



# ACCREDITATION MANUAL

## Section I General Information



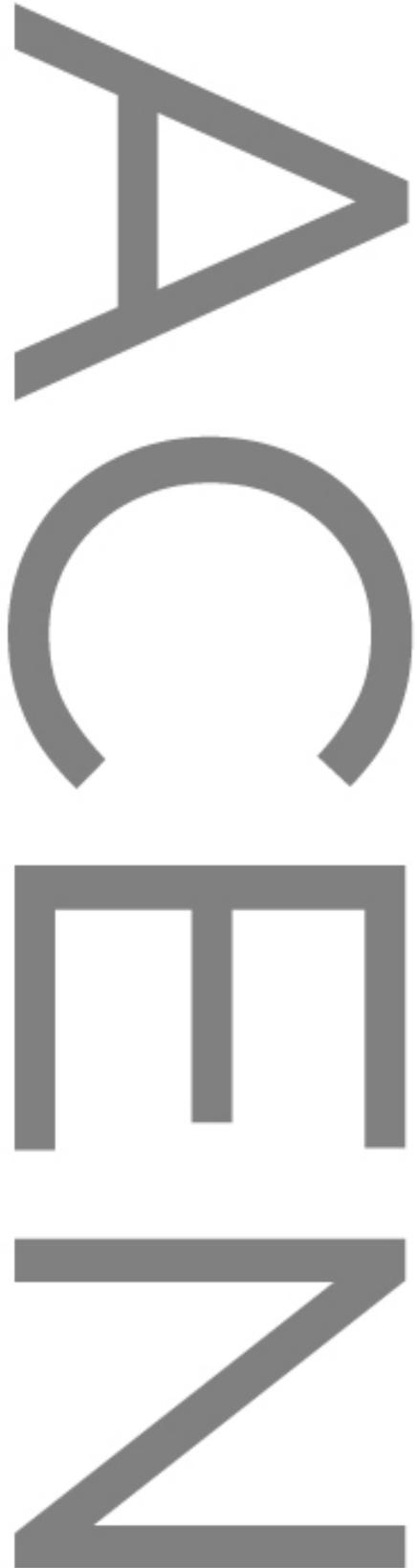
# **ACEN Accreditation Manual**

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

A publication of the  
Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing

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## INTRODUCTION

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### MISSION

The Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) supports the interests of nursing education, nursing practice, and the public by the functions of accreditation. Accreditation is a voluntary, peer-review, self-regulatory process by which non-governmental associations recognize educational institutions or programs that have been found to meet or exceed standards and criteria for educational quality. Accreditation also assists in the further improvement of the institutions or programs as related to resources invested, processes followed, and results achieved. The monitoring of certificate, diploma, and degree offerings is tied closely to state examination and licensing rules and to the oversight of preparation for work in the profession.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the ACEN is to provide specialized accreditation for all types of nursing programs, including clinical doctorate/DNP specialist certificate, master's/post-master's certificate, baccalaureate, associate, diploma, and practical nursing programs. The ACEN accredits nursing programs in secondary, postsecondary, and hospital-based governing organizations that offer certificates, diplomas, or degrees.

### GOALS

The goals of the ACEN are to:

- Promulgate a common core of standards and criteria for the accreditation of nursing education programs.
- Strengthen educational quality through assistance to associated nursing education units by evaluation processes, functions, publications, and research.
- Advocate self-regulation in nursing education.
- Promote peer review.
- Foster educational equity, access, opportunity, mobility, and preparation for employment based upon type of nursing education.
- Serve as gatekeeper to Title IV-HEA programs for which the ACEN is the accrediting agency. The ACEN serves as the Title IV gatekeeper for some practical nursing and some hospital-based nursing programs eligible to participate in programs administered by the United States Department of Education or other federal agencies.

### RECOGNITION

The ACEN is recognized as the accrediting body for all types of nursing education by:

- United States Department of Education (USDE)
- Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)

National, regional, and specialized accreditors that oversee federal funding eligibility must be reviewed by the USDE to ensure that the accrediting body meets specific standards established by Congress. The Secretary of Education for the USDE is charged with review of accrediting bodies and providing recognition to those accrediting agencies that meet the Secretary of Education's criteria. Students in institutions or programs accredited by a USDE-recognized agency may be eligible for federal financial aid assistance and other needed resources.

## **BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION**

ACEN accreditation is a voluntary peer-review process intended to enhance quality improvement in nursing education. Accreditation:

- Provides recognition that the program or school has been evaluated, and periodically re-evaluated, by a qualified independent group of peers and demonstrates the extent to which the program meets appropriate educational purposes and standards of educational quality specific to nursing education.
- Fosters ongoing, self-examination, re-evaluation, and focus on the future.
- Heightens faculty members' and administrators' awareness and responsiveness to areas needing improvement.
- Aids in student recruitment.
- Provides useful information for students' career and education decision making.
- Enables student eligibility for funding support from federal and state agencies, and foundations.
- Is required by many nursing programs for admission to the graduate level.
- Is required by some state regulatory agencies.
- Is required by many employers.
- Assists employers seeking graduates who are competent practitioners.
- Offers professional development opportunity and validation for faculty.
- Facilitates the transfer of credit using the following considerations:
  - the educational quality of the institution from which the student transfers;
  - the comparability of the nature, content, and level of credit earned from the programs offered by the receiving college or program; and
  - the appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned from the programs offered by the receiving college in light of the student's educational goals.

## **PHILOSOPHY OF ACCREDITATION**

The ACEN accreditation program is founded on the belief that specialized accreditation contributes to the centrality of nursing for the public good and provides for the maintenance and enhancement of educational quality through continuous self-assessment, planning, and improvement. Accreditation indicates to the general public and to the educational community that a nursing program has clear and appropriate educational objectives and is working to achieve these objectives. Emphasis is placed upon the total nursing program and its compliance with established standards and criteria in the context of its mission/philosophy as well as current and future nursing practice.

Accrediting agencies share responsibility with faculty and clinicians for the development of accreditation standards and criteria, policies, and procedures for participation in accreditation and review of accreditation processes. The ACEN supports the continuation and strengthening of voluntary specialized accreditation by peers as a principal means of public accountability and ongoing improvement. Specialized accreditation sets standards for programs and ensures, through the self-study process and accreditation review, the promotion of effective education and program improvement. Because the nursing education unit analysis is closely related to the governing organization itself, ACEN activities will, when possible, be coordinated with those of other officially recognized regional and specialized accrediting bodies.

Standards and criteria for accreditation, materials that document compliance, policies, and procedures are based on principles widely accepted and tested in general and professional education. All those involved in the process must be aware of current developments in education and nursing; the effectiveness of the current standards, criteria, policies, and procedures; and the evidence of need for change. A systematic ongoing review of all components of the accreditation process is essential to ensure an up-to-date, reliable, and valid accrediting process.

## **ACEN AND THE HISTORY OF NURSING ACCREDITATION**

- 1893 The American Society of Superintendents of Training Schools for Nurses, forerunner of the National League for Nursing, was founded for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a universal standard of training for nurses.
- 1917 The National League of Nursing Education published *Standard of Curriculum for Schools of Nursing*.
- 1920 Accrediting activities in nursing education were begun by many different organizations.
- 1937 The National League of Nursing Education published *A Curriculum Guide for Schools of Nursing*, the last of its type by the organization.
- 1938 The National League of Nursing Education initiated accreditation for programs of nursing education for registered nursing.
- 1949 The National Nursing Accrediting Service was formed for the purpose of unifying accreditation activities in nursing. It was discontinued in 1952 when accreditation activities were consolidated under the National League for Nursing (NLN).
- 1952 The USDE recognized the NLN (later NLNAC and then ACEN) and included it on the initial list of recognized accrediting agencies.
- 1958 The NLN Board of Directors established a policy charging each educational council with the responsibility for developing its own accreditation program. The program was conducted through the three (3) NLN membership units: the Council of Baccalaureate and Higher Degree Programs; the Council of Diploma and Associate Degree Programs (the Diploma and Associate Degree Programs separated into two (2) councils in 1965); and the Council of Practical Nursing Programs (1966). The accreditation program and services were administered by NLN professional staff.
- 1964 Federal funding for nursing education under the Nurse Training Act was contingent upon the compliance of schools of nursing with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- 1977 The Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) recognized the NLN Accreditation Program, which later became the Council for Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA).

