical instruction and experience requisite to *clinical postgraduate* PA education.

> ANNOTATION: Agreements typically specify whose policies govern and document *trainee* access to educational resources and clinical experiences. While one agreement between the sponsoring institution and the clinical entity to cover multiple professional disciplines is acceptable, these agreements *must* include specific notations acknowledging the terms of participation between the *clinical postgraduate PA program* and the clinical entity.

A2 Institutional Responsibilities and Resources

A2.01   The sponsoring institution *must* be responsible for:
  a) ("a" rescinded effective 10/2/21),
  b) appointment and institutional recognition of a medical director, program director, and *administrative support staff,*
  c) credentialing of *PA trainees* according to institutional requirements,
  d) storage of permanent program records,
  e) providing liability insurance for the trainees,
  f) providing the *PA trainees* full employment benefits *comparable* to those given to a traditional PA employee as defined by the HR department,

g) assuring policies and practices to support security and safety are implemented in all locations where training occurs,

h) provision of *sufficient* protected administrative time for medical director and program director(s),

i) providing *sufficient* support services to assure that *PA trainees* will not be required to perform non-patient related clerical or administrative work for the program that is not a component of the *curriculum,*

j) providing appropriate medical records access to PA trainees,

k) ("k" rescinded effective 10/2/21)

l) complying with ARC-PA PG accreditation Standards and policies, and

m) *teaching out* currently matriculated *PA trainees* in accordance with the institution's regional accreditor or state and/or federal law and in compliance with these accreditation standards in the event of program closure and/or loss of accreditation.

A2.02   The sponsoring institution *must* provide the program with *sufficient* financial resources to operate the educational program and fulfill obligations to matriculating and enrolled *PA trainees*.

A2.03   The sponsoring institution *must* provide the program with the human resources necessary to operate the educational program and to fulfill obligations to matriculating and enrolled *PA* trainees.

ANNOTATION: Human resources include the faculty and staff needed on a daily and ongoing basis, as well as those needed for specific program related activities. They include *sufficient* technical and *administrative support staff* to support faculty in accomplishing their assigned tasks.

A2.04   The sponsoring institution *must* provide the program with the academic resources needed by the program, *administrative support staff* and *PA trainees* to operate the educational program and to fulfill obligations to matriculating and enrolled *PA trainees*.

ANNOTATION: Academic resources include *sufficient* patient population to provide clinical experiences for *PA trainees*, computer and audio/visual equipment; instructional materials; technological resources that provide access to the Internet, medical information and current literature; the full text of current books, journals, periodicals and other reference materials related to the *curriculum*.

A2.05   The sponsoring institution *must* assure that the program has the following physical resources:

a) *sufficient* classrooms, labs, and clinical practice sites for *PA trainees*.

b) sleeping rooms and food facilities, if institutionally appropriate for call duty, available for all *PA trainees* while on "in-patient" assigned call duty,

c) space for confidential academic counseling of *PA trainees*, and

d) secure storage for *PA trainee* files and records.

A3 Personnel

Program Faculty

A3.01 *Program faculty must* include healthcare professionals who have the necessary education, specialty qualifications and expertise to provide didactic or clinical instruction and oversight for the *PA trainees*.

A3.02 The program *must* have a designated program director, medical director, and *sufficient administrative support staff*.

A3.03 The medical director and program director *must* be responsible for the administration and coordination of the didactic and clinical portions of the *curriculum*.

A3.04 The program *must* have a *sufficient* number of *program faculty* to provide *PA trainees* with the supervision, education and evaluation necessary to achieve advanced *competencies* safely.

A3.05 *Program faculty must* participate in:
   a) selection of *PA trainees* from the applicant pool,
   b) designing, implementing, coordinating, and evaluating the *curriculum,*
   c) providing instruction to PA trainees,
   d) evaluation of *PA trainee* performance,
   e) academic counseling of *PA trainees,*
   f) remedial instruction of *PA trainees,* and
   g) evaluation of the program.

A3.06 The program *must* have a clearly defined mission statement that is consistent with the mission of the institution and supported by faculty.

A3.07 Each training location *must* have *an instructional faculty* to coordinate and facilitate supervision of the *PA trainee* while at the particular location.

