Accreditation Manual
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Chapter 1  Introduction

1.1 Authorization  
NCOPE functions as a Committee on Accreditation (CoA) within the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) system and adheres to the CAAHEP Policies and Procedures.

1.2 NCOPE Functions and Goals  
1. Program Review: The primary function of the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE) is to assess the merits of applicant educational programs for accreditation by CAAHEP in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for the following professions:
   ● Orthotist / Prosthetist
   ● Pedorthist
   ● Orthotic and Prosthetic Technician
   ● Orthotic and Prosthetic Assistant

2. Educational Outcomes Assessment: NCOPE is responsible for evaluating and recommending means by which its collaborating sponsoring organizations may favorably influence the quality and availability of education for the orthotic and prosthetic professions as a service to the public and professions.

3. Review and revision of CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines for Accreditation: NCOPE conducts periodic reviews of the CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Orthotics and Prosthetics and revises them as necessary.

1.3 Principles of Accreditation  
   ● Professional Integrity: NCOPE staff and volunteers including commissioners, board of directors, and reviewers adhere to professional integrity in all NCOPE-related activities. All members aim to maintain accountability, impartiality, confidentiality, open communication, transparency of process, fairness and consistency throughout the accreditation process.

   ● Advancing Standards: The Board follows established procedures to obtain input from a broad constituency to ensure the CAAHEP Education Standards reflect current best practice in Orthotics and Prosthetics.

   ● Student Advocacy: The Board strives to protect students by ensuring safe, appropriate and effective learning opportunities.

   ● Respecting Differences: In accordance with CAAHEP principles, NCOPE respects the integrity of instructional approaches and strategies and recognizes innovation in orthotic and prosthetic education that achieves the accreditation Standards.

   ● Continuous Improvement: NCOPE is committed to ongoing evaluation of its policies and procedures for the purpose of continuous improvement.
     ○ NCOPE also encourages continuous self-analysis and improvement of orthotic and prosthetic programs by representatives of the institution's administrative staff, teaching faculty, students, governing body and other appropriate constituencies, with the ultimate
aim of assuring students of quality education and ensuring patients of appropriate orthotic and prosthetic care.

- **Promoting Success at all Levels**: NCOPE is committed to supporting programs in their efforts to meet the Standards for all CAAHEP levels of the O&P profession.

- **Input from all Stakeholders**: The Board acknowledges that varied perspectives are necessary when making decisions. We value the comments, expertise and insights of members of the profession throughout NCOPE activities, such as the development of policies, revision of Standards and the accreditation process.

### 1.4 Accreditation Purpose and Benefits

**Accreditation**

Accreditation is a system for recognizing educational institutions and professional programs affiliated with those institutions for a level of performance, integrity and quality, which entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public they serve. In the United States this recognition is extended primarily through nongovernmental, voluntary institutional or professional associations. These groups establish criteria for accreditation, arrange site visits, evaluate those institutions and professional programs that desire accredited status, and publicly designate those that meet their criteria.

The system of voluntary non-governmental evaluation, called accreditation, has evolved to promote both regional and national approaches to the determination of educational quality. Although accreditation is basically a private, voluntary process, accrediting decisions are used as a consideration in many formal actions - by governmental funding agencies, scholarship commissions, foundations, employers, counselors and potential students. Accrediting bodies have, therefore, come to be viewed as quasi-public entities with certain responsibilities to the many groups, which interact with the educational community.

In America, accreditation at the postsecondary level performs a number of important functions, including the encouragement of efforts toward maximum educational effectiveness. The accrediting process requires institutions and programs to examine their goals, activities and achievements; to consider the expert criticism and suggestions of a visiting team; and to determine internal procedures for action on recommendations from the accrediting body. Since accreditation status is reviewed on a periodic basis, recognized institutions and professional programs are encouraged to maintain continuous self-study and improvement mechanisms.

**Purpose of Accreditation**

Throughout the evolution of its procedures, the aims of postsecondary accreditation have been and remain:

1. Foster excellence in postsecondary education through the development of criteria and guidelines for assessing educational effectiveness.
2. Encourage improvement through continuous self-study and review.
3. Assure the educational community, the public, and other agencies or organizations that an institution or program has clearly defined and appropriate objectives and maintains conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected to continue.
4. Provide counsel and assistance to established and developing institutions and programs.
5. Endeavor to protect institutions against encroachments which might jeopardize their educational effectiveness or academic freedom (Directory of Recognized Accrediting Bodies, August 1990).

Benefits of Accreditation
By stating that an institution has met established CAAHEP Standards, accreditation provides benefits to:

1. The Public
   a. An assurance of external evaluation of the institution or program, and a finding that there is conformity to general expectations in higher education or the professional field;
   b. An identification of institutions and programs that have voluntarily undertaken explicit activities directed at improving the quality of the institution and its professional programs, and are carrying them out successfully;
   c. An improvement in the professional services available to the public, as accredited programs modify their requirements to reflect changes in knowledge and practices generally accepted in the field;
   d. A decreased need for intervention by public agencies in the operations of educational institutions since through accreditation, their institutions are providing privately for the maintenance and enhancement of educational quality.

2. The Students
   a. An assurance that the educational activities of an accredited institution or program have been found to be satisfactory, and therefore meet the needs of students;
   b. Assistance in the transfer of credits between institutions, or in the admission of students to advanced degrees through the general acceptance of credits among accredited institutions when the performance of the student has been satisfactory and the credits to be transferred are appropriate to the receiving institution;
   c. A prerequisite in many cases for entering a profession.

3. The Profession
   a. Providing a means for the participation of practitioners in setting the requirements for preparation to enter the profession;
   b. Contributing to the unity of the professions by bringing together practitioners, teachers and students in an activity directed at improving professional preparation and professional practice (CORPA Policy Statement on The Role and Value of Accreditation, 1982).

4. Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)
   a. The Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) was established as a non-profit agency on July 1, 1994. It is the largest specialized accreditation system in the country, accrediting educational programs in 23 disciplines. Today CAAHEP is a dynamic allied health agency comprised of representatives from professional allied health organizations and
related specialty and education groups, including 19 Committees on Accreditation (CoAs). These representatives form what is called the Commission.

b. NCOPE serves in cooperation with CAAHEP for accreditation of O&P educational programs. NCOPE is a sponsor CoA in the CAAHEP system. Each CoA is comprised of experts who assess applicant programs to ensure they meet the nationally accepted standards that are designed to prepare graduates for entry into the healthcare workforce. The accreditation standards are developed and adopted in collaboration with CAAHEP member-sponsors. Once an applicant program's formal application and CoA review process is complete, the designed CoA forwards program accreditation recommendations to CAAHEP for review to ensure they adhere to the principles of due process and are devoid of any conflicts of interest. CAAHEP awards accreditation to those programs that meet or exceed the national standards.

c. CAAHEP is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) for accredited programs that result in an associate, baccalaureate or master degrees.

1.5 History of O&P Accreditation

The American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association (AOPA), founded in 1917, in conjunction with the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons, sponsored the creation of the American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics, Inc. (ABC) in 1948. The Board was created for the purposes of establishing and maintaining Standards for the practice of orthotics and prosthetics.

In 1972 the Educational Accreditation Commission (EAC) was created by ABC. The Commission was established to conform to ABC's need for an institutional accreditation program. A consensus was reached that this would be a useful process for providing guidance to existing schools as well as to new educational institutions that might seek to participate in the training of orthotists and prosthetists. Basic educational Standards were developed, and the process of self-accreditation was implemented.

The accreditation process continued under the auspices of ABC until 1988, when AOPA, ABC and the American Academy of Orthotists and Prosthetists (AAOP, or “the Academy”) funded the operations of the EAC equally.

In the spring of 1990, a Task Force was established to review the professions' current educational and accreditation systems. In March of 1991, the Task Force report was presented to the respective organizations (AOPA, ABC and the Academy) and out of the report came the recommendation that the EAC should be a separate reorganized body with their own administrative bylaws.

In July of 1991, the new Commission met and renamed the organization the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE).

The current Board is composed with representation as follows:

- Six representatives from the National Office,
- Three representatives from National Association of Orthotic and Prosthetic Educators (NAPOE),
- One public member
1.6 The Comprehensive Accreditation Review Process

The accreditation process is continuously evolving. The trend has been from quantitative to qualitative criteria, from the early days of simple checklists to an increasing interest and emphasis on measuring the outcomes of educational experiences. Every five years, CAAHEP accredited O&P programs are re-evaluated for continuing accreditation. The Comprehensive Review includes an external review of the program’s self-study report and a site visit to verify information from the Program’s self-study. The following list outlines the steps involved in the Comprehensive Accreditation Review.

1. To initiate the accreditation process, the programs completes a Request for Accreditation Services (RAS) through the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP).

2. Programs complete a self study of its ability to address the Standards for accreditation.
   - The program reviews it's annual reports, past self-studies, it's mission and goals and its outcomes in relation to the Standards.
   - The data are aggregated, evaluated and summarized.

3. Self-Study Submission
   - The program’s self-study findings are reported through the online AMP program.
   - NCOPE assigns self-study reviewers.

4. Review of Self-Study
   - Self-study reviewers review the Program’s Self-study in relation to the CAAHEP Standards.
   - Self-study reviewers submit a report to NCOPE.
   - NCOPE shares the self-study reviewers report with the program.
   - An iterative process may occur if additional documentation is requested.

5. Site Visit
   - Once the self-study has been reviewed by the self study reviewers, the site visit is scheduled.
   - NCOPE assigns site visitors.
   - Site visitors evaluate the program
     i. Respond to self-study reviewers report
     ii. Prepare a site visit report
   - The program reviews the report for factual accuracy.
   - NCOPE sends the Findings Letter to the program.

6. NCOPE Board Review
   - NCOPE bases its recommendation to CAAHEP on its review of the self-study, the self-study reviewers report, the site visitors report and the findings letter.

7. CAAHEP awards the accreditation status
**When does CAAHEP accreditation expire?**

CAAHEP accreditation does not expire. However, there is a time period placed on both initial accreditation and continuing accreditation.

- Initial accreditation is valid for 3 years.
- Continuing accreditation is up for renewal every 5 years.

The Program Director shall find the schedule of self study deadlines and site visits through the NCOPE Accreditation Calendar within the [Accreditation Management Portal](#).
Chapter 2  Policy Statements of the Accreditation Process

2.1 Communication and Submission of Reports to the Board

All CAAHEP accredited programs are expected to prepare reports that adhere to guidelines set forth by the Commission and meet established deadlines for submission of requested information. This section describes the guidelines for communication and submission of reports.

2.1.1 Guideline for NCOPE Communication with Educational Program and Institutional Representatives

Written Communication
In order to prevent problems related to misunderstanding and/or misinformation, it is the policy of NCOPE that all communications regarding NCOPE Board and/or CAAHEP Commission actions related to the accreditation status shall be presented through official written correspondence. Such correspondence is sent directly from NCOPE over the signature of the NCOPE Chairperson, and is addressed and copied as follows:

- For action leading to a change in a Program’s reaffirmation of accreditation status, letters are addressed to staff at NCOPE and copied to the CEO, dean, Program Director and reviewers.
- For any other Board action that involves or may involve areas of noncompliance with the Standards (i.e., Deficiencies), letters are addressed to the CEO and copied to the dean, Program Director and reviewers.
- For other Board actions that do not directly affect accreditation status, letters are generally addressed to the and copied to the reviewers.
- Additional written communication related to procedures and scheduling for the accreditation process is sent directly to the Program Director from the Executive Director of NCOPE.

2.1.2 Policy and Procedure for Delay of Self-Study

NCOPE occasionally receives requests for delay of self-study submission. These requests are decided on a case-by-case basis with consideration being given to the following factors:

1. Request for participation in a joint survey.
2. Total interval between site visits if delay is approved.
3. Impact on current students.
4. Frequency/history for requesting delays.
5. Status at last survey and site visit.
6. Changes in program since the last site visit (e.g., level, length, location, faculty).