- 1991 Outcome criteria were incorporated into Standards and Criteria for all accredited programs.
- 1995 The NLN Board of Governors approved the recommendation of the NLN Accreditation Committee to institute core Standards and Criteria.
- 1996 The NLN Board of Governors approved establishment of an independent entity within the organization to be known as the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC).
- 1997 The NLNAC, now the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), began operations with sole authority and accountability for carrying out the responsibilities inherent in the accreditation processes.
- Fifteen (15) Commissioners were appointed: nine (9) nurse educators, three (3) nursing service representatives, and three (3) public members. The Commissioners assumed responsibilities for the management, financial decisions, policy-making, and general administration of the NLNAC.
- The peer review process was strengthened with the formation of program-specific Evaluation Review Panels.
- 1998 The NLNAC continued collaborative work with specialty organizations to strengthen application of standards for advanced practice nursing programs. Advanced practice nurses were invited to serve as clinicians on the site visit teams.
- 1999 The NLNAC core Standards and Criteria were revised.
- The Secretary of Education, USDE, renewed NLNAC recognition as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for nursing education programs and schools, both postsecondary and higher degree, which offer a certificate, diploma, or a recognized professional degree including master's, baccalaureate, associate, diploma, and practical nursing programs in the United States and its territories. *Title IV Note: Only diploma programs and practical nursing programs not located in a regionally accredited college or university may use accreditation by this agency to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV program.*
- 2000 The NLNAC first accredited international programs.
- 2001 The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) renewed NLNAC recognition as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for nursing education.
- The NLNAC was incorporated as a subsidiary of the NLN.
- 2002 The NLNAC core Standards and Criteria were revised.
- The Secretary of Education, USDE, renewed NLNAC recognition as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for nursing education programs and schools, both postsecondary and higher degree, which offer a certificate, diploma, or a recognized professional degree including master's, baccalaureate, associate, diploma, and practical nursing programs in the United States and its territories. *Title IV Note: Only diploma programs and practical nursing programs not located in a regionally accredited college or university may use accreditation by this agency to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV program.*
- 2005 The NLNAC core Standards and Criteria were revised.
- The NLNAC first accredited Post-Master's Certificates (PMC).

- The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) renewed NLNAC recognition as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for nursing education.
- 2006 The Secretary of Education, USDE, renewed NLNAC recognition as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for nursing education programs and schools, both postsecondary and higher degree, which offer a certificate, diploma, or a recognized professional degree including master's, baccalaureate, associate, diploma, and practical nursing programs in the United States and its territories. *Title IV Note: Only diploma programs and practical nursing programs not located in a regionally accredited college or university may use accreditation by this agency to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV program.*
- 2007 The NLNAC Standards and Criteria for Clinical Doctorate approved by the NLNAC Board of Commissioners.
- 2008 The NLNAC core Standards and Criteria were revised.
- The Secretary of Education, USDE, granted expansion of scope of recognition as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for nursing education programs and schools, both postsecondary and higher degree, which offer a certificate, diploma, or a recognized professional degree including master's, baccalaureate, associate, diploma, and practical nursing programs in the United States and its territories, including those offered via distance education.
- 2009 The NLNAC first accredited Clinical Doctorate programs.
- 2011 The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) renewed NLNAC recognition as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for nursing education.
- 2012 The Secretary of Education, USDE, renewed ACEN recognition and granted expansion of scope of recognition as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for nursing education programs and schools, both postsecondary and higher degree, which offer a certificate, diploma, or a recognized professional degree including clinical doctorate, master's, baccalaureate, associate, diploma, and practical nursing programs in the United States and its territories, including those offered via distance education. *Title IV Note: Practical, diploma, associate, baccalaureate, and higher degree nursing education programs that are not located in a regionally accredited institutions may use accreditation by this agency to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV programs.*
- The NLNAC endorses 4th Edition of the National Task Force Guidelines for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs.
- The NLNAC implements mentoring for Candidate programs.
- 2013 The NLNAC core Standards and Criteria were revised.
- The name of the Commission was changed to the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN).
- 2015 The ACEN endorses academic progression programs in nursing in cooperation with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Academic Progression in Nursing (APIN) program and the Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action.
- 2016 The Secretary of Education, USDE, renewed ACEN recognition as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for nursing education programs and schools, both postsecondary and higher degree, which offer a certificate, diploma, or a recognized professional degree including clinical doctorate, master's, baccalaureate, associate, diploma, and practical nursing programs in the United States and its territories, including

those offered via distance education. *Title IV Note: Practical, diploma, associate, baccalaureate, and higher degree nursing education programs that are not located in a regionally accredited institutions may use accreditation by this agency to establish eligibility to participate in Title IV programs.*

The ACEN endorses 5th Edition of the National Task Force Guidelines for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs.

The ACEN Board of Commissioners approve the offering of Advisory Reviews.

The ACEN Board of Commissioners approve Observers on site visit teams (Policy #31).

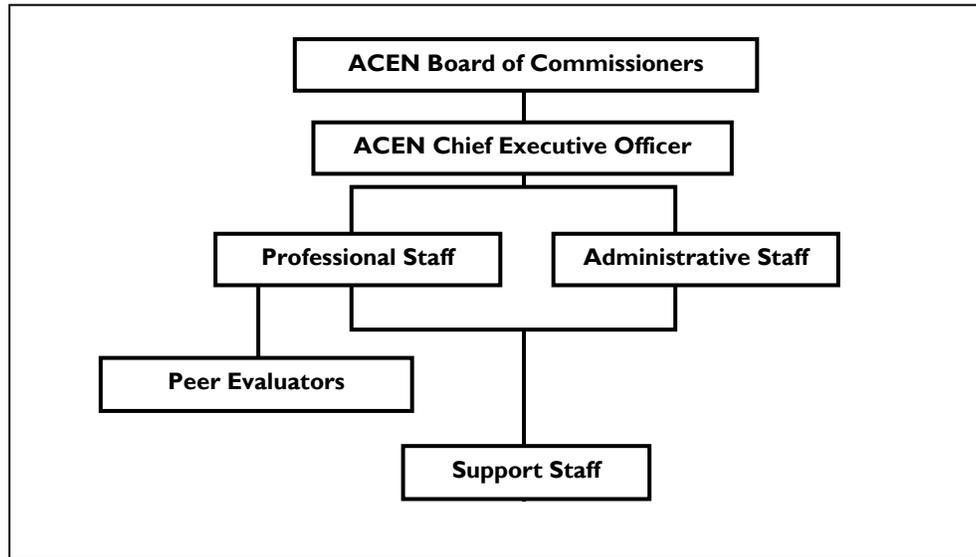
2017 The ACEN core Standards and Criteria were revised.

The ACEN first accredited DNP Specialist Certificates.

## PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

- Initial accreditation and continuing accreditation site visits of approximately 150-200 nursing programs per year
- Continuous monitoring of more than 1,200 nursing education programs per year
- ACEN Directory of Accredited Nursing Programs (electronic database)
- Forums/Workshops
  - Self-Study
  - Program Administrators
- Candidacy Mentoring Program
- Advisory Review Program
- Observer Program
- Mentoring by Professional Staff
- ACEN Accreditation Manual
  - General Information
  - Policies
  - Standards and Criteria/Glossary
- *Bridges* (electronic newsletter)
- Report to Constituents
  - Analysis of ACEN Annual Reports
  - Analysis of Accreditation Cycles
- ACEN website: [www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org)

## ACEN ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



## THE COMMISSION

### OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE COMMISSION

The ACEN is governed by a 15-member Board of Commissioners. The Commissioners are elected by the representatives of ACEN-accredited nursing programs. The legal basis for the foundation and structure of the Commission is outlined in the [Bylaws](#) and the Articles of Incorporation. The ACEN is incorporated under the laws of the state of New York.

### BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

- Nine (9) Commissioners are nurse educators representing ACEN-accredited programs, three (3) Commissioners represent the public, and three (3) Commissioners represent nursing service.
- Commissioners are diversified and ensure balanced representation from across identified constituencies insofar as possible.
- The Board of Commissioners sets accreditation policy and makes accreditation, administrative, budget, and policy decisions.
- Commissioners serve as chairpersons of the program-specific Evaluation Review Panels.
- Decision of accreditation status is made by the Commissioners based on review of program materials, the Site Visit Report/Focused Site Visit Report/Follow-Up Visit Report, and the recommendation of the Evaluation Review Panel.
- No governor, officer, or employee of the NLN or its subsidiaries, or employee of the ACEN, may serve as a Commissioner.

Names, credentials, and affiliations of Commissioners are available online at <http://www.acenursing.org/?s=Commissioners>.

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## ACEN STAFF

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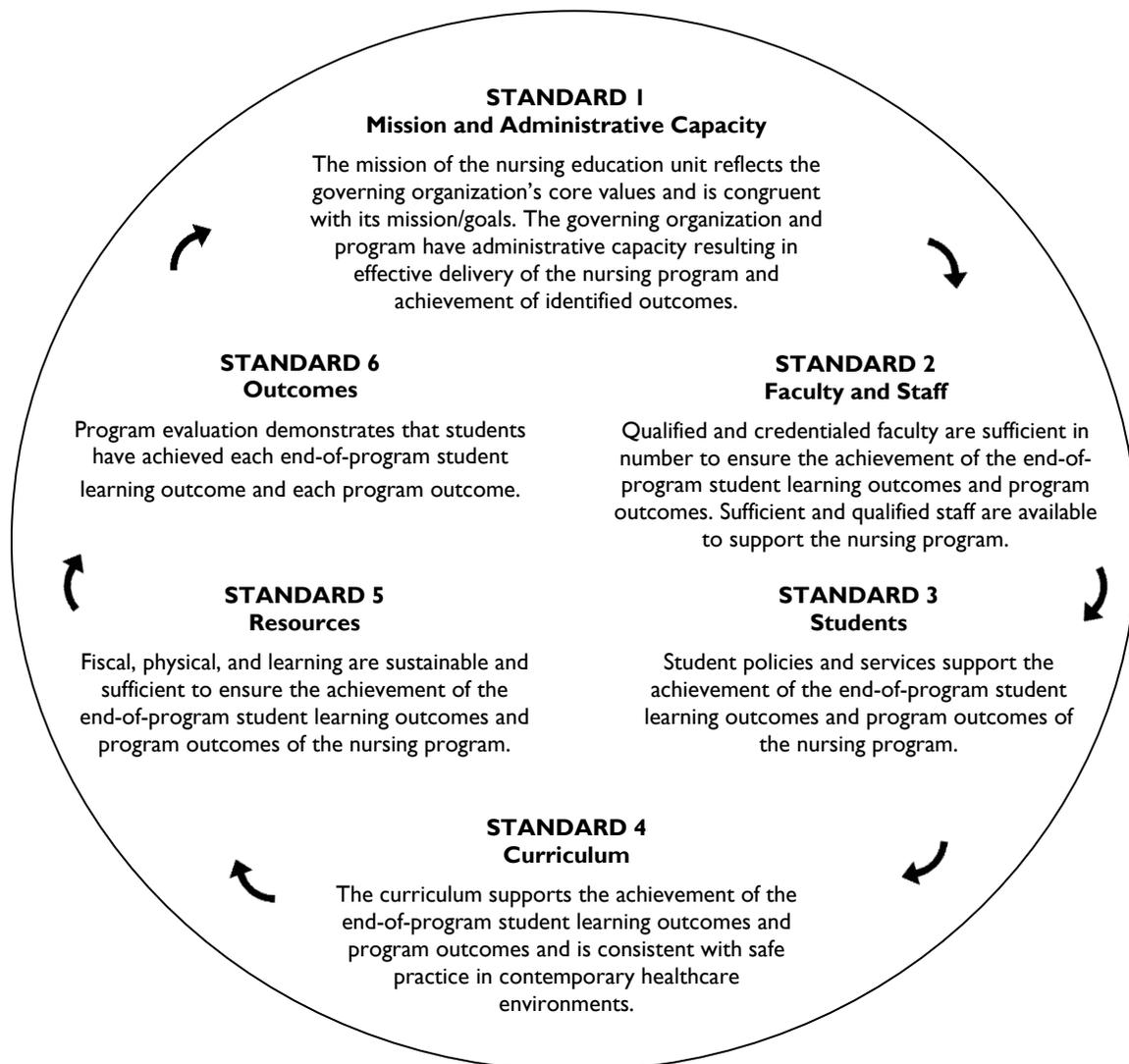
The ACEN staff maintain operational functions of the office and support the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Board of Commissioners, and nursing programs. Names and credentials of staff are available online at [www.acenursing.org/acen-staff-3](http://www.acenursing.org/acen-staff-3).

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# ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR ACADEMIC QUALITY OF POSTSECONDARY AND HIGHER DEGREE PROGRAMS IN NURSING

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## ACEN ACCREDITATION STANDARDS



## ACEN DEFINITION OF QUALITY

The core values of accreditation emphasize learning, community, responsibility, integrity, value, quality, and continuous improvement through reflection and analysis.

Peer review is a long-established and effective process that promotes institutions and academic programs embracing quality assurance and quality improvement to become stronger and better institutions and programs by setting standards of educational quality. It is used by the ACEN to help determine which programs meet or exceed established standards and criteria for educational quality in nursing education. The ACEN peer evaluators are familiar with contemporary practices in various program types and receive training from the ACEN to make informed recommendations about a program's compliance with the ACEN Standards and Criteria.

Quality in nursing education ensures high levels of opportunity for student learning and achievement. Accreditation is an affirmation of values central to postsecondary and higher education: appropriate mission, organizational structures, processes, and functions; resources aligned with core values; collegiality; and continuous improvement.

The ACEN accredits all types of nursing education programs leading to a diploma, certificate, or degree in a variety of postsecondary and higher education settings, including vocational-technical schools, hospitals, professional schools, community/technical colleges, and colleges/universities.

## UNDERSTANDING STANDARDS AND CRITERIA IN THE EVALUATION OF NURSING EDUCATION UNITS

The singular function of nursing is the improvement of the human condition. Each certificate, diploma, or degree has an identifiable, discrete set of specific end-of-program student learning outcomes and program outcomes. Postsecondary and higher education provide for the development of learners' ability to think for themselves, master analytical problem-solving, apply scientific knowledge, and make value judgments within the context of the specific program type. Thus, education requires a broad academic orientation and depth and breadth of intellectual skills translated into competencies so as to fulfill nursing's functions in all types of nursing.

**Standard** – Agreed-upon expectations to measure quantity, extent, value, and educational quality.

**Criteria** – Statements that identify the elements that need to be examined in evaluation of a Standard.

The current version of the ACEN Standards and Criteria become effective on the date specified by the Board of Commissioners. Programs scheduled for review within 12 months of the Standards and Criteria effective date may elect to use the current or former version of the Standards and Criteria.

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## ACCREDITATION PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

