



# Accreditation Process Overview

## ISMA DECISION MAKING

### **The Decision-Making Process**

Two times per year, the ISMA makes accreditation decisions. The decision making process includes review and ratification by the ISMA Commission on Medical Education. Fairness and accuracy of ISMA Commission on Medical Education decisions are enhanced by the use of a criterion-referenced decision-making system.

The decision-making process assesses providers' levels of compliance with the Accreditation Requirements based on information furnished by the provider, via the Initial Self Study Report, Self Study Report or Progress Report, as well as information collected, if applicable, by ISMA accreditation surveyors. Compliance options for each individual requirement include:

- Compliance (the provider meets the criteria for compliance)
- Non-Compliance (the provider does not meet the criteria for compliance)

### **Initial and Reaccreditation Decisions**

Based on the accumulated compliance findings for each individual Accreditation Requirement, the ISMA makes a decision regarding the provider's accreditation status. This decision could be one of five options:

1. Provisional Accreditation
2. Accreditation
3. Accreditation with Commendation
4. Probation
5. Non-Accreditation

1. Provisional Accreditation: Provisional Accreditation is the standard status for initial or first-time applicants and is associated with a two-year term. To achieve Provisional Accreditation, the applicant must be found in compliance in all Level 1 Requirements. The ISMA may grant "Extended Provisional" accreditation to an already provisionally accredited provider one time, for up to two years. Provisional Accreditation may also be granted when an accredited organization's CME program is so altered that it is essentially a new program.

2. Accreditation: Accreditation is the standard status for reaccreditation applicants and is associated with a four year term. For accredited providers seeking Accreditation, non-compliance with any accreditation requirement will necessitate a progress report and/or focused or full survey. Failure to demonstrate compliance in the progress report and/or focused or full survey may result in Probation.

3. Accreditation with Commendation: Accreditation with Commendation is associated with a six-year term and is available only to reaccreditation applicants. A reaccreditation applicant is considered for Accreditation with Commendation if the applicant meets the criteria for Accreditation with Commendation: Compliance with Criteria 1 – 22.

4. Probation: An accredited program that seriously deviates from compliance with the accreditation requirements may be placed on probation. Probation may also result from a provider's failure to demonstrate compliance in a progress report.

Providers who receive Probation at reaccreditation receive the standard four-year term of accreditation for two years, maximum. Accreditation status, and the ability for a provider to complete its four-year term, will resume when a Progress Report is received, validated and accepted by the ISMA.

Probation may not be extended. Therefore, providers on Probation that fail to demonstrate compliance with all ISMA requirements within two years will receive Non-Accreditation.

Note that provisionally accredited providers cannot be put on probation. Rather, provisionally accredited providers that seriously deviate from compliance will receive Non-Accreditation.

5. Non-Accreditation: Although decisions of Non-Accreditation are rare, the ISMA reserves the right to deliver such decisions under any of the following circumstances:

- After the initial survey. To achieve Provisional Accreditation, first-time applicants must be found in compliance in all Level 1 Accreditation Requirements. Initial applicants who receive Non-Accreditation may not be reviewed again by the ISMA until one year from the date of the ISMA meeting at which the decision was made.
- After Provisional Accreditation. Provisionally accredited providers that seriously deviate from compliance will receive Non-Accreditation. These providers are not eligible for probation.
- After a Progress Report. For accredited providers on probation, non-compliance with any one of the criteria will be cause for Non-Accreditation.

The effective date for Non-Accreditation is usually one year from the ISMA decision. The ISMA will confirm in writing the specific date on which the provider's accreditation will end. A provider who receives Non-Accreditation is responsible for payment of all

fees and submission of all required reports until the effective date of Non-Accreditation. Failure to do so will result in immediate Non-Accreditation. The ISMA waives the requirement of a Pre-application for the provider that chooses to submit an Initial Self Study Report during the one-year time period prior to the effective date of Non-Accreditation. The process and standards for review of newly Non-Accredited applicants are the same as for all other applicants.

The ISMA considers the names of providers whose accreditation has been withdrawn by either the ISMA or a recognized state medical society to be public information, and provides lists of these names to the public accordingly.

### **Progress Report Decisions**

Some providers are required to submit progress reports to the ISMA. A decision regarding a provider's progress report could be one of three options.

1. *Accept:* the ISMA accepts a progress report when the provider has furnished evidence of compliance with the requirements that were in non-compliance. A provider's demonstration of compliance in all elements will result in its ability to complete its four-year term with a status of Accreditation.
2. *Clarification Required:* If the progress report requires clarification, the provider has corrected most of the Criteria that were in non-compliance, but some additional information is required to be certain the provider is in compliance. An additional progress report may be required.
3. *Reject:* The ISMA rejects a progress report if it does not provide evidence that the areas of Non-Compliance have been corrected. Either a second progress report or a focused accreditation survey may be required. The ISMA can place a provider on Probation or Non-Accreditation as the result of findings on a progress report.

### **Reconsiderations and Appeals**

A provider that receives a decision of Non-Accreditation may request reconsideration when it believes that the evidence presented to the ISMA justifies a different decision. Only material that was considered at the time of the ARC review may be reviewed upon reconsideration.

If following the reconsideration the ISMA sustains its original action, the organization may request a hearing before an ISMA appeal board. Appeals may be based only on the grounds that the ISMA's decision was: (1) arbitrary, capricious or otherwise not in accordance with the accreditation standards and procedures of the ISMA, or (2) not supported by substantial evidence.

Attorneys may participate in the reconsideration and appeals processes.

Note that Non-Accreditation decisions delivered as a result of administrative issues, such as failure to submit fees, are not eligible for the reconsideration and appeals processes.