GUIDE TO THE PROCESS FOR ACCME INITIAL ACCREDITATION:

AN OVERVIEW AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

FOR 2016 SUBMISSIONS

Overview and Background Information

Conducting Your Self-Study for Initial Accreditation

The self-study process provides an opportunity for the initial applicant to reflect on its program of CME. This process can help the 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 choose to submit narrative and evidence for Criteria 5, 6, 13, and 16-22, as well. 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 ACCME has specific requirements for the *Self-Study Report* content outline, but 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

The ACCME's accreditation process is an opportunity for an initial applicant to demonstrate that its practice of CME is in compliance with the ACCME's accreditation requirements through three primary sources of data about the initial applicant's CME program:

Self-Study Report

Organizations are asked to provide descriptions, attachments, and examples to give the reader an understanding of CME practice(s) related to ACCME Criteria and Policies. Descriptions are narrative explanations. Attachments are specific documents. Examples are demonstrations of the implementation of the practices described that may include narrative and/or attachments.

Performance-in-Practice Review

Organizations are asked to verify that their CME activities are in compliance with ACCME Criteria and Policies through the documentation review process. The initial applicant will present evidence to the ACCME for documentation review from at least two recently completed educational activities.

Accreditation Interview

Organizations are presented with the opportunity to further describe the practices presented in the Self-Study Report and activity files, and provide clarification as needed, in conversation with a team of volunteer surveyors who are colleagues from the CME community, trained by the ACCME.

Expectations about Materials

Materials submitted to the ACCME, in any format, 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.

Materials submitted for accreditation (Self-Study Report, activity files, 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 all of the deadlines and submission requirements of the 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.

Accreditation Interview

The accreditation interview offers the initial applicant the opportunity to discuss its CME program with qualified surveyors. ACCME surveyors will be assigned to review the self-study materials you submit to the ACCME. They will meet with representatives of your CME program to engage in a dialogue about your organization's policies and practices that ensure compliance with the Accreditation Criteria, including the Standards for Commercial Support and Accreditation Policies.

At 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, and 3) 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; however, other interview formats are available, including a face-to-face meeting at the ACCME offices, an on-site meeting at your organization's offices or the site of an activity, or via video conference. 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 format, date, time, and/or composition of the survey team.

The ACCME will provide information about the process of scheduling the accreditation interview. The ACCME will confirm your assigned surveyor(s) and the interview date and time in advance via email. Your organization will be asked to confirm receipt of this communication.

Please note, your organization must have a CME activity reviewed. An Activity Review entails the observation of one of your organization's CME activities by an ACCME volunteer surveyor. This requirement must be fulfilled as a part of your organization's initial accreditation review or as part of your organization's subsequent reaccreditation review process.

Decision-Making Process

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 full Board of Directors of the ACCME which meets three times each year (generally in March, July, and November).

This multi-tiered system of review provides the checks and balances necessary 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 mail following the ACCME Board of Directors' meeting.

The ACCME's review and 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 applicable 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).

Requirements for Organizing and Formatting Your Self-Study Report

The Self-Study Report must be formatted as indicated to facilitate the review of your CME program.

The cover of each of the four Self-Study Report binders should clearly identify your organization by name and ACCME provider number. Use the full name of your organization as it is known to the ACCME (no acronyms or abbreviations).

1. Each page in the binder, including the attachments, must be consecutively numbered. The name (or abbreviation) of your organization must appear with the page number on each page.

2. The Self-Study Report must be organized using divider tabs as specified by the ACCME.

3. Narrative, attachments, and examples must be provided as indicated in the ACCME Self-Study Report Outline.

4. The Self-Study Report must be typed with at least 1" margins (top, bottom, and sides), using 11 point type or larger; double-sided printing is acceptable.

5. Pertinent excerpts must be photocopied on standard paper for inclusion in the binder. Do not use plastic sleeves for single pages or for multi-page documents (i.e., brochures, handouts, etc.).

6. The Self-Study Report must be submitted in a three-ring binder. The rings may not be more than 1½ inches in diameter, and the materials may not be more than 1 ½ inches in thickness.

7. Four hard copies of the Self-Study Report must be submitted to the ACCME. Keep a separate duplicate copy for your reference at any time during the accreditation process, but especially at the time of the accreditation interview.

8. One electronic copy of the Self-Study Report in its entirety must be submitted to the ACCME (in addition to the four binders), as a single PDF file on a USB flash drive, bookmarked according to the seven sections of the ACCME Self-Study Report Outline.

Regarding Self-Study Report Divider Tabs

The Self-Study Report must be organized using divider tabs to separate the content of the report in the seven sections of the ACCME Self-Study Report Outline. For the purpose of printing tabs, the titles of the sections have been abbreviated as follows:

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)**

The ACCME's Review of Performance-in-Practice

The ACCME's performance-in-practice review allows initial applicants to demonstrate compliance with the ACCME's expectations and offers initial applicants an opportunity to reflect on their CME practices.

Materials that demonstrate compliance with the ACCME's expectations may result from work done for individual activities or as part of the overall CME program. In this process, you will present materials that you developed and utilized for the activity to help your organization demonstrate compliance. Blank forms, blank checklists, and policy documents alone do not verify performance-in-practice.