### PLANNING FOR ACCREDITATION

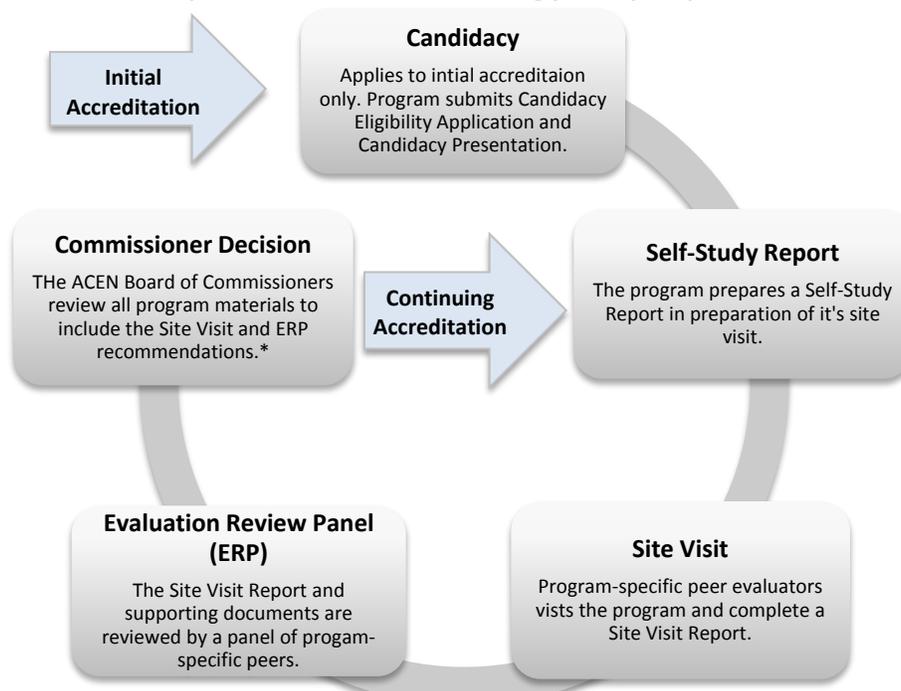
Nursing programs considering accreditation should contact the ACEN to begin the Candidacy process. As part of this process, nursing programs will be assigned a member of the professional staff as their mentor. The mentoring service is provided to facilitate faculty self-review and planning. The nurse administrator, faculty of the program, and administrative officers of the governing organization determine when the program is ready to apply for candidacy and the initial accreditation visit. The decision should be based on an in-depth self-study of the program in relation to the ACEN Standards and Criteria. When the ACEN Board of Commissioners grants accreditation to a program, all students who graduated during or after the accreditation cycle\* during which the initial site visit was performed will be recognized as graduates of an accredited nursing program.

Note: Initial accreditation is effective as of the accreditation cycle in which the Board of Commissioners grants initial accreditation. **Accreditation is not retroactive for students who graduated prior to the semester/quarter/term in which the initial accreditation site visit occurred.**

\*Fall Cycle: July 1 to December 31  
Spring Cycle: January 1 to June 30

### OVERVIEW OF THE INITIAL OR CONTINUING ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The ACEN accreditation process includes the following primary steps:



\*An Appeal Panel may be convened only when initial or continuing accreditation is denied by the Board of Commissioners)

Programs seeking initial accreditation with the ACEN must start with the Candidacy process. The ACEN process for nursing programs seeking initial accreditation after achieving Candidate status or continuing accreditation is a comprehensive four-step process starting with the program's self-reflection regarding its compliance with the Standards and Criteria and as presented in its Self-Study Report. The second step is the program-specific peer evaluators visiting the program resulting in the peers documenting their assessment regarding the program's compliance with the Standards and Criteria in the Site Visit Report. In the third step, a program-specific Evaluation Review Panel examines the reports written by and about the program (Self-Study Report and Site Visit Report) reaching their own independent judgement regarding the program's compliance with the Standards and Criteria. The final step is a review of the process by the ACEN Board of Commissioners. While considering the peer evaluators' judgement, the Commissioners also reach their own independent judgement regarding the program's compliance with the Standards and Criteria and make an accreditation decision.

## CANDIDACY PROCESS

A nursing program seeking initial accreditation must apply for Candidacy. Candidate status is granted after the ACEN professional staff review the nursing program's potential to achieve ACEN accreditation. Programs applying for initial accreditation will be assigned an ACEN professional staff member once they have begun the Candidacy process. A program seeking accreditation must:

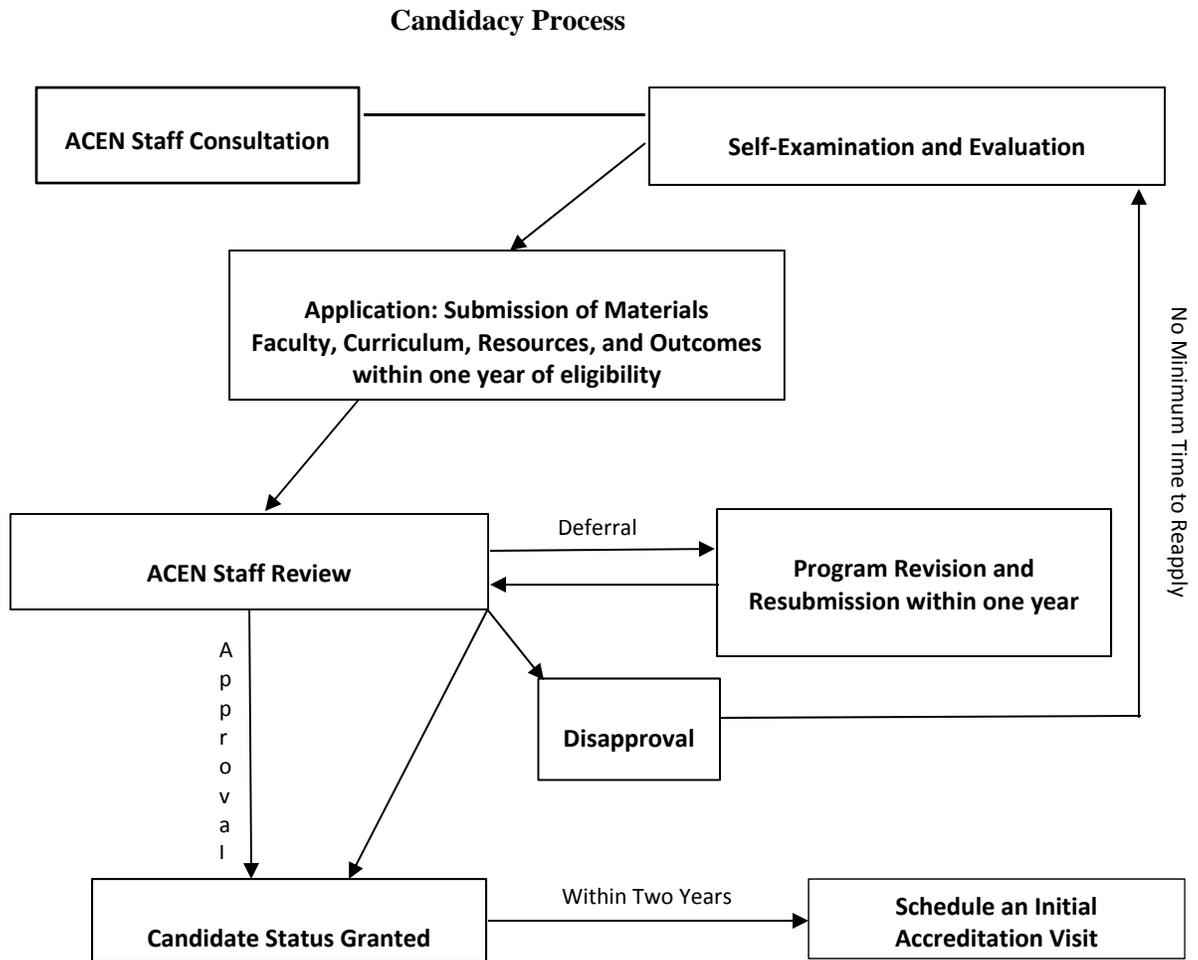
1. Complete [Candidacy Eligibility Form](#) for candidacy. After eligibility has been confirmed, submit payment for the required fee. See [Schedule of Accreditation Fees](#) available on the ACEN website ([www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org)) under [Resources for Nursing Programs](#). Provide evidence of current approval from the state regulatory agency for nursing and the governing organization's accreditation/approval status (where appropriate) is a requirement of this component of the process. See the following list of accrediting agencies that are ACEN-approved: <http://www.acenursing.org/institutional-accrediting-agencies/>
2. Submit a [Candidacy Presentation](#) based upon the guidelines available on the ACEN website ([www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org)) under [Resources for Nursing Programs](#).

All materials submitted are reviewed by the ACEN professional staff. Applicants are notified if they are granted candidate status, are deferred, or are disapproved. Approval for Candidacy is granted when the nursing program (a) demonstrates it is currently compliant with the selected ACEN Standards and Criteria or (b) demonstrates the potential to be compliant with selected ACEN Standards and Criteria within two (2) years of notification and the potential to achieve ACEN accreditation based upon the selected ACEN Standards and Criteria reviewed in the Candidacy Presentation. A program that has achieved candidate status must complete the accreditation process within two (2) years by hosting an initial accreditation site visit. Candidate status does not guarantee that a program will achieve initial accreditation.

