



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

NOTES TO PROGRAMS

October, 2011

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 an edited version of the Accreditation Manual this fall.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY EXCERPTS FROM SEPTEMBER, 2011 MEETING

Topics being discussed in ARC-PA Committees include:

- Cross organization competencies review
- Oral health summit
- Site visitor preparation and updates
- Annual report and program management data portal
- Policy changes
- Distance education as it relates to accreditation
- Clinical Postgraduate *Standards* changes

Accreditation Actions

- Acknowledged 10 new PD, 6 New IPD program changes, 5 new MD program changes
- 24 Continuing program applications
- 4 Provisional program applications, 1 postgraduate
- 1 Postgraduate third year renewal reports
- 14 Program changes
- 33 Program reports

([Accreditation actions](#) are posted on the ARC-PA web site after each meeting)

Projected Workload

- The current projected workload includes an additional 42 new programs for provisional accreditation consideration through December 2014.
- 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.

NEW DEFINITION FOR DISTANT EDUCATION

The ARC-PA voted to change the current definition of distant education. The definition as presently published in the Standards reads: *A formal educational process in which 50% or more of the required content/time/credit hours, excluding supervised clinical practice experiences, may be accrued when the student and instructor/faculty are not in the same physical location. The interaction may be synchronous or asynchronous.*

The new definition reads: *A formal educational process in which 50% or more of the required content/time/credit hours, excluding supervised clinical practice experiences, may be accrued when the student and instructor/faculty are not in the same physical location **at the same time.** The interaction may be synchronous or asynchronous.*

The distant education task force is working on a survey to be distributed to programs about their uses of distant education modalities within in their programs at present and as anticipated in the next five years.

ACCREDITATION TERMINOLOGY

Accreditation Status

The ARC-PA awards eight statuses of accreditation (policy 9.2).

- Provisional Accreditation
- Continued Accreditation
- Probationary Accreditation
- Administrative Probationary Accreditation
- Accreditation Withheld
- Accreditation Withdrawn
- Voluntary Inactive Status
- Initial Accreditation for Clinical Postgraduate Programs

The ARC-PA does NOT use the term *Full Accreditation*. The use of this term is confusing to potential students who are considering applying to programs and believe that the status of Provisional Accreditation is not an active accreditation status.

The ARC-PA requests that programs discontinue using the term *Full Accreditation* on their web sites and within their correspondence and publications.

Professional Phase

The ARC-PA discontinued using the term *professional phase* of a PA program several years ago. The ARC-PA only refers to accreditation of PA programs. PA program curricula are the course separate from any pre-requisite courses an institution may require of students in preparation of entry into a program. Programs that include prerequisite coursework in

publications that refer to these as part of the PA Program as accredited by the ARC-PA wrongly imply that these courses are reviewed as part of the ARC-PA accreditation.

The ARC-PA requests that programs discontinue using the term *professional phase* on their web sites and within their correspondence and publications.

ARC-PA WEB PAGE LINKS TO ACCREDITED PROGRAMS

The ARC-PA web site maintains a list of accredited programs by state. As a convenience to those who use the site to obtain information about accredited program, the web page includes a url link to the PA program page.

The 159 ARC-PA accredited entry-level programs are listed below, alphabetically by state, along with information on their accreditation status and timing of next scheduled accreditation action. Clicking in the State column should open the program's or institution's web page. Specific address information for programs can be found on their individual web sites. The Physician Assistant Education Association's web site (PAEA) allows one to search for program by state.

A listing of accredited clinical postgraduate programs is available on a [separate page](#) within this section.

State	Accredited Program	Date First Accredited	Next ARC-PA Review
AL	University Of South Alabama	4/1/1996	September 2013
AL	University Of Alabama At Birmingham	9/1/1975	March 2014
AR	Harding University	3/5/2005	September 2014
AZ	Arizona School Of Health Sciences	10/1/1996	March 2014
AZ	Midwestern University (Glendale)	10/1/1999	March 2016

A recent audit of the web links revealed that many of the links do not go to the PA Program, but to other web pages of the sponsoring institution. These links make it more difficult for those interested in a specific program to find the information they are seeking.

Programs are asked to review the link to their program from the ARC-PA web page (http://www.arc-pa.org/acc_programs/) and to send updated links directly to their program to the [webmaster](#) (webmaster @arc-pa.org). Programs are asked to submit future changes to their program urls to the [webmaster](#).

ACCREDITATION PROGRAM MANAGEMENT PORTAL

The ARC-PA appreciates the effort of programs in entering their program data into the new accreditation program management portal. We also appreciate all the questions received, which have allowed the portal team to make modifications to the portal for easier use.

As a reminder, by this time all programs should actively be entering their data into the portal for completion by **January 1, 2012**. Once you have initially entered your data, updating it yearly for submission to the ARC-PA will not be as time intensive as the initial entry because the fields will be prepopulated from the previous report and you will only need to update information that has changed.

The ARC-PA will be hosting a session focused on the portal at the fall PAEA meeting in New Orleans from 10:00 am to noon on Saturday November, 5, 2011. This session, open to all programs, is designed to answer questions that programs have based on their use of the system. The presentation will highlight various components of the data portal and reports. After that meeting, programs will be informed as to how they may officially submit their data to the ARC-PA.

If you have any questions about required entries, or suggestions for improvement, please contact the portal team at portalfeedback@arc-pa.org. Responses are usually sent within 36 hours and often on the same day.

