



*Accreditation Review Commission on Education
for the Physician Assistant, Inc.*

NOTES TO PROGRAMS

April, 2012

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 will be reflected in edited versions of the Policy Documents and Accreditation Manual this summer.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY EXCERPTS FROM MARCH, 2012 MEETING

Topics discussed in ARC-PA Committees include:

- Cross Organizational Competencies (revised) approval
- Oral health summit Outcomes
- CHEA Recognition
- Site visitor preparation and updates
- Program management data portal data review and reports
- Webinars / podcasts for program support in completing applications
- Policy changes (included appeal process, initiation of distant campuses)
- Distance education survey of programs
- Clinical Postgraduate application changes
- Feasibility Study / Needs Assessment format for Provisional
- *Standards* review timeline

Accreditation Actions

- Acknowledged 6 new PD, 10 New IPD program changes, 10 new MD program changes, 1 IMD change
- 17 Continuing program applications
- 6 Provisional program applications
- 1 clinical postgraduate application
- 2 Program changes
- 5 Program reports
- 28 Expedited Reviews (20 reports due, 8 program changes)
([Accreditation actions](#) are posted on the ARC-PA web site after each meeting)

Projected Workload

- The current projected workload includes an additional 66 new programs for provisional accreditation consideration through December 2015.

- While the need for PA healthcare providers remains strong, the commission is concerned about the availability of clinical education sites for all types of healthcare students and qualified program leadership and faculty.

ACCREDITATION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT PORTAL UPDATE

All programs have submitted information for the annual report. The ARC-PA is in the process of reviewing the submissions and providing clarification to programs concerning their submissions. Programs that were on the ARC-PA agenda for the March meeting have received specific feedback with their accreditation status letters.

Until such time as all programs can be reviewed, programs are to pay special attention to the **attached Portal Pointers document**, correcting their portal data as needed. The ARC-PA now refers to the program's portal 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.

NEW POLICY FOR DISTANT CAMPUS EXPANSION

The ARC-PA voted to add a policy statement about expansion to distant campus. For programs with provisional accreditation, the ARC-PA will not consider an application for expansion to a distant campus until five years after the time of the start of the first class of students of the provisionally accredited program.

For programs with a continuing accreditation status, the ARC-PA will not consider an application for expansion to a distant campus until the program has maintained five years of continuing accreditation without an adverse accreditation status.

Accreditation letters will include the wording above as appropriate for provisional vs. continuing accreditation.

COMMISSIONERS AT LARGE

The ARC-PA has added commissioners-at-large to the commission to assist with the increased number of programs and general work of the commission. At-large commissioners are former commissioners retired from the commission for at least one year before being eligible for election. At-large commissioners hold the same rights and responsibilities of the other commissioners, except that they are eligible to serve only one three-year term. Patrick Auth and David Wiegler joined the commission January 1, 2012.

STANDARDS INTERPRETATION

Parts of standards A2.02 and 2.03 cause some ongoing questions. **It is important to remember to read the definitions for the words in *italics* in the *Standards*.** Standard A2.02 states that *program faculty* include the program director, medical director, at least 3 FTE *principal faculty* (2

FTEs *must* be filled by currently certified *NCCPA* PAs, and all *principal faculty* positions must be at least 50% FTE) and *instructional faculty*. Standard A2.03 means that there *must* be enough principal faculty positions, beyond the minimum required in standard A2.02 to meet the needs of the students. Thus, a program may have many individuals in faculty positions, depending on the number of students and the job descriptions, but each person can only be classified as a principal faculty member if that person works at least 50% with the program. Since the definition of instructional faculty is broad, many individuals fit this category, i.e., anyone who teaches or serves as a preceptor essentially.

Standard A3.14b requires that each program “*must* define, publish and make *readily available* to enrolled and prospective students general program information to include the success of the program in achieving its goals.” The Commission is reminding programs that before the program can do this, it must first **define its goals**. “Goals” is plural and programs are encouraged to think beyond PANCE expectations.

