



SITE VISITOR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

*Supplemental Document to the CoARC Accreditation Policies &
Procedures Manual*

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Please Note: Unless specified otherwise, the term ‘Standards’ refers to the CoARC’s most recently approved Accreditation Standards (*Entry into Respiratory Care Professional Practice* or Accreditation Standards for *Degree Advancement Programs*) and Accreditation Standards for *Advanced Practice Programs in Respiratory Care*, as applicable to the program offered.

The term ‘program’ in this document refers to all base programs and program options (i.e., additional degree track programs, sleep disorders specialist programs, and satellite programs) unless specified otherwise.

5.01-INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The site visit is the most complex aspect of the accreditation process. It is also the most visible function of the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC). Accordingly, the CoARC has the obligation to assure both itself and the educational community it serves that those engaged in site evaluation are fully qualified and competent.

Site visitation teams usually have 2 members, one of whom may be (and in some cases, must be) a physician. As a Site Visitor you are an on-site objective observer and gatherer of the “facts” that you report back to the CoARC Referee as a part of the ongoing process of accreditation and reaccreditation.

Prior to your site visit, the Referee assigned to that program (a Referee is a member of the CoARC Board assigned to a program to review and assist with a program’s accreditation process) will communicate with you and the program about specific concerns or requests regarding the data submitted by the program in their self-study report, annual report, or progress report. The Site Visitor will review the Program's Self Study and the Referee's Analysis of the Self Study prior to the site visit.

During the site visit, the Site Visitor will endeavor to gather program information relative to the CoARC Standards and to address any Referee questions or concerns. This information can be obtained from: 1) on-site inspection of records, facilities, etc., 2) interviews of faculty, students,



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and graduates, 3) discussions with the Administration, Dean, Program Director, Director of Clinical Education, and the Advisory Committee.

Becoming a site visitor requires that the site visitor be familiar with the CoARC Thresholds of Success, *Accreditation Policies and Procedures*, and the *Standards* which are available from the CoARC website, www.coarc.com. The process of accreditation is heavily dependent upon the performance of the site visit team. This team must accurately and reliably collect, review, interpret, verify, and document all information pertaining to the program under review. The accreditation recommendation made by the CoARC depends to a significant extent upon this information. Unless this information is accurate and fully documented, the CoARC will be unable to reach a fair and responsible decision concerning the program.

It is for this reason that the following policies and procedures have been developed. The CoARC believes that delineating the competencies and behaviors expected of site visitors will assist those already engaged in the process in discharging their responsibilities and will provide the basis for training new evaluators. Careful preparation and continuing improvement of the on-site evaluation process will enhance the precision and consistency of the entire accreditation function.

5.02-THE ON-SITE EVALUATION

As noted in the introduction, the on-site evaluation is one of the most important and critical functions of the CoARC. During one to two days at a campus, site visitors interact with all of the communities of interest, review pertinent documents, and, when appropriate, inspect program facilities.

Through this process, the CoARC ensures that each program's documentation supports the analysis and action plans related to its resources and outcomes. Further, the visit offers an opportunity to document the degree to which the program meets the *Standards*.

5.03-ON-SITE EVALUATION TEAM

QUALIFICATIONS FOR INITIAL APPOINTMENT AS A SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBER:

To be eligible to become a site visit team member, an individual must meet or exceed all the qualifications for one (1) of the three categories (A-C):

A. Academic Team Member:

1. At least three (3) years of experience as a senior academician (e.g., dean, associate dean, department chair, program director, director of clinical



education, or senior faculty member holding the rank of associate professor or higher) within the last 10 years at program(s) holding initial or continuing accreditation;

2. At least five (5) years as an NBRC-credentialed registered respiratory therapist;
3. Earned baccalaureate degree or higher from an academic institution accredited by a regional or national accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE);
4. Demonstrated active involvement in the profession of respiratory care (e.g., membership in professional organizations, credentialing, and research record);
5. Has prepared or contributed to the preparation of a self study report; and involved in a site visit or observed a site visit.

B. Physician Team Member:

1. At least three (3) years as a Board-certified, licensed physician, credentialed at or has been credentialed at one of the clinical affiliates of a CoARC-accredited program, with recognized qualifications, by training and/or experience, in the management of respiratory disease and in respiratory care practices;
2. Hold appropriate state credential to practice, or be a retired physician in good standing who is otherwise qualified as determined by the CoARC;
3. Demonstrated active involvement in the profession of respiratory care (e.g., membership in professional organizations, specialization, or research record).

C. Sleep Specialist Team Member:

1. At least three (3) years of experience as a faculty member within the last 10 years at program(s) holding initial or continuing accreditation;
2. At least five (5) years as an NBRC-credentialed registered respiratory therapist;
3. At least three (3) years as an NBRC-credentialed sleep disorders specialist (SDS) or BRPT-credentialed registered polysomnographic technologist;
4. Earned associate degree or higher from an academic institution accredited by a regional or national accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE);
5. Demonstrated active involvement in the profession of respiratory care and polysomnography (e.g., membership in professional organizations, credentialing, and research record).



D. Degree Advancement Site Team Member

1. At least three (3) years of experience as a faculty member within a degree advancement program and/or currently serves as the program director for a degree advancement program;
2. At least five (5) years as an NBRC-credentialed registered respiratory therapist; or meet the criteria as a physician team member who has experience with degree advancement education;
3. Developed a respiratory care degree advancement program in its entirety and/or has developed courses within the program;
4. Earned master's degree or higher from an academic institution accredited by a regional or national accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE).

