



**CoARC Update on Response to COVID-19:
2020–2021 Self-Studies and On-Site Visits
May 27, 2020**

The Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) continues to monitor the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on our accredited programs. We are fully aware of the ongoing efforts of administrators and faculty to find ways to provide satisfactory educational experiences for their students during this difficult and uncertain time. The CoARC also supports all programmatic actions focused on ensuring the health, safety and security of students, faculty, patients, and other stakeholders. We understand that programs may need to implement strategies different from normal operating procedures during this unprecedented period, and that these strategies may be influenced by programmatic and institutional policies and procedures, by local, state, and federal regulations, as well as by the spread of COVID-19. We will continue to collaborate with our programs to ensure that such strategies not only address these problems adequately but are in compliance with all CoARC Standards and Policies. We will also continue to carry out our role of verifying that program resources and processes are sufficient to meet the mandated goal (Standard 3.01): “To prepare graduates with demonstrated competence ... in the learning domains of respiratory care practice as performed by Registered Respiratory Therapists”.

We provide the following updates and clarifications regarding **self-studies** and **on-site visits** for the 2020 review cycle:

Self-Studies

- At this time, dates specified by the CoARC Executive Office for the submission of self-studies over the next several months are still applicable. The Executive Office has been granting extensions upon request; however, the extensions are short-term (typically 30 to 60 days) as our goal is to complete these reviews within a reasonable time frame.
- The Self Study Report must contain sufficient documentation to address each standard. The version of the accreditation Standards to be utilized for each Self Study (i.e., either 2015 or 2020) is specified in the Executive Office request.
- Should information related to a given Standard be unavailable or incomplete because of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, a detailed explanation of all factors related to this deficiency must be provided. For example, if certain documentation could not be obtained due to on-campus restrictions, this should be described in detail. Simply stating ‘Not available due to challenges from the COVID-19 response’ will not be sufficient. In addition, as part of the narrative response, programs must describe when they expect these data will be made available. Unless institutional closures extend well into the fall semester, one would not expect this to be later than December 1, 2020. Program Directors will need to work closely with their Referee to address the updating issue.



COARC ON ACCREDITATION FOR RESPIRATORY CARE

On-Site Visits

- The CoARC is monitoring COVID-19 related travel restrictions, as our top priority is the safety and well-being of our program personnel and volunteer site visitors.
- The CoARC's goal is to complete all on-site visits currently scheduled for 2020 during this calendar year. Should travel restrictions extend through the fall, the suitability of each program for a virtual site visit will be assessed. If a virtual site visit is not a viable option, on-site visits will be rescheduled for Spring 2021. The CoARC asks that programs be flexible in re-scheduling on-site visits as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- For entry into practice programs with pending provisional accreditation reviews, the CoARC will only schedule the on-site visit once access to campus facilities is permitted, travel restrictions and other conditions are met. Priority scheduling may be implemented for programs on probation and/or with pending progress reports.
- Site visit team members will work cooperatively with programs to re-evaluate those Standards for which data in the Self Study were incomplete because of factors related to the pandemic, as noted above. In addition, should such data become available prior to the visit, the Program Director will, as always, be able to provide updated information to the Referee.

The CoARC appreciates your ongoing commitment to providing high-quality respiratory care education through your participation in programmatic accreditation.

Additional information will be disseminated by the CoARC as deemed appropriate. Should you have specific questions or additional concerns, please do not hesitate to contact [Bonnie Marrs](#) (817-283-2835 ext. 102). CoARC Coronavirus updates are posted on a dedicated page on the [CoARC website](#).