



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

PROVISIONAL ACCREDITATION

ARC-PA Site Visit Rationale for Final Provisional Site Visit Sessions

May 2015

A site visit team can conduct a thorough and accurate assessment of the educational program for physician assistants within two days or less. Site visits should provide the site visit team members information on the program, and should provide the team the opportunity to meet and discuss the program with its administration, faculty, staff, instructors, preceptors, and students.

The primary responsibility of the site visit team is to verify, validate, and clarify, if necessary, the information supplied by the program in its application materials. The purpose of the site visit is to assess the program's demonstrated compliance with the *Standards*.

Site visitors should have a private conference room for use throughout the visit.

NOTE: The outline below provides the rationale for each session of the site visit. This is for the program's use in understanding what to expect from each session.

The actual schedule **should not** vary from the Site Visit Schedule Template, without discussion with the assigned site visit team chair, from the model posted on the website. It represents a starting point for programs to use as they prepare to discuss the schedule with the site visit team chair.

This rationale document is best reviewed and used in conjunction with Site Visit Protocol document, the Site Visit Schedule Template that is used to develop the actual agenda that will be provided to the visitors, and the Organizing Materials Document. Those documents are also available on the ARC-PA web site.

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.

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.

NOTE: *The Site Visit Team/Program should construct the visit in such a way that the team can begin its review of documents either late afternoon or early evening the day of arrival or as the first order of business on Day One. The team can usually review documents that are presented in an organized fashion in about 90 minutes. Visitors have found that reviewing the documents prior to meeting with program faculty and students is very beneficial. This approach can provide the team with information that allows for more productive visits with key individuals during the visit. It also provides an opportunity for the team to indicate to the program which documents it may not be able to locate, thus giving the program*

time to assist the team in finding what it needs to make its assessment.

The rationale below is for sessions, regardless of where the sessions are found in the actual site visit agenda. The recommended sequencing is found on the ARC-PA web site as "Site Visit Schedule Template."

EVENING BEFORE THE SITE VISIT BEGINS:

Meeting of Members of the Site Visit Team

Purpose: Allows visitors to meet one another, review the site-visit schedule, discuss their perspectives of the program on the basis of the information provided in the application, and identify areas which merit special attention. (This is customarily a dinner meeting and is *restricted to site visit members*. The site visit team chair coordinates this activity.)

FIRST AND SECOND DAYS

The program is expected to arrange for transportation of visitors from the hotel to the program offices each morning and back to the hotel at the end of the first visit day. The visit should conclude by mid-afternoon and *no later than 3:30 p.m. of the second day*.

Meeting with Program Director

Purpose: To review the schedule for the each day as planned by the program and make desired adjustments when feasible and not excessively disruptive.

Review of Documents, Files, and Records Maintained in the Program's Offices on the Students and the Curriculum

Purpose: To review the syllabi, student manuals, student files, policies and other documentation requested in the application that must be available for visitors on site.

Document review occurs on both days of a visit. This may be divided into two blocks of time, such as 60 minutes in the morning of the first day and 30 minutes later in the day and should be discussed with the site visit team chair. The team continues its review of documents on the second day. Additionally, the team may also request that documents be available the evening before the visit begins.

Discussion of the Submitted Appendix 13 (Self-Study Report) including process, outcomes, analysis, modifications, and plans

Members of the site visit team meet with the Program Director, Medical Director, and individuals identified by the program to meet the *Standards* definition for *principal faculty* Individual(s) responsible for the Didactic and Clinical phases of the program

Purpose: This session provides the team an opportunity to discuss and clarify the program's self-study document and supporting materials with the program faculty in order to obtain a more complete understanding of the program's self-study process, outcomes, analysis, modifications, and plans. **The focus of this session is to address the progress of the program since it first began to include unanticipated changes that have occurred and changes that have**

been made since the program began. Additional supporting documentation may be required to be reviewed or provided as a result of this session.

The responsibility for the format of session rests with the site visit team.

Review and Clarification of the Application and Appendices

Members of the site visit team meet with the Program Director, Medical Director, and individuals identified by the program to meet the *Standards* definition for *principal faculty* Individual(s) responsible for the Didactic and Clinical phases of the program

Purpose: This session provides the team an opportunity to discuss and clarify the program's application content and supporting materials with the program faculty in order to obtain a more complete understanding of the program and its compliance with the *Standards*. Additional supporting documentation maybe required to be reviewed or provided as a result of this session.

The responsibility for the format of session rests with the site visit team.

