



ACCREDITATION REVIEW COUNCIL ON EDUCATION IN SURGICAL TECHNOLOGY AND SURGICAL ASSISTING (ARC/STSA)

ACCREDITATION PROCESS, PROCEDURE AND TIMELINE

I. Initiating the Accreditation Process (Approximately 8 – 12 months*)

- A. Contact the ARC/STSA office before or upon institutional accreditor approval of a new surgical technology or surgical assisting program start.
- B. Programs applying for accreditation for the first time or renewing accreditation that has expired will apply for Initial Accreditation.
 - 1. The ARC/STSA will schedule a mutually agreed upon On-Site Evaluation date based on schedule and visiting team availability and the program's cohort completion date. An On-Site Evaluation will be scheduled when the students have completed a minimum of ½ of the required clinical component for program completion. The program will order a copy of the 'Accreditation Packet' [see ARC/STSA Schedule of Fees (www.arcstsa.org) for cost of packet] to begin the 'Self-Study Application'.
- C. Submission of the Accreditation Application
 - 1. The 'Self-Study Application' should be received in the ARC/STSA office at least 4 months but no greater than 6 months prior to the On-Site Evaluation and should include:
 - a. Completed Self-Study Report
 - b. \$2000.00 Initial Application Fee
 - c. \$3000.00 Initial On-Site Evaluation Fee (\$5000.00 total) by institutional check or money order
 - d. CAAHEP Request for Accreditation Services [RAS] form available online at www.caahep.org
 - e. On-Site Evaluation schedule

II. On-Site Evaluation and Program Approval (Approximately 8 to 12 months*)

- A. The On-Site Evaluation will be performed over approximately 1½ to 2 days. On-Site Evaluations (site visits) for all program applicants for Initial Accreditation cannot occur before at least one cohort/class has completed a minimum of ½ of the required clinical component for program completion and not before the program has provided evidence of institutional accreditation.
- B. The program is informed via letter of the On-Site Evaluators' findings and/or concerns found during the On-Site Evaluation (Approximately 6-8 weeks*).
- C. The program is given approximately 6 to 8 weeks to submit a formal response to the findings letter. The accreditation application is complete upon the receipt of the program's response and any additional documentation requested at the ARC/STSA office.
- D. The program's application is forwarded to the next SASA (SA programs), ARC/STSA and CAAHEP board meetings.
 - 1. The ARC/STSA board (and its subcommittee SASA) meets twice a year in March and September.
 - a. On-Site Evaluations performed in the months of November–April are generally forwarded to the September ARC/STSA meeting, if the program's application is complete.
 - b. On-Site Evaluations performed in the months of May–October are generally forwarded to the March meeting, if the program's application is complete.
 - 2. Applications are forwarded by ARC/STSA to the CAAHEP board twice a year in May and November.
 - a. On-Site Evaluations performed in the months of November–April are generally forwarded to the November CAAHEP meeting, if the program's application is complete.
 - b. On-Site Evaluations performed in the months of May–October are generally forwarded to the May CAAHEP meeting, if the program's application is complete.
 - 3. Upon the completion of a CAAHEP meeting, each program will be notified of CAAHEP's decision in writing approximately 2 weeks following the meeting.

III. Initial Accreditation (Initial accreditation expires in 5 years)

- A. Once a program has received Initial accreditation, it will begin submitting an Annual Report that is focused on the program outcomes and reflects the ARC/STSA mandated academic year [AY] 8/1/xxxx-7/31/xxxx.
- B. Each program should use the standardized ARC/STSA Outcomes Tracking Tool, Graduate Survey, and Employer Survey forms to collect applicable outcomes data for reporting on Annual Reports. The program should also administer and report outcomes assessment exam results using an ARC/STSA *approved* outcomes program assessment exam.
- C. Annual Reports are due by May 1st of every year.