CONTINUED QUALIFICATION AS A SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBER

Once initially qualified, the site team member must:

1. Maintain active status (see Appointment Process, p.6);
2. Complete all required retraining;
3. Maintain an updated Site Visitor Participation Agreement on file at the CoARC Executive Office upon request;
4. Provide an updated Curriculum Vitae, CoARC CV Outline, or Bio sketch on file at the CoARC Executive Office upon request;
5. Provide a current CoARC approved professional head shot upon request.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR INITIAL APPOINTMENT AS A SITE VISIT TEAM CAPTAIN:

To be eligible to become a site visit team captain, an individual must meet or exceed all the following qualifications:

1. Satisfactory completion of at least five (5) or more site visits as a team member.
 - a. Satisfactory completion is defined as receiving no unfavorable evaluations from either the team captain or the programs site visited;
2. Working knowledge of the CoARC Standards and Site Visitor Manual;
3. Recommendation by the Site Visit Committee to the CoARC for approval.

CONTINUED QUALIFICATIONS AS A SITE VISIT TEAM CAPTAIN:

Once initially qualified as a site visit team captain, the site team captain must continue to abide by all requirements for maintaining qualification as a site visit team member (see above).



APPOINTMENT:

A. Application Process

The applicant's record must be sufficient to demonstrate that s/he meets the initial qualifications, is an active and respected participant in the respiratory care education community, and is therefore well-qualified to represent the community in the accreditation process.

The CoARC accepts applications on an as-needed basis. Qualified persons wishing to be selected as site visitors must first apply (available upon request from the CoARC Executive Office). Applicants should contact Bonnie Marrs, Site Visit Coordinator (817-283-2835 ext. 102) prior to submitting the application to the CoARC Executive Office. Applicants must also submit a current (less than 6 months old) curriculum vitae (CV) or CoARC-approved CV Outline Form, 2 Letters of Reference, and a signed Site Visitor Participation Agreement.

Once the application and supporting documentation (e.g., proof of credentials, degree, etc.) has been received and reviewed by the CoARC Executive Office, the applicant will be contacted to participate in a telephone interview with either a Site Visit Committee Chair or the Executive Director. Applicants that have completed the telephone interview process will then be reviewed by the Site Visit Committee. Applicants will then be presented to the CoARC for a final decision. Applicants will be notified of the Commission's decision. If the Commission's decision is to deny the application, the notification will include the reason(s) for the denial.

B. Appointment Status

1. **Provisional Status:** "Provisional" status will be granted to a Commission approved applicant who has completed the site visitor training program. To achieve active status, a probationary site visitor must: (1) complete a minimum of 2 site visits within a 2-year period (1st site visit must be completed during the first year) with an experienced CoARC commissioner or team captain; and (2) receive satisfactory evaluations for both visits. Exceptions to the 2-year timeline must be approved by the Chair of the Site Visit Committee.



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2. **Active Site Visitors:** "Active" status will be granted to an applicant who has successfully completed the site-visitor training, signed the Site Visitor Participation Agreement, and satisfactorily completed the probationary period.

Active status for all site visitors is subject to review by the CoARC and is based upon appointment recommendations by the Site Visit Committee.

Active status requires that site visitors participate in at least an average of one site visit per year every three years (i.e., a minimum of 3 site visits in a three-year period).

Whenever there is a change in the CoARC *Standards*, all site visitors with "Active" status must complete the retraining program and submit an updated Site Visitor Participation Agreement upon completion.

Whenever an active site visitor's program receives an adverse accreditation status from CoARC, the site visitor's active status will be temporarily suspended. The site visitor's active status will be reinstated once the adverse accreditation status has been removed.

3. **Withdrawal of Appointment:** Individuals will be deleted from the roster of site visitors if they: (a) voluntarily resign; (b) fail to maintain active status, (c) fail to correct any deficiencies revealed in the evaluation process, or (d) violate the Terms of Participation for CoARC Site Visitors as described in the CoARC Site Visitor Participation Agreement.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND SENSITIVITIES:

Note: The following is a description of the general competencies expected of site visitors. It is recognized that a site visitor may not be fully proficient in all the areas described after a single site visit. The team approach utilized by the CoARC assumes a complementary integration of the site visitors' knowledge and skills in such a manner that the team, as a whole, exhibits the required competencies.

A. Knowledge

1. In-Depth Knowledge

Site visitors representing the CoARC must exhibit in-depth knowledge of:

- a. The full scope of the program's resources, operations and components as described in the self-study report prepared by the institution under evaluation;



- a. The CoARC *Standards* for the Profession of Respiratory Care;
- b. The existing procedures for accreditation and re-accreditation, including the mechanism for reconsideration;
- c. The role of Resource Assessment and Outcome Evaluation in respiratory care programs.

2. General Knowledge

Accurate and complete on-site assessment requires that the site visitors have a general knowledge of:

- a. The principles of institutional organization/administration, including:
 - (1) Institutional accreditation processes;
 - (2) Fiscal policy and planning;
 - (3) Various organizational/authority structures.
- b. Curriculum design and instructional methods, including non-traditional approaches.
- c. Psychometric theory and application including:
 - (1) Cognitive testing and evaluation;
 - (2) Performance evaluation.
- d. Contemporary standards of respiratory care, including current procedures and equipment, and the expected role of practitioners.
- e. Current learning resources related to respiratory care.