Procedure for handling a request for a delay of the self-study is as follows:

1. Requests for delay must be submitted in writing no more than 60 days upon notification from NCOPE of self-study due date.
2. The request is placed on the agenda for the next Board meeting and acted on by the entire Board.
3. Until a decision is made by the NCOPE Board, the program must proceed with preparations as though the self-study deadline is as originally scheduled.

2.1.3 Policy and Procedure for Delay of Site Visit

NCOPE occasionally receives requests for delay of a site visit. These requests are decided on a case-by-case basis with consideration being given to the following factors:

1. Request for participation in a joint survey.
2. Total interval between site visits if delay is approved.
3. Impact on current students.
4. Frequency/history for requesting delays.
5. Status at last survey and site visit.
6. Changes in program since the last site visit (e.g., level, length, location).

Whenever possible, rescheduling will be accomplished within the site-visit year rather than postponing to the following year. This provides considerable flexibility in scheduling and is an administrative decision not requiring Board action.

Procedure for handling a request for a delay to the next site-visit year is as follows:
1. Requests for delay must be submitted in writing at least six (6) months prior to the scheduled site visit.
2. The request is placed on the agenda for the next Board meeting and acted on by the entire Board.
3. Until a decision is made by the NCOPE Board, the program must proceed with preparations as though the site visit were occurring as originally scheduled.

2.1.4 Policy for Failure to Submit Reports

Timely submission of accreditation reports (i.e. annual reports, self-study reports, progress reports) is critical to provide adequate review time prior to NCOPE action. A due date is established for each accreditation report and provided to the program in writing.

Failure to meet administrative requirements may lead to administrative probation and ultimately to the withdrawal of accreditation. CAAHEP will immediately rescind administrative probation once all administrative deficiencies have been rectified. (CAAHEP Standards, Appendix A)

NCOPE has established the following procedures regarding the failure to submit accreditation reports by the specified due date:

1. When an accreditation report is not received by the specified due date, a warning letter is sent to the Program Director (with a copy to the dean), stating that the report must be received within 15 working days of the due date or the program will be placed on Administrative Probationary Accreditation. (See Recognition Statuses)

2. If a report is received by NCOPE before the end of the 15-day grace period, receipt of the
report is acknowledged by NCOPE and the report is reviewed by the Accreditation Committee at its next scheduled meeting.

3. If a report is not received by 5:00 p.m. on day 15 of the grace period, a recommendation of Administrative Probation may be moved forward to CAAHEP after review by the NCOPE board.

4. Once a delinquent report is received, it is acknowledged by NCOPE and the Administrative Probationary Accreditation status should be removed.

2.1.5 Communication about Submission of Reports

Submitting reports through the Accreditation Management Portal (AMP)
Annual Reports and Self-Studies are submitted using the NCOPE Accreditation Management Portal (AMP). Upon successful submission, a confirmation screen is shown. Within 4 hours, a copy of the completed annual report and/or self-study is automatically emailed to the individual identified as the primary contact with AMP.

Direct correspondence to NCOPE staff
In regard to direct correspondence other than submission of reports through AMP, you should receive confirmation within 2 business days. If no confirmation of receipt from NCOPE within 2 business days, follow up with a phone call to the NCOPE Clinical Resource Director identified on the NCOPE Staff Directory: http://ncope.org/about/contact/.

Note: Please ensure that messages sent from email addresses ending in “ncope.org” are not blocked by your email spam filter or firewall.

In the event the email is not received, please contact the NCOPE Clinical Resource Director identified on the NCOPE Staff Directory: http://ncope.org/about/contact/.”

2.2 Disclosure of Accreditation Recognition Status

2.2.1. CAAHEP Public Notification of a Program’s Status
CAAHEP provides the public with information about a program’s accreditation status through its website directory of accredited programs. (Section 301 Public Notification of a Program’s Status)

2.2.2 NCOPE Public Notification of a Program’s Status
NCOPE publishes annually a list of accredited orthotic and prosthetic educational programs including a section devoted to developing programs that have entered the accreditation process and sections devoted to programs that have voluntarily or involuntarily withdrawn from the accreditation process. The fact that the program is included as an accredited educational program in the listing indicates that it is in substantial compliance with the Standards and thus meets a common minimal level of quality. The scope, policies, procedures and decisions of NCOPE are described in official documents and available to the public through the NCOPE website.
If inquiries, written or verbal, are received regarding the accreditation status of a program, the inquirer is told:
1. whether the program is accredited,
2. the specific accreditation category,
3. the definition of the application accreditation category, and
4. The next review date

If the status is Probationary Accreditation or Administrative Probationary Accreditation, the inquirer is referred to the program for further, current information regarding the reason(s) for the probation and the program's progress in addressing them.

Effective 1/1/93, notice of all final actions of NCOPE regarding the status of educational programs will be published annually by NCOPE.

2.2.3 Institutions Responsibilities for Publication and Disclosure
All accredited O&P education programs are expected to exhibit integrity and responsibility in programmatic advertising and student recruitment. CAAHEP section V.A. Fair Practices describes the requirements for institution publication and disclosure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAAHEP Policy</th>
<th>V. Fair Practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Publications and Disclosure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Announcements, catalogs, publications, and advertising must accurately reflect the program offered.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least the following must be made known to all applicants and students: the sponsor’s institutional and programmatic accreditation status as well as the name, mailing address, web site address, and phone number of the accrediting agencies; admissions policies and practices, including technical standards (when used); policies on advanced placement, transfer of credits, and credits for experiential learning; number of credits required for completion of the program; tuition/fees and other costs required to complete the program; policies and processes for withdrawal and for refunds of tuition/fees.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>At least the following must be made known to all students: academic calendar, student grievance procedure, criteria for successful completion of each segment of the curriculum and for graduation, and policies and processes by which students may perform clinical work while enrolled in the program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sponsor must maintain, and make available to the public, current and consistent summary information about student/graduate achievement that includes the results of one or more of the outcomes assessments required in these Standards.</td>
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</table>

The sponsor should develop a suitable means of communicating to the communities of interest the
2.2.3.1 NCOPE Candidate for Accreditation Policy

NCOPE follows CAAHEP policies, thus requiring institutions and programs to be accurate in reporting to the public the program’s accreditation status. Publication of a program’s accreditation status must include the full name, mailing address and telephone number of NCOPE.

Suggested wording may include the following:

- Programs in orthotics and prosthetics that are **Seeking Candidate for Accreditation Status by NCOPE**.
  - (Name of Program/Institution) is seeking accreditation by the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education. The program [will submit/has submitted] an Application for Candidacy, which is the formal application required in the pre-accreditation stage. Submission of this document does not assure that the program will be granted Candidate for Accreditation status nor does it assure that the program will be granted Accreditation.

- Programs in orthotics and prosthetics that are **Recognized with Candidate for Accreditation Status by NCOPE**.
  - “The [name of program] is recognized with Candidate for Accreditation status by the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE). Candidate for Accreditation is a status that indicates that the education program is progressing toward initial CAAHEP accreditation status. National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education, 330 John Carlyle St., Ste. 200, Alexandria, VA 22314, Tel: 703-836-7114 [www.ncope.org](http://www.ncope.org)

2.2.3.2 CAAHEP Accreditation Status Disclosure Policies

CAAHEP requires institutions and programs to be accurate in reporting to the public the program’s accreditation status. Refer to the CAAHEP policies to find the rules on publications and disclosure.

- The [CAAHEP Policy Manual](http://www.caahep.org) describes the rules on public use of CAAHEP
Accreditation Status (Section 302)
- Refer to the [CAAHEP Policy Manual](https://www.caahep.org) for use of the CAAHEP logo (Section 303).

Suggested wording may include the following:

- Programs in orthotics and prosthetics that are **Accredited by CAAHEP**:
  - “[Name of program] is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (www.caahep.org) upon the recommendation of the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education. Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs 25400 US Hwy 19 N., Suite 158 Clearwater, FL 33763 727-210-2350 [www.caahep.org](https://www.caahep.org)

- Programs in orthotics and prosthetics that have been placed on **Probationary Accreditation by CAAHEP**. If a program has been placed on Probationary Accreditation by CAAHEP, it must inform all students and applicants in writing, and must disclose this sanction whenever reference is made to its accreditation status, by including the statement:
  - “[Name of program] is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (www.caahep.org) upon the recommendation of the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education. The program has been placed on Probationary Accreditation as of [date of Probation action]. Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs 25400 US Hwy 19 N., Suite 158 Clearwater, FL 33763 727-210-2350 [www.caahep.org](https://www.caahep.org)

### 2.2.3.3 Disclosure of Program Outcomes
The sponsor must maintain, and make available to the public, current and consistent summary information about student/graduate achievement that includes the results of the following program outcomes assessments:

- Practitioner programs must disclose
  - employment rates
  - ABC pass rates
- Technical programs must disclose
  - graduation rates
  - ABC pass rates
- Assistant programs must disclose
  - graduation rates
  - ABC pass rates
- Pedorthic programs must disclose
  - graduation rates
  - ABC pass rates

### 2.3 Accreditation Fees
NCOPE is committed to administering a quality accreditation program in a cost-effective manner. The Board continually seeks opportunities to minimize costs to both the educational programs and to
NCOPE. NCOPE maintains an established fee schedule to support the operations of the accreditation program for candidate, initial and continuing accredited education programs.

Note that institutions housing O&P practitioner, pedorthic, technician and assistant programs must pay the application, site visit and annual fees applicable for each program. Institutions housing more than one O&P program (i.e., associate, baccalaureate, and/or professional master's) would pay for each Application, site visit and/or Annual Fee.

- **Application Fees** are billed upon receipt of the self-study materials.
- **Site Visit Evaluation Fees and Surcharges** are billed after the site visit is complete.
- **Annual Accreditation Fees** are billed in early February and are payable upon receipt. If early notification is required to facilitate the processing of a purchase order for payment, NCOPE should be notified. Annual Fees are due each year, including the year in which a site visit is scheduled. For new programs, the Annual Fee becomes effective with the first full academic year for which the program has accreditation status.

### 2.4 Complaints Regarding Accredited Programs

The [CAAHEP Policy Manual](http://www.ncope.org/assets/pdf/NCOPE_Policy.pdf?20160428) describes the procedure for complaints regarding accredited programs (Section 602 Complaints Regarding Accredited). NCOPE follows due process procedures when written and signed complaints are received alleging that they or an accredited program are not following established Board policies or accreditation *Standards*. CAAHEP and NCOPE maintain indefinitely a record of all complaints received.

### 2.5 Quality Assurance of Accreditation Policies and Processes

NCOPE is responsible for developing and periodically revising the CAAHEP Accreditation *Standards*. These *Standards* are the minimum requirements to which an accredited program is held accountable and include fair business practices, ethical standards, due process and fair educational practices as well as outcome measures.

NCOPE periodically reviews its policies and procedures to ensure that:
- They are consistent with the recommendations of CAAHEP and the United States Department of Education (USDE),
- They facilitate an impartial and objective judgment of each program's compliance with the *Standards*,
- They ensure due process, and
- They minimize, as much as possible, the burden of the documentation required.

### 2.6 NCOPE Communication about Updates on *Standards*, Policies and Procedures

Relevant changes to *Standards*, policies and procedures are disseminated to educational programs on a regular basis, such as in NCOPE Annual Reports, direct communications with Program Directors and during educators meetings at national conferences.

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Chapter 3  Recognition Statuses

3.1 Accreditation Recommendations

NCOPE bases its recommendation on its review of the Self-Study, the Self-Study Reviewers Report, the Letter of Review, the Site Visits Report, and the Program’s Response to the Site Visit Report. NCOPE sends the Findings Letter to the appropriate institutional official, with copies to the Program Director and the Dean.

