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
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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 or 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 programs.

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 programs 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 clinical 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 programs.

ELIGIBILITY

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 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 clinical postgraduate PA programs 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 clinical postgraduate PA programs 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 Rehabilitation 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 programs 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.  

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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 competencies 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.

A3.18 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


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 competencies, 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

INTRODUCTION

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 experiences 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 preceptors for program-required clinical experiences. 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

INTRODUCTION

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 \(\text{"C1.04" rescinded effective 10/2/21}.\)

C1.05 \(\text{"C1.05" rescinded effective 10/2/21}.\)

**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 preceptors 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 preceptors 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 learning outcomes.

ANNOTATION: Site evaluation involves program faculty monitoring the sites used for clinical experiences and modifying them as necessary to ensure the expected learning 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 preceptors 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TERM</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABMS</td>
<td>American Board of Medical Specialties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accurately</td>
<td>Free from error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative support (staff)</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced placement</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotation(s)</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOA</td>
<td>American Osteopathic Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical postgraduate PA program</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical experiences</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comparable</strong></td>
<td>Similar but not necessarily identical.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Competencies</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Deceleration</strong></td>
<td>The loss of a PA trainee from the entering cohort, who remains matriculated in the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Didactic course</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equivalent</strong></td>
<td>Resulting in the same outcome or end result.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Formative evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Intermediate or continuous evaluation that may include feedback to help in achieving goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td>The end toward which effort is directed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health record(s)</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional faculty</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructional objectives</strong></td>
<td>Statements that describe observable actions or behaviors the PA trainee will be able to demonstrate after completing a unit of instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning outcomes</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximum class size</strong></td>
<td>Maximum potential number of PA trainees enrolled for each admission cycle.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Moonlighting</strong></td>
<td>Professional and patient care activities that are external to the educational program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Must</strong></td>
<td>A term used to designate requirements that are compelled or mandatory. “Must” indicates an absolute requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NCCPA</strong></td>
<td>National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PA trainee(s)</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preceptor</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program faculty</strong></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prospective PA trainees</strong></td>
<td>Any individuals who have requested information about the program or submitted information to the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Published</strong></td>
<td>Presented in <em>written</em> or electronic (Web) format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readily available</strong></td>
<td>Made accessible to others in a <em>timely</em> fashion via defined program or institution procedures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **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 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remediation</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should</td>
<td>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.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>Enough to meet the needs of a situation or proposed end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Out</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical standards</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timely</td>
<td>Without undue delay; as soon as feasible after giving considered deliberation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
<td>On paper or available in electronic format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>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.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>