Remember when considering increasing class size to refer to the E standards, specifically standard E1.09d: The program must inform 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 of ≥ 10 students or $\geq 15\%$ increase in *maximum entering class size*. The maximum class size is assigned by the ARC-PA based on the most recent action taken by the Commission in reviewing the program. It is found in a program’s most recent accreditation letter, and on the portal. The flexibility within the standard gives programs the latitude needed depending on the applicant pool in a particular year or years, and the numbers are considered to be ones which most programs can absorb without needing to document and explain additional resources which might be required. **Note that programs cannot simply continue to increase the number of students each year based on what they did the year before as long as they stayed under the number of students (10) or the percentage of students (15%) but must notify the ARC-PA and complete the appropriate change form for a permanent change in maximum class size and thus aggregate enrollment.**

As always, those with questions about interpreting a standard should contact the ARC-PA. And those with comments to submit should continue reading the next section!

STANDARDS REVIEW

The Committee for Review of the *Standards* met in March to discuss its ongoing review of the Standards. The committee meets at least once yearly and more often if needed to consider and develop technical, grammatical and clarifying changes and annotations for the current *Standards*. Programs are reminded that they may submit suggestions about standards that require clarification or for which they believe an annotation would be helpful via email to StandardsComments@arc-pa.org

DEGREE DEADLINE

The *Standards* require that programs which do not currently offer 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 that are housed in institutions unable to offer a graduate degree, those that do not yet offer a graduate degree or those that currently affiliate with an 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 needed to and steps required 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.

ARC-PA SUMMER WORKSHOP

The [ARC-PA's summer accreditation workshop](#) will be held in St. Louis, July 8-10, 2012. This summer's workshop will be open to program directors, medical directors, principal faculty and deans from currently accredited programs. As space is limited, priority will be given to individuals from those programs scheduled for site visits between January 2013 and December 2016 and to individuals who did not attend the summer workshops in 2009, 2010 or 2011. Breakout groups will be focused on issues of institutional support, preparing the accreditation application, completing the self-study report or using the program data management portal. The workshop application deadline is June 4, 2012.

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION REMINDER (REPOSTED FROM FALL 2011 NOTES)

In determining a program's compliance with the requirements related to the Summative Evaluation (C3.04) it is important to consider several items.

First, the definition of Summative Evaluation: *An assessment of the learner conducted by the program to ensure that the learner has the knowledge, interpersonal skills, patient care skills and professionalism required for entry into the profession. This evaluation must consist of more than a listing and review of student outcomes otherwise obtained in the course of the program.*

There are four components that must be considered per the definition. A program that does not evaluate all four is not in compliance with the definition of the exam. Additionally, the evaluation cannot simply be a review of previous evaluation tools used during the course of the program.

In applying these concepts to the *Standards*, consider the standard C3.04, which reads, "The program must conduct and document a summative evaluation of each student within the final four months of the program to verify that each student is prepared to enter clinical practice."

The time frame indicates the final four months of the program as a whole. A program that conducts an OSCE and a written examination at the end of the preclinical phase prior to allowing the students to begin supervised clinical practice experiences may choose to call that OSCE and exam a summative exam, and it may be summative within the program. However, it does not satisfy the summative evaluation requirement of the ARC-PA per the *Standards* in terms of time offered. Additionally, such an exam may not meet all four components of the definition in that it

may not assess interpersonal skills and professionalism. OSCEs may assess these areas, but not all do. Programs are asked to be very clear in describing their summative evaluation process.

PACKRAT REMINDER (REPOSTED FROM FALL 2011 NOTES)

Some programs continue to use the PACKRAT as a major component of their summative evaluation, given in the last four months of the program.

PACKRAT and other evaluation products designed primarily for individual student self-assessment must not be used by programs to fulfill the summative evaluation of students within the final four months of the program as required by the *Standards*. Additionally, such exams must not be used as an instrument that results in a passing or failing grade for students in any course(s) in the program.

