

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) About the Accreditation of New Programs and Sponsoring Institutions, Program Mergers, and Changes in Sponsorship (Updated July 2013)

This document offers general information about the application process for programs and sponsoring institutions. Specialty-specific questions should be addressed to the staff of the Residency Review Committee (RRC) and/or the Institutional Review Committee (IRC).

New Program Applications

Question: How do I apply to have a program accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)?

ACGME accreditation of a new residency/fellowship program is based on published accreditation standards, and is accomplished through a peer review process. Before starting an application, consult with the Executive Director of the pertinent RRC for helpful advice.

All applications for new programs are processed through the Accreditation Data System (ADS). In some specialties a part of the application is a separate (Microsoft Word) document that is downloaded from the RRC's web page and filled out. All application documents must be complete, final, and of high quality.

Question: How does the ACGME charge for new program applications?

A nonrefundable fee is charged for processing applications of programs seeking initial accreditation or re-accreditation. [A listing of all accreditation fees](#) can be found on the ACGME's website.

Question: When will a newly accredited program appear in the list of ACGME-accredited programs and National Residency Matching Program (NRMP) list?

Shortly after the RRC has reviewed an application, the program director and the designated institutional official (DIO) of the sponsoring institution will receive notification of the accreditation decision. Once the program has received initial accreditation, it is included in the list of newly accredited programs on the [ACGME web site](#) according to the effective date of accreditation. This information is available to the public, including applicants. Once a program receives notification from the ACGME that the program has been granted accreditation, the program director should contact the NRMP to request the program's inclusion in the NRMP listing.

Question: How do we find out if our application requires a site visit?

After an application has been processed, the RRC team sends the program director an e-mail acknowledging receipt of the application. This notice also indicates whether a site visit is needed prior to RRC review (all core programs and many subspecialty programs

require a site visit). If a site visit is needed, the Department of Field Activities will schedule the visit and send a site visit announcement letter indicating the date. Programs that are not site visited prior to the review of their application must have a site visit within two years of initial accreditation.

Question: We are a new sponsoring institution. How do we apply for institutional accreditation?

All new institutions (i.e., those with no existing ACGME-accredited programs) applying for institutional accreditation will be reviewed under the revised Institutional Requirements (effective July 1, 2014 for all institutions, but effective July 1, 2013 for new institutions).

Institutions applying must submit an Institutional Review Application, which will be reviewed by the IRC. No site visit is required at the time of institutional application. If accredited, the institution will have a full institutional site visit within two years of the initial accreditation decision. Once accredited, the institution may proceed to apply for its programs' accreditation.

Question: How long does it take for an application to become accredited?

The RRCs and the ACGME give priority to new applications. At the same time, programs should expect the process to take as long as six to eight months for programs requiring a site visit. Applications that do not require a site visit prior to RRC review may be reviewed within four to six months.

Question: How can I ensure the RRC reviews the application in a timely way?

Completing the application with careful attention to detail is the most important initial step for the program director. The document submitted should demonstrate how the requirements are met in the program.

Common errors that may delay scheduling of the site visit or RRC review include missing or discrepant information about the planned program, missing signatures, or missing documents such as letters of agreement with participating sites. All submissions are considered final.

Question: How does the ACGME determine the name of the new program?

The ACGME's practice for naming programs is to assign the name of the program's sponsoring institution, followed by the word "Program." The name of the specialty does not appear in the name, unless the official name of the sponsoring institution includes the name of the specialty. Programs may denote their affiliation with a medical school or a particular participating site in the name of the program, with the express written permission of the entity to be included in the name.

Question: What accreditation status does the RRC assign to the new program?

At the review of an application, a Review Committee may grant “Initial Accreditation” or “Withhold Accreditation.” Accreditation is withheld when the RRC or IRC determines the new program or institution does not demonstrate substantial compliance with the requirements.

Question: There were some errors and added changes in our application documents. How do we correct these?

The ACGME accepts only one application, which must be submitted in its final form. In the rare event that changes need to be made after an application has been submitted to the ACGME, these changes should be minimal and will be reported by the field representative in his/her report. If added documentation is required, this will be appended to the field representative’s report.

When the program deems that a complete revised application should be submitted, the ACGME allows this only if the program agrees to pay a second application fee. If a site visit was scheduled, the date of the visit likely will need to be rescheduled. Changing the program director is considered a significant change, and may require the submission to be withdrawn and a new application to be submitted.

Sponsorship Changes and Mergers

We would like to transfer sponsorship of our program to another institution. What is required for this change?

Transfer of sponsorship requires a letter from the program’s current sponsoring institution (the DIO and the institution’s senior administrative official) indicating willingness to relinquish sponsorship, and a letter from the proposed sponsoring institution (the DIO and the institution’s senior administrative official) indicating willingness to sponsor the program. The letters should be addressed to the Executive Director of the program’s RRC, with a copy to the Senior Vice President, Department of Field Activities.

Several RRCs require a site visit prior to a transfer of sponsorship. Programs planning to transfer sponsorship should contact the Executive Director of their RRC before initiating the process. Upon transfer of sponsorship, the ACGME changes the name of the program to conform to that of the new sponsoring institution.

Our program is planning to merge with another program. Will the resulting program be considered as an application?

Two options exist for processing planned mergers between two accredited programs: (1) one program absorbs the other, or (2) the two residencies combine to form a “new” program. In the first model, the program that will remain proposes to add rotations to the other institution and demonstrates how all residents will participate in the program. The

program being “absorbed” then requests voluntary withdrawal pending a successful merger.

In the second model, the merged program receives a new program number and review as an application by the RRC; this is followed by the voluntary withdrawal of accreditation from the two previous programs. While most mergers are treated as the incorporation of the second program, the RRC reserves the right to decide whether the proposed change is so extensive that it constitutes an application.

If you are planning a merger, you should contact the RRC team to discuss the proposed changes. For the first review after a merger, the program director will need to provide responses to citations from the most recent reviews of both programs that formed the new merged program.