The ACCME's review of an initial applicant's performance-in-practice entails the following process:

1) The initial applicant's selection of at least two recently completed CME activities for performance-in-practice review

2) The initial applicant's entry of data into the ACCME's Program and Activity Reporting System (PARS) for activities selected for performance-in-practice review

3) The initial applicant's submission of evidence of performance-in-practice for the activities selected

Selecting Activities for Performance-in-Practice Review

The initial applicant will select two educational activities, completed within the last 24 months, for performance-in-practice review. These activities may have been conducted in joint providership with an accredited ACCME provider or may be activities offered by the initial applicant without CME credit. It is important to note, in all cases, the evidence of performance-in-practice presented from these activities will be an important data source upon which the initial applicant's accreditation findings and decision will be based.

The initial applicant is expected to provide evidence that will demonstrate compliance with Criteria 1-3, 7-11, and all applicable ACCME accreditation policies. The initial applicant may also choose to submit evidence for Criteria 5, 6, and 16-22, but this evidence will not affect your organization's accreditation status.

Submitting your CME Activity Data

Using the ACCME's Program and Activity Reporting System (pars.accme.org), you will submit known information about the CME activities that your organization selected for performance-in-practice review. For more information about PARS, visit http://www.accme.org/cme-providers/maintaining-your-accreditation/about-pars.

Requirements for Assembling and Submitting Performance-in-Practice Materials

Submitting Evidence for Performance-in-Practice Review

The ACCME utilizes the review of an initial applicant's performance-in-practice, as seen in materials from CME activities, to verify that the initial applicant meets the ACCME's expectations.

Initial applicants have the following options for submitting evidence of performance-in-practice to the ACCME:

Option 1: Submit Evidence Using the ACCME Performance-in-Practice Structured Abstract

The ACCME Performance-in-Practice 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. Using the Structured Abstract, you will complete text-limited fields, tables, and attach evidence that verifies the activity meets the ACCME's requirements.

Option 2: Submit Labeled Evidence of Performance-in-Practice

The ACCME Performance-in-Practice Labels may be downloaded from the ACCME website, or you may click here to access the label template directly if you are connected to the Internet. The label template is pre-formatted to print onto *Avery Standard File Folder Labels #5266*. Affix the labels to evidence that verifies the activity meets the ACCME's requirements. If the evidence applicable to a label is several pages in length, you may apply the corresponding label to the first page or on a coversheet. Use labels, arrows, highlighting, or other methods to make explicit where the evidence is located.

For Options 1 and 2, initial applicants may submit evidence in either hard copy or electronic format.

Instructions for Submitting in Hard Copy:

1. Submit labeled evidence for each activity selected in an 8 ½" by 11" file folder; do **not** submit evidence in binders.

2. Affix a label on the front cover of each file folder that specifies:

• Full name of your organization	• Activity type, as submitted in PARS
• Activity title, as submitted in PARS	• Directly or jointly provided
• Activity date and location, as submitted in PARS	• Commercial support was/was not accepted

Instructions for Submitting in Electronic Format:

Note: Submission in electronic format requires Adobe Acrobat version 8.0 or more recent.

1. Save the evidence for your activity as a separate PDF file. The file you create should appear as a single document when opened. Do not use the Acrobat option to make a PDF "portfolio" style file. Use the following format for the file name: Brief activity title_Date of activity(YYYYMMDD)

2. Create a cover page for your activity file with the following information displayed. This cover page must be the first page of the activity file.

• Full name of your organization	• Activity type, as submitted in PARS
• Activity title, as submitted in PARS	• Directly or jointly provided
• Activity date and location, as submitted in PARS	• Commercial support was/was not accepted

3. If you use the labels, create a bookmark for each label, and use the language of the label as your bookmark, e.g., "C2 The professional practice gap(s) of your learners on which the activity was based." If you use the abstract, create a bookmark for each attachment, and use the number of the attachment as your bookmark, e.g., "Attachment 1."

4. Save all of the PDF files to a USB flash drive. Submit two flash drives, each with a complete set of PDF activity files.

Submitting Materials to the ACCME

The following materials must be shipped, using a method that has a reliable electronic, web-enabled delivery tracking system:

- Four copies of the Self-Study Report in binders formatted and organized as specified

- One electronic copy of the Self-Study Report as a single PDF file on a flash drive

- Two separate flash drives with your evidence of performance-in-practice for selected activities, if submitting electronically

- One set of your evidence of performance-in-practice for selected activities, if submitting in hard copy format

- One copy of the CME product(s) for any enduring materials, Internet, or journal-based CME activities selected for performance-in-practice review (or a URL and access code, if applicable)

Do not ship original documents. Activity files will not be returned. Retain a duplicate set of materials including the Self-Study Report and evidence of performance-in-practice for your own reference at any time during the accreditation process, but especially at the time of the accreditation interview. If the need arises, the ACCME may ask for additional copies of a file or set of files.

SHIP TO:

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Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education
515 North State Street, Suite 1801
Chicago, IL 60654
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