

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, 13, and for 16-22 or 23-38. 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 December). 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. Accreditation decision letters are sent to initial applicants via hard copy mail following the ACCME Board of Directors' meeting.

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 must be submitted in PDF format, **bookmarked*** and paginated, and fully compatible for review in Adobe Acrobat or Reader (version 8 or later). Your total electronic submission should be no larger than 500 megabytes. The ACCME is using Citrix ShareFile, an online file management service, to collect the materials for your accreditation decision. A private folder will be created for each organization's use in uploading self-study materials. You will be sent an account activation email directly from the ShareFile system. Once you receive the account activation email, please see the [ShareFile Basic Client Guide](#) for instructions about how to log in to ShareFile and how to upload PDF files to a ShareFile folder. Please be sure to retain copies of all files submitted. After you have completed the submission process, you will no longer have access to the ShareFile folder.

** For information about creating bookmarks, please refer to these [instructions](#) for the current version of Adobe Acrobat Document Cloud. The steps may vary slightly for other versions of Acrobat.*

Self-Study Report

You will provide narrative descriptions, documents, and examples to present the CME practice(s) you utilized to ensure compliance with the ACCME's Accreditation Criteria and Policies. The content of the report is prescribed in the seven sections of the *ACCME Self-Study Report Outline*:

- I) Prologue
- II) Purpose and Mission (C1)
- III) Educational Activities (C2-7 and Policies)
- IV) CME Program and Educational Activities (C8-9)
- V) Content of Educational Activities (C10 and Content Validation)
- VI) Evaluation and Improvement (C11-13)
- VII) Engagement with the Environment: Option A (C16-22) or Option B (C23-38 Menu)

Organizing and Formatting Your Self-Study Report

1. Create a cover page to clearly identify your organization by name and ACCME provider number, using the full name of your organization as it is known to the ACCME.
2. Each page of the self-study report must be consecutively numbered.
3. Narrative and examples must be provided as indicated in the *ACCME Self-Study Report Outline for Initial Accreditation*.
4. The self-study report must have at least 1" margins (top, bottom, and sides), using 11 point type or larger.
5. The self-study report must be no more than 200 pages in total.
6. Submit the self-study report in its entirety as a single PDF file. In the PDF file, create bookmarks for each of the seven sections of the *ACCME Self-Study Report Outline for Initial Accreditation*. The file you create should appear as a single document when opened.
7. Use the following format to name the PDF file: [your organization's 7-digit ACCME identification number]_SSR

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 into the ACCME's Program and Activity Reporting System (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.

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.

Submitting CME Activity Data in PARS

Using PARS, the ACCME's Program and Activity Reporting System (pars.accme.org), you will submit known information about the CME activities that your organization has selected for performance-in-practice review. For more information about PARS, visit <http://www.accme.org/education-and-support/video/commentary/accmes-program-and-activity-reporting-system-pars>.

Preparing Evidence of Performance-in-Practice

You will submit evidence of performance-in-practice for the activities you select using the **ACCME Performance-in-Practice Structured Abstract**. The structured abstract may be downloaded from the ACCME website, or you may click [here](#) to access it directly, if you are connected to the Internet.

Following the structured abstract, you will provide the information requested with narrative explanations and statements, in tables, and include documents and evidence to verify that the activity meets the ACCME's requirements.

Initial applicants are expected to provide performance-in-practice evidence that demonstrates compliance with Criteria 2, 3, 7, 8, and 11, and all applicable ACCME accreditation policies. You may also choose to submit evidence for Criteria 5 and 6, but this evidence will not affect your organization's accreditation status.

Save the evidence for each activity you select for review as a separate PDF file. In each PDF file, create bookmarks as indicated in the structured abstract. Each file you create should appear as a single document when opened.

Use the following format to name each PDF activity file: [Brief Activity Title] _Date of Activity (YYYYMMDD).

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. Your organization will be asked to confirm receipt of this communication.