



Program Directors' Guide to Site Visits

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Program Directors' Guide to Site Visits _____

Overview _____ 3

A. Introduction to site visits _____ 3

B. Site visit scheduling _____ 4

C. Appointment of site visitors _____ 5

D. Site visit logistics _____ 5

E. Site visit agenda (on-site and virtual) _____ 7

F. Review of exhibits _____ 8

G. The site visit report and concluding activities _____ 10

H. Additional information from the program _____ 11

PROGRAM DIRECTORS' GUIDE TO SITE VISITS

Overview

This guide is offered to assist you in preparing for your site visit. In addition, the staff of ACME, the Board of Review (BOR) Chair, the ACME Chair, and the ACME Executive Director are available to you as resources for the process, and we encourage you to contact us at support@theacme.org with your questions. The Directors of Midwifery Education (DOME) network is another valuable source for assistance.

A. Introduction to site visits

Site visits must be conducted in conjunction with the pre/accreditation review of all midwifery education programs. The purpose of the site visit is to supplement the PAR/SER submitted by the program faculty so that the BOR will have a complete picture of the program. The BOR may require a site visit at other junctures, as needed, such as in the case of a proposed substantive change in an already accredited program.

The program may wish to coordinate the ACME site visit with the site visit of another accrediting agency. In that instance the program director must submit a request to ACME at least six months in advance of the visit, or with their letter of intent. The ACME Executive Director will consider a joint site visit, seeking counsel from the ACME BOC Chair if necessary. Proposed joint and/or collaborative site visits are not guaranteed approval. See *Guidelines for Collaborative or Joint Site Visits by ACME and Other Accrediting Bodies* in Appendix C.

The site visit is conducted using a consistent, objective process. This process begins with the selection of a team of site visitors who carefully and thoroughly read the PAR/SER before the visit. At the visit, the site visitors verify the accuracy of, clarify, and amplify the PAR/SER, and seek additional information that may be pertinent to the BOR's evaluation. The visitors maintain confidentiality throughout the process. They begin to verify factual information, e.g. from URLs, before arriving at the site. At the visit, further data are gathered from interviews and exhibits organized by the program. The visitors present the information they obtained in the Site Visit Report (SVR). This report is read by the visit team to the program's representatives at the end of the visit. The visitors then send the completed SVR to ACME. The SVR is presented in a standardized report format to the BOR to use in its review of the program. The program is not provided a copy of the SVR by the Site Visit Team.

B. Site visit scheduling

1. Initiation of site visit schedule

- a. An administrative officer of the institution, such as president, provost, chancellor, or dean, notifies ACME that the organization wishes to initiate the process.
- b. Timing of notification
 - 1) The notification may occur as early as twelve (12) months prior to the site visit and must occur no later than six (6) months prior to the site visit.
 - 2) For initial accreditation, this notification must occur no later than six (6) months in advance of graduation of the first cohort of students.

2. Proposing site visit dates

- a. At least six months prior to the desired visit, the program director or designee should notify the ACME Executive Director in a letter sent via email to support@theacme.org of the intention to undergo review. The letter should contain the time frame for the review, the programs to be visited (MS, DNP, etc.), and three sets of proposed dates for the visit, each set to be three consecutive days, in order of preference.
- b. The notification for **initial accreditation of a preaccredited program** must be provided no later than six (6) months after graduation of the first cohort of students.
- c. The site visit must be made no later than ten (10) weeks prior to a regularly scheduled February or July meeting of the BOR, or ten (10) weeks prior to a BOR meeting scheduled at any other time.

3. Notice of opportunity for third-party comment

- a. The program must identify its relevant constituencies (e.g. alumni, community members, affiliated organizations). At least 2 months prior to the date of the site visit, the program must publish notice of the opportunity for third-party written comments. All such comments should be sent directly to ACME (support@theacme.org).
- b. Suggested venues for public notice include alumni newsletters, program and/or school websites, community news sources, affiliate discussion boards. Contact ACME (support@theacme.org) for suggested text for the notice.