- **If the Accreditation recommendation has been voted to move forward:**
  - The proposed program would appear to meet the Standards if fully implemented in accordance with the plans of the sponsoring institution.
  - NCOPE forwards its recommendation to CAAHEP
  - CAAHEP awards the Initial or Continuing Accreditation Status

- **If Accreditation recommendation has been voted to not move forward:**
  - One or more of the Standards are not met (e.g., faculty, budget, facilities, course content, etc.), and there does not appear to be evidence of substantial compliance or the ability to comply within the immediate future.
  - The program is informed of the denial through to not recommend Initial or Continued Accreditation status to CAAHEP.
  - No further action is taken by NCOPE unless the appropriate institutional official and the Program Director sends a Letter of Intent to rectify non-compliance issues and to proceed with the accreditation process within 30 days of receipt of notification of denial to move the recommendation forward.
  - At the end of the 30 days, if no request has been received for reconsideration of recommendation from the program with supporting compliance evidence, then the application becomes inactive.

3.2 NCOPE Candidate for Accreditation Recognition Status

Candidate for Accreditation is a pre-accreditation status whose purpose is to recognize programs that are seeking accreditation status and are in process of Standards compliance. It establishes a formal, publicly recognized relationship with NCOPE that helps assure that the institution develops an O&P program with adequate planning and with the necessary resources (e.g., leadership, faculty, physical plant, budget, clinical education sites).

Attainment of Candidate for Accreditation status does not assure accreditation by CAAHEP. This is a preliminary status that is granted by NCOPE; it is not a recognized CAAHEP accreditation status. It shall be granted by NCOPE for a time period not to exceed two years.

Refer to New Program Accreditation Process for more details about this accreditation status.

3.3 CAAHEP Recognition Statuses
Students successfully completing a program that is granted any of the following recognition statuses at any point during their tenure as students are regarded as graduates of a CAAHEP-accredited program. Reference Policy 204 Statuses of Accreditation:

CAAHEP Accreditation Categories
- Initial Accreditation
- Continuing Accreditation
- Probationary Accreditation
- Administrative Probationary Accreditation

Non-Accreditation Categories
- Accreditation Withheld
- Accreditation Withdrawn
- Inactive Status

3.3.1 Initial Accreditation
Initial Accreditation is the first status of accreditation granted to a program that has demonstrated substantial compliance with CAAHEP Standards. The first status of accreditation shall be granted to a program for a period no longer than five years. At any point during the initial accreditation period, a program may be recommended for continuing accreditation or, if warranted, for probationary accreditation. If no recommendation is forthcoming, the Initial Accreditation will automatically expire.

Refer to Initial Accreditation Process for more details about this accreditation status.

3.3.2 Continuing Accreditation
Continuing Accreditation is granted to a program when it is re-evaluated every five years. It does not expire. It shall remain as the status until a recommendation is forwarded to CAAHEP.

Refer to Program Continuing Accreditation Requirements for more details about this accreditation status.

3.3.3 Probationary Accreditation
Probationary Accreditation is granted when the program is not in substantial compliance with the Standards because:

1. The deficiencies are so serious that the capability of the program to provide acceptable educational experiences for the student is threatened, or

2. The program has not corrected deficiencies within a reasonable period of time (usually not more than two years).
If the cited deficiencies are not in dispute, NCOPE may recommend Probationary Accreditation without conducting a site visit. However, most awards of Probationary Accreditation are based on evidence obtained during a site visit or fact-finding visit.

*Probationary Accreditation is usually limited to one year.* It may not extend beyond two years.

The appropriate official of the institution is provided with a clear statement of each deficiency contributing to the failure to be in compliance with the *Standards* and notified of the due date for a required Plan of Correction. NCOPE will assess the adequacy of the Plan of Correction to return the program to substantial compliance with the *Standards* and will require Progress Reports documenting how each deficiency has been or is being resolved. Failure to come into substantial compliance with the *Standards* will result in a recommendation that accreditation be withheld for initial accreditation or withdrawn from an accredited program.

- **Opportunity for Reconsideration/Appeal**

  NCOPE provides an opportunity for reconsideration prior to action. (See [Reconsideration/Appeals Process](#)) Following NCOPE's reconsideration of a recommendation, if denied, recommendation to CAAHEP of Probationary Accreditation are final and are not subject to appeal.

3.3.4 Administrative Probationary Accreditation

The institutional sponsor and the accredited program will be advised that the program is on Administrative Probationary Accreditation when the program does not comply with one or more of the following administrative requirements for maintaining accreditation:

1. Submitting the Self-Study Report, a required Plan of Correction, a required Progress Report or the Annual Report to NCOPE by the specified due date.
2. Agreeing to a reasonable site visit date within the year specified for reevaluation for continuing accreditation.
3. Paying accreditation fees within ninety (90) days after being notified of a past-due account.
4. Documenting within ninety (90) days of a new appointment that the program has retained and/or changed key program personnel (i.e., Program Director), as required by the *Standards*.

When an accredited program has failed to satisfy the requirements identified above, the Executive Director of NCOPE, after consultation with the Board, will promptly notify CAAHEP and the chief executive officer (CEO) of the sponsoring institution, the dean or comparable administrative officer and the Program Director that the program is being recommended for Administrative Probationary Accreditation until the Commission's administrative requirement has been satisfied.

At its next scheduled meeting, NCOPE reviews the probation status and determines if a recommendation for withdrawal of accreditation is merited.

When and if the program satisfies the requirements, the NCOPE promptly notifies CAAHEP and the CEO, the dean or comparable administrative officer and the Program Director that Administrative Probationary Accreditation is withdrawn and the program's accreditation is reinstated.
NCOPE does not provide opportunity for reconsideration of recommendations of Administrative Probationary Accreditation. NCOPE recommendations of Administrative Probationary Accreditation are final and are not subject to appeal. During a period of Administrative Probationary Accreditation, programs are recognized and listed as being accredited.

3.4 Non-Accreditation Categories

3.4.1 Accreditation Withheld
A program seeking initial accreditation may have accreditation withheld if the accreditation review process confirms that the program is not in substantial compliance with the Standards that are vital to the educational program.

The appropriate official is provided with a clear statement of each deficiency and is informed that a new application for accreditation may be made whenever the program is believed to be in substantial compliance with the Standards. A Letter of Intent must be filed and the Letter of Review process repeated. Fees would be reassessed.

- Opportunity for Withdrawal of Application
  The institution sponsoring a program may withdraw the Application for Initial Accreditation at any time prior to NCOPE's consideration. Programs selecting this option relinquish the opportunity to appeal that is provided to programs receiving a status of Accreditation Withheld.

- Opportunity for Reconsideration/Appeal
  Prior to recommendation, NCOPE provides opportunity for reconsideration of the recommendation to withhold accreditation. The letter informing the appropriate official of the accreditation recommendation describes the reconsideration process. The letter from NCOPE notifying the appropriate official that the program has had accreditation withheld for failure to be in substantial compliance with the Standards indicates that the institution may appeal the decision. (See Reconsideration/Appeals Process)

3.4.2 Accreditation Withdrawn
Students enrolled in an accredited program at the time the sponsoring institution is notified that accreditation has been withdrawn may complete the requirements for graduation and will be considered graduates of an NCOPE accredited program.

- Accreditation Withdrawn-Voluntary (at the request of the sponsoring institution)
  The appropriate official of a program may at any time inform CAAHEP in writing that the program is or will be discontinued by a given date or that the official wishes to have accreditation withdrawn. This notification is acknowledged by NCOPE.

  The official is informed that the sponsoring institution must apply for accreditation as a new applicant should it wish to resume sponsorship of an accredited program.

- Accreditation Withdrawn-Involuntary (for failure to be in substantial compliance with the Standards or with administrative requirements).
Accreditation may be involuntarily withdrawn from a program with Probationary Accreditation if the accreditation review process confirms that the program has not come into substantial compliance with the Standards or with the administrative requirements for maintaining accreditation within a reasonable period of time, usually no longer than one year.

The appropriate official is provided with a clear statement of each deficiency and is informed that the sponsoring institution may apply for accreditation as a new applicant whenever the program is believed to be in compliance with the Standards and with the administrative requirements for maintaining accreditation.

- Opportunity for Withdrawal of Application
  The institution sponsoring a program may withdraw the Application for Continuing Accreditation at any time prior to NCOPE consideration. Programs selecting this option relinquish the opportunity to appeal that is provided to programs receiving a status of Accreditation Withdrawn-Involuntary.

- Opportunity for Reconsideration/Appeal
  Prior to recommendation the Board provides an opportunity for reconsideration of a recommendation to withdraw accreditation. The letter informing the appropriate official of the accreditation recommendation describes the reconsideration process.

The letter from CAAHEP notifying the appropriate officials that the program has received Accreditation Withdrawn--Involuntary indicates that the institution may appeal the decision (See Reconsideration/Appeals Process)

1. From Initial or Continuing Accreditation

If the accreditation review process confirms that a program is in substantial compliance with the Standards and with administrative requirements, the program is awarded initial accreditation or continuing accreditation. If the program is not in compliance with the Standards and requirements, NCOPE may recommend Probationary Accreditation (including Administrative Probationary Accreditation) or Accreditation Withdrawn.

In unusual circumstances, such as evidence of critical deficiencies that appear to be irremediable within a reasonable length of time, or a documented threat to the welfare of current and potential students, NCOPE will recommend to CAAHEP withdrawal of accreditation without providing a period of probation.

Programs from which accreditation is involuntarily withdrawn without a probationary period are ensured due process, as described in Reconsideration/Appeals Process.

2. From Probationary Accreditation (including Administrative Probationary Accreditation)

If the accreditation review process confirms that a program has corrected the identified deficiencies leading to probation within a reasonable period of time and is in substantial compliance with the Standards and with administrative requirements, the program is awarded initial accreditation or continuing accreditation. If the identified deficiencies are not corrected
within a reasonable period of time (usually no more than one year), NCOPE may grant extension of Probationary Accreditation or Accreditation Withdrawn.

3.5 Inactive Status Policy
Inactive status is a special status applied only to programs that are not currently enrolling new students.

The status "inactive" does not replace any other current accreditation status. The designation follows the regular accreditation status, e.g., Accreditation - Inactive. Students graduating from a program on inactive status are considered graduates of an accredited program.

A program may remain in inactive status for a maximum of two years. During that time, the program remains responsible for submission of the Annual Report to NCOPE and must pay the annual accreditation fee. A program may request reactivation at any time during the period of inactive status.

If the program chooses not to reactivate, the program may request Voluntary Withdrawal of Accreditation.

If a request is not received prior to the end of two years, the status will be changed to Involuntary Withdrawal of Accreditation.

Procedure
Written notification of intent to move to inactive status must be signed by the CEO of the institution and the Program Director and sent to:

National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE) 330 John Carlyle St., Suite 200
Alexandria, Virginia 22314
(703) 836-7114
fax (703) 836-0838

The two-year period begins on the date of receipt of this notification. At the end of the first year of inactive status, a letter will be sent to the program to inquire about plans to reactivate.

If the request for inactive status includes a request for delay of a site visit, the request for delay will be considered by NCOPE according to the procedure described in the NCOPE’s Policy and Procedure for Delay of Site Visit.

A request to reactivate accreditation must be submitted in writing (signed by the CEO and the Program Director) six months prior to the enrollment of students. A determination will be made at the time of the request regarding documentation and evaluation required (i.e., full self-study and site visit or brief report regarding current status) for reactivation. During the time between the request for reactivation and the final approval for reactivation, status will be designated as "Reactivating" (e.g., Probationary Accreditation - Reactivating).
Chapter 4  NCOPE Candidate for Accreditation Process

The first step for any new emerging orthotic and prosthetic academic program is for the program to apply to become a candidate for accreditation. Candidate for Accreditation is a status that indicates that the orthotic and prosthetic education program is progressing toward formal accreditation. Attainment of Candidate for Accreditation status does not assure accreditation by NCOPE/CAAHEP. The purpose is to help assure that the institution develops an O&P program with adequate planning and with the necessary resources (e.g., leadership, faculty, physical plant, budget, clinical education sites) to address the CAAHEP Standards.

Candidate for Accreditation once granted is not an accreditation status and therefore students graduating under candidacy would not be graduating from an accredited program and would not be accepted by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics, Prosthetics and Pedorthics. The purpose for the candidacy program is to help assure that institutions develop O&P education programs with adequate planning and the necessary resources (e.g., leadership, faculty, physical plant, and budget). This program allows developing O&P programs the opportunity to establish a formal and publicly recognized relationship with NCOPE.

