

This correspondence is intended to provide guidance to programs impacted by the spread of COVID-19. The Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) recognizes that programs may need to employ different approaches and strategies that may be influenced by individual institutional policies and procedures; local, state and federal regulations; and possible variations in the spread of COVID-19. CoARC is providing the following guidance to help programs remain compliant with CoARC's Accreditation Standards and Policies during this emergency. Guidance provided by the United States Department of Education (USDE) on March 5, 2020 allows accrediting agencies some flexibility in addressing these circumstances. Accordingly, if face-to-face instruction and learning activities are disrupted by campus closures, distance education may be utilized to continue instruction and learning activities. In this situation, the program will not be required to obtain CoARC approval for temporary use of distance education.

The CoARC understands that programs may need additional time to complete programmatic accreditation requirements (for example, self-study reports, progress reports, etc.). Please contact Shelley Christensen for requests for extension. The CoARC has suspended all scheduled site visits through May 15th. The CoARC will contact affected programs to reschedule these visits.

Given the serious risk of spread of COVID-19, the CoARC encourages all programs to develop a contingency plan that will ensure the safety of students, faculty, and patients. For safety of students and faculty, institutional and local public health and medical guidelines and policies should be followed.

Programs should contact their clinical affiliates to be apprised of changes in facility protocols that would affect students' clinical education. If needed, the program may consider make up options should students miss clinical time or utilize alternate sites if clinical facilities are unable to accept students due to COVID19. It is up to each program to determine when and how those experiences take place and to ensure that the scope of these alternatives are sufficient for program graduates to meet state licensure and institutional requirements.

Should program operations close for more than one week, the program must notify the CoARC using the following link: <https://forms.gle/j85gwn18NEkEwubn7>.

As this is an evolving situation, additional guidelines will be provided as deemed appropriate. For questions regarding this communication, please contact Tom Smalling, Chief Executive Officer, at 817283-2835 ext. 101 or by email at tom@coarc.com.

COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION FOR RESPIRATORY CARE

CoARC Communication – COVID-19 Response 3/14/20

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The following includes responses to Frequently Asked Questions related to this emergency.

Q: What do I do about an upcoming site visit if my campus is closed?

A: The CoARC has suspended all scheduled site visits through May 15th. The CoARC will contact affected programs to reschedule these visits.

Q: Can programs modify, reduce or waive educational requirements during this situation? A: Yes. However, the program must ensure that the duration of the learning experiences (didactic, laboratory, and clinical) are sufficient for students to acquire the knowledge and competencies specified in the applicable Standards. In addition, programs should check with their state licensing agency to determine what potential impact any modifications, reduction, or waivers may have on graduates' eligibility for state licensure.

Q: Are students required to make up the missing hours?

A: This is at the discretion of the program and institution. The sponsoring institution is ultimately responsible for the provision of the didactic and laboratory instruction, as well as the clinical experience consistent with the applicable Standards.

Q: Can programs utilize simulation to meet the required clinical hours?

A: During this emergency, programs have the flexibility to use whatever methods they deem appropriate to meet the educational requirements and competencies.

Q: Do faculty and advisory committee meetings need to be face-to-face? A: Faculty and advisory committee meetings can be conducted by web or videoconference as long as minutes are recorded and attendance can be verified. Q: Will this emergency impact our on-time graduation? A: The CoARC eliminated the On-Time Graduation outcome in December 2019; therefore, this is no longer relevant.

Q: Will programs be accountable for meeting all CoARC outcomes and thresholds in the Annual Reports of Current Status that include cohorts from 2020?

A: Yes.

Q: Do I need to complete a Substantive Change Form to use distance learning technologies during this emergency? A: Substantive change applications are not needed if distance learning technologies are only used during this emergency. If these changes are going to be permanent, the program must submit an Application for Substantive Change available at www.coarc.com