**Virtual Site Visit Protocol**

**December 2022**

As program directors prepare for the virtual site visit, keep the following in mind.

After reading this document, program directors with questions about planning for the virtual site visit are encouraged to contact [accreditationservices@arc-pa.org](mailto:accreditationservices@arc-pa.org).

**Before the Visit**

* **Twelve (12)** weeks before the visit, the application materials as detailed in the application and as directed in the email from the ARC-PA must be received by the ARC-PA office.
* **Eight (8)** weeks before the visit, the **site visit schedule/agenda** must be emailed to [accreditationservices@arc-pa.org](mailto:accreditationservices@arc-pa.org) and the site visit chair. Accreditation services will work with the site visit chair to put the agenda into a virtual site visit agenda template and return the final agenda to the program.
* **Eight (8)** weeks before the visit, a copy of the completed **Information Summary Sheet** (found on the ARC-PA website at <https://www.arc-pa.org/site-visit-protocol/>) must also be emailed to [accreditationservices@arc-pa.org](mailto:accreditationservices@arc-pa.org) only. The Information Sheet includes program contact information for the site visitors.
* **One (1) week** prior to the site visit, provisional and distant campus applicants must provide a virtual tour of the program facilities. (See separate document, **Virtual Tour of Program Facilities** for details.)
* **Seven (7) calendar days** prior to the site visit, materials the site visit team would usually review on site (faculty and student files, affiliation agreements, etc.) must be available in a secure document sharing application (Dropbox, Blackboard, etc.) and the login to access the documents must be provided to the site visit chair. The program will remove access to these materials at the conclusion of the virtual visit.
* Prior to the virtual visit, a pre-visit virtual meeting with ARC-PA staff will be scheduled to test technology so any problems are identified and corrected prior to the date of the virtual site visit and contingency plans are made should the primary technology fail at the time of or during the site visit.
  + Be sure the site visit chair has a way to reach the program director during the visit.
* Technology requirements must in place for all participants listed on the site visit agenda including:
* An internet connection – broadband wired or wireless (3G or 4G/LTE)
* Speakers and a microphone – built-in or USB plug-in or wireless Bluetooth
* A webcam or HD webcam - built-in or USB plug-in
* Or, a HD cam or HD camcorder with video capture card
* All individuals listed on the virtual site visit agenda will register in order to access the Zoom meeting. The program director will be provided a registration link to send to everyone on the agenda. Only those individuals registered will be allowed into the meetings.

Attendees must not share their confirmation emails with other participants as the links are specific to each attendee. Only those listed on the agenda will be allowed to register. Names used to register must match those listed on the agenda.

* The program director is responsible for informing all participants who may be present during interviews, what is expected during the virtual site visit.

**Scheduling the Activities**

As program directors begin developing the agenda for the site visit and thinking of the details of the visit, remember the following:

* Start with the ARC-PA site visit agenda template on the ARC-PA website but work out specific times and sequencing of events for the visit in consultation with the site visit team chair.
  + For provisional site visits: <https://www.arc-pa.org/provisional-accreditation/provisional-accreditation-site-visit-schedule/>
  + For continuing site visits: <https://www.arc-pa.org/continuing-accreditation/continuing-accreditation-site-visit-schedule/>
* The agenda includes the names, degrees (MD, PhD, EdD, etc.) and position titles or teaching assignments of each person with whom the team will be meeting. Be sure to include the names of the graduates (with year of graduation), students and preceptors on the agenda (as needed and as identified on the template). The names must match the individual Zoom profile names.
* A virtual site visit agenda will be created from the agreed upon agenda sent to Accreditation Services. The virtual site visit agenda will include:
  + Breaks for the team between meetings and sufficient time for the next group of individuals to log into Zoom.
  + Time for the team to review the documents the program has posted on its secure site.
* Time before the team completes its reports for the visitors to again meet with the program director and program faculty to clarify issues or answer questions they may still have.
* The program director must be available for the entire active period of the site visit in case s/he is needed for clarifications.
* Communicate with the team chair more than once prior to the visit. If the program director has not heard from the chair about confirming the schedule, s/he should contact the chair as opposed to waiting for the chair to initiate contact.
* Schedule changes must be discussed with the team chair who will share the information with ARC-PA staff and the other site visitor(s).
* Faculty and students must be available for the entire interview period for which they are scheduled, with their cell phones turned off.