Program Director

A3.08 The program director *should* be a PA with requisite experience in the specialty of the program. If the program director is not a PA, then the program director *must* be a physician.
   a) If the program director is a PA, s/he *must* hold current *NCCPA* certification and current licensure in the state in which the program exists (unless exempt under state or federal law.)
   b) If the program director is a physician, s/he *must* hold current licensure as an allopathic or osteopathic physician in the state in which the program exists and *must* be certified by an *ABMS-* or *AOA*-approved specialty board. (unless exempt under state or federal law.)

A3.09 The program director *must* have the requisite knowledge and skills to administer the program effectively.

A3.10   The program director *must* provide effective leadership and management.

A3.11   The program director *must* be knowledgeable about and responsible for the program's:
a) organization,
b) administration,
c) fiscal management,
d) continuous review and *analysis*,
e) planning,
f) development, and
g) accreditation requirements and process.

A3.12   Together the program director and medical director *must* assure and document that adequate supervision of *PA trainees* is provided.

Medical Director

A3.13   The medical director *must:*
a) hold a current, valid, unrestricted, and unqualified license to practice medicine as an allopathic or osteopathic physician in the state in which the program exists (unless exempt under state or federal law.).
b) be currently certified by *ABMS* or *AOA* approved specialty board and experienced in the delivery of the type of health care services for which the *PA trainee* is being educated,
c) be knowledgeable about current practice standards and the PA role,
d) support the program director to ensure proficient medical guidance for didactic and supervised clinical instruction that meets best practice guidelines and the accepted standards of care, and
e) be an advocate for the program within the sponsoring institution and the medical and academic communities.

Professional Development

A3.14   The sponsoring institution *must* provide the opportunity for continuing professional development of the *program faculty* by supporting the development of the clinical, teaching, scholarly, and administrative skills/abilities required for their role in the program.

ANNOTATION: Professional development involves remaining current with clinical and academic skills and developing new skills needed for position responsibilities. The types of opportunities supported by institutions vary and may include funding to attend continuing education conferences, non-vacation time to attend professional organizational meetings, funding to attend professional organizational meetings, time for research/scholarly activities, time to pursue advanced degree and/or tuition remission for an advanced degree, payment of dues and fees related to certification maintenance and/or time needed for review and study.

A3.15   The program *should* support the *program faculty* assigned to work in the program in maintaining their national *NCCPA* certification status, unless exempt by law.

Instructional Faculty

A3.16   In addition to the program and medical director, there *must* be *sufficient* additional *instructional faculty* to provide *PA trainees* with the attention, instruction, and supervised practice experiences necessary to acquire the knowledge and c*ompetencies* required to meet the *learning outcomes* of the program.

A3.17   *Program* and *instructional faculty must*:
   a) be qualified through academic preparation and experience to teach assigned content, and
   b) be knowledgeable in course content and effective in teaching assigned topics.

A.3.18   All *program faculty* and *instructional faculty* assigned to teach *PA trainees must* be responsible for evaluating *PA trainee* performance and identifying *PA trainees* who appear to be struggling with meeting expected *learning outcomes* or *competencies* in a *timely* manner.

Administrative Support Staff

A3.19   ("A3.19" rescinded effective 10/2/21).

A4 Operations

Fair Practices and Admissions

A4.01   The program, *program faculty* and *PA trainees must* comply with applicable state PA practice legislation and regulations.

A4.02   The program *must* develop a schedule of *PA trainees* educational activities that facilitates learning, performance and achievement of program c*ompetencies*, allowing for safe and high quality patient care.

A4.03   *PA trainees must* be provided with rapid, reliable systems for communicating with their clinical supervisors.

A4.04   Announcements and advertising *must accurately* reflect the program offered.

A4.05   All personnel and program policies *must* be consistent with federal and state statutes, rules and regulations.

A4.06   The program *must* clearly define and publish the admission requirements and practices upon which admissions decisions are made.

A4.07   The program *must* provide notification of acceptance to potential *PA trainees* according to its *published* practice/timeline and include, the notification of acceptance and the *written* conditions of appointment.

A4.08   Applicants being considered for acceptance into the program *must* be informed in writing or by electronic means of the terms, conditions and benefits of appointment, to include:
  a) *PA trainee* responsibilities,
  b) duration of appointment and conditions for reappointment,
  c) available financial support,
  d) policies about paid time off (such as vacation, sick, leave of absence, professional development),
  e) ("e" rescinded effective 10/2/21),
  f) professional liability insurance,
  g) hospitalization, health, disability and other insurance provided for *PA trainees* and their families, and
  h) conditions under which living quarters, meals, laundry services are to be provided, if applicable.