3. Sensitivities

For a site visit to be satisfactory, the site visitors must demonstrate not only the knowledge and skills identified above, but also that they are imbued with certain affective attributes. The following are some of the basic attributes and sensitivities the CoARC believes to be very important in a successful site visitor:

- a. Sensitivity to the concerns of the parties with a stake in the evaluation process, including those of
 - (1) Privacy;
 - (2) Confidentiality of data;
- b. Sensitivity to the politics of evaluation and accreditation, including
 - (1) Internal and external ramifications of adverse findings or decisions;



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- (2) Potential institutional or programmatic misuse of accreditation process;
- c. Sensitivity to the facilitative and consultative role of site visitors;
- d. Sensitivity to the limitations of the responsibility and authority of site visitors (i.e., not assuming the role of the referee or the CoARC in accreditation recommendations, etc.);
- e. Sensitivity to values and philosophies different from those personally held;
- f. Sensitivity to the potential for personal or professional bias.

TEAM CONSTITUTION/ASSIGNMENT:

- A. On-site evaluation teams shall consist of two (2) qualified members assigned by the CoARC Executive Office.
- B. Assignment Criteria:
 - 1. Site visitors should not have any real or potential conflict of interest that may affect the evaluation as outlined in the Site Visitor Participation Form or the Conflict of Interest Form. If the site visitor, the CoARC, or the program has reason to believe that a conflict of interest may exist, the site visitor will be excused and another member will be selected.
 - 2. The on-site evaluation team shall not be made up exclusively of current Commissioners.
 - 3. A current Commissioner shall not site visit the program of a current Commissioner.
 - 4. The Executive Office may decide to send a site visitor from the same state of the program. This will be determined on an individual basis and the program will be contacted to ensure it would not be considered a conflict of interest (i.e., site visitor cancellation or retirement/relocation of a site visitor).
- C. **Additional Personnel:** Observers may accompany the on-site evaluation team. The program must be notified and give prior consent. The Observers must sign the CoARC Approved Site Visitor Agreement form.



- D. **Team Captain:** The team member having the most experience in on-site program reviews will be the Team Captain. In the event that a Commissioner is part of the team, the CoARC Commissioner may serve as Team Captain.

5.04-CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All individuals associated with the CoARC, including the Commissioners, staff, site visitors, consultants and other representatives, shall maintain the highest standard of professionalism and integrity and shall conduct themselves in a manner that fosters respect for the integrity, expertise, and reliability of all.

The CoARC requires that its procedures and the actions of its site visitors and others with designated roles in the accreditation process are consistent with the need to maintain confidentiality during the review process.

Site visitors must decline any assignment in which a real or potential conflict of interest may be perceived. This includes assignment to programs in which close personal friends (or enemies), former associates, former students or relatives are employed, or institutions at which the site visitor has been employed. Site visitors should also disqualify themselves if at any time in the past they have served as a consultant to the program or the sponsor. Conflict of interest may also arise when a clear disparity in the values, philosophies, or orientations of the program and the site visitor would make an objective evaluation difficult or impossible.

5.05-CONSULTING

- A. A Site Visitor cannot consult with a program for a period of one (1) year following a site visit to that program or a program within their corporate structure.
- B. A Site Visitor can never site visit a program or corporate entity in which he/she was employed in a consulting capacity or served in the capacity of key personnel since it is a conflict of interest for a person to site visit a program or corporate entity in which he/she was formerly employed.
- C. A Site Visitor must contact the Executive Director for approval in writing before contracting with a school as a consultant to avoid any unforeseen conflict of interest. The Executive Director in consultation with the Site Visit Committee Chair will reply within 5 working days to the site visitor. If a site visitor accepted a contract that was not



approved by the CoARC, he/she would be removed as a CoARC Site Visitor and notification would be sent to the program.

- D. The Site Visitor must provide in writing the following statement that he/she must send to the program and provide a copy to the Executive Director so it will remain on file with the program and the site visitor.

“The consultation I provide to [program] are the personal opinions and recommendations of [your name]. These personal opinions and recommendations are not endorsed or approved in any way by the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) and do not represent the opinions and recommendations of the CoARC. I am not acting as an agent of the CoARC when providing consultation for [program].”

5.06-PRECAUTIONS FOR THE ON-SITE EVALUATION TEAM

- A. All information made available to site visitors for and during their evaluation is to be considered confidential. Site visitors are required to sign a confidentiality statement. Disclosure of any information obtained during the accreditation process is a breach of confidence. Team members are also privy to a number of opinions expressed by individuals during their many interviews; these too are confidential. Site visitors should refrain from discussing any aspect of an institution, even positively, with anyone other than representatives of the institution or individuals involved in the accreditation process. While site visitors are encouraged to be on the lookout for exceptional evaluation instruments or other things that may be beneficial to other programs, such material may be utilized only with the express written consent of appropriate institutional personnel.
1. Sponsors must inform the CoARC Executive Office in writing at least 10 (ten) days prior to the site visit the site visit team members will be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement or similar documents. If the site visit team is required to sign such documents while on site without notice, the CoARC reserves the right to cancel the visit and to reschedule the site visit at the sponsor’s expense.
- B. Site visitors may not engage in either personnel recruitment or job hunting activities/behavior during an on-site evaluation or until the accreditation process is complete, whichever is longer. Team members should not imply their availability for any role, temporary or permanent, at the institution being visited. In addition, they should not apply for any position at that institution for at least one year following the on-site evaluation. If such activities are observed, the uninvolved team member shall



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notify the Executive Office immediately about the potential for a gross conflict of interest.