**Definition of Candidate for Accreditation:** Candidate for Accreditation is a status that indicates that the orthotic and prosthetic education program is progressing toward formal accreditation. Attainment of Candidate for Accreditation status does not assure accreditation by NCOPE/CAAHEP. The purpose is to
help assure that the institution develops an O&P program with adequate planning and with the necessary resources (e.g., leadership, faculty, physical plant, budget, clinical education sites).

### 4.1 Program Conditions for Accreditation Eligibility

1. An O&P Program Director must be on staff at least six (6) months prior to the initiation of an O&P program and the admission of students to ensure a timely progression of the process.
2. It is expected that appropriate state and institutional bodies approve the proposed curriculum before a site visit is conducted by NCOPE.
3. Granting of Candidate for Accreditation status must occur prior to the enrollment of students in the program.
   - The program and the institution agree to not enroll students in the applicant program until recognized by NCOPE. The program will provide evidence upon submission of its application that it fully understands that failure to comply with this condition shall result in termination of the review by NCOPE without having made a final decision.
   - The attainment of Candidate for Accreditation status is required for the program to proceed with the CAAHEP accreditation process.

The verbiage of this Candidacy process (section 4.2) is from the Commission on Accreditation of Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) and modified slightly to meet the needs for the profession of O&P. The procedures were adopted by the NCOPE board of directors and became effective January 1, 2007. The policy was accessed on-line at www.apta.org.

### 4.2 Procedures for Achievement of Candidate Status for Accreditation

**Communication with NCOPE**

NCOPE should be notified when an institution is considering the development of an education program. NCOPE may provide guidance and assistance to ensure that the steps leading to accreditation are initiated in a timely manner. NCOPE staff or board members are available at any time during the process to provide guidance to programs. The NCOPE staff members may be contacted through the NCOPE National Office at: 330 John Carlyle St., Ste. 200, Alexandria, VA 22314, telephone: (703) 836-7114, fax: (703) 836-0838. Additional information by contacting us through the NCOPE “contact us” page.

**Procedure**

1. Program completes the Application for Candidacy Status (ACS): [http://www.ncope.org/view/?file=candidatestatus](http://www.ncope.org/view/?file=candidatestatus) no later than ten months prior to the planned enrollment of the first class of students in the professional or technical phase of the program. If the Candidacy Application is not submitted according to the established time schedule, NCOPE cannot guarantee that a candidacy decision will be made prior to the intended date of enrollment of the charter class of students.

   The ACS must include the following items:
   - A completed Application for Candidate Accreditation, which is signed by the Chief Executive Officer of the sponsoring institution and the program director who has
responsibility for the program.

- Evidence of appropriate state approval to offer the program, if necessary.
- Evidence that the institution planning to offer the program is, or has an executed formal agreement with, an institution of higher education with degree granting authority and accreditation from an agency or association recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, or evidence that the institution has at least candidate status granted by the appropriate accrediting agency or association.
- Evidence that the institution has employed a program administrator/director who meets the Standards related to qualifications. The program administrator/director should be employed full-time to plan, as well as implement, the program. This individual plans and implements the academic and clinical education components (where appropriate) of the program; demonstrates an understanding of the curriculum; provides timely communication with the institution, profession and other communities of interest; and demonstrates a concern with the future welfare of the education program being developed.
- Evidence that the institution and program agree not to enroll students in the program until Candidate for Accreditation status has been achieved.

2. Program submits a Candidate for Accreditation Self-Study Report to NCOPE.

Submission of the Application for Candidate Status (ACS) is a crucial step in the accreditation process for O&P program. The ACS is a report through which the institution provides information in response to the items in the Standards. The information and data submitted in the ACS are used to identify areas of weakness that might preclude compliance with the Standards and to offer recommendations for strengthening the education program. In addition, submission of the ACS and receipt of same by NCOPE provides the basis for establishing a reasonable timetable for the accreditation process.

The ACS is submitted to NCOPE from the institution where the education program is located. In order to assure a timely review during the pre-accreditation process and to have adequate time for the accreditation action to cover the first class of graduates, five copies of the ACS are to be submitted no later than ten months prior to enrollment of the first class of students in the professional or technical phase of the program. In cases of curricular design of one year or less, frequently seen in certificate level programs, the program is expected to submit the ACS a full year in advance.

NCOPE will accept materials at any time but will not assure the institution that the final action will be timely in order to cover the students initially enrolled in the program if the suggested timeline is not followed.

3. NCOPE Staff and Committee review the application

The staff of NCOPE will screen the ACS to determine its completeness and readiness for further review by the ACS committee. If it is deemed appropriate to continue in the review process, the ACS will be evaluated by the ACS committee and the institution will receive a written report regarding the program’s progress toward compliance with the Standards, judgments concerning
in institutional readiness to start the proposed program and suggestions related to findings with respect to the Standards.

The self-study review committee will develop a report after a thorough review of the program’s ACS. In preparing the report, the committee will make assessments of the program’s satisfactory progress toward compliance with each standard based on the documentation provided in the ACS. Determinations made include: 1) satisfactory progress toward compliance; 2) the area needs further development; or 3) due to insufficient information, the committee is unable to determine if satisfactory progress has been made toward compliance. The committee is asked to briefly describe in narrative format the strengths and deficiencies apparent in each standard at this stage of the program’s development. Following the assessment of each standard the committee will provide, in narrative format, consultative suggestions for the enhancement and development of program resources as they relate to the Standards.

The ACS application and the ACS committee’s evaluation report are considered to be working documents and are not shared with NCOPE board of directors.

Following receipt of the ACS committee’s report, the program must determine whether or not the first class of students should be enrolled or if enrollment of the first class should be postponed. Should the decision be made to continue in the development of the program, the submission of a revised ACS application which is reflective of further program development and responsive to the ACS committee’s first report is required followed by a Candidate site visit. The revised application is submitted at least three weeks prior to the site visit.

4. Revised application

The program must submit a report regarding the program's progress towards compliance with the Standards, judgments concerning institutional readiness to start the proposed program and suggestions related to the findings with respect to the Standards is provided.

At least three weeks prior to the scheduled on-site visit for candidate status, the institution must submit five copies of the revised application for candidate status (ACS) to NCOPE. The revised application is expected to be a complete version of the original application, including appendices, which has been revised as appropriate.

The revision should be a description of the program at a later stage of development and should include a description of all the changes that have occurred since the submission of the original application.

5. If no additional information is required and a new or revised application is not needed then a one day Candidate site visit is coordinated

A one and a half-day Candidate site visit is a routine component of the candidate program and is conducted by a site evaluator selected for the specific purpose of serving as an ad hoc representative of NCOPE. It usually occurs approximately four months prior to the first
academic term during which students are to be enrolled in the professional or technical phase of
the program.

If an institution wishes to postpone the Candidate site visit, it may do so only to the extent that the
visit would occur within three months of the originally scheduled time frame. Should an
institution wish a longer delay, then a new Application for ACS will be required and a
reapplication fee will be charged.

The on-site visit will consist of a series of conferences with administrative officials and faculty of
the program along with visits to selected program facilities. The visit provides a view of the O&P
education program in its particular environment. The purpose of the visit is to provide a
mechanism for verification and supplementation of information included in the application for
ACS, and to assess the program’s readiness to proceed with implementation of the program and
the accreditation process.

6. Site visit report from the Candidacy site visit is prepared and provided to the NCOPE board of
directors for review

The completed report from the Candidacy site visit is to be submitted to NCOPE within ten
working days of the visit. The report is then forwarded to the institution for correction of any
factual errors and/or clarification of any errors of interpretation. A copy of the report will be
submitted to NCOPE along with any response to the report from the institution. The response to
the report is due within thirty (30) days of its receipt by the program.

4.3 NCOPE Decisions

The granting of Candidate for Accreditation status must occur prior to enrollment of students in the
professional/technical phase of the O&P education program.

NCOPE will make candidacy decisions approximately two to two and one-half months prior to the
planned enrollment of students.

If the institution requests an extension of the time for a response to the Candidate Site Visit report,
NCOPE will make the candidacy decision no later than forty-five days following submission by the
institution of all materials that responded to the visit report.

NCOPE makes Candidate for Accreditation decisions based on its determination that the program is
making satisfactory progress toward compliance

The following is a list of the minimum level of achievement expected by NCOPE during the Candidacy
process. The list is tied to the Standards. Development beyond the minimal levels described below at the
time of the candidacy decision is highly desirable; development that does not reach this level will
decrease the likelihood of a positive candidacy decision. It is expected that as evidenced in the ACS and
by the time of the candidate site visit, the program will have the following documentation in place.
## Documentation Requirements for Candidacy Site Visit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Reference</th>
<th>Documentation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.A.</td>
<td>Evidence that the sponsoring institution is accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the US Department of education. In addition, evidence of appropriate state approval(s) if necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.C. and III.B.</td>
<td>Institutional policies related to academic standards and to faculty roles and workload that are/will be applied to the program that recognizes the O&amp;P education program as both a professional and an academic discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.A, III.A., V.A –F</td>
<td>Document the program specific policies and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.A.</td>
<td>Document the program mission, goals, and expected program outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. D., IV.A-B</td>
<td>Document the plans for an ongoing, formal program assessment process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.A. 1-3</td>
<td>Developed and documented policies and procedures affecting student recruitment, admission and retention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.A.1 – 3</td>
<td>Provided prospective students with accurate information about the program; including the program’s accreditation status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.B.1 – 2</td>
<td>Determined the projected size and composition of the entire program faculty, matching the variety of faculty responsibilities identified in III.B.1. – 2. and in keeping with the institution’s expectations for faculty workload.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.B.1 – 2</td>
<td>Hired at least two qualified full-time core faculty including the program administrator; the hired faculty must be qualified to implement the first year of the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. A. and III.A – D</td>
<td>Developed a written plan for meeting the resource needs of the program as outlined in Standards.</td>
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<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.A.</td>
<td>Documented a projected budget covering the full implementation (through graduation of the charter class) of the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.B.</td>
<td>Hired adequate support staff to meet the needs of the developing program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.A.</td>
<td>Identified the learning resources currently available as well as those still needed for the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.A.</td>
<td>Identified classroom space, laboratory space, storage space, faculty and staff offices, etc., sufficient to meet the needs of the fully implemented program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.A. and III. C.</td>
<td>Obtained sufficient equipment, technology, and materials for the current needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.A. – C.</td>
<td>Acquired equipment, technology, and materials needed for the first term of the program and documented plans for acquiring equipment and materials as needed by the program throughout the remainder of its implementation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A documented curriculum plan that is based on information about the current practice of O&P, standards of practice, and current literature, documents, publications, and other resources related to the profession, to O&P education, and to educational theory; and includes

- the philosophy and the principles and values of the program
- statements of expected student outcomes;
- determination of prerequisites;
- the curriculum model and educational principles on which the curriculum is built;
- the projected course of study (a series of organized, sequential and integrated courses designed to facilitate achievement of the expected student outcomes);
- course syllabi with objectives stated in behavioral terms that are reflective of the breadth and depth of the course content and of the level of student performance expected;
- for courses to be taught in the first year: complete syllabi for all courses, including course title, description, specific objectives, specific content outline, instructional methods, textbooks and other learning resources, mechanisms for evaluation of student performance, instructor, and credit and clock hours;
- for courses to be taught in subsequent years: syllabi including title, description, general course objectives, basic content outline, and credit and clock hours. Other information listed in g, should be included if known;
- a variety of evaluation processes;
- an on-going process to assess the curriculum.

After a complete review of the information contained in the ACS, the Site report for Candidate Status, the additional materials requested by the committee, and the response of the institution, NCOPE will act on the decision to grant Candidate for Accreditation status to the program if the program demonstrates satisfactory progress toward compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs in Orthotics and Prosthetics. The attainment of Candidate for Accreditation status is required for the program to proceed with the accreditation process.

If the program is judged not to have made satisfactory progress toward compliance with the Standards, NCOPE will deny Candidate for Accreditation status. A program that is denied candidate status will not be permitted to proceed with the accreditation process. An action to deny candidate status is an adverse action and is eligible for reconsideration at the request of the sponsoring institution.