A4.09   The following *must* be defined, *published*, and *readily available* to *prospective* and enrolled *PA trainees*:
  a) ARC-PA accreditation status,
  b) policies and practices that favor specific groups of applicants in the admissions process,
  c) program eligibility requirements,
  d) policies regarding *advanced placement*,
  e) policies related to required duty hours,
  f) policies related to *instructional faculty* supervision of *PA trainees*,
  g) required *technical standards*,
  h) all required curricular components,
  i) academic credit offered by the program, if applicable,
  j) estimates of all costs related to the program which may be incurred by the *PA trainee*,
  k) policies and procedures for refunds of tuition and fees, if applicable,
  l) policies regarding *PA trainees*' *moonlighting* or outside work during the program,
  m) policies related to remuneration and benefits,
  n) policies addressing reduction in size or closure of a *clinical postgraduate PA program*, and how *PA trainee* would be assisted in completing their education in such instances, and
  o) defined training duties and weekly time expectations.

A4.10   The following *must* be defined, *published*, and *readily available* to enrolled *PA trainees*:
  a) required academic standards for progression in the program,
  b) policies and procedures for *PA trainee* withdrawal from the program,
  c) policies and procedures for *PA trainee* dismissal from the program,
  d) policies and procedures for *PA trainee* grievances,
  e) policies describing how *PA trainee* impairment, including that due to substance abuse, will be handled,
  f) policies covering sexual and other forms of harassment, and
  g) policies and procedures for PA trainee remediation during the program.

A4.11   Grievance and due process policies and procedures *must* address:
  a) academic or other disciplinary actions taken against *PA trainees* that could result in dismissal, nonrenewal of a *PA trainee's* agreement or other actions

that could significantly threaten a *PA trainee's* intended career development, and

    b) adjudication of *PA trainee's* complaints and grievances related to the work environment or issues related to the program or *program faculty*.

A4.12   Programs granting *advanced placement must* document that *PA trainees* receiving *advanced placement* have:

    a) met program defined criteria for such placement,
    b) met institution defined criteria for such placement, and
    c) demonstrated appropriate *competencies* for the curricular components in which *advanced placement* is given.

A4.13   Policies and procedures for processing *PA trainee* grievances *must* be defined, *published*, and *readily available* to *program faculty*.

A4.14   *PA trainees must* not be required or expected to perform non-patient related clerical or administrative work for the program that is not a component of the *curriculum.*

A4.15   *PA trainees must* not have access to the records or other confidential information about other *PA trainees* or *program faculty*.

PA Trainee Records

A4.16   *PA trainee* files kept by the program *must* include documentation:

    a) that the *PA trainee* has met *published* admission criteria,
    b) that the *PA trainee* has met institution health screening and immunization requirements,
    c) of the evaluation of *PA trainee* performance while enrolled,
    d) of *remediation* and results,
    e) of disciplinary action, and
    f) that the *PA trainee* has met requirements for program completion.

Program Faculty Records

A4.17   Records of the program director, medical director and any *program faculty must* include:

    a) a current job description that includes duties and responsibilities specific to each individual, and
    b) a current curriculum vitae (CV).

SECTION B: *CURRICULUM*

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

The program *curriculum* enhances *PA trainees*' abilities to provide patient centered care and collegially work in physician-PA teams in a specialty discipline. The *curriculum* for *clinical postgraduate PA program* education will vary somewhat by discipline, but is expected to address appropriate application of medical, behavioral and social sciences; patient assessment and clinical medicine; and clinical practice.

Programs need not have discrete courses for each of the instructional areas of the *curriculum*. However, *learning outcomes* related to all instructional areas are required elements of the *curriculum* and course *syllabi*.

B1 *Curriculum* and Instruction

B1.01   The *curriculum must* include didactic content as well as clinical skills and practice experiences applicable to the specialty of the program.

B1.02   The *curriculum must* be of *sufficient* breadth and depth to prepare the *PA trainee* for clinical practice in the specialty of the program.

B1.03   The *curriculum* design *must* reflect sequencing that enables the *PA trainee* to meet program defined *learning outcomes* and demonstrate competency in the specialty of the program.