Special Note regarding Personnel Changes

Once an individual has been activated in the portal, that person is assigned a unique identifier. If the program has a change in program director or other individuals who have been activated by the program director to access the portal, the program should not attempt to delete that person from the system, but should contact the portal team at portalfeedback@arc-pa.org. The portal team will make necessary changes.

STANDARDS UPDATE / INTERPRETING THE STANDARDS

Clarification

The ARC-PA has posted a revised copy of the *Standards*, 4th edition, with clarifying changes on its website. Programs are urged to review this copy carefully. Changes include the following:

- Revised definition to distant education
- Added definition for PACKRAT
- New annotation to A2.16 concerning validation of licensure of instructional faculty
- Clarification rewording to A3.09 to allow principal faculty, the program or medical director to participate as health care providers to students in cases of emergency

- New annotation to A3.21 indicating that the ARC-PA does not consider the results of needle stick/sharps exposure, drug screening or criminal background checks a part of the (student) health record
- Annotation rewording to B1.04 changing *should* to “are expected to.” (*Should* and *must* are not used in annotations)
- Annotation rewording to B3.02 without a change in meaning.
- Addition to annotation of C3.01 addressing the use of evaluation products designed primarily for individual student self-assessment, such as *PACKRAT* as a graded component in the program.
- New annotation to C3.04 addressing the use of evaluation products designed primarily for individual student self-assessment, such as *PACKRAT* as a component of the summative examination.
- Change in annotation to E1.09f regarding changes in requirement for graduation. (Same wording as in accreditation manual now in annotation.)

Degree Deadline

The ARC-PA has developed a document to help clarify the *Standards* degree deadline issue as found in the *Standards*, 4th edition. This document, available on the ARC-PA web site [Accreditation Resources Page](#), details the expectations for those programs that do not yet offer a graduate degree as well as those sponsored by institutions not able to award a graduate degree.

Summative Evaluation

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.

Standards Section E

Programs are reminded that Section E of the *Standards* addresses accreditation maintenance issues (personal changes, student capacity changes, curriculum changes and support changes among others) that require ARC-PA notification or approval. Programs are encouraged to keep these in mind and to take the appropriate action required in a time frame as defined by the individual standards.

PACKRAT REMINDER AND CLARIFICATION

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

According to Standard, A3.14 Annotation, each program is *expected to publish on its web site the PANCE performance data of its graduates by publishing the NCCPA PANCE Pass Rate Summary Report 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.*

A recent audit of program websites revealed that it is very difficult to find the PANCE results within some program web pages. 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 then 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 posted on the web.

NCCPA		Pass Rate Summary Report			Print Date: 9/6/2011 12:02:36 PM
Program Name:		Page: 1 of 1			
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:				%	

Programs are encouraged to review and update their web sites to be in compliance with the *Standards*. Programs not in compliance with this requirement by January 1, 2012, will be placed on administrative probation until compliant. The status of administrative probation is posted by a program's name on the ARC-PA list of accredited programs.

(Administrative probation is a temporary accreditation status granted when a program has not complied with an administrative requirement, such as failure to pay fees or submit required reports. Once placed on Administrative Probation, a program that fails to comply with administrative requirements in a timely manner, as specified by the ARC-PA, may be scheduled for a focused site visit and/or risk having its accreditation withdrawn.)

ACCREDITATION APPLICATION ISSUES

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 will allow 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.

- 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*.

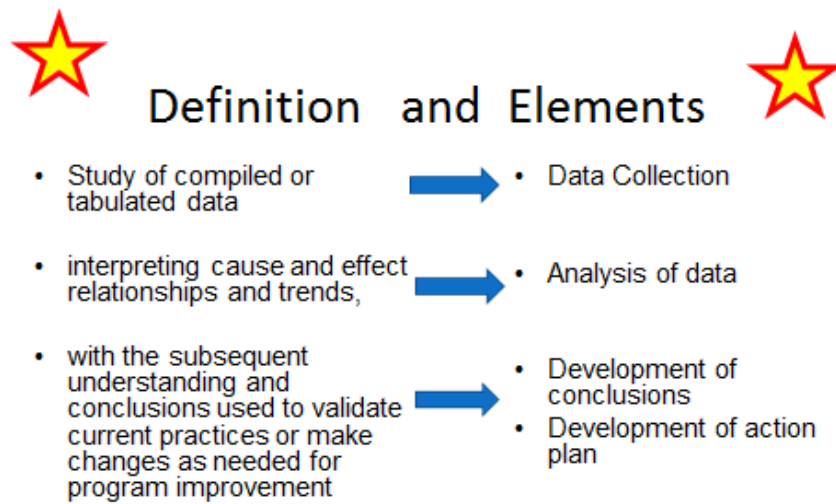
PA	MD	PD	CC	AC
SSR	PAEA	AAPA	NCCPA	PANCE

The ARC-PA staff are working on changes to application materials and will provide follow up on these to programs later this year. 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.

DATA ANALYSIS AND THE SSR

In an effort to clarify the ARC-PA's expectation about data analysis as a component of ongoing program assessment, the ARC-PA has developed a new document Elements of Analysis and the Self-Study Report. This document is posted on the ARC-PA [Resources page](http://www.arc-pa.org/acc_programs/acc_resources.html) of the ARC-PA web site (http://www.arc-pa.org/acc_programs/acc_resources.html) and addresses the four Elements of Data Analysis and their application to writing the Self-Study Report.

Programs are **strongly encouraged** to review this document, which includes the graphic display below.



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>