### 4.4 Policies for Candidate Status for Accreditation

This candidacy program allows developing O&P programs the opportunity to establish a formal and publicly recognized relationship with NCOPE.

**Enrollment of Students**

- The granting of Candidate for Accreditation status must occur prior to enrollment of students in the professional/technical phase of the O&P education program.
Developing programs may initiate processes to identify and screen applicants for the charter class prior to achieving Candidate for Accreditation status. All information provided to prospective students must include the statement above. The granting of Candidate for Accreditation status must occur prior to enrollment of students in the professional/technical phase of the O&P education program.

Developing O&P programs that do not attain Candidate for Accreditation status will not be considered for accreditation by NCOPE or receive a recommendation to CAAHEP.

Developing programs that fail to achieve Candidate for Accreditation status are expected to refrain from enrolling/matriculating students into the program.

**Length of Candidate for Accreditation Status**

- Candidate for Accreditation status is limited to two years or the length of the professional/technical phase of the program, whichever is longer. Candidacy may be renewed for two years by NCOPE, except that the maximum length of time that a program may hold Candidacy is five years.

**Reports during Candidate Accreditations Status**

- During the period of candidacy, the program will be expected to provide any information requested by NCOPE, including but not limited to, submission of an abbreviated annual report.

**Withdrawal of Application**

- NCOPE will allow the program to withdraw its application at anytime prior to final NCOPE action on the materials described above.

- An institution that has achieved Candidate for Accreditation for its O&P program may withdraw its request for accreditation at any time prior to the meeting of NCOPE at which the accreditation decision is scheduled to be made by submitting a letter from the chief executive officer requesting such withdrawal.

**Reconsideration and Reapplication**

- If an education program is denied candidate status, the institution and program may reapply at any time the institution judges the corrections have been made in the deficiencies that led to the denial. Reapplication requires submission of a new application for candidate status and the process will start from the beginning, including a site visit.

**Appeals Procedures for Candidate for Accreditation**

The NCOPE appeals procedures follows those of CAAHEP.

1. Upon receipt of the Notice of Appeal, NCOPE shall immediately reinstate the status of public recognition held prior to the decision being appealed.

2. Within 30 days of the postmark of the Notice of Appeal, the program sponsor shall submit a Statement of Appeal. This Statement shall indicate the basis for the appeal as: 1) that the record does not support the decision; and/or 2) that due process and proper procedure were not followed.
The Statement of Appeal shall present point-by-point all aspects of the decision that the program sponsor believes warrant reversal and the complete rationale for the program sponsor’s position(s).

3. Within 45 days of the postmark of the Notice of Appeal, NCOPE shall send to the program sponsor the names of at least five (5) individuals who meet the requirements of an Appeal Panel member. The list shall be prepared by NCOPE.

4. Within 10 days of receipt of the list, the institution shall designate to NCOPE three (3) of the individuals listed who shall become the members of the Appeal Panel. In the event the institution does not respond by the deadline or fails to designate three individuals, NCOPE shall appoint, within 5 days after the institution’s deadline, from the list as many members as are needed to create a three (3) member Appeal Panel. NCOPE shall designate one of the members to be the Chairperson.

5. Within 10 days after constituting the Appeal Panel, each Appeal Panel member shall be provided with the complete accreditation record that existed at the time of NCOPE’s recommendation, the Statement of Appeal submitted by the program sponsor, and any correspondence between NCOPE and the program sponsor. A list of all materials comprising the complete record shall be made and provided to the program sponsor.

6. Within 15 days after constituting the Appeal Panel, a hearing shall be scheduled to be conducted as soon as feasible, preferably within 45 days after the Appeal Panel is constituted. Once scheduled, notice of the date, time, and location of the hearing shall be sent to the members of the Appeal Panel and the program sponsor, with copies of the notice sent to the NCOPE Executive Director. Expenses incurred in the development and presentation of the program sponsor’s portion of the appeal, including its witnesses, shall be borne by the program sponsor. Expenses incurred in the selection of the Appeal Panel, the arrangements for the hearing, and the expenses of witnesses requested by the Appeal Panel shall be borne by NCOPE. All reasonable and customary expenses incurred by the Appeal Panel directly associated with conducting the hearing (e.g. copying, postage, travel, meals, lodging, hearing transcript) shall be borne equally by the program sponsor and by NCOPE.

7. The hearing shall be conducted by the Chair according to the “CAAHEP Hearing Format”, shall have a written transcript and shall provide an opportunity for the program sponsor representative(s) to present oral argument in person or by telephone conference in support of the appeal; for an NCOPE representative to present oral argument in person or by telephone conference in support of NCOPE’s decision; and for the Appeal Panel to ask questions of the program sponsor, the NCOPE representative, or any other witness(es) it deems appropriate. The Appeal Panel may request the services of a legal advisor. Brief executive sessions may be called by the Appeal Panel to insure its complete understanding of the information. Only facts known at the time of the NCOPE recommendation and after reconsideration of that recommendation, if any, shall be accepted. The Appeal Panel may request that the program sponsor file additional written materials to support its oral argument. Six (6) copies of the additional materials shall be sent to the NCOPE Executive Director and shall be postmarked within 10 days of the adjournment of the hearing. At the conclusion of oral arguments and questioning, the hearing shall be adjourned.

8. Within 20 days of the adjournment of the hearing or the receipt of additional written materials from the institution within the 10-day limit, whichever is later, the Appeal Panel shall prepare its report and submit it to the NCOPE Executive Director. The panel shall address each point raised by the program sponsor in its Statement of Appeal and shall recommend to the NCOPE Board of Directors either to “deny the appeal” or “grant the appeal.”
9. Within 5 days after receiving the Appeal Panel report, the Executive Director shall forward a copy of the Appeal Panel report to each member of the Board of Directors and designate the manner in which the Board of Directors will arrive at its decision (regular meeting, mail ballot, conference call). Within 20 days of the Executive Director’s receipt of the Appeal Panel report the Board of Directors shall make its decision.

10. If the Board of Directors’ decision is to “deny the appeal,” then the status of public recognition shall immediately be changed to that which was originally decided by NCOPE. If the Board of Directors’ decision is to “grant the appeal,” the Board of Directors shall determine the status of public recognition for the program.

11. Within 5 days after the decision of the Board of Directors, the Executive Director shall notify the program sponsor of that decision.

12. The decision of the Board of Directors shall be final and is not subject to further appeal.
Chapter 5  CAAHEP Initial Accreditation Process

Initial accreditation is granted to a program by action of CAAHEP, upon recommendation of NCOPE prior to the graduation of the first class. Continuing accreditation is granted to a fully operational program by action of CAAHEP, upon recommendation of NCOPE. A self-study and a site visit are integral parts of both the evaluation for initial accreditation and continuing accreditation. The accreditation review process confirms that the program is in substantial compliance with the Standards.

A program in substantial compliance with the Standards may be deficient in one or more specific Standards that are believed to be readily correctable. NCOPE provides the sponsoring institution with a clear statement of each deficiency. On or before the specified due date, the institution must submit to NCOPE a progress report within 3 months documenting how deficiency(ies) that could be resolved within the time of the progress report were achieved. A plan for the correction of other deficiency(ies) should be included in the progress report to show a schedule for correcting all deficiencies within a reasonable period of time (usually not more than two years). NCOPE will assess the adequacy of the plan to return the program to full compliance with the Standards and will require additional Progress Reports. If NCOPE determines that the program has not returned to compliance within a reasonable period of time (usually not more than two years), NCOPE may recommend Probationary Accreditation or take other appropriate action. The notification of accreditation letter will inform the institution of the status awarded to the educational program.

Procedures for Achievement of Initial Accreditation Status

1. Request for Accreditation Services (RAS) through CAAHEP

   To initiate the accreditation process, a Request for Accreditation Services (RAS) should be submitted through the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) eighteen months prior to admission of students into the program. The application declares the intention of the institution to seek CAAHEP accreditation for the O&P education program and requests a review. The RAS includes questions about the following items:

   - A declaration of the intention of the institution to seek accreditation for the O&P education program.
   - The type of the program (i.e., practitioner, assistant, pedorthic or technician).
   - The level of the program (i.e., associates, baccalaureate degree, certificate, or professional master's degree).
   - The month and year the first class will enter the program.

   Information about the accreditation process and the RAS application form is found on the CAAHEP website: [https://www.caahep.org/Accreditation/CAAHEP-Accreditation-Process.aspx](https://www.caahep.org/Accreditation/CAAHEP-Accreditation-Process.aspx).

   After submission of the RAS, appropriate forms and information concerning the review will be forwarded to the Program Director. The NCOPE staff will establish and forward a timeline for the
accreditation process. In addition, the program becomes officially listed as a developing program in the O&P Almanac, recruitment brochures, etc. The program may contact NCOPE for guidance at any time throughout the process.

2. Comprehensive Review

In preparing materials for comprehensive review, refer to chapter 6 Self Study Process and Report and chapter 7 Site Visit. The self-study report and the site visit evaluations follow the same review process for initial accreditation as continuing accreditation. However, the expectations differ as described below.

NCOPEs decision to recommend an accreditation status is based on review of the program’s self study report as well as the program’s and institution’s demonstrated commitment and ability to implement the program. It is understood that all aspects of the program may not be in place at the time of the initial site visit. However, the information provided should be as complete as possible. Items that may be in process include the following:

- If the budget for the next fiscal year has not been appropriated at the time the Self-Study Report is prepared, proposed budgetary figures should be submitted.
- If the current catalog does not contain a description of the program, including the course of study and course descriptions, a copy of what has been proposed for the catalog should be submitted. Documentation should include the date that the information will be included in the catalog and should describe the current method of disseminating the information.
- Although no outcome data will be available when developing the initial Self Study, a full development plan for program evaluation should be included. The development plan should describe the program’s anticipated plan for development of the program including its
  - Current status for each accreditation Standards,
  - Schedule for implementation of various aspects of the program,
  - Evidence of progress made towards compliance with all accreditation Standards,
  - Methods to assess program outcomes.

The curriculum and the sequencing of courses should be complete:

- The curriculum design and sequencing should be complete and course syllabi, including objectives, a topical outline, teaching/learning experiences and evaluation methods, and an estimate in percentage of each subject taught in each of the courses, must be provided for all courses. (Appendix)

Self-Studies are submitted using the NCOPE Accreditation Management Portal (AMP). Upon successful submission, a confirmation screen is shown.

3. Accreditation Recommendations to CAAHEP

NCOPE bases its recommendation to CAAHEP on its review of the Self-Study, the Self-Study Reviewers Report, the Letter of Review, the Site Visits Report, and the Program’s Response to the Site Visit Report. NCOPE sends the results of the comprehensive review to the appropriate institutional official, with copies to the Program Director and the Dean.
Withdrawal of Request For Initial Accreditation
An institution may withdraw its request for Initial Accreditation of an O&P education program at any time prior to final action by CAAHEP. The request for withdrawal should be in writing and signed by the appropriate institution officials, including the O&P director, and sent to the Chair of NCOPE or CAAHEP.

Initial Accreditation: The first status of accreditation shall be granted to a program for a period no longer than five years. At any point during the initial accreditation period, a program may be recommended for continuing accreditation or, if warranted, for probationary accreditation. If no recommendation is forthcoming, the Initial Accreditation will automatically expire.
Chapter 6  The Self Study Process and Report

6.1. Self-Study Overview

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the United States Secretary of Education require a Self-Study for granting accreditation to programs and institutions. The Self-Study and the process involved provide an opportunity for regular, deliberate introspection and consideration of each part of the program. This assures that programs remain responsive to community needs, verifies compliance with standards, and allow for continuous improvement.

The Self-Study Process should begin well in advance of the anticipated site visit, to provide ample time for evaluation of all facets of program operations, including compliance with the Standards. The process should involve the various constituencies of the program, including administration and faculty, clinical instructors, students, graduates, advisory committee members, and employers if possible.