ANNOTATION: The concept of sequencing refers to the coordination and integration of content both horizontally and vertically across the *curriculum*. It does not mandate that content be delivered in separate courses with traditional discipline names. Appropriate sequencing involves considering overall program design and integration of content. Content and course sequencing are expected to build upon previously achieved *PA trainee* learning.

B1.04   The program *must* provide the *PA trainee* with direct experience with progressive responsibilities for patient management which demonstrate achievement of program defined *competencies*.

B1.05   The program *must* assure educational equivalency of curricular content, *PA trainee* experience, and access to didactic and clinical resources when instruction is:
a) conducted at geographically separate locations, and
b) provided by different pedagogical and instructional methods or techniques for some *PA trainees*.

B1.06   For all didactic and clinical curriculum, the program *must* provide each *PA trainee* with a written document that includes *learning outcomes* to guide *PA trainee* acquisition of the required *competencies*.

Annotation: *Learning outcomes must* be stated in measurable terms to allow assessment of *PA trainee* progress in developing the *competencies* required for entry into practice for the specific specialty of the program. They address learning

expectations of the *PA trainee* and the level of the *PA trainee* performance required for success.

B1.07 The program *must* orient *instructional faculty* to the specific educational *competencies* expected of *PA trainee*.

ANNOTATION: *Program* and *instructional faculty* need to work collaboratively in designing courses with appropriate *learning outcomes* and *PA trainee* assessment tools that reflect the *learning outcomes* expected.

B1.08 The program *must* be responsible for the selection of clinical sites to which the *PA trainee* will be assigned for *clinical experience*s to ensure that sites and *preceptors* meet program expectations for *learning outcomes* and performance evaluation measures*.*

B1.09 The program *must* assure that the volume and variety of *clinical experiences* provides for a *sufficient* number and distribution of appropriate experiences/cases for each *PA trainee* in the program to meet defined program expected *learning outcomes.*

B1.10 The program *must* not require that *PA trainees* provide or solicit their own clinical sites or *preceptor*s for program-required *clinical experience*s. The program *must* coordinate clinical sites and *preceptors* for program required clinical experiences to meet expected *learning outcomes*

ANNOTATION: Coordinating clinical practice experiences involves identifying, contacting and evaluating sites and *preceptors* for suitability as a required or elective clinical experience. The *PA trainee* may make suggestions to *program faculty* for sites and *preceptors* but are not required to do so. *PA trainee* suggested sites and *preceptors must* be reviewed, evaluated and approved for educational suitability by the program.

B1.11 The *curriculum must* include instruction to prepare the *PA trainee* to provide medical care to patients from diverse populations

B1.12 The *curriculum must* include instruction that addresses disparities in the health status of people from diverse racial, ethnic, and culture background.

B1.13 The *curriculum must* include instruction on*:*
      a) principles of quality improvement and patient safety,
      b) patient-centered care, and
      c) incorporating interprofessional teamwork into practice.

B1.14 The *curriculum must* include instruction to prepare *PA trainees* to participate in the performance improvement method used by healthcare organizations to improve healthcare outcomes.

B1.15 The program *curriculum must* include instruction in the principles and practice of medical ethics relevant to the discipline in which they are being trained.

B1.16   The *curriculum must* include evolving biomedical and clinical sciences and the application of this knowledge to patient care.

B1.17   The program *curriculum must* include instruction to prepare *PA trainees* to search, interpret, and evaluate the medical literature within the program specialty/discipline, including its application to individualized patient care.

SECTION C: EVALUATION

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

The program *must* have a robust and systematic process of ongoing self-assessment to review the quality and *effectiveness* of their educational practices, policies and outcomes. This process *should* be conducted within the context of the mission and *goals* of both the sponsoring institution and the program, using the *Accreditation Standards for Clinical Postgraduate PA Programs (Standards)* as the point of reference. A well-developed process occurs throughout the year and across all components of the program. It critically assesses all aspects of the program relating to sponsorship, resources, *PA trainees*, operational policies, and didactic and clinical *curriculum*. The process is used to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement and *should* lead to the development of plans for corrective intervention with subsequent evaluation of the effects of the interventions. The program's data collection and evaluation *must* be submitted using forms and processes developed by the ARC-PA. The data sources specified are considered minimums. Programs are encouraged to use additional data sources.