A Deferral of Candidacy is made when the nursing program (a) makes an inconsistent presentation to demonstrate it is currently compliant with selected ACEN Standards and Criteria or (b) made an inconsistent presentation to demonstrate the potential to be compliant with selected ACEN Standards and Criteria within two (2) years of notification and the potential to achieve ACEN Accreditation based upon selected ACEN Standards and Criteria reviewed in the Candidacy Presentation. If deferred, the program has up to one (1) year to resubmit the Candidacy Presentation for reconsideration without incurring an additional fee. Upon

resubmission, the program is either granted candidacy or disapproved. A Disapproval of Candidacy is made when the nursing program (a) does not demonstrate that it is currently compliant with selected ACEN Standards and Criteria, (b) does not demonstrate the potential to be compliant with selected ACEN Standards and Criteria with two (2) years of notification, or (c) did not demonstrate the potential to achieve ACEN accreditation based upon selected ACEN Standards and Criteria reviewed in the Candidacy Presentation. The program will be required to restart the Candidacy Process. Deferral or Disapproval of Candidacy is not an appealable action.

An overview of the Candidacy process:



Programs that achieve Candidate status must publically disclose the following information exactly as illustrated below.

**This nursing education program is a candidate for accreditation by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing.**

Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN)  
3343 Peachtree Road NE, Suite 850  
Atlanta, GA 30326 404-975-5000  
[www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org)

If a program's Candidacy expires prior to scheduling an initial accreditation site visit, then the program must restart the candidacy process to renew its Candidacy status. The Candidacy process can be restarted at any time after either being disapproved or when the program's Candidacy has expired.

Each governing organization/nursing program making a Candidacy Presentation to ACEN or granted Candidacy agrees to certain requirements concerning financial obligation, choice of law, jurisdiction, and venue. As a condition of reviewing the Candidacy document or of ACEN granting Candidacy, each governing organization/nursing program agrees that:

- The governing organization/nursing program acknowledges that all agreements created by the ACEN regarding the review of the Candidacy Presentation shall be deemed to have been entered into in Fulton County, Georgia, and shall be interpreted in accordance with the laws of the State of Georgia. Further, each governing organization/nursing program agrees that jurisdiction and venue for any action which might arise from any agreement between the governing organization/nursing program and ACEN, regardless of which party shall initiate the action, shall be exclusively in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia or the state courts of Fulton County, Georgia, whichever of these courts shall have proper subject matter jurisdiction.
- It is the obligation of every governing organization/nursing program seeking Candidacy to pay fees and expenses when due. Failure to pay fees and expenses when due shall be deemed a voluntary withdrawal from the Candidacy process. A schedule of current fees and expenses is available at <http://www.acenursing.org/resources-for-nursing-programs/>.
- The governing organization/nursing program agrees to abide by ACEN Policy #28 Litigation.

Programs pursuing Candidacy and initial accreditation with the ACEN must notify the ACEN of changes that occur in the program during the entire candidacy process as both eligibility for Candidacy and Candidate status are based upon the information provided in the [Candidacy Application Form](#) or the Candidacy Presentation. Changes that occur can affect the program's eligibility to pursue the process and/or achieve initial accreditation with the ACEN. Therefore, programs must notify the ACEN of changes, which include but are not limited to, changes in nurse administrator, change in status with the state regulatory agency or the accrediting body of the governing organization, changes in curriculum/options, potential addition of a new location, or implementation of distance education. Contact your ACEN mentor for guidance related to any change and the potential need to report a change. The ACEN must be notified of all changes no less than four (4) months prior to the change or as soon as possible for any unexpected changes. The notification should be in writing and should address the selected Criteria from the Candidacy Presentation related to the change (e.g. all of the Standard 4 Curriculum Criteria for a change in the curriculum and/or new option). Failure to notify the ACEN of changes could result in an unsuccessful initial accreditation visit or the changes that have been made are not considered in the initial accreditation review.

## INITIAL ACCREDITATION

A governing organization that offers a program not accredited by the ACEN initiates the Candidacy process through its chief executive officer and nurse administrator. The chief executive officer of the governing organization for the nursing program/nursing education unit as well as the nurse administrator must authorize the ACEN to conduct the accreditation process by submitting the *Official Authorization for Candidacy Process Form*. Once Candidacy status has been achieved, the chief executive officer of the governing organization and the nurse administrator must authorize the scheduling/hosting of the initial accreditation visit using the [Information Form for Accreditation Site Visit](#). A program seeking initial accreditation must achieve Candidacy prior to scheduling the initial accreditation visit. (See section on Candidacy Process above)

A nursing program may discontinue the initial accreditation process up to 16 weeks prior to the date of the site visit. Changes within 16 weeks of the scheduled site visit will result in the program being responsible for all expenses incurred for the site visit. A program seeking initial accreditation can also withdraw from the process at any point prior to being reviewed by the Board of Commissioners.

### **NOTE:**

In order for the ACEN to properly discharge its responsibilities to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) pursuant to 34 CFR Section 602.28, an applicant for candidacy must certify that neither the governing organization nor the nursing program is the subject of:

1. A pending or final action brought by a State agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the State;
2. A decision by a recognized agency to deny accreditation or pre-accreditation;
3. A pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution's accreditation or pre-accreditation; or
4. Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized agency.

The program will be required to certify this information at the time that *Official Authorization for Candidacy Process Form* is signed and again when the program applies for the initial accreditation visit. Information submitted by the program will be kept confidential and will only be utilized by the ACEN in its report to the USDE as required. The information provided by the governing organization/nursing program will not be utilized in determining the program's candidacy or its initial accreditation with the ACEN. The achievement of Candidacy as well as achieving initial accreditation will be based upon the program's ability to demonstrate compliance with the current ACEN Standards and Criteria.

## CONTINUING ACCREDITATION

Planning for continuing accreditation is an ongoing process. A program must be visited and re-evaluated at specified intervals to ensure continuing compliance with the Accreditation Standards and Criteria. The ACEN staff notify the program of a pending visit approximately one (1) year in advance. Dates for the site visit are scheduled in consultation with the nurse administrator, as the program must be in full operation during the visit.

Official authorization to conduct the ACEN accreditation process is secured from the chief executive officer of the governing organization and the nurse administrator for the nursing

program. The [Information Form for Accreditation Site Visit](#) is available on the ACEN website for the program to complete approximately one (1) year before the visit is to take place.

If an ACEN-accredited program seeks to delay or reschedule a visit, refer to Policy #6 Delay/Advancement of Continuing Accreditation Visit. If an ACEN-accredited program seeks to voluntarily withdraw from ACEN accreditation, refer to Policy #7 Voluntary Withdrawal from ACEN Accreditation. See ACEN Policy #6 and #7 on the ACEN website ([www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org)) under [Resources for Nursing Programs](#), Accreditation Manual, Section II - Policies.

## ASSISTANCE

The ACEN professional staff are available to assist programs preparing for accreditation site visits. The ACEN website also provides a wide variety of online resources for programs, including, but not limited to, the ACEN Accreditation Manual, including the ACEN Glossary, the forms to use for scheduling an accreditation visit, and various resources related to preparation of the Self-Study Report and for the site visit, preparation of a Follow-Up Report, reporting Substantive Changes, and preparation of the Focused Visit Report.

[Self-Study Forums](#) are offered annually to provide information about the accreditation processes and details regarding the preparation of the Self-Study Report. All programs seeking initial and continuing accreditation are encouraged to attend a Self-Study Forum. Dates and locations are posted on the ACEN website: [www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org).

The ACEN also offers a workshop for Program Administrators on at least an annual basis. Dates and locations are posted on the ACEN website: [www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org).

[Advisory Review](#) is a one-time opportunity for an ACEN-accredited program to receive feedback from an ACEN professional staff member assigned to the Advisory Review regarding draft accreditation documents as the program prepares for a continuing accreditation visit. Examples of documents could include the Self-Study Report, faculty profile table, or systematic evaluation plan. This is an optional resource for currently accredited programs and is not a requirement for continuing accreditation. Professional staff feedback indicates the staff member's best judgment but does not guarantee that the Board of Commissioners will determine that the program complies with the ACEN Standards and Criteria. An advisory review may be conducted in one (1) of three (3) formats, which include teleconference, videoconference, or in-person review. Additional information about this service is accessible on the ACEN website, including the fee for an Advisory Review. See [Schedule of Accreditation Fees](#) available on the ACEN website ([www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org)) under [Resources for Nursing Programs](#). The Advisory Review is not a mock visit.

