



NOTES TO PROGRAMS

Spring 2014

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/acc_programs/acc_resources.html). Others are or will be reflected in edited versions of the Policy Documents, *Standards* and Accreditation Manual.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY EXCERPTS FROM MARCH 2014 MEETING

Accreditation Actions as of April 11, 2014

- Acknowledged 13 new PD, 7 New IPD, 10 new MD, 3 IMD
- 16 Continuing program applications
- 7 Provisional program applications
- 0 Expansion to a Distant Campus applications
- 0 Postgraduate third year renewal reports
- 7 Program changes
- 14 Program reports due
- 1 Program Issue

There were 29 Expedited Reviews (17 reports due, 6 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 April 1, 2014 is **187**.

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

Projected Workload

- The current projected workload includes an additional **77** 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 and requests that our collaborating organizations, when possible, promote to their members participation in clinical education. The ability of current and emerging programs to recruit qualified program leadership and faculty remains worrisome to the commission.

DIVISION OF ACCREDITATION SERVICES

As part of its internal reorganization, the ARC-PA has created a Division of Accreditation Services. Ms. Loretta Waldron is the Director of Accreditation Services. Ms. Heather McGovern is the Assistant Director of Accreditation Services. Many of the issues related to questions about applications and the details related to the site visit scheduling and planning are handled in this division. Programs are asked to pay close

attention to correspondence and documents from the ARC-PA requiring a program response as the ARC-PA now uses an accreditationsservices@arc-pa.org email for some of these.

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. Sample applications for new provisional applicant, provisional monitoring, and validation visits, as well as sample SSR, have been posted on the ARC-PA web site in the Continuing and Provisional sections. The samples are unprotected, allowing programs to begin drafting their potential responses to questions in the application. These sample application are not to be used for submission to the ARC-PA.

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

By commission agenda

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 (2014); 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.

PROGRAM DEFINED EXPECTATIONS

In 2013, the commission began a renewed focus on the topic of “program defined expectations” as referenced in the Standards and used by programs. The Spring 2013 Notes addressed this issue (*Standards Related to Program Expectations and Requirements for Practice*) by clarifying several related standards.

At the fall 2013 PAEA meeting, the ARC-PA shared a power point presentation about this topic as it relates to programs defining the expectations in ways that demonstrate students’ preparation for entry into practice. Additionally the session focused on the assessment of student performance and demonstration that they meet the expectations. This power point remains on the ARC-PA [Resources web page](#).

The commission believes that

“What programs have moved away from is their ability to define requirements in the form of measurable learning outcomes. The concept of measurable learning outcomes does not equate to a

number. Rather than just relying on numerical evidence of case logs, successful programs indicate it is the continuum of experiences of increasing rigor and interrelationship that guide learners to develop as clinicians. This approach can help the student develop, from novice to skilled learner, even to expert as the learner moves through an appropriately sequenced curriculum. Defining program expectations and competencies to be acquired during SCPEs reinforces and aligns the important content areas of the didactic curriculum and provides a continuum of that material within the clinical year experiences.”

Programs are encouraged to review the presentation and engage in critical discussions within their programs about their curricula and performance evaluation mechanisms related to the well-defined expectations for competency. Talks on this topic continue at the commission. All workshops presented by the ARC-PA will address this.

SITE VISITOR ROLE

A site visit is the peer evaluation component of the accreditation process. Its success depends on the mutual respect and performance of appropriate responsibilities by all parties involved. After being selected by the ARC-PA for an assignment, site visitors are asked to identify any potential conflicts of interest that would disqualify them. Program directors are also given the opportunity to identify conflicts. Programs may request a change in site visitors only if there is a defined conflict of interest.

The role of the site visitor is to verify, validate and clarify the information provided by the program in its application materials and on site as evidence presented in support of the program’s compliance with the *Standards*. Site visitors are not allowed to suggest improvements or discuss how they might approach an issue in their own program. Their role is strictly defined by the ARC-PA.