**During the Site Visit**

* Ensure all participants have audio and video functioning properly, and if there are problems, someone from the institution’s IT department must be available to address the issue(s).
* The program may share a document with the site visitors via the chat function in Zoom. However, if a document is shared via the chat function in Zoom, the site visitors will delete the document at the end of the site visit.
* The only individual(s) present at virtual meetings occurring during the site visit are the institutional and program administrators, program faculty and staff, students or program committee members as determined by the site visit team chair and as listed on the site visit agenda. All participants in the interviews will introduce themselves and state their role in the program.
* To the extent practical, the program director must limit individuals present for interviews to only those listed on the site visit agenda.
* Consultants used by the program are not to be included in any of the meetings during the visit.
* The site visit chair has sole responsibility for the final decision regarding who should be interviewed and who may be present during the interviews.
* The use of any recording device by the program during any portion of the site visit is strictly prohibited.

**The Visit Schedule**

* Be prepared for changes. The team recognizes that the site visit is a stressful time for program faculty and staff. Nevertheless, it is the team’s responsibility to ensure that they speak with the people, see the facilities and read the documents that will give them the fullest, most accurate picture of the program. The site team chair will do everything in his or her power to follow the agenda as agreed to with the program director in advance of the visit, but the materials and individuals involved may necessitate last minute changes.
* The site visit team will meet with senior administration, instructional faculty and students without program faculty present.
* Depending on the size of the class and the team, some team chairs will ask to meet with all students in a class. Others will ask the program to select students using a specific method, for example, every third student alphabetically. If the chair does not indicate a preference, use a similar random method.
* The team may ask for additional material or clarification of material. Sometimes it may seem as if visitors are asking for material that has already been provided. Sometimes, the manner in which the material is organized may require clarification or appear to the site visitors to be incomplete. Please understand that the team members want to ensure that programs are given every opportunity to demonstrate compliance with the *Standards*. If the team’s requests are unclear, seek clarification.
* The team has limited time to review materials. The application submitted by the program/institution is the document of record for the comprehensive review process including the site visit. The team may not accept additional application materials voluntarily provided by the program which the team did not request. However, the team may ask the program to submit additional materials to the ARC-PA in the program’s response to the site visit observation(s). It is the responsibility of the program, not the responsibility of the site visitors, to submit those additional requested documents to the ARC-PA. The program should only send materials to the ARC-PA if the team so requests.

**Visit Conclusion**

The ARC-PA site visitors do not conduct a formal exit report before departing from the program. The site visit team will take a few minutes at the conclusion of the site visit to express thanks to the program for its assistance in facilitating the visit. The following points are important as the visit ends:

* The filed written report submitted by the team will be sent from the ARC-PA to the program director, and to the individual to whom the program director reports, as identified by the program director on the program data sheet, usually within 21 days of the visit.
* The program is offered the opportunity to respond to any of the observations noted in the site visit report within 21 days of receipt of the report. The purpose of the program’s response is to eliminate errors of fact, or challenge perceived ambiguities and misperceptions, providing clarification as the program sees fit. The program may not respond with new information or changes made since the site visit.
* The site visit team does not have the authority to speak on behalf of or bind the ARC-PA regarding a program’s compliance with the *Standards*, as these responsibilities and decisions rest solely with the ARC-PA.
* Any communication about the visit after the visit should be directed to the ARC-PA Accreditation Services staff (accreditationservices@arc-pa.org), not to the site visitors.

**After the Visit**

After the visit, the ARC-PA will ask the program director to complete a web-based evaluation of the visit process and the visitors. This evaluation is especially helpful to the ARC-PA as part of its ongoing internal review of processes and individuals. The ARC-PA urges the program to complete the evaluation as fairly and candidly as possible. Feedback and comments remain anonymous and will in no way effect the ARC-PA’s decision about the program's accreditation status.

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| **APPLICATION OF RECORD:**  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. |