[Observer Opportunities](#) provide a nursing program with the opportunity to send a faculty member on an accreditation visit as an observer. This typically occurs one (1) year to 18 months prior to an upcoming accreditation visit. The opportunity enables the faculty member to observe the site visit process, including team preparation and orientation, prior to having the experience. A nursing program submits a request to have an observer on an upcoming visit to a nursing program who has consented to have an observer. The governing organization for the observer is responsible for all costs of the observer in this experience. See ACEN Policy #32 Observer on Site Visit Team on the ACEN website ([www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org)) under [Resources for Nursing Programs](#), Accreditation Manual, Section II - Policies.

## SELF-REVIEW AND SELF-STUDY REPORT

Any program preparing for initial or continuing accreditation must submit a Self-Study Report to demonstrate the extent to which the program meets the ACEN Accreditation Standards and Criteria. The Self-Study Report is submitted a minimum of six (6) weeks prior to the scheduled site visit.

The process of self-study represents the combined efforts of the governing organization administrators, nursing program administrators, faculty, staff, students, and other individuals concerned with the nursing program(s). All those associated with the program(s) should participate in the self-study process. Broad participation leads to an understanding of the total program.

The Self-Study Report is a primary document used by the peer evaluators visiting the program, the peer evaluators on the Evaluation Review Panel, and the Board of Commissioners to understand the nursing program.

- The report must be based on the ACEN Accreditation Standards and Criteria in effect at the time of review and the most recent edition of the ACEN Accreditation Manual. Accreditation Standards and Criteria become effective on the Commission's approval date. Programs scheduled for review within 12 months of the Standards and Criteria effective date may elect to use the current or former version of the Standards and Criteria.
- Faculty and administrators are responsible for presenting narrative and evidence that clearly demonstrate the extent to which the program meets the ACEN Accreditation Standards and Criteria. Peer evaluators visiting the program will use the Self-Study Report in preparation for their visit to the program.

[Guidelines for the Preparation of the Self-Study Report](#) are available online at [www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org) under the Resources tab, and [Resources for Nursing Programs](#).

## THE SITE VISIT

The purpose of the site visit is to determine the extent to which the program meets the ACEN Accreditation Standards and Criteria by clarifying, verifying, and amplifying the information (narrative/evidence) presented in the Self-Study Report. Based on findings, the peer evaluators visiting the program will make a recommendation relative to the accreditation status of the nursing program(s).

Onsite review of the program by peer evaluators is an essential part of the accreditation process. It provides the program an opportunity to demonstrate and highlight information presented in its Self-Study Report and provides for interaction among all concerned: administrators, faculty, students, staff, and peer evaluators. In addition, the site visit provides peer evaluators an opportunity to see the nursing program first-hand. The peer evaluators conduct an independent analysis and make professional judgments on the extent to which the program meets the ACEN Accreditation Standards and Criteria; their findings are documented in the Site Visit Report. These peer evaluators verify congruence between the Self-Study Report and the actual practices of the program so that the peer evaluators on the Evaluation Review Panel and Board of Commissioners have a clear and complete understanding of the program.

[Multiple Nursing Programs Within a Nursing Education Unit](#)

The ACEN encourages nursing education units offering more than one (1) type of nursing program (clinical doctorate/DNP specialist certificate, master's/post-master's certificate, baccalaureate, associate, diploma, and/or practical) to request that all programs be reviewed for continuing accreditation at the same time. The nursing education unit will prepare one (1) Self-Study Report for all of the programs and host one (1) site visit for all of the programs.

#### Collaborative and Coordinated Site Visits With Other Agencies

The ACEN welcomes the opportunity to cooperate with other accreditation and approval-granting agencies (e.g., state regulatory agency for nursing). The goal is to increase efficiency and decrease faculty workload while maximizing outcomes. Two (2) options are available: the collaborative and the coordinated visit.

To arrange either a collaborative or a coordinated visit, the nurse administrator initiates the process by submitting a request to the ACEN. The ACEN staff then work with the institutional/program administrators and faculty members to achieve their goal.

#### Collaborative Visit

The collaborative site visit involves the establishment of one (1) site visit team that incorporates representatives from the ACEN and the other accreditation or approval-granting agency. Using the standards and criteria from both agencies, the program prepares one (1) Self-Study Report. A single agenda is established for the site visit. At the conclusion of the site visit, the representatives of each agency on the site visit team write their individual report that documents the extent to which the program meets the agency's respective standards and criteria or regulations.

#### Coordinated Visit

For a coordinated site visit, the program prepares materials separately for each agency team. The two (2) teams share an agenda and conduct a site visit that meets each agency's requirements. However, the representative from another agency is not a member of the ACEN site visit team. The ACEN peer evaluators and the other representative may participate jointly in such activities as conferences with faculty, students, and other groups. Many of the activities of the ACEN peer evaluators and the representative will be carried out separately as the purposes of ACEN accreditation may differ from those of other accrediting/approval-granting bodies. At the conclusion of the site visit, each site visit team writes a report that documents the extent to which the program meets the agency's respective standards and criteria or regulations.

#### Length of Visit

The ACEN site visit is typically scheduled for a minimum of three (3) days. However, the length depends on several factors, including size and complexity of the nursing program, geographical locations of the various resources used for student learning experiences, the number of nursing programs involved, and coordination of the visit with other agencies. Correspondence from the ACEN will indicate the inclusive dates of the visit.

#### Assignment of Peer Evaluators on a Site Visit Team

Each site visit is conducted by a team of nursing educator peers with program-specific expertise and, when appropriate a clinician. The peer evaluators on a site visit team for review of a single program typically has a minimum of three (3) members. Graduate programs offering advanced

practice nursing options will have at least one (1) team member with current advanced practice certification.

The ACEN staff will appoint the team of peer evaluators and notify the nurse administrator in advance of the visit. The nurse administrator should contact the ACEN staff in writing if a possible conflict of interest is identified among peer evaluators. If a peer evaluator becomes ineligible or unable to serve, another peer evaluator with comparable qualifications will be appointed.

The ACEN staff will assign peer evaluators considering their expertise with multiple program factors, including, but not limited to:

- Program type(s)
- Size of program(s) and governing organization
- Method(s) of program delivery
- Carnegie classification
- Setting (urban, suburban, or rural)
- State
- Governance of the governing organization (public, private, religious affiliation, etc.)

#### Team Chairperson

A peer evaluator is eligible to be a team chairperson for an accreditation visit after serving on a minimum of three (3) teams as a peer evaluator.

#### Responsibilities of the Team Chairperson

The team chairperson assumes the following responsibilities:

- Acts as official spokesperson for the team of peer evaluators
- Reviews all content of the ACEN accreditation information packet upon receipt
- Coordinates planning with the team members
- Conducts the team orientation and subsequent team meetings and conferences
- Receives and reviews the electronic files from the nurse administrator listing information on all individuals and groups interviewed by the team members and all documents reviewed in the evidence room
- Allocates responsibilities for various activities to ensure optimum utilization of team members and adequate coverage of all areas during the visit, including interviews and conferences with key personnel on and off campus
- Requests additional information as necessary
- Notifies the nurse administrator of the arrival of the team members and plans the time for the first meeting
- Conducts periodic conferences with the nurse administrator
- Arranges for the exit meeting with the nurse administrator and any persons the nurse administrator invites to be present
- Collates and edits the Site Visit Report/Follow-Up Visit Report/Focused Site Visit Report to ensure completeness and clarity
- Emails the completed Site Visit Report/Follow-Up Visit Report/Focused Site Visit Report to the ACEN within one (1) week following the site visit
- Is available for telephone contact by the Evaluation Review Panel at the time of the program's review
- Assumes the additional responsibilities stated under "Responsibilities of the Team Members"

### Responsibilities of the Team Members

The team member assumes the following responsibilities.