The program may find it useful to appoint several committees, assigning to each the evaluation of aspects of program operations that relate to one or more of the Standards. One individual, usually the Program Director, should serve as the Coordinator and resource to the Self-Study Committees. Committee reports, each containing a summary of the findings relative to the Standard(s), including strengths, concerns and recommendations, should then be used as the basis for the Narrative Section of the Self-Study Report.

6.1.a Objective

The Self-Study is an objective, comprehensive evaluation of a program occurring every 5 years and is conducted to assure that the program continues to be in compliance with the Standards. The Self-Study allows the program a chance to self-reflect on its goals, evaluate student-learning outcomes and determine ways to improve student learning and the promotion of exemplary patient care.

6.1.b Process vs. Report

The Self-Study is a formal process. This organized and systematic activity precedes the Self-Study Report. It is conducted by and for the educational program with the participation of appropriate constituencies to critically examine its structure and substance. The process is intended to be comprehensive in guiding identification and analysis of all aspects of the program.

The Self-Study Report is an evidential document that summarizes the methods and findings of the Self-Study Process. The Report should not be perceived as the end or goal, but rather as a means of communicating the results of the Self-Study Process to NCOPE.

6.2 The Self-Study Process

During the Self-Study Process, judgments are made regarding the effectiveness of the program in addressing and being in compliance with all established accreditation Standards. Critical analysis of student learning outcomes is emphasized, and goals and objectives are reviewed in their connection to and support of the program mission. The Self-Study identifies specific strengths and deficiencies by
being open, objective and precise in its assessment. It reaches conclusions, with short- and long-term plans for necessary modifications and improvements to meet and surpass basic compliance for each requirement.

The Self-Study should include a consideration of external factors influencing educational directions. Particularly, conditions of the sponsoring program and its legal, social, political and economic climate may affect the present or future program, and analysis of these factors must be demonstrated.

It is recommended that the program begin planning for the self study one year before the due date. This longitudinal evaluation provides an opportunity to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with the aim of continuous improvement.

6.2.a NCOPE Expectations

NCOPE does not specify details regarding how the self-study process is to be conducted. However, it does have expectations that the program adhere to the following principles:

- **Evaluative process**: The self-study process precedes the preparation of the self-study report. Although the requirements of the final report should be considered in the plan for the study, the initial focus should be on the evaluative process, not on the finished document.
- **Formative and Strategic**: The review identifies the strengths and areas for improvement; it leads to coordinated action that strengthens the program’s ability to achieve its competencies and learning outcomes.
- **Participatory**: the self-study process involves participation from the entire faculty of the program. Although it is recognized that a small committee or a single individual is generally assigned responsibility for overseeing the process and the preparation of the report, it is expected that the process include input from all faculty and administration, students and graduates. In addition the review uses input from internal and external stakeholders (i.e. students, graduates, faculty, staff, administration, program advisory committees, and employers, as appropriate).
- **Evidence Based**: the review uses an evidence-based approach. The self-study process should be comprehensive, examining in sufficient detail all aspects of the program, so that eventual assessment of compliance with the Standards can be accomplished.
- **Iterative**: The review follows up on previous reviews and recommendations with specific attention to trends and patterns.

6.2.b Sample list of tasks in Self-Study Process

The Self-Study Process begins with a well thought out plan. The following is a sample outline of steps in planning for preparation of the Self-Study:

1. Collectively reflect on and discuss the Program’s mission and objectives.
2. Delegate responsibilities to faculty and staff.
3. Review summary from previous site visits and describe progress made on deficiencies and/or recommendations.
4. Aggregate and analyze data from Annual Reports
5. Examine the Program’s environment for opportunities and threats (e.g. resources)
6. Obtain stakeholder input on strengths, areas for improvement, opportunities and threats.
   a. Prioritize actions based on feedback
7. Review CAAHEP/NCOPE Education Standards
   a. Correlate opportunities for student learning with the Core Curriculum Competencies
8. Interpret the data and aggregate the Self-Study findings
9. Discuss and validate findings with stakeholders (e.g. students, clinical sites)
10. Determine methods to report the results

6.2.c Strategies for Completing a Self Study

The list of strategies is offered for programs use to enhance their Self-Study Process and the overall quality of the program. The strategies are updated periodically as NCOPE learns of new approaches to demonstrate compliance and to enhance the quality of O&P programs. Refer to the full description of the CAAHEP Standards (link out).

Guidance for Section A Entry-Level Competencies: The entry-level competencies outline the broad learning objectives necessary to practice O&P effectively. These competencies may be threaded through multiple courses. To self-assess and demonstrate compliance, programs may:
- Reflect on clarity of program goals and student learning outcomes
- Reflect on graduate and first employer/residency director feedback.
- Reflect on graduation rate and ABC first time pass rate
- Reflect on residency placements and/or first employments
- Reflect on discussions from curriculum advisor committee meetings
- Reflect on discussions from A&E meetings
- Describe how each entry-level competency is threaded through the curriculum
- Identify areas for program improvement

Guidance for Section B Basic Science Curriculum: The basic science curriculum provides the basic science foundation. These are purposely written as broad learning outcomes with the intent that students develop a knowledge “base” and be ready to build upon and apply that knowledge within the O&P-specific coursework. The basic science courses may be part of the pre-professional curriculum (i.e. as prerequisites prior to entering the program) or part of the O&P program. To self-assess and demonstrate compliance, programs may:
- List prerequisite courses for entry to the O&P program
- List the courses taken within the O&P program

Guidance for Section C Professional Curriculum: The professional curriculum Standards listed in Section C are the minimum student learning outcomes required prior to graduation. Programs are encouraged to strive beyond these Standards.
- C.1.0 The Foundational Content Areas provide a rigorous foundation of knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors to promote exemplary patient care. To self-assess and demonstrate compliance, programs may:
  ▪ Assess if and how learning is scaffolded through the curriculum (i.e. introduced, applied, integrated, reflected upon).
  ▪ Describe if and how students apply the content areas of knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviors in the O&P program.
  ▪ Describe if and how student learning in these areas is evaluated throughout the O&P program.
  ▪ Create a curriculum map documenting breadth and depth of learning objectives and/or learning outcomes.
  ▪ List curricular and/or co-curricular experiences made available to students to document developing competence.
  ▪ List simulated activities.
Further suggestions for program-level specific strategies for self-assessment and verification of evidence of students’ competencies, are found in the following documents:

- Guidance for Standards for Master Level (link out to another document)
- Guidance for Standards for Technician Level (link out to another document)
- Guidance for Standards for Assistance Level (link out to another document)
- Guidance for Standards for Pedorthic Level (link out to another document)

6.3 The Self-Study Report

The Self-Study Report describes how and for what purpose the study was conducted, provides clear evidence that an identifiable process actually took place, and summarizes the methods and findings of the self-study. The report contains a synopsis of relevant data, conclusions and plans generated by the self-study. The Self-Study Report is sent in advance of the Site Visit along with additional materials as requested by the Self-Study Reviewers. It determines the focus for the external review and subsequent strategic planning.

6.3.a. Outline of the Self-Study Report

Introduction
This section should include a statement of how the Self-Study was conducted, the period of time devoted to the Study, and a list of participants and their Committee assignments. A brief historical overview of the program and orientation to the program's setting may be helpful to the Self-Study readers, but is optional. It is not necessary to repeat data or information contained in the Institutional/Program Data Forms and in the Appendices, unless it is absolutely standard for the sake of clarity.

Narratives
The Self-Study Report is evaluative rather than descriptive. Programs will include short narratives within relevant sections throughout the AMP system. In general, each section requires a summary of the self-study findings relevant to that Standard, including the strengths, concerns, and self-assessment of compliance with the Standards. The review should include comments, suggestions and recommendations on program change, particularly the resolution of current problems or weaknesses. The narratives should also offer plans for improvement.

Summary
The summary is the “heart” of the Self-Study Report, and should reflect the findings and conclusions resulting from the self-study process. The summary describes the program’s qualitative assessment of it’s strengths and deficiencies and the extent of it’s compliance with the Standards. The summary should include a review of how the program has addressed any concerns cited during the accreditation review process and a summary of plans to remedy any significant deficiencies identified.

6.3.b Supporting Documentation
Programs are required to submit documentation through the AMP to validate their compliance with the Standards. Such documentation may include the following:

- Course Catalog / Bulletin
- Transfer Letters from CEO / President of original / transfer
- Consortium Binding agreements (MOU, etc)
- Organization Chart (Including O&P program)
- Advisory Panel Minutes / Sign-in sheet
- Expenses and Revenue Data Across the Span of the Document (1 yr annual report)
- Student Handbook
- Faculty CVs
- Staff Job Descriptions
- Course Syllabi
- Rubrics for assignments/projects
- Student Schedule
- Academic Calendar
- Copies of student / employer surveys
- Capstone Manual (Master’s level)

6.3.c Format and Organization
Specific instructions and forms for the preparation of the report are provided through AMP online.

6.4 Review of Self-Study Report
The Self-Study Report documents the self-study process and findings and it provides the basis for the site visit. An evaluation team of two-three members reviews the self-study. The team's responsibility is to create an objective and impartial assessment of the quality of the orthotic and prosthetic educational program seeking accreditation. NCOPE may request additional information to clarify understanding.

The Self-Study Review Committee
Composition of the reviewers may include a team of 2-3 individuals:
1) Educator from a CAAHEP accredited program with teaching experience in the same level of the O&P program being evaluated
2) O&P or Pedorthic Professional
3) Educator unrelated to the O&P profession

Qualifications: Self-Study Reviewers shall be qualified by education and experience to evaluate the learning concentrations for which the program is seeking accreditation.

Selection of Self-Study Reviewers
In addition to meeting the qualifications to serve as an NCOPE Self-Study Reviewer, an individual selected to serve as a Self-Study Reviewer also must
- Be a current member of the NCOPE self-study reviewer pool.
- Possess skills to critically review a self-study (e.g., attention to detail, sensitivity/understanding of
unique qualities of developing programs, organizational skills and the ability to provide constructive feedback).

Responsibilities of the Self-Study Reviewers
Self-Study Reviewers serve as representatives of the NCOPE and are expected to perform all responsibilities in an ethical, moral, timely, and professional manner. Self-Study Reviewers primary responsibilities include the following:

- The purpose of the self-study review is to verify evidence of compliance with the Standards. Therefore, the committee’s primary responsibility is to review the following documents for completeness and compliance with the Standards:
  - The Self-Study
  - Program’s and university’s website(s)
  - All correspondence and other relevant documentation associated with the program review
- Respond to all NCOPE requests for information and dates of availability and make every effort to participate actively as a self-study reviewer on a regular basis.
- Complete the self-study reviewers report in preparation for the site visit
- Notify NCOPE staff of any contact information changes or changes affecting self-study reviewer qualifications.

6.5 Program Response to Self-Study Reviewers Report (PRSS)

If program deficiencies are identified by NCOPE/CAAHEP, a Program Response to Self-Study is required. Refer to form for the report and a completed example in Appendix.

Procedure
1. Programs may resolve areas of potential non-compliance with Standards and submit documentation of the resolution to be considered during the formulation of an accreditation recommendation.
   a. For each deficiency, the response must include a plan describing how compliance with the Standards will be achieved. This should include the projected timeline and a description of the documentation to demonstrate compliance. If progress has been made towards correcting the deficiency already, a summary of the progress should also be included.
   b. The Program Response to Self-Study (PRSS) should be dated and signed by the Program Director and Dean.
2. NCOPE reviews the PRSS and will either Accept or Deny the report.
   a. If NCOPE determines that execution of the PRSS is likely to bring the program into compliance with the cited Standards in a timely manner, the report is Accepted and a due date established for a progress report. A site visit may be scheduled.
   b. If the Board determines that the PRSS has inadequately addressed the deficiency or that execution of the PRSS is not likely to bring the program into compliance with the cited Standards in a timely manner, the report is Denied and a due date established for a revised PRSS. The letter notifying the Program Director will specify in what way the PRSS was considered inadequate.
   c. Failure to bring any Standard found to be partially compliant or non-compliant into compliance in a timely manner will result in recommendation of Probationary Status and may result in an adverse accreditation action.
Chapter 7  Site Visit

7.1 Site Visit Overview

CAAHEP Policy 206 A.4.a. and b. - Site Visit: An on-site visit is required to be part of the evaluation process to assist with further determination of compliance with the Standards. Site visitors represent both the CoA and CAAHEP.

a. The evaluation of the program by the site visitors must be based on the standards language of the published Standards and Guidelines.

b. A narrative report of findings from the site visit shall be provided to each program following a site visit. The Site Visit Report, in addition to stating the areas not meeting the Standards, shall also include a listing of the strengths, weaknesses and areas needing improvement.