C1 Program Assessment

C1.01   The program *must* define its ongoing self-assessment process that is designed to document program *effectiveness* and foster program improvement. At a minimum, the process *must* address:
a) administrative aspects of the program and institutional resources,

b) *effectiveness* of the didactic curriculum,

c) *effectiveness* of the clinical curriculum,

d) preparation of trainees to achieve program defined *competencies,* and

e) sufficiency and effectiveness of program and instructional faculty and staff.

C1.02   The program *must* implement its ongoing self-assessment process by:
a) conducting data collection,
b) performing critical *analysis* of data leading to conclusions that identify:
   i. program strengths,
   ii. program areas in need of improvement, and
   iii. action plans to address the areas in need of improvement.

C1.03   The program *must* prepare a self-study report as part of the application for accreditation that *accurately* and *succinctly* documents the process, application and results of ongoing program self-assessment. The report *must* follow the guidelines provided by the ARC-PA.

C1.04   ("C1.04" rescinded effective 10/2/21).

C1.05   ("C1.05" rescinded effective 10/2/21).

C2 Clinical Site Evaluation

C2.01   The program *must* define, implement and maintain effective processes for the initial and ongoing evaluation of all sites and *preceptor*s used for *PA trainees'* clinical practice experiences.

ANNOTATION: An effective process or processes involves the program establishing criteria by which to initially evaluate new sites and *preceptor*s as well as those that have an ongoing relationship with the program. The process(es) will focus on the established criteria and fit the individual program.

C2.02   The program *must* assure and document that each clinical site provides the *PA trainees* access to the physical facilities, patient populations, and clinical supervision necessary to fulfill the program's l*earning outcomes*.

ANNOTATION: Site evaluation involves *program faculty* monitoring the sites used for clinical experiences and modifying them as necessary to ensure the expected l*earning outcomes* will be met by each *PA trainee* by program completion. It is expected that *program faculty* document that differences in clinical settings do not impede the overall accomplishment of expected *learning outcomes*. This *should* include ensuring that *preceptor*s are providing adequate supervision of *PA trainees* including observation of procedures trainees are not credentialed to perform. As part of clinical supervision, *PA trainees must* receive mentoring and feedback.

SECTION D: *PA TRAINEE* SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

PA trainee should be provided with the same types of health and supportive guidance services offered to other health professional learners providing patient care. *PA trainees* own confidential health information *must* be protected so as not to cause a potential bias or conflict on the part of the supervisors who also serve as *program faculty* and evaluators. Guidance and counseling *must* be provided to all *PA trainees*, to assist in their understanding of program requirements and to assist in any academic concerns that may arise. The *PA trainee must* be identified as such so that patients and providers are clearly aware of their status in the provision of medical care.

D1   *PA Trainee* Health

D1.01   Health screening and immunization of *PA trainees must*:
   a) be based on current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations for health professionals,
   b) be consistent with institutional policy, and
   c) not be conducted by *program faculty*.

D1.02   *Program faculty must* not participate as health care providers for *PA trainees* in the program, except in an emergency situation.

D1.03   The program *must* inform *PA trainees* of and provide access to health care services *equivalent* to those that the sponsoring institution makes available to other health profession residents, trainees or employees.

D1.04   *Program faculty* and *administrative support staff must* not have access to or review the confidential *health records* of *PA trainees*, except for immunization and tuberculosis screening results, which may be maintained and released with *written* permission from the *PA trainee.*

D2 *PA Trainee* Guidance

D2.01   The program *must* assure that guidance is available to assist *PA trainees* in understanding and abiding by program policies and practices.

D2.02   The program *must* assure that *PA trainees* have *timely* access to *program faculty* for assistance and counseling regarding their academic concerns and academic progress.

D2.03   The program *must* support and facilitate *PA trainee* access to appropriate health and wellness resources whenever indicated.

D3 *PA Trainee* Identification

D3.01   *PA trainees must* be clearly identified as such to distinguish them from physicians, medical residents, staff PAs, other health care professionals and students.

SECTION E: ACCREDITATION MAINTENANCE

E1 Program and Sponsoring Institution Responsibilities

E1.01   In accordance with ARC-PA policy, failure of the institution to meet administrative requirements for maintaining accreditation will result in the program being placed on Administrative Probation and, if not corrected as directed by the ARC-PA, an accreditation action of Accreditation Withdrawn.

E1.02   The program *must* inform the ARC-PA within 30 days of the date of notification of any adverse accreditation action (probation, withdrawal of accreditation) received from The Joint Commission, the sponsoring institution's *recognized regional or specialized and professional accrediting agency* or any state or federal action.