When the ACEN accreditation information packet is received:

- Reviews all content of the packet

When the materials from the program are received:

- Reviews all materials
- Prepares a draft copy of the Site Visit Report/Follow-Up Visit Report/Focused Site Visit Report findings and submits draft to the team chair for areas as assigned
- Makes a list of findings from the Self-Study Report/Follow-Up Report that require additional verification, amplification, or verification at the time of the site visit

Upon arrival at the site:

- Assumes responsibility to collect data cooperatively and make observations
- Further develops Site Visit Report/Follow-Up Visit Report/Focused Site Visit Report based on findings of the onsite visit
- Participates in the exit meeting with the nurse administrator and any persons invited to be present

After the visit:

- Retains a copy of the Self-Study Report, Catalog, Site Visit Report/Follow-Up Visit Report/Focused Site Visit Report, and any other resource materials used/developed during the site visit until the Board of Commissioners' decision is finalized
- Reviews materials in preparation for contact by the Evaluation Review Panel
- Is available for telephone contact by the Evaluation Review Panel at the time of the program's review

### Responsibilities of the Nursing Program

- Provides the team chair with an electronic file that lists the names, credentials, and titles of individuals and group members interviewed by the peer evaluators during the site visit
- Provides the team chair with an electronic file listing all documents available in the evidence room by defined category
- Provides computers and printer(s) for the team members to use throughout the site visit
- Establishes a room in which materials for the peer evaluators are assembled, where the team members can read and work during the period of the site visit
- Obtains any necessary written permissions required prior to the site visit (e.g., review of records and visits to clinical agencies)
- Assembles the following materials in the evidence room:
  - Annual reports (three [3] years, as applicable) to the administration of the governing organization and to the state regulatory agency for nursing
  - Budgets (three [3] years for both the governing organization and the nursing program)
  - Class and clinical schedules for the current academic term
  - Complete and current course syllabi, outlines, and materials, including samples of examinations and evaluation forms
  - Faculty handbook (current version)
  - Faculty curricula vitae (up-to-date version)
  - Minutes of faculty and committee meetings for the past 2–3 years

- Most recent accrediting agency report and approval letter for the governing organization
- Results of standardized tests, licensure examinations, and/or certification examinations
- Most recent state regulatory agency for nursing report(s) to the program and approval letter
- Samples of student and faculty projects, ideally throughout the last three (3) years
- Student handbook (current version)
- Clinical agency contracts (signed and current version)
- Data/evidence for three (3) years to support the systematic evaluation plan
- Other materials the faculty deem essential to the peer evaluators' understanding of the nursing education unit and the nursing program(s) being reviewed

These materials will be used during the site visit and left with the nursing program upon completion of the site visit. Peer evaluators will ask to review records of faculty, students, and recent graduates. The student records include both academic and financial aid. All records will be reviewed in the offices where they are filed.

Programs for which all or part of the curriculum is delivered in a language other than English should make provisions for an interpreter to be present throughout the site visit and to make certain that **all program documents are available in English** for review by the peer evaluators.

*Additional information related to the materials for the evidence room is available online at [www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org).*

Visit Arrangements

Area	Responsibility	
	Nursing Education Unit	Peer Evaluators
Lodging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Nurse administrator will make hotel reservations for the peer evaluators and notify the team chair.</li> <li>– Each peer evaluator is to have a separate hotel room in close proximity to each other; availability of restaurant facilities within a reasonable walking distance of the hotel is essential.</li> <li>– The program is responsible for additional hotel costs above \$150.00 per night/peer evaluator unless approved by the ACEN.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Individual peer evaluators will pay for the hotel accommodations and be reimbursed by the ACEN.</li> </ul>
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The program is responsible for arranging and providing all ground transportation such as transportation to and from the airport/hotel. Peer evaluators may not provide any ground transportation even if a peer evaluator drove to the site visit.</li> <li>– Any intra-visit travel expenses and arrangements are also the responsibility of the program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– All persons traveling on ACEN business are expected to use common carriers (coach class or equivalent rates).</li> <li>– Reservations, whether by air, bus, or train, are to be reserved and purchased through the ACEN-designated travel agency and in advance of the site visit per the timeframe noted in the ACEN travel policy.</li> <li>– A written request to use a personal automobile is required in advance of the site visit.</li> </ul>
Food		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Food during the site visit is the responsibility of each peer evaluator and will be reimbursed by the ACEN after the site visit based on current ACEN travel policy.</li> </ul>
Fees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The ACEN will invoice the program according to the current fee schedule prior to the site visit.</li> <li>– Payment in full is required prior to the site visit, or the site visit will be canceled.</li> </ul>	

Agenda for the Visit

At least six (6) weeks prior to the scheduled site visit, a tentative agenda for the site visit is prepared by the nurse administrator and sent to the team chairperson along with a copy of the class and clinical laboratory schedules and the completed technology assessment form. See the ACEN website under *Resources for Nursing Programs* for a sample agenda for an accreditation visit. Activities typically planned to take place during the site visit include for all locations and methods of delivery:

- Preliminary, interim, and closing meetings with the nurse administrator (and any persons invited to be present)
- Meetings with:
  - faculty (all levels, all program options, and all locations)
  - administrative officers of the governing organization
  - nursing students (all levels, all program options, and all locations)
  - general education faculty (as appropriate)
  - the public for third-party comments

- student support service personnel (all locations)
- nursing service personnel (as appropriate)
- Visits to:
  - appropriate on-campus and off-campus facilities and resources
  - selected clinical agencies to observe and meet with students
- Review of:
  - curricular and other materials prepared by the faculty (all levels and all program options)
  - appropriate records of faculty, students, and recent graduates (all levels, all program options, and all locations)
  - additional information to clarify, verify, and amplify the Self-Study Report
- Classroom and clinical observations for on-campus and off-campus locations and methods of delivery:

#### Visiting Off-Site Locations of the Nursing Program

Prior to the visit, programs with branch campuses or off-campus instructional sites must discuss with the team chairperson alternative methods for the visiting team to evaluate additional locations on which the program is offered. If locations are more than one (1) hour apart in driving distance, the nurse administrator should communicate with the ACEN professional staff regarding visits to the additional locations.

#### Access to Hybrid/Online Nursing Courses

Prior to the visit, programs with hybrid or online nursing courses must provide all peer evaluators access to the courses. The access to the courses should be provided with the Self-Study Report at least six (6) weeks prior to the onsite visit and continue throughout the visit.

#### Internet Access While on Campus and at the Hotel

The nursing program is also responsible for making sure that the peer evaluators have access to the Internet in the onsite evidence room during the site visit. The program may be requested to have a computer onsite for each peer evaluator or may be requested to provide Internet access via the peer evaluators' personal computers. Information technology (IT) support should be available to the peer evaluators during the site visit if needed. The nursing program should also ensure Internet access is available at the hotel where the peer evaluators are staying during the site visit.

## **THE SITE VISIT REPORT**

The site visit team chairperson is responsible for presenting an accurate, complete, and well-organized Site Visit Report/Follow-Up Visit Report/Focused Site Visit Report to the ACEN within one (1) week after the conclusion of the site visit. Team members review the final report prior to submission to the ACEN.

Additional information related to the preparation of the Site Visit Report is available online for peer evaluators as well as the nursing program/nursing education unit at [www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org).

#### ACEN Staff Review

All Site Visit Reports/Follow-Up Visit Reports/Focused Site Visit Reports are reviewed by the ACEN professional staff. If questions arise, the team chairperson is contacted for clarification.

A draft copy of the Site Visit Report/Follow-Up Visit Report/Focused Site Visit Report is emailed to the nurse administrator of the nursing program/nursing education unit for review and correction of errors of fact **within eight (8) weeks** after the conclusion of the site visit. An email with the completed *Nurse Administrator Response Form* attached must be received by the ACEN within one (1) week after the nursing program/nursing education unit receives the draft report. Substantive comments are shared with the team chairperson, who then decides whether the report is to be changed. After this decision and any necessary changes are made, the report becomes final. The final Site Visit Report/Follow-Up Visit Report/Focused Site Visit Report and the *Nurse Administrator Response Form* will become part of the permanent materials relating to the accreditation visit.

The final Site Visit Report/Follow-Up Visit Report/Focused Site Visit Report will be emailed to the nurse administrator. The peer evaluators that visited the program will also receive a copy of the final report **prior** to the Evaluation Review Panel meeting via email.