Site visitors do not speak on behalf of the ARC-PA and cannot predict the accreditation actions that will be taken by the ARC-PA. The report they submit is only one part of the assessment conducted by the commission, which is solely responsible for accreditation decisions.

VALIDATION VISITS: Examples of Examinations Used for Student Evaluation

Effective with the programs on the September 2014 commission agenda, the ARC-PA no longer requires that programs submit examples of examinations used for student evaluation as a component of the appendices. The Site Visit team chair will determine in advance which evaluation instruments may be needed for review at time of the site visit in support of the C3 standards.

STANDARDS CLARIFICATION / INTERPRETATION

Standard A3.14 addresses the general program information that *must* be defined, published and made *readily available* to enrolled and *prospective students*. A3.14b indicates that one such area is “the success of the program in achieving its goals.” This is above and beyond the PANCE data, as addressed in A3.14c.

In order to be in compliance with A3.14b, the program must first publish define and publish its goals. The expectation is that these will be published and readily available on the program’s web site. The standard and annotation have been reformatted to assist programs in understanding the standard requirements, as below.

A3.14 The program *must* **define, publish and make readily available** to enrolled and *prospective students* general program information to include:

- a) the program's ARC-PA accreditation status,

ANNOTATION: The program is expected to post on its web site the accreditation status statement provided the program by the ARC-PA.

- b) **the success of the program in achieving its goals,**

- c) first time *PANCE* rates for the five most recent graduating classes,

ANNOTATION: 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 graduate performance. The program is expected to update this performance data in a *timely* manner.

- d) all required curricular components,
- e) academic credit offered by the program,
- f) estimates of all costs (tuition, fees, etc.) related to the program,
- g) policies and procedures for refunds of tuition and fees and
- h) policies about student employment while enrolled in the program.

ANNOTATION: The program may supplement the above general program information with concise and factually accurate evidence of the soundness of its operation and its overall effectiveness in meeting its mission. Examples of information may include graduation rates, job placement rates and *attrition* rates.

POLICY CHANGES

The following represent policy changes approved by the commission at its March 2014 meeting. Updated policies with full wording may be found on the [Policies page of the ARC-PA web site](#) in May, 2014.

Policy 9.2 Accreditation Status wording has been edited: "Programs applying for Accreditation-Provisional status are not eligible to begin more than one cohort/class per calendar year or include a distant campus as part of the application."

Policy 10.1 Eligibility for Expansion to a Distant Campus: The change involves setting as five years the number of years of accreditation continued that any program must hold before it may apply for expansion to a distant campus. Additionally the policy states that a program must have outcomes from the first cohort of students at any distant campus before applying to expand to another distant campus.

Policy 10.2 Eligibility to Request an Increase in Maximum Entering Class Size: Changed wording of title of policy since the process does not involve an application process, as indicated. A program with the status of accreditation – probation is not eligible to request an increase in the maximum entering class size. Wording was edited to define the time between successive requests to increase class size based on the number of years the applying program has held accreditation-continued status.

A program holding the status of accreditation – continued

- a) Must maintain five consecutive years of accreditation – continued status before the ARC-PA will consider a request for an increase in maximum entering class size.
- b) Must maintain four consecutive years of accreditation-continued status from the date of the last approved class size increase before the ARC-PA will consider a request for an increase in maximum entering class size.
- c) Must maintain two years of accreditation-continued status after completing the provisional pathway, without an approved incremental class size increase while holding accreditation-provisional status, before the ARC-PA will consider a request for an increase in maximum entering class size.
- d) Must maintain five years of accreditation-continued status after completing the provisional pathway, if the program was approved for incremental class size increases while holding accreditation provisional-status, before the ARC-PA will consider a request for an increase in maximum entering class size.

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

Beginning with class cohorts that graduated in 2013, the ARC-PA is now reviewing 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**. In any year that a program's 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 ARC-PA expects to review reports from **6 programs** this year.

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. The report form is available this year on the [Program Change Forms](#) page of ARC-PA web site.

MORE ON PANCE AND STANDARD A3.14 a & c

Programs are reminded to update the PANCE results on the website to remain in compliance with the Standards. 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 graduate performance report.

