Now that you are a Candidate for ACEN accreditation…

Congratulations on achieving Candidacy for your program! Here are essential further steps in the process:

**Initiate the Self-Study Report process:**

Any program seeking initial accreditation must undergo a thorough self-review and evaluation to determine the extent to which the program meets the ACEN Accreditation Standards and Criteria. Programs should engage the nursing faculty and administrators, the administrators for the governing organization, students, staff, and other members of the program’s communities of interest in the self-study process and in preparing the Self-Study Report. The amount of time needed for the Self-Study Report process varies for each program.

**Participate in the ACEN Self-Study Forum:**

The nurse administrator and as many faculty members as possible should plan to attend an ACEN Self-Study Forum. Forums are scheduled in the spring and fall. Faculty members do not have to attend the same Forum. Information about upcoming Forums is available at all times on the ACEN website.

**Address any and all areas of non-compliance identified during the Candidacy process:**

A program seeking initial accreditation must meet all Accreditation Standards and Criteria at the time of its review by the ACEN Board of Commissioners. Therefore, the program must be sure to address and correct any and all areas of non-compliance brought to light during the Candidacy process. The faculty should also ensure that any areas needing development that were identified during the Candidacy process are also considered in preparing the Self-Study Report and for the initial accreditation visit.

**Ensure compliance with all Standards and Criteria:**

Remember that Candidacy only considers selected Criteria of four (4) Standards; a program must fully meet all six (6) of the Standards and their respective Criteria at the time of its review by the ACEN Board of Commissioners.

**Determine the timing of the site visit:**

The professional staff can help the program determine the best timing of the site visit, but please note for initial accreditation of a nursing program without previous graduates, the initial accreditation site visit for the nursing program should occur while the initial cohort of students is enrolled in either (1) the final semester/quarter/term of the nursing program or (2) the semester/quarter/term prior to the final semester/quarter/term of the nursing program. When planning the site visit, allow time for the Self-Study Report process, including participation in a Self-Study Forum. Programs should postpone scheduling the visit if the program will not be in compliance with all Standards and Criteria at the time of the visit.

Updated September 2016
Note: Accreditation is not retroactive for students who graduated prior to the semester/quarter/term in which the initial site visit occurred.

**Apply for a site visit:**

To schedule a site visit, submit a site visit information form for the cycle in which you plan to have the visit. This form is available on the ACEN website approximately one (1) year in advance. The deadline for submitting an application for a spring visit is July 1st of the preceding year and the deadline for submitting for a fall visit is March 1st. The ACEN staff will use the information you provide on the site visit application to schedule your visit and assign your team.

**Prepare and submit the Self-Study Report:**

The Self-Study Report is the primary document used by the site visit team, the Evaluation Review Panel, and the Board of Commissioners to review the nursing program. The completed Self-Study Report is due to the peer evaluators and to the ACEN office no later than six (6) weeks prior to the date of the site visit.

**Prepare for the site visit:**

Resources for nurse administrators to use when planning a site visit are available on the ACEN website. In addition, your assigned team chair will help you plan the agenda and guide you in the preparations for the site visit. Colleagues in nearby programs who have recently undergone accreditation reviews can be an outstanding resource to you as you prepare for the visit.

**Address special considerations as necessary:**

Please note that all program documents must be submitted in English. Programs for which all or part of the curriculum is delivered in a language other than English should make provisions for professional interpreter(s) to be present throughout the site visit and to make certain that all program documents are available in English for review by the site visitors. These arrangements are necessary to facilitate the work of the site visit team and ensure a comprehensive and accurate review of the program.

**Contact the ACEN staff with any questions:**

The ACEN staff will gladly assist you and are available to answer questions about your program’s compliance with the Standards and Criteria or your visit. The staff can be reached as follows:

**Questions about compliance:**

Nell Ard, PhD, RN, CNE, ANEF  
Associate Director  
nard@acenursing.org  
404-975-5004

**Questions about your site visit dates or team:**

Sharon Beasley, PhD, RN, CNE  
Associate Director  
sbeasley@acenursing.org  
404-975-5003
NOTE:

In order for ACEN to properly to discharge its responsibilities to the Department of Education 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 USDOE 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 a Candidate status as well as achieving initial accreditation will be based upon the program’s ability to demonstrate compliance with the current ACEN Standards and Criteria.