### **EVALUATION REVIEW PANEL**

The Evaluation Review Panel (ERP) members are appointed by the ACEN Board of Commissioners. The role of the ERP is to continue the peer review process, conduct its own independent analysis on the extent to which the program meets the Standards and Criteria and to ensure the consistent application of the Standards and Criteria among programs of the same type. The Panel reviews the findings as presented in the Site Visit Report/Follow-Up Visit Report/Focused Site Visit Report compared to the Self-Study Report/Follow-Up Report/Focused Visit Report of the program(s) and catalog and make its recommendation for accreditation status to the Board of Commissioners. Documents relative to developments occurring after the site visit may be used in the deliberations.

The Evaluation Review Panel also validates the work of the peer evaluators that visited the program and extends it by noting points of agreement and raising any questions where disagreement or a lack of clarity exists. In the latter case, the site visit team members are available by telephone during ERP deliberations and may enter into discussion with the Panel to assure an accurate understanding of the Site Visit Report/Follow-Up Visit Report/Focused Site Visit Report. The aim is to provide consistency in the recommendations for the program type. The role of the professional staff is to facilitate the work of both groups of peer evaluators.

#### Nursing Program Representative Attendance at the Evaluation Review Panel Meeting

The nurse administrator and one (1) additional program representative may attend the deliberations of the Evaluation Review Panel about the program in person or the program may participate in the Evaluation Review Panel deliberations by telephone conference call. The attendees are observers during the presentation of the program, ERP deliberations, and vote; attendees will not be asked to respond to questions or to clarify information. At the conclusion of the ERP deliberations, the nurse administrator is invited to address the Panel with regards to the overall process.

### **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

The Board of Commissioners has the sole authority to determine the accreditation status of programs. Composed of nurse educators, nursing clinicians/practitioners, and public members, the Board of Commissioners bases its decisions on its own independent analysis and professional judgment on extent to which the program meets the Standards and Criteria, while considering

the previous peer evaluators' judgement, as well as the consistent application of the Accreditation Standards and Criteria within and across all program types. The entire Board of Commissioners makes the accreditation decision at a regularly scheduled meeting (typically, March, July, or October). To assist the nursing program in future planning, a copy of the Summary of Deliberations of the Evaluation Review Panel is forwarded to the program along with the Commissioners' decision letter. Documents relative to developments occurring after the site visit may be used in the deliberations. In cases where accreditation is denied, programs have the opportunity to present their case in an impartial hearing before an independent Appeal Panel per Policy #10 Appeal Process and Submission and Review of New Financial Information Subsequent to Adverse Action.

## **PEER EVALUATORS**

Peer evaluators make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners. Peer evaluators are knowledgeable about common, contemporary, and best practices within the various program types, appropriate curricula, and conventions as well as current trends in healthcare, nursing education, and/or nursing practice.

### **Eligibility for Selection as a Peer Evaluator**

Eligibility to serve as an ACEN peer evaluator is dependent on the following requirements:

See ACEN Policy #1 Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest  
<http://www.acenursing.net/resources/policy01.pdf>

See ACEN Policy #2 Representation on the Site Visit Teams, Evaluation Review Panels, and Board of Commissioners <http://www.acenursing.net/resources/policy02.pdf>

See ACEN Policy #1 and #2 on the ACEN website ([www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org)) under [Resources for Nursing Programs](#), Accreditation Manual, Section II - Policies.

#### Academic Credentials:

##### Clinical Doctorate Programs

Earned doctoral degree from a regionally accredited college/university and a graduate degree with a major in nursing

##### Master's Degree Programs

Earned doctoral degree from a regionally accredited college/university and a graduate degree with a major in nursing

##### Baccalaureate Degree Programs

Earned doctoral degree from a regionally accredited college/university and a graduate degree with a major in nursing

##### Associate Degree Programs

Graduate degree with a major in nursing

##### Diploma Programs

Graduate degree with a major in nursing

##### Practical Programs

Graduate degree with a major in nursing

#### Nurse Clinician

Graduate degree with a major in nursing

#### Experience:

##### Nurse Educator

1. Currently hold a full-time faculty or administrative appointment in an ACEN-accredited program.
  2. Previously held a full-time faculty or administrative appointment in an ACEN-accredited program and now holds a part-time faculty or administrative appointment in an ACEN-accredited program.
  3. Held a full-time faculty or administrative appointment in an ACEN-accredited program and is retired for no more than two (2) years from this position.
  4. Held a full-time faculty or administrative appointment in an ACEN-accredited program and then held a part-time faculty or administrative appointment in an ACEN-accredited program and is retired for no more than two (2) years from the part-time position.
- Knowledge of postsecondary and/or higher education; curriculum and instructional methods; current issues in nursing education and practice.
  - Expertise in communication, group dynamics, information literacy, use of technology, best practices in educational and clinical settings.
  - Contributions in scholarship/research, practice, community service, professional service.

##### Nurse Clinician

Full-time or part-time time position in a clinical practice environment

- Knowledge of current nursing practice, contemporary issues in healthcare settings, transition of new graduates into nursing practice.
- Expertise in communication, group dynamics, information literacy, use of technology, best practices for patient health and safety.
- Contributions in scholarship/research, practice, community service, professional service.

We encourage you to self-nominate or nominate nurse educators and nurse clinicians/practitioners to serve as a peer evaluator. Please send your nomination to [peer\\_evaluator@acenursing.org](mailto:peer_evaluator@acenursing.org)

### **Selection, Appointment, and Maintaining Eligibility as a Peer Evaluator**

#### Selection

All peer evaluators are selected through mechanisms and criteria established by the ACEN.

Individuals identified by staff, nominated by a colleague, or self-nominated must submit a letter of interest, current curriculum vitae/resume, and a letter of recommendation. After ACEN staff review of submitted materials, selected individuals will be invited to become peer evaluator and must participate in the peer evaluator professional development offered by the ACEN.

#### Appointment

Peer evaluators are eligible to serve for an indefinite period of time if they receive ongoing positive site visit performance evaluations, remain current with the accreditation process, and

continue to be employed with an ACEN-accredited nursing program or work as a nurse clinician. A list of the current program evaluators is accessible on the ACEN website.

#### Continuing Eligibility

A peer evaluator who:

- Retires may continue to serve up to two (2) additional years if she/he remains current in nursing education and the accreditation process.
- Is no longer affiliated with an ACEN-accredited nursing program or nursing service will be ineligible to continue as a peer evaluator.

#### Evaluation

Peer evaluators are evaluated by the members of the site visit team and the nurse administrator following each site visit.

#### Preparation

Required training is initially completed in an online program, and brief updates are provided each accreditation cycle for all peer evaluators prior to the assigned visit.

#### Honorarium

An honorarium will be provided to the peer evaluator after a visit is completed.

### **Evaluation Review Panel Members**

#### Selection

Members of the ERP and alternate members are program-specific and appointed by the Board of Commissioners. The ACEN professional staff review candidates based on information from current members of the ERP, peer evaluators, Commissioners, and accredited programs and recommend their names to the Board of Commissioners. Members of the ERP and alternate members must be eligible peer evaluators.

#### Appointment

Members of the ERP serve for a three-year term and may be appointed to a second consecutive term; alternate members of the ERP may serve indefinitely. Panel vacancies are filled by program-specific peer evaluators selected from the list of alternate members.

#### Preparation

Members of the ERP are expected to participate in a briefing session held prior to each ERP to orient new Panel members and update the continuing Panel members.

### **Appeal Panel Members**

#### Selection

Members of the Appeal Panel must have knowledge of and experience with the peer-review process. The nurse educator and nursing clinicians/practitioners members must be currently eligible peer evaluators. Commissioners cannot serve on the Appeal Panel.

#### Appointment

The Appeal Panel consists of individuals selected from a Board of Commissioners-approved list of the individuals qualified to serve as members of the Appeal Panel. See ACEN Policy #10 Appeal

Process and Submission and Review of New Financial Information Subsequent to Adverse Action. A list of the individuals who have been appointed to the Appeal Panel is accessible on the ACEN website ([www.acenursing.org](http://www.acenursing.org)).