The ARC-PA defines summative evaluation as *an assessment of the learner conducted by the program to ensure that the learner has the knowledge, interpersonal skills, patient care skills and professionalism required for entry into the profession. This evaluation must consist of more than a listing and review of student outcomes otherwise obtained in the course of the program.*

In relation to the summative evaluation, the ARC-PA expects that a program demonstrating compliance with the *Standards* will incorporate an evaluation instrument/s that correlates with the didactic and clinical components of the program's curriculum and that measures if the learner has the knowledge, interpersonal skills, patient care skills and professionalism required to enter clinical practice.

NCCPA PANCE RESULTS POSTING (UPDATED FROM FALL 2011 NOTES)

According to standard, A3.14 and its annotation, each program *must define, publish and make readily available* its PANCE performance and is *expected to publish on its web site the PANCE performance data of its graduates by publishing the NCCPA PANCE Pass Rate Summary Report of the most recent five-year first time and aggregate graduate performance report. The program is expected to update this performance data in a timely manner.*

It remains very difficult to find the PANCE results within some program web pages. An item that is “readily available” means that the item being searched for is easy to find for someone who may not know the specific vernacular to use in searching for the item, such as the outcomes or results of student performance on the national certifying exam. It means that this information should not be buried obscurely within the website or included only in a long list of unclassified FAQs.

Additionally, many programs are displaying the data in a manner that may not accurately represent their program performance. Still others have data that is two years old posted. Such data display can be misleading to potential students and others who are seeking information about the program.

The ARC-PA expects that programs will post the PANCE document as obtained from the NCCPA through their NCCPA program portal. This document reports the last five years for ALL Test Takers and the document will be populated and appears similar to the one below. The commission will not accept any other document than the one provided by the NCCPA. (Programs may include additional narrative concerning their PANCE performance, but must post the results as required.) The ARC-PA expects programs to have the most current results readily available, posted on the web.

As the ARC-PA review program portal pages it will be checking this important standard requirement for each program.

Program Name:
Program Number:
Class Name:
Test Taker Status: All Test Takers

Class	Group	Year	Students	Program (All Test Takers) Pass Rate	NCCPA National (All Test Takers) Pass Rate
Class of 2007	All Examinations	2000	20	%	%
	First Time Takers	2000	18	%	%
Class of 2008	All Examinations				
	First Time Takers				
Class of 2009	All Examinations				
	First Time Takers				
Class of 2010	All Examinations				
	First Time Takers				
Class of 2011	All Examinations				
	First Time Takers				

First Time Takers Average: %

All Examinations 5 Year Average: %

ACCREDITATION APPLICATION ISSUES (UPDATED FROM FALL 2011 NOTES)

The ARC-PA appreciates the programs that have completed the new accreditation application and appendices for the *Standards*, 4th edition. The new format has provided a learning curve for programs, site visitors and commissioners. Feedback received from all stakeholders is allowing the ARC-PA to make modifications to the documents for programs with visits scheduled in the future.

A few reminders to those programs yet to work with the new application materials:

- **The question required for each standard is a two part question.** *Provide Narrative describing how the institution demonstrates and reviews compliance.* The second component of the question is important as it allows the program to succinctly describe how it reviews compliance with each standard in an ongoing manner. The addition of this component has allowed the ARC-PA to eliminate the need for the previous fifty page narrative.

Simply inserting a web page url into a text box that requires a program to *Provide Narrative*, is not providing narrative. The questions ask **how** you do this.

- There is no need for you to type out words which are understood in the context of the application. Feel free to use abbreviations, save keystrokes. For example, the abbreviations below are fine to use, as are many others that refer to the areas of the *Standards*.

PA	MD	PD	CC	AC
SSR	PAEA	AAPA	NCCPA	PANCE

The ARC-PA staff will soon be rolling out selected revisions to components of the application materials. In part these changes will streamline the application process as programs will have submitted some materials by completing the program management portal fields. Programs currently in the process of completing application materials for site visits scheduled in 2012 will not be required to use updated application materials.

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>