E1.03   The program *must* agree to periodic comprehensive reviews that may include a site visit as determined by the ARC-PA.

E1.04   The program *must* submit surveys and reports as required by the ARC-PA.

E1.05   The program *must* inform the ARC-PA in writing of changes in the program director, medical director, or *program faculty* within 30 days of the date of the effective change.

E1.06   The program *must* inform the ARC-PA, using forms and processes developed by the ARC-PA, of a temporary vacancy of *program faculty* greater than 30 days. The notice *must* include the program's plan to accommodate the temporary absence.

E1.07   An interim program director (IPD) *should* meet the qualifications of the program director and the appointment *should* not exceed 12 months.

E1.08   The program *must* inform and/or receive approvals from the ARC-PA in writing, using forms and processes developed by the ARC-PA, no less than six months prior to implementation of proposed changes in the following:

   a) degrees or certificate granted at program completion,
   b) requirements for program completion,
   c) program length, and
   d) any increase above the approved *maximum entering class size*.

   ANNOTATION: The *maximum entering class size* is approved by the ARC-PA upon review of the program by the commission or after approval of a change request for a class size increase. Any increase above the ARC-PA approved *maximum entering class size* for any reason requires program notification and approval from the ARC-PA.

   e) a substantive decrease in program support; program is expected to anticipate how reductions in support may occur; giving careful consideration to the impact such reductions may have on the responsibilities of program personnel, ongoing program activities and the educational experience for trainees.

   ANNOTATION: A decrease in support for the program may refer to a decrease in allocated fiscal, human, academic or physical resources. Reviewing program budget numbers is only one way of determining a   decrease in support. Support for vacant positions may be reduced or eliminated, leaving an open but unfunded and unfilled position within the program. Programs may also find that space allocated to the program has been reduced. Federal, state or private grants or other funds awarded to the sponsoring institution or to outside agencies that supported individuals or program activities may not be renewed. Significant numbers of supervised clinical practice sites may decide to no longer accept trainees.

   Programs are expected to consider the many ways in which their support may be reduced; giving careful consideration to the impact such reductions may have on the responsibilities of program personnel, ongoing program activities and the educational quality for the trainees.

E1.09   The program *must* be responsible for notifying the ARC-PA when notice is received from their sponsoring institution of impending change in sponsorship.

E1.10   The program *must* be responsible for notifying the ARC-PA when notice is received from their sponsoring institution of intent to close the *clinical postgraduate PA program* and the process it will use to assure *teaching out* of current *PA trainees*.

E1.11   The *clinical postgraduate PA program* and the sponsoring institution *must* be responsible for accreditation fees payable to ARC-PA as described in the fee schedule.

DEFINITIONS

NOTE: Where terms are not defined, their definitions are at the discretion of the ARC-PA.

TERM	DEFINITION
ABMS	American Board of Medical Specialties
Accurately	Free from error
Administrative support (staff)	Those individuals providing administrative, secretarial or clerical help to the program. Administrative support staff does not include other staff working in or with the program who are assigned a traditional faculty role or those who function to provide technical assistance for instructional technology or data analysis.
Advanced placement	A waiver of required coursework/clinical experiences included in the curriculum for applicants to the program and/or a waiver of required coursework included in the curriculum for currently enrolled PA trainees in the program which results in the PA trainee advancing in the curriculum without completing required curriculum components at the sponsoring institution.
Analysis	Study of compiled or tabulated data interpreting cause and effect relationships and trends, with the subsequent understanding and conclusions used to validate current practices or make changes as needed for program improvement.
Annotation(s)	Annotations are paragraphs that clarify the operational meaning of the standards to which they refer. Considered an integral component of the standards to which they refer, they may be changed over time to reflect current educational or clinical practices.
AOA	American Osteopathic Association
Clinical postgraduate PA program	Clinical postgraduate PA programs are formal educational programs in a medical or surgical specialty that offer structured curricula, including didactic and clinical components, to educate graduate PAs who are NCCPA-eligible or who holds current NCCPA certification and current state licensure (unless exempted by federal or state law)/ Programs typically involve full time study of 12-24 months duration.
Clinical experiences	Supervised clinical practice experiences involving direct patient care provided by a PA trainee. At the discretion of the program or sponsoring institution, this term may be recognized as rotations or clerkships.