- c. ACME will also publish notice of the opportunity for third-party written comments for all programs due for review in a given season (spring or fall). Note, however, that this does not obviate the program's responsibility to solicit third-party comments.

C. Appointment of site visitors

1. Criteria:

Visitors are chosen from the site visitor panel by the ACME Executive Director on the basis of experience, availability, type of program, whether the program is campus-based or distance, and special needs such as geographic location or a joint accreditation visit. When the visit is to a program with a significant utilization of distance education methodologies, every attempt is made to select at least one site visitor who has experience with distance education.

- 2. The site visit team consists of a minimum of two members of whom at least one will be a senior site visitor.
- 3. The ACME staff polls site visitors for their availability on the dates the program has submitted. Once a proposed visit team is identified, the ACME Executive Director submits their names and curricula vitae to the program director for approval.

4. Vetoes by the program:

If the program finds a proposed site visitor unacceptable for any reason, the ACME Executive Director should be notified within one week (telephone or email to support@theacme.org) to request that another name/team be submitted. No more than two vetoes are allowed. Vetoes of proposed visitors may delay the site visit.

D. Site visit logistics

1. On-site visits

ACME administrative staff will make all travel and hotel arrangements for site visitors once the visit dates are confirmed and the visit team is selected and approved by the program.

a. Travel arrangements

- 1) ACME staff will communicate both visitors' travel plans and arrival/departure times to the program director or designee once travel arrangements are finalized.
 - 2) The program may offer airport transport for the visitors; however, this is not required. ACME staff will provide site visitors with details of local transportation options if the program is not providing this service.
 - 3) ACME staff will seek recommendations from the program director or designee for full-service accommodations that are close to the institution. Each site visitor is afforded a single room with a work area and internet access.
- b. The senior site visitor will review the technology needs of the site visitors with the program director or designee prior to the visit. This includes:
- 1) One laptop available throughout the visit to each visitor, on- and off-site, **as needed**, or support for the use of a visitor's own device.
 - 2) Internet access on- and off-site.
 - 3) Access to the program's restricted files or intranet.
 - 4) **Tech support on standby throughout the visit.**
 - 5) A screen, projector, and, if needed, a computer, plus 2 printed copies of the SVR upon request, available for the report reading on the final day.
- c. A work room should be available and prepared for the visit team. It should be lockable to secure personal items and site visit materials when visitors are out of the room.
- d. The program director or designee sends a tentative agenda for the visit to the senior site visitor no later than four (4) weeks before the visit and copy ACME at support@theacme.org. The senior site visitor will contact the program director within a few days of receipt of the agenda to discuss any needed changes. Subsequent communication between the senior site visitor and the program director should ensue such that the agenda is finalized by one week before the visit.

2. Virtual visits (**Virtual Site Visits are not Available at This Time**)

ACME staff will provide access to and manage the meeting platform for all attendees.

a. Visit preparation

- 1) The program director or designee sends the proposed agenda to the senior site visitor no later than four (4) weeks before the visit begins.
- 2) The senior site visitor will contact the program director within three (3) business days with any requested changes to the agenda.
- 3) Once the agenda is finalized, the senior site visitor will send it to ACME staff.
- 4) The program director or designee must submit to ACME staff the final lists with the name, title, telephone number, and email address of each meeting participant by close of business two (2) days before the first day of the visit. No one other than the people on these lists will be permitted to enter the meeting space.