- C. Site visitors should not accept gifts, favors, or services from any person associated with the program being evaluated. (This includes: souvenirs, key chains, pens, coffee mugs, shirts, etc.) In addition, the site visitors should pay all travel, accommodation and meal expenses. Exceptions are breakfast or lunch meetings utilized to facilitate the on-site evaluation (i.e., lunch with the Advisory Committee).
- D. Team members should not use the on-site evaluation or their report to promote personal theories, nor is there any room for process-based criticism such as the number of books in the program's section of the library, or the types of flow meters in its laboratory.
- E. Site visitors must be objective and unbiased. Team members who are overly sympathetic may leave program personnel with unwarranted optimism regarding the extent to which their program meets the *Standards*. Conversely, team members who are in awe of highly respected or well-known institution or program personnel may hesitate to point out weaknesses in the program. Excessive criticism based on personal biases may have serious adverse effects on a program. The extent, to which it meets the current CoARC Standards as written, must be the only criterion by which a program is evaluated. Site visitors who have any doubts about their ability to perform an objective evaluation of a particular program must excuse themselves.
- F. CoARC's objective in establishing a formal work dress code is to enable our site visitors to project the professional image that is in keeping with the needs of our programs to trust us. Site visitors should project the image of a trustworthy, knowledgeable professional for the programs who seek accreditation and our consultative and facilitative services. Site visitors are expected to dress in business attire during the site visit. The CoARC will issue each site visitor an identification badge to wear during the site visit to identify themselves as members of the site visit team.
- G. Team members' conduct throughout the visit must be above reproach. Behavior such as lewd comments, off-color jokes, and intolerance of any kind (gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation) are unacceptable and must be reported to the Executive Office immediately.
- H. In order to minimize disruptions during meetings and interviews, site visitors should refrain from using cell phones, pagers, and other portable electronic devices. These devices should be turned off or placed in silent mode.



- I. The sponsor must provide video-free and audio-free facilities where the site visit team can work and conduct interviews. Surveillance and/or recording of site visitors during the site visit are prohibited.

5.07-RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ON-SITE EVALUATION TEAM

GENERAL:

The responsibilities described below are listed in the chronological order in which they are discharged prior to, during, and after an on-site evaluation. Those responsibilities marked with an asterisk (*) are traditionally delegated to the team captain of the on-site evaluation team. Each member of the on-site evaluation team is expected to be thoroughly familiar with the *Standards* and the components of the accreditation process. Each member of the team is required to respect and maintain the confidential nature of all materials and activities related to the accreditation process.

SPECIFIC:

- A. **Confirmation of Participation:** Upon selection and assignment for a scheduled on-site evaluation, the team members should confirm with the Executive Office their willingness to participate.
 1. Site visitors recognizing real or apparent conflicts of interest with the program being evaluated should disqualify themselves immediately;
 2. The Executive Office should be notified at the earliest possible time of scheduling conflicts that arise after assignment and prior to the scheduled date(s) of the visit.
- B. **Self-Study Report Review:** Upon receipt of the program self-study report and any supplementary documentation, the team members should review its contents in relation to the applicable *Standards*.
 1. Where necessary, the team captain should communicate with the CoARC referee assigned to the program for clarification of self-study report contents, supplementary materials, etc;
 2. Following review of the written program documentation and Referee's Analysis, team members should communicate with each other in order to: (a) develop strategies for data collection and evaluation; (b) outline specific areas for scrutiny; and (c) identify concerns;

3. Team member(s) should communicate with the Executive Office regarding any questions or concerns not clarified by (1) or (2) above.
- C. *Visit schedule/Agenda approval:** A mutually satisfactory agenda should be arranged in consultation with the Program Director and/or the administrative officials of the program being visited.
1. The Executive Office should be contacted if changes in the length of the visit are deemed appropriate;
 2. The program personnel may be asked for recommendations of appropriate accommodations and ground transportation;
 3. When possible, the travel arrangements of the team members should be coordinated. Late arrival to or early departure from the institution reduces the efficiency and efficacy of the site visit and can adversely affect the team's ability to evaluate the educational program completely and objectively.
- D. *Preliminary Team Meeting:** Arrangements should be made for the site visitors to meet prior to the formal agenda. At this meeting, the team should compare notes, decide how they will conduct the various interviews, and discuss any other concerns.
- E. *Orientation:** At the first encounter with both program personnel and with representatives of the administration, these individuals should be clearly informed about the purposes, function, and mechanics of the on-site evaluation and its relationship to the accreditation processes of the CoARC. The Opening Scripts is to be read at this first meeting. Fears and/or anxieties should be allayed.
- F. Data Collection/Interpretation:** The team members should seek, collect, verify, and interpret all information likely to demonstrate how the program meets the applicable *Standards* by:
1. Interview of all key program personnel, support staff, students, graduates, and representation of the Advisory Committee;
 2. Review and analysis of relevant documentation and reports, particularly Resource Assessment materials;
 3. When necessary, inspection of pertinent facilities and resources.

- G. Documentation:** Since the CoARC can take no action without adequate documentation; team members must carefully document all findings on the "On-Site Review Report" forms. In addition, site visitors should be careful to answer any questions listed on the Referee's Analysis of the Self Study on Form X of the On-Site Review Report (OSRR).
1. Evidence must be provided to substantiate all *Standards* marked as 'not met'. For example, if the *Standard* marked as 'not met' is 2.14 – "physician instructional involvement", support may consist of reference to statements made by the students or staff, to admission of non-participation by the physician or physicians concerned, to the absence of any formally scheduled physician seminars, etc.;
 2. For all *Standards* marked as 'not met', reference must be made to the number/letter designation of the applicable *Standard(s)*;
 3. The On-site Review Report should be reviewed for accuracy prior to its submission. Errors should be identified and corrected. Consistency between the observations/impressions of the site team and their documentation is essential;
 4. Recommendations for the remediation of *Standards* marked as 'not met' must be provided in writing on Form X of the report, but are not to be presented by the site visit team to the program. The Referee will communicate the "Required Documentation" to the program in the Referee's Analysis of the On-Site Review Report.
- H. Consultation Conference:** After they have completed their report, the site visit team should arrange to meet with the Program Director and Director of Clinical Education to confirm their data and to discuss their conclusions. It is important that team members discover prior to the Summation Conference whether any of their conclusions have been based on faulty interpretations or incomplete information. In addition, this is an ideal time for the site visit team to function as consultants, providing informal ideas and suggestions to help the program personnel address any shortcomings in their program.
- I. Summation Conference:** Team members must provide program personnel and administration officials with an objective oral review of the findings of the team during the on-site evaluation. The Summation Conference script is read and the Summation Conference Handout is distributed.
1. Those present during the summation conference are to be documented by printing their name on Form A of the OSRR;