Comparable	Similar but not necessarily identical.
Competencies	The knowledge, interpersonal, clinical and technical skills, professional behaviors, and clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities required for PA practice specific to the specialty of the program.
Curriculum	A planned educational experience. This definition encompasses a breadth of educational experiences, from one or more sessions on a specific subject, to a clinical experience, to the entire educational program.
Deceleration	The loss of a PA trainee from the entering cohort, who remains matriculated in the program.
Didactic course	Organized instructional content on a specific topic or general content area provided in a defined and pre-established format over an extended period of time, such as a series of lectures, seminars, or workshops.
Equivalent	Resulting in the same outcome or end result.
Formative evaluation	Intermediate or continuous evaluation that may include feedback to help in achieving goals.
Goals	The end toward which effort is directed.
Health record(s)	The primary legal record documenting the health care services provided to a person in any aspect of the healthcare system. (This term includes routine clinical or office records, records of care in any health-related setting, preventive care, lifestyle evaluation, research protocols, and various clinical databases.) The ARC-PA does not consider needle stick/sharp reports, results of drug screening, or criminal background checks a part of the health record.
Instructional faculty	Individuals providing didactic or clinical supervision during the program, regardless of length of time of instruction or professional background of the instructor. This includes but is not limited to physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners and other members of the health care team.
Instructional objectives	Statements that describe observable actions or behaviors the PA trainee will be able to demonstrate after completing a unit of instruction.
Learning outcomes	The knowledge, interpersonal, clinical and technical skills, professional behaviors, and clinical reasoning and problem-solving abilities that have been attained at the completion of a curricular component or supervised clinical experience.

Maximum class size	Maximum potential number of PA trainees enrolled for each admission cycle.
Moonlighting	Professional and patient care activities that are external to the educational program.
Must	A term used to designate requirements that are compelled or mandatory. "Must" indicates an absolute requirement.
NCCPA	National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants
PA trainee(s)	Graduate PA who is NCCPA-eligible or who holds current NCCPA certification and current state licensure (unless exempted by federal or state law) and is enrolled in a clinical postgraduate PA program. At their discretion the program or sponsoring institution may recognize this trainee under the title of resident or fellow.
Preceptor	A licensed and appropriately credentialed physician (MD or DO) or other licensed medical professional serving to supervise the patient care activities of the PA trainee, which can include didactic and clinical instruction.
Program faculty	Health care professionals assigned to work with the clinical postgraduate PA program as a major component of their work assignment. This includes the program director and medical director at a minimum.
Prospective PA trainees	Any individuals who have requested information about the program or submitted information to the program.
Published	Presented in *written* or electronic (Web) format.
Readily available	Made accessible to others in a *timely* fashion via defined program or institution procedures.
Recognized regional or specialized and professional accrediting agencies	Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care (AAAHC) American Osteopathic Association (AOA) Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitative Facilities (CARF) The Joint Commission (formerly the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations) Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools New England Association of Schools and Colleges North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Remediation	The program's defined process for addressing deficiencies in a PA trainee's knowledge and skills, such that the correction of these deficiencies is measurable and can be documented.
Should	The term used to designate requirements that are so important that their absence must be justified. (The onus of this justification rests with the program; it is the program's responsibility to provide a detailed justification why it is not able to comply with any standards including the term should.)
Sufficient	Enough to meet the needs of a situation or proposed end.
Syllabus	A written document that includes the content name, description, goals; outline of topics to be covered; expected learning outcomes; method(s) of PA trainee assessment/evaluation; and plan for determining successful completion of expected competencies.
Teaching Out	Allowing PA trainees already in the program to complete their education or assisting them in enrolling in an ARC-PA accredited post graduate program, if one exists, in which they may continue their education.
Technical standards	Non-academic requirements for participation in an educational program or activity. They include physical, cognitive and behavioral abilities required for satisfactory completion of all aspects of the curriculum and for entry into the profession.
Timely	Without undue delay; as soon as feasible after giving considered deliberation.
Written	On paper or available in electronic format.
United States	The fifty States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, the Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Wake Island, the Midway Islands, Kingman Reef and Johnston Island. A program may satisfy the requirement of *supervised clinical practice experiences* through medical facilities located in the *United States* and through a limited number of medical facilities that are accredited by the United States Joint Commission and operated by the American government under a signed Status of Forces Agreement with the host nation.