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**

POSTING OF ACCREDITATION ACTIONS

In an attempt to provide transparency for the public the commission continues to post the results of [accreditation actions](#) for program applications for accreditation and actions from commission meetings. Details of this content were described in the Fall 2013 edition of the Notes.

ARC-PA SITE VISITOR WORKSHOP

The ARC-PA held a new site visitor workshop April 4-6, 2014, in conjunction with an experienced site visitor update. In part the workshop related to the ongoing changes related to the accreditation processes, application, forms, and site visit agendas. Fifteen new site visitors were selected from the pool of 47 applicants. Newly elected commissioners and new ARC-PA staff also attended the workshop.

ARC-PA SUMMER WORKSHOP

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 programs preparing for a site visit of any type. [More information](#) is posted on the ARC-PA website. This workshop is open only for individuals from accredited programs. The deadline for registration is May 15, 2014.

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 for 2014 will be due **December 15, 2014**. (Reports for programs that were first accredited in September 2014 and all clinical postgraduate programs are due March 31, 2015.)

The Portal was recently revised to include changes related to multi campus programs. Those programs are now required to enter data in the personnel, SCPE and budget tabs with data categorized by campus. The ARC-PA waited for these changes before issuing the special supplemental SCPE HELP manual, in order to capture screen shots of the changes. The SCPE HELP will be available to all programs in May, 2014. All programs are required to update their SCPE tab data for a **July 31, 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). Questions about accessing the portal or those related to forgotten passwords should be addressed to Mercedes Beard at Mercedes@arc-pa.org.

WHEN DOES THE ARC-PA ACCESS PORTAL DATA?

The ARC-PA staff routinely will access a program's data as below. Programs are expected to keep their data accurate and up to date. Staff will review the Portal of all programs scheduled on an ARC-PA agenda for any action.

- To find contact information for the program director, faculty, staff.
- To find contact information for the individual to whom the program director reports.
- To review the program's web site and NCCPA PANCE report.
- To verify any information entered by the program as a means of updating older information collected by paper in the ARC-PA files, such as program personnel in place within the program, degree awarded, regional accreditation status, tuition and budget information, students enrolled, SCPEs, etc.
- After receiving a change notice of personnel to be sure the change has been documented correctly in the portal.
- To check on the status of "reports due" to the ARC-PA as required by information sent to the program in an accreditation letter.
- **Six weeks in advance of a commission meeting when a program is scheduled on the meeting agenda for any reason.**
- During a Commission meeting when a program is scheduled on the meeting agenda.
- After receiving a question from a program about its portal site.
- Concurrently with an authorized program user when that person has asked a question.
- When alerted by the portal that the program has uploaded a document for submission to the ARC-PA as requested by the ARC-PA.

SPECIAL BOX WARNINGS

Programs will find the special notices below in applications, site visit templates, and change forms. They are provided here as a reminder of their importance.

THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR **MUST** CONSULT WITH THE SITE VISIT TEAM CHAIR BEFORE FINAL SCHEDULING OCCURS. THIS IS BEST HANDLED WHEN THE TEAM CHAIR HAS A COPY OF THE PROPOSED SCHEDULE.

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.

1. Paper copies of each document and the specific web address for each document available on the web that support the program's compliance with the Standards must be readily available for site visitors at the time of the site visit and as requested by the commission.
2. Complete web addresses for web pages designed in support of compliance with the Standards must be readily available for site visitors at the time of the site visit and as requested by the commission.
3. Paper copies of each course syllabus supporting compliance must be readily available for site visitors at the time of the site visit and as requested by the commission.
4. Paper copies of ALL signed agreements with other entities providing didactic or supervised clinical practice experiences must be readily available for site visitors at the time of the site visit and as requested by the commission.
5. Source documents for data summaries and analysis within application and appendices must be readily available for site visitors at the time of the site visit and as requested by the commission.
6. Data and activities presented in ARC-PA TEMPLATES and program-designed graphic presentations must be verifiable. Documents and materials in support of entries must be available for review during the site visit and as requested by the commission.

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.html>.