2. Team members should try to evaluate the degree of concurrence expressed by those present regarding the team's observations;
3. Team members should reiterate their function and review the sequence of events (including the program's right to verify the facts in the report, the ability of the program to inform the CoARC of improvements made prior to the close of the agenda at which the CoARC will consider the program, and the reconsideration mechanism, where applicable) in the accreditation process subsequent to on-site visit. Under no circumstances should the team indicate their estimate of the nature of the CoARC recommendation. None of the written report must be left with the program; and videotaping or recording of any type is prohibited.

J. Following the On-Site Evaluation: The Executive Office must be provided with an electronic copy of the "On-Site Review Report" within five (5) working days of the completion of the on-site evaluation.

1. The document is considered signed when both team members names are typed on the bottom of form A and agree with the report findings;
2. If necessary, an explanatory letter or other documentation of any specific difficulties, unusual circumstances, and/or incidents should be provided.

K. Miscellaneous Responsibilities: Team members shall:

1. Submit all travel/expense reports within two weeks of completion of the on-site evaluation (see Travel and Reimbursement section);
2. Communicate in a timely manner with the CoARC Executive Director if there is a concern about a site visitor's performance;
3. Report to the CoARC Executive Director any impropriety or unusual circumstance which could affect the validity or integrity of the on-site evaluation;
4. Complete the Site Visitor Peer Evaluation form (www.coarc.com/32.html).

5.08-ROLE OF THE REFEREE IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS



The referee is the member of the CoARC Board of Commissioners assigned to guide a program through the accreditation process. The role of the referee is that of liaison between the CoARC Board of Commissioners and the program. The referee collaborates with the CoARC Executive Office and will make recommendations to the CoARC concerning the accreditation status of the program. Furthermore, the referee is responsible for communicating with the program to clarify program matters and for determining whether program documents demonstrate compliance with the *Standards* before the recommendation to the CoARC.

The referee is responsible for maintaining a running file of all documentation on the program to which he/she is assigned as a referee from the original application date until final accreditation is granted by CoARC. Copies of all correspondence with the program must be sent to the Executive Office so that parallel files may be retained. It is the referee's responsibility to submit all documentation supporting his/her recommendations for accreditation status to the Executive Office. These documents must be forwarded to the Executive Office by the preset deadline dates or they will be retained until the next CoARC meeting. After full accreditation has been granted or accreditation withdrawn and all appeals exhausted, the referee may discard all documents.

The referee also serves as a consultant, available to help program personnel improve all aspects of the program, so that it will meet current *Standards*. The role of the referee is not simply to identify weaknesses, deficiencies, and *Standards* 'not met', but referees should try to analyze the deficiencies and make recommendations that will help the program correct the problems and achieve accreditation. The CoARC and the referee should strive to make accreditation a positive process.

However, referees must avoid delaying action on a program based upon the programs' promises or good intentions. In addition, referees must be consistent in their interpretation of the *Standards* so that programs will not be affected by biases or inconsistencies. It is the referee's responsibility to contact the team captain prior to the site visit if the referee deems such communication is necessary.

5.09-ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

The Executive Office is active throughout the on-site evaluation process. Initially, Executive Office staff assigns team members for each visit, and ensures that each site visitor receives all appropriate program materials. The Executive Office staff is available to answer questions about the self-study report and/or the on-site evaluation process. Following the on-site evaluation, the staff distributes the Program Site Visit Questionnaires (PSQs) to the program's administration and staff, and ensures that a copy of the site visit report, along with the referee's analysis of the report, is sent to the program in a timely fashion.



5.10-COLLABORATIVE VISITS

An institution may request that several of its allied health programs be evaluated at the same time. If such a request is made, the CoARC will determine if a collaborative visit is appropriate for that program and is convenient for the Commission. If a collaborative site visit is deemed suitable, the CoARC will coordinate the visit of its team to the institution with that of the representatives from the other accreditation agencies.

The Team Captain's responsibility is to review all areas common to the programs (i.e. budget, library, admission and records). Upon completion of the visit, the Team Captain will submit a written report to each team in the combined site visit, in addition to providing input on the CoARC On-Site Review Report.

5.11-FOCUSED SITE VISITS

Site visitors will receive a blank Focused On-Site Review Report, a list of citations with the Referee's Analysis, and any other documentation required from the program prior to the visit.

The referee will communicate directly with the site visitor to ensure that his/her instructions will be answered.

An On-Site Review Report must be completed for a "Focused" site visit addressing only the Standards noted by the Referee.

5.12-SATELLITE SITE VISITS

The format for a Satellite Site Visit is the same as a regular site visit. The Referee in consultation with the Executive Director will determine if an additional site visitor is needed at the site of the Satellite Program.