- 5) ACME staff will schedule all meetings/interviews on the agenda via Zoom and provide Zoom links to all participants via email.
 - 6) The program director or designee should advise all participants at the institution to monitor their email for the Zoom links and ensure their calendars are clear for the meeting(s) they will attend.
- b. Virtual meetings
- 1) Attendees invited by the program should endeavor to sign in to each meeting 10 minutes before the scheduled start time and test their audio and video.
 - 2) Meetings will be password-protected. All sign-in information will be sent to attendees by ACME staff by the day before the meeting.
 - 3) At sign-in, attendees will be admitted to a virtual waiting room. ACME staff will check their names against the list of attendees the program submitted, and admit those on the list to the meeting. No one will be admitted to the meeting after 5 minutes past the scheduled start time.
 - 4) Every attendee must be audible and visible.
 - 5) Every attendee must be identified in the meeting window by name and role. Consult ACME staff or your local IT support for assistance with this if needed.
 - 6) Speak slowly and clearly in case of voice or video connection delays.

E. Site visit agenda (on-site and virtual)

1. Scheduled activities for the site visitors include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Meeting with program director or designee alone
 - b. Meeting with faculty group without the program director or administrators
 - c. Meeting with student group without faculty, program director, or administrators
 - d. Meeting/s with chief executive officer of the institution and/or other appropriate administrative officers (e.g. President, Provost, directors of clinical services)
 - e. Meeting/s with administrators of the school that houses the program, e.g. Dean, graduate program director
 - f. Observations of teaching and learning resources in the academic and clinical settings. For a virtual visit, this may take the form of a live tour, a pre-recorded video tour, or some combination of these.
3. It is ideal for the program director to have minimal or no teaching assignments or other commitments while the visit is in progress.

4. The presence of the program director or designee or other administrators at meetings with institutional administrators is negotiable at the senior site visitor's discretion.
5. Meetings should be scheduled to allow the site visitors lunch and rest breaks during the day and, for on-site visits, to accommodate any necessary travel.
6. Recording of meetings is prohibited.
7. Evening/social activities: No evening activities should be planned for the site visitors. After the visit is completed and the SVR has been sent to ACME, the visitors may accept invitations for social activities, e.g. a luncheon, if their schedules permit.
8. The first two days should include time for the visitors to gather additional data, review exhibits as needed, and organize notes. Time should be allowed during the first day to start writing the SVR.

F. Review of exhibits

1. Exhibits are the objective evidence that supports the statements made in the PAR/SER. They must be electronic. The title of the exhibit should appear in the PAR/SER along with the criterion number, for example: "Criterion I.P. Transfer of Credit Policy."
2. Organize the documents for each exhibit in a folder labeled with the number of the criterion to which it pertains, e.g., Criterion I.G., Criterion II.H. Identify relevant sections of the documents, e.g., by highlighting or bookmarking.
3. If a document supports more than one criterion, you may:
 - a. Duplicate it so that there is a copy in the folder for each criterion it supports, or
 - b. Clearly state the document's name in the PAR/SER and point the reader to the folder of the criterion number where you have filed it.

4. Site visitors must have remote access to exhibit files (e.g., web pages, or via the institution's network) by the first day of the site visit.

5. Virtual exhibit review

a. Advance access to program exhibits is **required** for all visits. No later than four (4) weeks before the visit begins, the program director should contact ACME staff to discuss how the visit team will get access to program exhibits. Some options are:

1) Online document sharing e.g. Dropbox

2) Access to the program's learning management system

3) PDFs of documents sent to ACME (Handbooks)

4) Confidential documents such as student files to be viewed at an advance Zoom session by arrangement with ACME staff.

b. Virtual exhibits must be ready and available for site visitors to review no later than three (3) weeks before the first day of the site visit.

6. Core competencies

The visitors will randomly verify 25% of the competencies from each section of the Core Competency document that was in effect at the writing of the PAR/SER. If any are missing, they will notify the program director and verify every competency.

7. Core and clinical faculty files

a. Required documents: See Criterion II.C. and II.U. for the list of required documents for
a. core faculty and clinical faculty, respectively.