7.1.a Objectives

The site visit is a most critical and sensitive part of the review and accreditation process. The site visit is part of a larger peer review/accreditation process by which members of the O&P profession are endeavoring to discover and share a continuing development of quality and excellence in O&P education. Fundamental to peer review is recognition that excellence in education can be achieved in diverse ways. The site visit team and everyone at the host institution must appreciate the purpose of the site visit to provide a professional judgment of the quality of the educational program and to encourage the program’s continued improvement.

1. To provide a professional judgment of the quality of the educational program, the site visit team will take the following actions:
   a. Confirm that the program has a clear mission and goals that it regularly assesses.
   b. Verify and clarify the description of the program as presented in the Self-Study Report.
   c. Assess the program against its own stated goals.
   d. Assess the program against the NCOPE/CAAHEP Standards.
   e. Establish a basis for an evaluative report by the Site Visit Team to NCOPE.

2. To encourage the program’s continued improvement:
   a. The site visit provides an opportunity for the exchange of information among colleagues and for learning about innovative developments responsive to common problems and educational approaches from across the profession.

It is important that all participants embrace this understanding and approach the site visit with trust and goodwill. It is within the reach of reasonable people to translate these attitudes into appropriate site visit performance.
During the site visit, administrators, faculty and students at the host institution and members of the site visit team will be in almost constant and intensive contact with one another. The site visit will be an occasion when the host institution will want to create the best possible impression on its visitors, and the visiting team will want to gain the most thorough appreciation of the program being evaluated.

Following the site visit, a narrative report of findings from the site visit is provided to each program. In addition to stating the areas not meeting the CAAHEP Standards, the Site Visit Report also includes a listing of the program strengths and areas of non-compliance. Programs are given an opportunity to respond to the report of findings. The program’s response to the Findings Report will be taken into consideration when determining an accreditation action recommendation.

Finally, every effort should be made to ensure the site visit is a cooperative, collegial experience and non-adversarial encounter, and that no one involved perceives it as such. The officials in charge of the self-study preparation and the site visit should take every possible occasion to reinforce this understanding. NCOPE is dedicated to the principle that openness, candor, and trust at the host institution must, in turn, generate goodwill, sensitivity, and dispassionate evaluation on the part of the site visitors.

7.1.b Overview of Process

The site visit is scheduled after NCOPE receives and approves the self-study. The program works with NCOPE to identify site visit dates that accommodate all parties. The site visit is typically conducted over one-and-a-half days, during which the site visit team assesses the program’s facilities and conducts interviews with students, faculty, staff, and administrative personnel. After the site visit, NCOPE provides a comprehensive report of the site visit team’s findings and recommendations to the program. Site visits for initial and continuing accreditation follow the same process and are conducted in the same manner. The general process for the site visit is outlined below:

1. After notification of acceptance of the program’s self-study, the program proposes potential dates for the site visit[UB1].
2. NCOPE identifies three site visitors.
3. NCOPE confirms the site visit date with the program[UB2].
4. The program proposes an agenda.
   1. The site visit team may request changes to the agenda.
5. The site visit occurs.
6. The site visit team submits a site visit report to NCOPE[UB3].
7. NCOPE sends the findings from the site visit to the program for review and comment on the accuracy of the report.
   1. A Findings Letter from the site visit will be provided to each program following a site visit. The Site Visit Report, in addition to stating the areas not meeting the CAAHEP Standards, will also include a listing of the program’s strengths and deficiencies or areas of non-compliance. Programs will be given an opportunity to respond to the report of findings[UB4].
   2. The program’s response to the Findings Letter will be taken into consideration when determining an accreditation action recommendation.
8. NCOPE sends the program a post-site evaluation survey[UB5].
1. The completed surveys are not seen by the Commission prior to its taking final action on the program.
9. After careful review of all documents (i.e. self-study report, self-study reviewer report, site visit report, findings letter, program’s response to site visit findings and other relevant documents[UB6]), the NCOPE Board of Directors collectively determines a recommendation for each program. The NCOPE recommendation for each program will be[UB7] forwarded to CAAHEP where the final accreditation decision is made. The recommendation options are located in CAAHEP policy.
10. NCOPE sends an action letter and final Report of NCOPE to the program.
11. NCOPE then informs the program [UB8] and CAAHEP of NCOPE’s recommendation.
12. CAAHEP evaluates NCOPE’s report during its next meeting [UB9] and designates a status of Initial/Continuing Accreditation, Probationary Accreditation, Administrative Probation, or Withdrawal of Accreditation based on the reports.
13. The program will be notified by CAAHEP of the accreditation decision.

[UB1]Is a month / season / window / estimate suggested by NCOPE? For example, could it be X number of months before the program’s existing accreditation cycle expires?  
[UB2]For reference of “program” in this sequence, is “Program Director” more specific and accurate?  
[UB3]Is there a time limit or guideline to set expectations for all involved?  
[UB4]I’ve heard before it’s expected that program’s comment on the factual accuracy of the findings. Is this now intentionally broader?  
[UB5]Is this after the Findings have been responded to by the host program? Any more specific as to timings?  
[UB6]There is some inconsistency in capitalization of terms here. It’s OK to capitalize them and keep it throughout.  
[UB7]Again, try on present tense here: “… is forwarded…”  
[UB8]Did NCOPE not just do this officially with the letter in the previous step?  
[UB9]Do these occur on a semi-annual rate? Monthly? Bi-monthly?

7.1.c Costs
The program is responsible for all costs associated with the site visit. Costs include expenses for travel and housing of the site visit team (e.g. airfare, ground transportation, hotel accommodations, meals, internet access). NCOPE will provide an invoice to the program after the conclusion of the site visit.

7.2. The Site Visit Team

7.2.a. Composition of the Site Visit Team:
A site visit team of three (3) individuals conducts each site visit. The team is comprised as follows:
1) CAAHEP representative: Educator in a Healthcare Field (non-O&P certified/registered)

2) O&P Educator
   1) Credential
7.2.b. Qualifications

Site visitors shall be qualified by education and experience to evaluate the learning concentrations for which the program is seeking accreditation.

- At least one site visitor will be appropriately credentialed and have experience with O&P education and accreditation. One site visitor may be qualified by other experience and education in allied health.
- All should have received and attended some type of site visitor training course.
- No visitor will have any real or potential conflict of interest that may affect the evaluation. If the site visitor, program, or NCOPE has reason to believe that a conflict of interest exists, the visitor will be excused and another member selected.
- All site visitors are required to sign a confidentiality statement.
- Trainees and/or observers may accompany the site visit team.

In addition to meeting the qualifications to serve as an NCOPE site visitor (outlined above), an individual selected to serve as a site visitor must also:

- Have successfully completed the CAAHEP Site Visitor Quiz.
- Have a positive evaluative record as a site visitor.
- Possess skills to support a site visit (e.g., sensitivity/understanding of unique qualities of developing programs, organizational skills and the ability to provide constructive feedback).

7.2.c. Selection of Site Visitors

Prior to selection of the team, the Program Director is provided with a list of potential evaluators and instructed to strike names of individuals who may have a conflict of interest with the program. The director may strike up to two (2) names without cause.

So, the others struck due to CoI are labeled as such, and these two have no labels? Also: Must the nature of the CoI be disclosed, or is it enough to declare it?

The Chair and Vice Chair of NCOPE select the site visitors from those remaining on the list in collaboration with NCOPE staff. A sincere effort is made to "match" team members to the program and institution being evaluated. NCOPE considers these areas in its selection process in order to maintain balance in the site visitor pool: the type of expertise needed, the type of institution that houses the program, geographic location and the need to avoid conflicts of interest. The criteria for selection of site visitors include, but are not limited to:

- published qualifications for service
- professional experience
- geographic location
- gender, cultural, and ethnic background
- work environment (i.e., type of institution or employment setting)
- availability
One representative is designated as the team chair and serves as the official spokesperson of the team during the evaluation process. The chair assumes primary responsibility for checking the final arrangements before the site visit, reviewing the suggested schedule, recommending changes if appropriate, and overseeing any necessary follow-up activities.

7.3. Program Preparation for the Site Visit

Site visits are usually scheduled for one-and-a-half business days, with site visitors typically arriving the evening before the visit and departing the afternoon of the second day. For weekend programs or programs located on more than one campus, adjustments to the schedule are made in collaboration with the Program Director. Any other request to alter the length of the site visit must be submitted in writing to the NCOPE Board at least three (3) months prior to the scheduled site visit.

7.3.a Site Visit Schedule

The Program Director prepares a tentative schedule for the site visit and forwards it to the team chair at least one month in advance of the site visit. If there are suggestions for changes to the tentative schedule, the team chair will submit them to the Program Director for consideration.

A sample schedule is in the appendix. Much of the first day is dedicated to interviewing faculty, administrative personnel, and students. In addition to time for interviews, forty-five minutes should be set aside on the first day for the site visitors to review program documentation. A minimum of one half hour should be scheduled for a tour of the facilities, including classrooms, laboratories, offices and the clinical/technical sites. A short period should be left free for the team to review materials at the end of each day, and no meetings or activities of any nature should be scheduled by the program for the evenings.

The Program Director should finalize the schedule with the site visit team chair prior to confirming appointments because the team chair may wish to make adjustments to the schedule. After the team chair has been contacted and the schedule confirmed, a final copy should be emailed to each team member and to the NCOPE staff prior to the site visit.

The well-planned site visit usually proceeds smoothly. The site visit team members should meet with the Program Director at the beginning and end of each day for a brief report on their progress, needs, concerns, etc. The team chair keeps the Program Director apprised of any additional information that the team needs or any desired changes to the schedule.

The program director needs to ensure that the site visit team is staying on schedule to complete the 1) interviews, 2) campus facility tours, 3) clinical or practicum visit, 4) document review and 5) exit conference.

Site Visit Schedule: The Interviews

The site visit team members will collect, verify, and interpret all information likely to demonstrate how the program meets the Standards by interviewing all key program personnel, support staff, students, graduates, and representatives of advisory committees. The site visit team members will determine the degree of support from the administration, all faculty, advisory committee members, and other
stakeholders. In addition, the site visit team members will inquire about the future plans for the O&P program by reviewing the program’s systematic and periodic program evaluations, the support for continuing professional development, and overall support from the administration. Sample interview questions are listed in the Site Visitor Manual.

The Program Director should arrange an effective and efficient schedule with faculty interviews arranged so that each instructor is interviewed and each Standard is addressed. It is helpful in some instances for the site visitors to have individual interviews with key instructors, and in other instances, for them to meet in groups (e.g., when several teach together). The structure of these sessions depends on faculty size and shared teaching responsibilities. NCOPE recognizes that each program uniquely integrates the requirements of the Standards into its curriculum design and that the design should impact the schedule.

On the agenda or a supplementary document, please indicate the name, title and highest degree for each interviewee, the name and catalog number of course(s) taught, and the Standard(s) being covered. When planning and scheduling the meeting between the Program Director and the site visit team, the Program Director should plan for approximately one hour of discussion. Consider using name tags or name tents for group meetings to help site visitors.

Information gathered during the interviews is used to assess the program’s compliance with the Standards. The site visit schedule should include interviews with the following people. Each group should be scheduled separately if possible.

- The Program Director for the purpose of mutual orientation and discussion of administrative responsibilities for:
  - Faculty selection, development and retention
  - Budget development and control
  - Program development, general effectiveness and evaluation

- Current students for discussion about their views of the program and courses, ability to express their perception of their roles as O&P professionals and their attitudes toward the profession.