5.13-RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TEAM CAPTAIN

BEFORE THE VISIT:



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- A. Thoroughly review the Self-Study Report and Referee's Analysis. Communicate with the Referee if clarification is needed;
- B. Communicate with the Program Director (PD) as early as possible prior to the visit and agree on an agenda. The PD will have a copy of a sample agenda provided by the CoARC (Appendix A). This may be modified as desired by the Team Captain, so long as all communities of interest are interviewed. Time must be set aside for review of supporting documents, touring of classrooms, laboratories or other facilities (if necessary), a consultation conference with program personnel and the summation conference. The PD may also be requested to provide local transportation for the on-site evaluation team;
- C. Communicate with the other member of the team to compare notes and to facilitate travel and accommodation arrangements. The team will make its hotel reservations with the assistance of the PD. The program will have provided recommendations on the Site Visit Request form;
- D. Download the necessary forms from the CoARC web site (see www.coarc.com) or contact the CoARC Executive Office to obtain a copy of the appropriate forms;
- E. Manage the expenses of the site visit for the team in accordance with the Travel and Reimbursement policies and guidelines.

DURING THE VISIT:

- A. Arrange for a pre-visit team conference on site. This usually requires less than 15 minutes and may be done on a very casual basis. During this conference the team members should review questions or concerns that each member has garnered from the self-study report, review the Referee's Analysis, and discuss the general format of the interviews, agenda, and any other pertinent matters;
- B. Ensure that both team members participate in the interviews and that they work as a team during interviews, review of documents and at the summation conference. Ensure that prior to each interview; the interviewees are informed about the accreditation process, the importance that the CoARC places on confidentiality, the specific role of the site visitors and the lack of effect of this process on past and current students;
- C. Read the CoARC On-Site Review Opening Script at the meeting with administration;
- D. Schedule a time and place to review supporting documents. These should be convenient for the program director, as other documents may be required during the process;

- E. Schedule a meeting of the on-site evaluation team at the end of the first day both to compare notes and focus the second day's activities, and to begin work on the written report while information from the interviews is still fresh. This may be done at a time and place acceptable to both team members;
- F. Coordinate the completion of the written report and obtain signatures of both members of the team. The report may be completed while supporting documents are being reviewed, i.e., during an "executive session," or at another convenient time. It is advisable to complete at least a draft of the document prior to departure simply because the report must be in the Executive Office within five (5) working days of the completion of the visit. However, it should be noted that prior to submission, the team's report may not be changed except by mutual agreement of the site visitors;
- All citations must be fully documented.
 - The Site Visit Team should review the Referee's Instructions to the Site Visitors on form X of the Referee's Analysis of Self Study. Then the Site Visit Team should respond to the Referee on form X of the On-site Review Report. Submit the On-Site Review Report electronically;
- G. Responsible for training and evaluating probationary site visitors.

5.14-THE CONSULTATION CONFERENCE

The on-site evaluation schedule must allow time for a meeting with the program's personnel (PD and DCE) after all data have been evaluated and discussed by the team. At this conference the program personnel should be told, in detail, not only about apparent problem areas, but also should be congratulated for any strengths in the program. Site visitors should use this time both to corroborate the data that they will be using to support their conclusions and recommendations and to function as consultants. The site visitors should suggest various ways in which the above noted problems can be addressed. During this conference, team members should be particularly careful to behave in a professional manner.

Site visitors are both gathering information and serving as a resource for the program's personnel. To perform these roles well, they must be impartial but supportive, polite, non-judgmental (especially within the hearing distance of anyone associated with the program), objective, observant, helpful, and friendly. This is not to imply that the team should be unhelpful or unprofessional at other times, but that special care should be taken at this time.



5.15-THE SUMMATION CONFERENCE

- A. At the summation conference, any interested member of the various communities of interest should have the opportunity to hear a brief summary of the report the site visitors will send to the CoARC;
- B. While the summation conference may take any form desired by the team captain, inclusion of both team members is advisable as it connotes unity;
- C. Read the On-Site Review Summation Conference Script and distribute the On-Site Review Summation Conference Handout to program administration;
- D. The report must include Strengths of the program (Form C) as well as *Standards 'not met'* (Forms B and F). Suggestions for Enhancement (Form D) and Additional Comments (Form E) must also be discussed. **Do NOT** discuss possible remedies (Form X);
- E. Document those present by printing the names and title of all those present at the summation conference on Form A;
- F. **Do NOT** leave any part of the report with the program; and videotaping or recording of any type is prohibited.

5.16-THE WRITTEN REPORT

The On-Site Review Report (OSRR) is an important and unique data source for the CoARC in its evaluation process. In their report, site visitors must provide information that will give the referee insight into the program and the context in which it operates. Plain statements of fact, much of which is available elsewhere, do not help the CoARC to make an informed judgment about the program's quality.

The OSRR should complement and validate, not duplicate, the self-study report submitted by the program. The combined information should provide the CoARC with a comprehensive picture of the educational program's activities as they relate to both the program's objectives and the CoARC's evaluative criteria (*Standards*). In addition, the team's report should address specifically any concerns expressed by the referee in his/her analysis.

The report should be concise but must provide evidence, from objective sources, of the program's quality relative to the *Standards*. In addition, the report should be free from personal philosophical iterations and from convoluted terminology.



A helpful report will describe both problems and strengths that were not obvious in the self-study report. In addition, it should point out any misinformation or misunderstandings that may have been derived from the self-study report, and the extent to which the program has responded to the referee's concerns. Shortcomings and strengths should be described in the appropriate section of the report. It is not necessary to discuss aspects of the program in which criteria have been met unless there is something unusual which merits the referee's attention. For deficiencies, there must be possible remedies provided by the site visitors to the referee on Form X (do not present these specific possible remedies to the program).

The report should be objective and analytical. On the other hand, because a copy of the report will be sent to the program, the report should not be vindictive or pejorative or dwell on personalities, nor should it contain unnecessary asides. Look in the instructions attached to the report form for specific guidelines for completing the report in such a way as to give the CoARC an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

If the program wishes to supplement or refute the report, the team should direct the program director to send materials, fully identified, paginated, and collated, to the CoARC in accordance with the directions from the Executive Office. Please do not interpret this to mean that all materials normally left on site should be sent (exams, surveys, etc.)