- b. If there are more than thirty (30) faculty files, visitors may opt to conduct a random sampling of files for review. The rule is ten (10) files or 10%, whichever is greater.
- c. If there are thirty (30) or fewer files, all must be examined.
- d. If verification is not found for any of the files examined, visitors must look at all files.
- e. Refer to Criterion II.C. Elaboration and Documentation for documents that may be used instead of the AMCB or other specialty certificate for core and clinical faculty.
- f. **Core faculty only:** Site visitors must see copies of diplomas or official transcripts verifying core faculty members' highest earned degrees. These are not required for clinical faculty.

8. Contracts for clinical sites

- a. The PAR/SER should include a list of sites and in the SER, the dates when students were assigned to the clinical sites (see Criterion VI.I.).
- b. Contracts for all clinical sites in use during the identified SER time frame, or expected to be used for a program requesting preaccreditation, must be present in an exhibit. Please ensure that each site is identified by the same name wherever it appears.
- c. The contracts should be signed and dated in effect during the SER year, or to be in effect when students begin the clinical portion of a preaccredited program, and in alphabetical order.
- d. Verification of contracts:
 - 1) If there are thirty (30) or fewer contract files, all must be verified.
 - 2) If there are more than thirty (30) contract files, visitors may opt to conduct a random sampling of contract files. The rule is ten (10) files or 10% of the total, whichever is greater.
 - 3) If verification is not found for any of the files examined, visitors must look at all files.

G. The site visit report and concluding activities

1. The site visitors will schedule time with the program director or designee before the reading to summarize the contents of the report.

2. For on-site visits, ensure that the technology needed for presentation of the report is functioning properly. The site visitors may request that the report be printed for ease of reading.
3. Those in attendance at the reading are invited to note down their questions and/or factual corrections to be addressed when the reading is finished. The visitors can correct factual errors, e.g. a title, a year, a course name, but cannot change the evidence.
4. For on-site visits, if time permits and the program wishes to do so, they may arrange to have lunch with the visitors before their departure.
5. The practice in times past was to leave a copy of the report with the program. Visitors are no longer permitted to do so.
6. Site visitor evaluations
 - a. For on-site visits, the ACME staff will send the survey to participants. The program director will provide a list of names and email addresses for each participant after the site visit to ACME in a Word or Excel spreadsheet.
 - b. For virtual visits, each attendee will receive a link to the survey directly.
 - c. The results of these evaluations are forwarded to the ACME Executive Director for quality improvement. They are not part of the BOR process.

H. Additional information from the program

1. Submission of additional information (“addenda”)

There are occasions when the program needs or wishes to submit information beyond that contained in the PAR/SER or exhibits for consideration by the BOR. Often this is material that the program was unable to present to the visitors during the visit. For example, if the site visitors were unable to verify the highest academic degree of some of the core faculty members, the program director can submit a scan of each diploma following the visit, in accordance with the guidelines.

The site visitors may also recommend that additional materials be submitted that will amplify or clarify the program’s response to a criterion. This is appropriate when such additional information will give the BOR a more accurate and complete picture of that aspect of the program and assist with decision-making.

2. Options for submitting additional information

Programs have two options for submitting additional information.

a. Addenda submitted with the SVR

Additional information may be submitted as addenda to the SVR when the SVR is transmitted at the conclusion of the site visit. All addenda must be in electronic format and named by the criterion number to which they pertain and the content, e.g. "Criterion II.C. Revised Core Faculty Table." These materials can be provided to the site visit team as soon as they are ready.

b. Addenda submitted following the site visit

The program director or designee should submit one (1) electronic copy of each addendum. As with addenda to the SVR, these files are to be named according to the pertinent criterion and the content, and a list of files must accompany the submission. This material is to be sent to the ACME, support@theacme.org, within seven (7) business days following the site visit for consideration by the BOR. The original PAR/SER is retained intact and the new information is added to the program documents. Prior to the BOR meeting, the BOR Chair may request additional information from the program to verify criteria.

For detailed information about the Board of Review process, please see Section IV of the ACME Policies and Procedures Manual.