1. Any deficiencies reported must include the program's assessment and corrective plan of action to remedy the deficiencies satisfactory to the ARC/STSA. Plans of action are developed and submitted using the standardized ARC/STSA Plan of Action Form.
 2. Non-compliant programs begin a dialogue with the ARC/STSA as part of the "Due Process" system.
- D. After receipt of two to three Annual Reports and a required Program Review Report (PRR), approximately 2 to 3 years after Initial Accreditation is awarded, the ARC/STSA will determine if the program is in continued compliance with the *Standards*.
1. If the program is determined to be in compliance, then the ARC/STSA will forward a recommendation for Continuing Accreditation to CAAHEP.
 2. If the program is determined to be in non-compliance, then the ARC/STSA will require the submission of additional documentation that supports compliance or may require the program to undergo Consultative/Comprehensive On-Site Evaluation.

IV. Continuing Accreditation (No expiration)

- A. After a program receives Continuing accreditation, it will continue to submit Annual Reports under the schedule listed above. Random/Continuing On-Site Evaluations will be performed at least once within a ten-year period. These evaluations will be performed in three different formats. The following is a basic synopsis of these processes:
1. Random/Continuing On-Site Evaluation (1 day)
 - a. Will occur at least once in a 10-year period
 - b. Focus is on the verification of Annual Report data
 - c. Approximately 4-8 weeks' notice will be given to programs in advance of the visit
 - d. No Self-Study report will be required, unless previously asked for by the ARC/STSA
 - e. The cost of the On-Site Evaluation is included in the program's Annual Fee
 - f. CAAHEP's award of Continuing Accreditation re-sets the 10-year timeline for Random/Continuing On-Site Evaluation
 2. Focused On-Site Evaluation (1 day)
 - a. Triggered by programs reporting two (2) or more outcomes below established thresholds on three (3) or more Annual Reports
 - b. Focuses on outcomes compliance and program changes that will focus the program's efforts towards achievement of ARC/STSA-established thresholds
 - c. Approximately 4-8 weeks' notice will be given to programs in advance of the visit
 - d. Annual Reports, Progress Reports, and other documentation submitted to the ARC/STSA are used as the basis for the On-Site Evaluation. No Self-Study report will be required
 - e. The cost of the On-Site Evaluation is indicated on the current ARC/STSA Schedule of Fees (available online at www.arcstsa.org)
 - f. A Focused On-Site Evaluation can lead to a recommendation for Accreditation Probation or other adverse action
 - g. A Focused On-Site Evaluation does not re-set the CAAHEP 10-year timeline. Programs that undergo a Focused On-Site Evaluation are also required to undergo a Random/Continuing On-Site Evaluation within a 10-year timeline from the last CAAHEP Continuing Accreditation award.
 3. Consultative/Comprehensive On-Site Evaluation (2 days)
 - a. Triggered by consistent non-compliance with the *Standards*
 - b. Focuses on areas of non-compliance with the *Standards* and assessment of compliance with all CAAHEP *Standards*
 - c. This On-Site Evaluation will be scheduled based on a mutually agreed upon date
 - d. No Self-Study report will be required, unless requested by the ARC/STSA
 - e. The cost of the On-Site Evaluation is indicated on the current ARC/STSA Schedule of Fees (available online at www.arcstsa.org)
 - f. A Consultative/Comprehensive On-Site Evaluation can lead to a recommendation for Accreditation Probation or other adverse action
 - g. CAAHEP's award of Continuing Accreditation based on a Consultative/Comprehensive On-Site Evaluation re-sets the 10-year timeline for Random/Continuing On-Site Evaluation
- B. Programs in Continuing Accreditation will continue to progress through the accreditation cycle until a decision is made by the program to voluntarily withdraw or the ARC/STSA recommends Withdrawal of accreditation.

**Timelines are broad estimates and provided as a courtesy only. The actual process of Initial Accreditation does not begin until the program has submitted its Self-Study application, all applicable fees have been paid, and an On-Site Evaluation date is confirmed. It is important to understand that each program progresses through the accreditation application process at an appropriate pace primarily based on the overall readiness of the program and the quality of the Self-Study Application submitted, and to a lesser degree the availability of On-Site Evaluators, and the schedule of the ARC/STSA and CAAHEP Board of Directors meetings, as noted. The time it takes a program to progress through the accreditation process does not specifically reflect on the qualities of the program.*