The report should be completed by the team captain and forwarded electronically to the CoARC Executive Office as soon as possible after the visit, but definitely within five (5) working days of the visit. Note that site team expenses will not be reimbursed until a complete, legible copy of the report arrives in the Executive Office. A copy of the report will then be forwarded to the referee for his/her evaluation of the conclusions and recommendations. The referee will then send a copy of the report to the program and direct the program to respond in the manner s/he deems appropriate. At this time, the program will also be given opportunity to respond to any inaccuracies of fact and to comment on the team's interpretation of information gathered on site.

5.17-ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF REPORT

A copy of the On-Site Review Report is available on the CoARC web site at www.coarc.com. The forms are provided to assist in preparing a professional document, as well as to expedite the report writing process. The on-site review report should be submitted electronically to the Executive Office, and by typing in the names of each team member it confirms both team members agree with the report findings. If there are questions, the Executive Office staff should be contacted. On-site review is essential to the accreditation process and the CoARC would like to make the generation of the report as convenient and user-friendly as possible.



5.18-TRAVEL AND REIMBURSEMENT

Policy: Site visitors will be reimbursed for the most economical usual and customary expenses directly related to fulfilling the responsibilities associated with conducting an on-site review as allowed by IRS regulations.

Procedure: The email and package of materials you receive from the Executive Office for each on-site review will include a memorandum with the instructions for making your travel plans. Travel/expense reports (www.coarc.com/32.html) should be completed and submitted within two (2) weeks of completion of the on-site review visit and must include: name, date, origin, destination and purpose of the trip, and the amount of each expense categorized under the appropriate Expense Report line item with a supplemental description and related itemized receipt.

Guidelines:

1. As a CoARC Site Visitor, you are required to schedule airfare with the CoARC Travel Agent. (The charges can be billed directly to CoARC or they can be applied to your personal credit card for reimbursement upon receipt being submitted to the Executive Office.)
2. You should make travel arrangements as early in advance as possible. Please confirm airline reservations at least 24 hours before leaving to confirm the flight schedule. In some incidents, flights have been changed or cancelled, and not all passengers were notified;
3. Site Visitors are expected to follow through with the reservations and flight arrangements that have been approved prior to the site visit. If the flight was rescheduled for personal reasons, the site visitor will be responsible for any additional fees. If a site visitor has been preapproved to stay an extra night due to limited flights, and the site visitor is able to make an earlier flight to prevent an extra night of hotel cost and meals, then the program should be responsible for the change in flight fee. All changes related to site visit expenses (airfare, hotel, etc.) must be preapproved by the Assistant Executive Director/Director of Finance and Operations;
4. The “reimbursable expense period” is considered to start when the site visitor would reasonably leave home to travel to the program and ends when the site visitor would reasonably arrive back home. *There are circumstances where traveling earlier or the day after a site visit the site visit would result in cost savings. Those situations must be in writing and approved by the Executive Director ahead of time;*



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- a. Personal travel expenses are not reimbursable. Expenses associated with personal travel before, during, or after the site visit are not reimbursable. If personal travel occurs within the “reimbursable expense period”, site visit expenses will be reimbursed based on the actual usual and customary expenses or on the expenses as if the personal travel had not occurred, whichever is less;
 - b. If a trip or flight arrangements, are extended longer for personal reasons the site visitor is responsible for the difference and *must have* prior approval by the Assistant Executive Director/Director of Finance and Operations;
 - c. Expenses associated with a non-visitor traveling companion are not reimbursed;
 - d. Airport parking is reimbursed only for the days within the customary “reimbursable expense period”, exclusive of personal time away. Individuals should select the lowest cost option;
5. When scheduling the site visit, the CoARC will obtain recommendations for hotels from the program. The Team captain will be responsible for selecting the hotel and making the reservations for the team (with the assistance from the Program Director). Some programs may be able to secure hotel reservations at a lower rate not available to the site visitors, in which case the program may make the reservation, but the visitors must arrange to pay for the expenses at the time of check in. If the lower rate is ONLY available if paid directly by the program, then the team should allow the program to pay that expense, but must note that on the expense report. The Executive Office will reconcile the expenses with the program. Small expenses, such as lunch during the visit, may be paid directly by the program. If prepaying for hotel rooms, the site visit team must make sure the reservations are refundable as last-minute cancellations can occur.
6. A site visitor paying expenses for program personnel (e.g., dinner) is not reimbursable;
7. Itemized receipts must be submitted to the Executive Office as part of the site visitor expense report within 2 weeks after the site visit. **Itemized receipts are required for all expenses (except tips) before reimbursement will be made;**
- a. In the case of meals, the CoARC will reimburse up to an average of \$50 per day per visitor for reported expenses with itemized receipts. The CoARC **does not reimburse for alcohol**. If one of the visitors pays for the meals of both visitors, that notation must be made on the back of the receipt. Any exceptions must be approved by the Executive Director;
 - b. In the case of vehicle mileage, the CoARC reimburses at the current IRS rate per mile. The cost should **not** exceed the lowest available airfare, plus necessary ground transportation. The comparison cost must be submitted in writing and approved by the Assistant Executive Director/Director of Finance and Operations at the CoARC;
8. A rental car is reimbursed only if it is less expensive than other means of ground transportation. Only rental car costs directly related to the site visit during the “reimbursable expense period” are reimbursable (e.g., gasoline, parking). The Team