Luncheon Team Executive Session (The program should make arrangements for the working lunch)

Purpose: To allow the team time to discuss the progress and findings of the visit to date and plan for remainder of visit.

Interviews with Key Members of the Faculty

(Members of the program faculty are not to be present during these conversations.)

Those involved are to be instructors for the didactic courses and supervised units of instruction designed to teach clinical skills in the program. This session is not for preceptors.

Interviews may be in groups or individually, as preferred by the site visit team.

Purpose: To discuss the progress of the program as it relates to the success or changes in the course selection and content, the instructional objectives and methods, the frequency and means of assessing and reporting to students on their progress, and other instructional related information.

Interviews with Students Currently Enrolled In the Didactic Phase of the Program

Purpose: To obtain perceptions of the program from **randomly selected** students and to gain an understanding of the organization and quality of instruction they have received.

Program directors should consult with the team chair prior to student selection regarding the number of students to be selected and the selection process used to assure students are randomly selected. The evaluators' interviews with the students should also provide them with an idea of the students understanding of their role as PA's. (Members of the program faculty are not to be present during these conversations)

Interviews with Students Currently Enrolled In the Supervised Clinical Practice Component of the Program

Purpose: To obtain students' assessment of the program from selected students who are in the supervised clinical practice components of the program. Discussion with students in clinical settings should allow the visitors to obtain their perceptions of the program, the curriculum, the quality of teaching, the types and frequency of evaluation of their progress, major challenges and related topics. Visitors should also obtain impressions of students' practical skills, as well as their clinical understanding, knowledge, and judgment of their limitations and the character of their interaction with others in the clinical setting.

Efforts should be made to select such students randomly, depending on the clinical students' availability. The number of students selected and the process for selecting them should be discussed with the site visit team chair. (Members of the program faculty are not to be present during these conversations)

A Brief Tour of Facilities *This is **only** conducted if the program has changed space or facilities or has plans to relocate.*

Purpose: To familiarize evaluators with the classroom, laboratory and library facilities used by students during the didactic and supervised practice components of the curriculum. Review with site visit team chair

Meeting with Key Senior Institutional Officials (such as President, Dean, whomever the Institution wishes to represent the sponsoring institution)

Purpose: To assess institutional support for the program and clarification of institutional information that appears in the application or that was gathered during the visit.

Interviews with Preceptors Currently Involved In Teaching and Supervising Students in Supervised Clinical Practice Experiences

Purpose: To provide the site visitors an understanding of the nature of the supervision provided to students, the character and/or range of clinical experiences students encounter during their clinical experiences, the clinical abilities of students, and the evaluation of students provided by the preceptors to the program. Visitors should also be able to determine the preceptors' understanding of their teaching responsibility to the students; their contacts with the program administration; their teaching methods; the nature of supervision, direction and evaluation they provide to students in the clinical setting.

Interviews with Recent Program Graduates

Purpose: To provide the site visitors with an opportunity to assess the graduates' satisfaction with their education, the program curriculum in preparing them for entry into the profession.

Final Meeting with Program Director and/or Other Program Faculty or Staff Members for Clarification of Issues.

Purpose: To allow team to meet with individuals to clarify issues that remain unclear.

Preparation of the Site Visit Report (Working lunch)

The program is expected to provide lunch as requested in advance by site visit team. Lunch should be a simple one in the conference room, thereby maximizing the time available for preparing their report. The site visit team may complete its work prior to lunch. The Program Director should be available to the site visit team in the event questions arise or if clarification is needed.

Closure:

The site visit team indicates it is ready to depart the program. The team will take a few moments to express thanks to the program for its assistance in facilitating the team's completion of its task. *Transportation arrangements for the visitors should have been previously arranged by the program.*

The ARC-PA does not give an oral exit report at the conclusion of the site visit. (Ten days to two weeks prior to the program's site visit the designated senior institutional official(s) will be notified of the upcoming visit by the ARC-PA. The notification letter will detail the process and address the fact that the ARC-PA does not give an Oral Exit Report.)

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.

The filed written report of observations submitted by the team will be sent as an attached e-mail document to the Program Director from the ARC-PA in approximately two weeks of the visit in most cases.

The Program will be offered the opportunity to respond to any of the observations noted in the site visitor report. The purpose of the program's response to observations is to eliminate errors of fact, or challenge perceived ambiguities and misperceptions.

Any communication about the visit after the visit must be directed to ARC-PA Accreditation Services staff, not to the site visitors.