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**GUIDE TO THE PROCESS FOR ACCME INITIAL ACCREDITATION**

**AN OVERVIEW AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

**Overview and Background Information**

**Conducting Your Self‐Study for Initial Accreditation**

The self‐study process provides an opportunity for an initial applicant to reflect on its program of CME. This process can help your organization assess its commitment to and role in providing continuing medical education and determine its future direction.

As an initial applicant, your organization is expected to provide narrative and evidence for Criteria 1-3 and 7 -12, and all applicable ACCME accreditation policies. Your organization may also choose to submit narrative and evidence for Criteria 5, 6, and 13. The ACCME will give a compliance finding and feedback for evidence submitted for these criteria, but these findings will not affect your organization’s accreditation status.

The process of conducting a self‐study is unique to your organization. Depending on the size and scope of your CME program, you may involve many or just a few individuals in the process.

# Data Sources Used in the Initial Accreditation Process

Your organization will demonstrate that your practice of CME is in compliance with the ACCME’s accreditation requirements through three primary sources of data: the self‐study report, evidence of performance‐in‐practice, and the accreditation interview.

# Expectations about Materials

Information and materials submitted to the ACCME must not contain any untrue statements, must not omit any necessary material facts, must not be misleading, must fairly present the organization, and are the property of the organization.

Information and materials submitted for initial accreditation (self‐study report, evidence of performance‐in‐practice, other materials) must not include individually identifiable health information, in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

# Missing or Incomplete Information

Initial applicants that meet the deadlines and submission requirements of the initial accreditation review process will receive an accreditation decision from the ACCME. Please note, if the ACCME is unable to render a decision due to missing or incomplete information, the ACCME reserves the right to request additional information, the expenses for which will be borne by the initial applicant.

# Decision‐Making

Your organization’s compliance findings and the outcome of the accreditation review are determined by the ACCME based on the data and information collected in the accreditation process. The data and information are analyzed and synthesized by the Accreditation Review Committee (ARC). The ARC makes recommendations on findings and status which are forwarded for action by the ACCME’s Decision Committee. All accreditation decisions are ratified by the ACCME Board of Directors that meets three times each year (generally, in March, July, and November). This multi‐tiered system of review provides checks and balances to ensure fair and accurate decisions. The fairness and accuracy of ACCME decisions are also enhanced by the ACCME's use of a criterion‐referenced decision‐making system.

The ACCME’s initial accreditation decision will be based on your organization’s demonstration of compliance with Criteria 1-3 and 7-12, and all applicable ACCME Accreditation Policies. Compliance with these criteria and policies will lead to an accreditation outcome of Provisional Accreditation with a two-year accreditation term. However, if any of these criteria are found to be in noncompliance, the accreditation outcome will be Nonaccreditation. At the end of the two-year term of Provisional Accreditation, your organization would be eligible for reaccreditation. If successful in reaccreditation, your organization would be eligible for a status of either Accreditation (with a four-year term) or Accreditation with Commendation (with a six-year term).

# Submitting Self‐Study Materials to the ACCME

The ACCME has moved to a fully online system to simplify and streamline the submission process. All materials will be submitted in the ACCME’s Program and Activity Reporting System (PARS). You will use PARS to complete your self-study report form, submit evidence of performance-in-practice, and sign up for your initial accreditation interview. You may be asked to upload documents that demonstrate your compliance with ACCME requirements. Please note, any uploaded files may not exceed 3 megabytes. All users associated with your organization in PARS have the ability to access, modify and delete information entered in these forms.

# Self‐Study Report

To ensure compliance with the ACCME’s Accreditation Criteria and Policies, you will provide narrative descriptions, documents, and examples to present the CME practice(s) you utilized using the self-study report form in PARS.

# Evidence of Performance-in-Practice

You will verify that your CME activities are in compliance with the ACCME’s Accreditation Criteria and Policies through the performance‐in‐practice review process. This process will require the following actions:

1. You will select at least two CME activities, completed within the last 24 months, for performance‐in‐practice review;
2. You will enter data in PARS for the activities you have selected for performance-in-practice review;
3. You will submit evidence of performance‐in‐practice for the selected activities in PARS.

# Submitting CME Activity Data in PARS

Using PARS (https:// [pars.accme.org](http://pars.accme.org/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fdefault.aspx)), you will submit known information about the CME activities that your organization has selected for performance-in-practice review.

# Selecting Activities for Performance‐in‐Practice Review

You will select at least two educational activities, completed within the last 24 months, for performance-in-practice review. These activities may be conducted in joint providership with an accredited ACCME provider or may be offered by the initial applicant without CME credit. In all cases, the evidence of performance-in-practice presented from these activities will be an important data source upon which your initial accreditation findings and decision will be based.

# Preparing Evidence of Performance‐in‐Practice

You will submit evidence of performance-in-practice for the activities you select using the Performance-in-Practice Structured Abstract form in PARS. You will complete one form for each activity. In each form, you will provide the information requested with narrative explanations and statements, in tables, and via uploaded documents and evidence to verify that the activity meets the ACCME’s requirements.

# Accreditation Interview

Your organization will have the opportunity to further describe the practices you present in the self‐study report and in evidence of performance‐in‐practice, and provide clarification as needed, in conversation with ACCME volunteer surveyors.

ACCME volunteer surveyors are your colleagues from the accredited CME community who are trained by the ACCME. A team of surveyors will be assigned by the ACCME to review your self‐study materials, meet with representatives of your CME program, and engage in a dialogue about your organization’s policies and practices that ensure compliance with the ACCME’s Accreditation Criteria and Policies.

During the interview, the surveyors will seek clarification about any questions they may have regarding the self‐study materials you submitted to the ACCME. You can expect ACCME surveyors to:

1) conduct their interactions in a professional manner,

2) be familiar with your materials and the ACCME’s Accreditation Criteria and Policies,

3) and communicate clearly and effectively without offering consultative advice or feedback regarding compliance or the expected outcome of the accreditation review.

The ACCME utilizes the conference call as its standard accreditation interview format; Interviews typically average 90 minutes in length. To ensure the validity of the process and based on circumstances and available resources, the ACCME reserves the right to make all final decisions regarding the interview and/or composition of the survey team. The ACCME will provide information about the process of scheduling the accreditation interview and will confirm the interview date and time and assigned surveyors in advance via email.