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Captain should attempt to coordinate the team's arrival and departure so as to require the use of only a single car rental, if needed. Rental cars must be refueled prior to return. (CoARC has set up a contract with Enterprise for a set rate);

9. Special accommodations: any site visitor requiring special accommodations that would incur additional expenses must present those needs to the Executive Director for prior approval. Occasionally, circumstances beyond the control of the site visitor (e.g., inclement weather, canceled flight) will require the site visitor to incur additional expense. The site visitor should use his/her best judgment in arranging suitable alternatives in a cost-effective manner. Where practical, the site visitor may consult with the Executive Director for guidance;
10. **Non-Reimbursable** Expenditures are: alcoholic beverages, fees for upgrades of air, hotel, and auto costs, entertainment, personal travel, spousal/family expenses, limousine travel, credit card interest charges, laundry services, traffic citations, auto repairs, in-room movies, costs for use of hotel gym, personal phone calls, massage, sauna, or mini-fridge, or valet parking unless there is no "self-park" or self-parking is an unsafe option;
11. Exceptions to this policy must have the prior written approval of the Executive Director of the CoARC;
12. The CoARC will provide the program a breakdown of expenses on each site visitor. Individual receipts (copies or originals) are not provided.

Note: the Team Captain is responsible for the overall expense and cost-effectiveness of the site visit. The site visitors should exercise discretion and good business judgment with respect to those expenses associated with representing the CoARC.

5.19-CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality statements are read at the beginning of the on-site review as part of the Opening Script and again at the end of the review as part of the Summation Script.

5.20-EVALUATION OF TEAM MEMBERS

Evaluation of team members by each other as well as by individuals from the institution being assessed is an integral part of the CoARC's accreditation process. The team's peer evaluation form asks questions about the preparation, communication, and function of each site visitor. Additionally, the program director and the senior officer of the institution who participated in the on-site evaluation are each given the opportunity to evaluate the site visitors both as a team and as individuals.

5.21-DELAY OR ADVANCEMENT OF THE ON-SITE EVALUATION

The program director of the program(s) may formally request a delay or rescheduling of a visit for continuing accreditation.

The CoARC Executive Director makes the decision to grant or deny the request based on the reasons(s) provided. The time frame considered for a visit delay is three months (one accreditation cycle).

Delays are not granted to programs:

- Currently on warning status or
- Having outstanding Progress Reports requested by the CoARC.

If the request for a delay is made after the continuing accreditation application materials have been sent out to programs, a processing fee is applicable.

If a program does not submit the Progress Report by the date requested, the program will be presented for action to the CoARC at the next scheduled meeting.

5.22-CANCELLATIONS AND RESCHEDULING OF AN ON-SITE EVALUATION

The Program Director and Director of Clinical Education as well as a representative of the sponsor's administration must be present during the On-Site visit, and all required documentation must be readily available for review by the On-Site Visitors. If all these individuals and all required documentation are not available, the On-Site review team will consult with the CoARC Executive office and the program's referee to determine whether the on-Site should be cancelled and rescheduled for a later date.

Should cancellation of the On-Site Review visit be based on any of these conditions, the program will be responsible for a Rescheduling Fee as well as any costs incurred by the CoARC related to rescheduling the visit.

- A. Both the Program Director and Director of Clinical Education must be in attendance and available to the on-site review team throughout the visit. If either of them is unable to attend the entire evaluation due to unanticipated circumstances, the on-site visit may be rescheduled for a later date at the discretion of the CoARC Executive Office and the Referee. Should it be determined, in spite of such absence, that the site visit should



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proceed, the team will complete as much of the evaluation as possible during the visit. Should it be deemed necessary by the Executive Office/Referee, a focused site visit will then be scheduled at a later date.

- B. The Medical Director is also requested to be available for a face-to-face interview with the On-site Review Team, but in special circumstances (i.e. out of town or sudden emergency), a site visit may continue as scheduled if the medical director agrees to a conference call interview prior to or during the visit with the site visit team captain and/or the team member. The program director will be responsible for assisting the team captain with arranging the conference call.
- C. At least one representative from the sponsor's administration is also required to attend the on-site review.

(Note: Starting January 1, 2014, if a program cancels a scheduled On-Site Review, the program will be charged a Rescheduling/Cancellation Fee; in addition to any cost that may have incurred by the CoARC in association with the upcoming scheduled visit. (See Fee Schedule at www.coarc.com/28.html))

5.23-LIST OF SITE VISIT FORMS

For the most current version of any form, please visit www.coarc.com

- A. Sample Agenda: On-Site Review
 - Respiratory Care Standard Provisional Site Visit Agenda
 - Respiratory Care Standard-Two Day Site Visit Agenda
 - Respiratory Care Program with Sleep Specialist Program Option
 - Sleep Specialist Program Option Focused Site Visit Agenda
 - Respiratory Care Standard-One Day Focus Site Visit Agenda
- B. General Guidelines for Site Visitors
- C. Responsibilities of the Site Visit Team Captain
- D. Site Visit Interview Guide
- E. Evidence List to Be Made Available for the On-Site Review Team
- F. Post Site Visit Evaluation Forms
 - Peer Evaluation
 - Post Site Visit Questionnaire (PSQ)
- G. Expense Report
- H. On-Site Review Reports



- On-Site Review Report for PSSR
 - On-Site Review Report for ISSR
 - On-Site Review Report for CSSR
 - On-Site Review Report for SSPO
- I. On-Site Review Scripts
- Opening
 - Summation with Handout
- J. Referee's Analysis of the Self Study Report
- K. Criteria/Forms for Initial & Reappointment as a Site visitor
- Criteria
 - Application
 - CoARC Site Visitor Participation Agreement
 - CoARC Conflict of Interest Agreement