- Recent graduates for discussion about their views of the program courses.

- The Program Director and senior members of the faculty as a group for understanding and ability to articulate the:
  - Philosophy, goals, and organization of the program
  - Program's mission and goals
  - Institution's mission and goals

- Senior members of the faculty as a group without the Program Director for understanding and ability to articulate the program's:
  - Philosophy
  - Curriculum design
  - Course objectives

- Other key faculty members to discuss their administrative, advisory and teaching responsibilities as related to the orthotic and prosthetic program, the objectives and content of the courses, the means of evaluating student performance, and to discuss relevant plans and activities of the
faculty for the future. For these interviews, the faculty may be grouped as appropriate for discussion of the curriculum content areas.

- The administrator to whom the Program Director reports (e.g. dean of the school of allied health and or president or provost) to determine the degree of support from the administration for the program and to understand the importance of the program to the campus and the community.

- Clinical or Practicum Visit to determine whether the clinical/practicum settings provide appropriate opportunities for practicum experience during and following didactic program.

- Employers

- Advisory Panel Members as a group for understanding and ability to articulate the:
  - Program's mission and goals
  - Ongoing evaluation and review of program’s curriculum and relevant activities

Site Visit Schedule: Campus Facility Tours

The site visit team members should tour campus facilities that contribute toward program success. A tour typically includes the following resources:

- Program classrooms
- Program laboratories
- Faculty offices and work spaces
- Administrative offices for the program and department

At the director’s discretion, the tour may also include general campus resources such as the tutoring center, student union, bookstore, library and any other facilities which support the program.

Site Visit Schedule: Clinical or Practicum Visit

Clinical visits are relevant for practitioners, assistant and pedorthic programs, while practicum visits are relevant for technician program site visits.

Experiences in a patient care or practicum setting are intended to provide students an understanding about didactic and/or practical content covered in the academic setting. The team may request visitation to one or more clinical or practicum settings to meet the people mentoring the students. If everything is deemed acceptable at one setting, it is unlikely that a visit to a second setting is necessary. Additionally, the site visit team has limited time to visit more than one clinical or practicum setting.

The site visitors may want to see that the affiliation agreements are appropriate and updated and they may ask the mentors at the settings questions, such as

- Do the preceptors know who the program administers are?
- Does the preceptor get feedback from the program about how the preceptor is doing?
- What will students know or be capable of doing after spending X time here?
- If the student gets hurt, what is the process to get student help?
Site Visit Schedule: The Exit Conference

A summation conference is held with the Program Director. Designated representative(s) may be included at the discretion of the Program Director. At this time, the site visit team expresses appreciation for the courtesies extended during the site visit and informs the group of the next steps in the accreditation review process. Initial impressions of the site visit will be shared with the Program Director and other invited guests.

7.3.b Organize Documents
The site visit team will evaluate a variety of program and institution documents for consistency with the Self-Study and compliance with the Standards. Documents may be provided in digital format, but must be organized and easily accessible for site visitors. Such documentation may include

- The self-study and all related documents
- Additional resources requested after the self study review
- The full curriculum for all courses identified in the Self-Study must be available for review. Curriculum may be provided on paper or through the institution’s learning management system (LMS). If the curriculum is provided online, please ensure that site visitors have access to the LMS.
  - In case of problems with access to the learning management system, have someone from IT available
- Affiliation agreements
- Minutes of standing committees
- Textbooks
- Course syllabi
- Records of student activities
- Student records
- Evaluations of student performance (excluding examinations)
- Clinical/practicum data
- Selection and retention information
- Program advertising and outreach media
- Course assessments
- Refer to the CAAHEP Organizing the Documents for the Site Visit form.

7.3.c Reserve a dedicated meeting room and workspace for site visitors

- Meeting Room: If possible, the Program Director should assign a room to the team and arrange for all interviews and conferences to be held there. This minimizes time spent in moving about. It is helpful if the room is arranged conference style with a large table for the team to work.

- Workspace: a dedicated workspace is necessary for the site visit team to review documents.
  - Provide access to all documents listed above.
  - If students, faculty or staff are calling in via conference call rather than in person, the school needs to set up a speakerphone and/or screen for viewing via Zoom or Webex in the room, and directions on how to use it.
  - Provide snacks, water and coffee/tea.
  - Provide mobile number of the program director and an administrative team member in case there are questions.
● Arrange for online access for site visitors

● Telephone Contacts: Team members and NCOPE staff should be sent the office and mobile telephone numbers of the Program Director, and a contact number for weekends and evenings, in case of an emergency prior to the site visit. In addition, the Program Director should furnish team members and NCOPE staff with telephone numbers of the host institution where the site visitors may be reached during the visit in case of emergency.
  ● The program director must be available at anytime to address the site visit team members’ questions.

7.3.d Communication about Travel and Accommodations with Site Visit Team Members

● Arrange for travel to and from campus. Providing transportation to and from campus is a sign of good will, provides additional time to address questions/concerns and eases the burden on the site visitors. If this is not possible, send a campus map, parking instructions, and parking passes to the site visit team.

● Travel: The Program Director is asked to furnish transportation information to the nearest airport, best method of reaching the institution, and routes for those driving. Site visitors will make their own travel arrangements and notify the Program Director of their plans and schedules.

● Accommodations: The Program Director should provide the site visitors with hotel information for a convenient, moderately-priced hotel or motel for the night preceding the site visit and the following night. NCOPE will provide the names and addresses of the site team to the Program Director.

It is the responsibility of the site visitors to make their own hotel arrangements. Site visitors are responsible for their own expenses while travelling (e.g. hotel and meals). Reimbursement of those expenses deemed appropriate is handled directly through NCOPE. The program will be invoiced for the team’s expenses upon completion of the site visit.

7.3.e Prepare the faculty and students

The faculty may want to meet as a group to discuss the self study, philosophy, goals and organization of the program as well as any of the sample interview questions listed in the Site Visitor Manual. The faculty must be aware of the schedule and prepared for the meetings.

Students may not be knowledgeable about the accreditation process. The Program Director should inform them of the purpose of the visit and the interviews and types of questions that the team might ask. Typical questions to the students may include:

  o Even the best educational program can be improved. What do you think could be done to make this program better?

7.4 Consortium

A consortium sponsor is an entity consisting of two or more members that exists for the purpose of operating an educational program. In such instances, at least one of the members of the consortium must meet the requirements of a sponsoring educational institution, such that it must be a post-secondary
academic institution accredited by an institutional accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, and must be authorized under applicable state law or other acceptable authority to provide a post-secondary program, which awards a minimum of a master’s degree at the completion of the program.

The responsibilities of each member of the consortium must be clearly documented in a formal affiliation agreement or memorandum of understanding, which includes governance and lines of authority, applicable exclusions, expiration dates, and parameters of termination. This documentation shall be made available to the site visitors upon arrival.

Responsibilities of The Sponsor must ensure that the provisions of these Standards and Guidelines are met.

The site visitors will ask questions to get an understanding about the support provided and level of commitment for the program (refer to the suggested questions to administrators in the site visitors manual). In addition, the site visitors will ensure that the following requirements are met:

- The consortium is accredited by an established institutional accrediting agency
- Formal affiliation agreements or memorandums of understanding are current, appropriate and updated.

7.5. Post-Site Visit Actions

7.5.a Report Review and Comments
After the site visitors finalize their report and submit it to NCOPE, it will be returned to the program for review and comment on the accuracy of the report. Once the program has had a chance to respond, the annotated report is then reviewed by NCOPE for determination of accreditation.

7.5.b NCOPE Final Report and Notification
NCOPE will act on careful review of all documents (i.e. self-study, self-study reviewer report, site visit report, and other relevant documents) at the next scheduled meeting following the visit. The chief executive officer, dean and Program Director are sent a copy of the action letter and NCOPE’s final report. It should be noted that NCOPE’s final report may differ from the site visit report presented at the conclusion of the visit. For example, the Board may act to change one or more "Suggestions" to "Deficiencies" or vice versa based on its analysis of the findings.

The Board evaluates all relevant documents and votes on one of the following actions:

a. Recommend Initial/Continued Accreditation based on findings from the comprehensive review.
b. Recommend a status of Probationary Accreditation, Administrative Probation or Withdrawal of Accreditation based on findings.

Notification of NCOPE's recommendation for accreditation will be forwarded to the Program Director and the appropriate officials of the institution.

If deficiencies are identified in the final report, the program is required to submit a Plan of Correction by the date specified by NCOPE.

7.5.c Program’s Response to Findings

CAAHEP Policy 206.A.5. - Program's Response to Findings

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a. Programs shall be given an opportunity to respond to the report of findings.

b. CoAs are encouraged to allow a reasonable period of time, after the site visit, during which programs may resolve areas of potential non-compliance with Standards and submit documentation of the resolution to be considered during formulation of an accreditation recommendation by the CoA to the CAAHEP Board of Directors.

7.5.d Post-Site Visit Survey
Following the site visit, the Program Director and dean will each be sent a survey regarding the accreditation process. This survey is the primary mechanism for ongoing feedback by the academic community regarding the accreditation process. Information from these surveys is compiled and used in modifying accreditation procedures. A candid response is therefore appreciated. The completed surveys are not seen by the Board prior to its taking final action on the program.

7.6. Site Visitor Emergency
In the event that a site visitor is unable to complete his/her team responsibility due to an emergency (e.g., illness or accident), the team chair will meet with the Program Director and appropriate administrators to determine if the site visit should continue or be aborted and rescheduled.

- If the evaluation team chair feels that the site visitor could satisfactorily continue and complete the site visit and institution personnel agree, the site visit will continue. However, if institution personnel disagree, the site visit will be cancelled and rescheduled.

- If the site-visit team chair feels that the evaluation process has been too seriously affected to continue and institution personnel agree, the site visit will be cancelled and rescheduled. However, if institution personnel disagree, the site visit will continue and circumstances will be documented in the Site Visitors Report. The team chair will notify NCOPE of the decision and action taken.

7.7 Focused Site Visits
NCOPE requires Focused Site Visits to verify compliance with the Standards when compliance cannot be demonstrated with documentation alone (facilities, interviews, etc.). The number of visitors, length of visit, and Standard to be reviewed shall be individualized for each program, dependent on the Standard(s) that is/are not in compliance. Expenses for this visit shall be charged back to the program.

Programs will be given 90-days’ notice prior to arrival on site. The program will be given three (3) days to confirm the assigned site visit dates. If no confirmation is received from the program, it will be assumed that assigned dates are acceptable. Random site visits are determined based on NCOPE’s review of the annual outcome reports and a programs’ ability to meet the established thresholds. Selection may also be based on the date of the program’s last site visit or any significant changes taking place within the program.
Focused site visits may occur after substantial changes or when questions exist related to compliance during the interim of the accreditation cycle.

Chapter 8  Program Continuing Accreditation Requirements

Programs are required to complete the following items to maintain continuing accreditation status.

1. Pay all fees on time
2. Notify NCOPE promptly of specific changes (these are listed below)
3. Agree to a date for the site visit during the scheduled time frame.
4. Submit all required reports as listed below to maintain CAAHEP accreditation (Table 1).

Table 1. List of required reports, recurrence schedule and deadlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Report/Responsibilities</th>
<th>Recurrence schedule</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annual Report (<a href="#">link to AMP</a>)</td>
<td>Yearly</td>
<td>December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report of Substantive Change (<a href="#">link to online form and example in appendix</a>)</td>
<td>As required</td>
<td>Within 6 weeks of occurrence, preferably before change occurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Review Self-Study</td>
<td>Every 5 years, more often if dictated by accrediting body</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Review Site-Visit</td>
<td>Every 5 years, more often if dictated by accrediting body</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Response to Self-Study (corrections and/or explanations of deficiencies)</td>
<td>As required</td>
<td>6 weeks following receipt of deficiencies from annual report, self study, or site visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Report</td>
<td>As required</td>
<td>Jan 15, April 15, July 15, Oct 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accreditation Fees</td>
<td>Annually to CAAHEP &amp; NCOPE</td>
<td>August 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focused Site Visit</td>
<td>As required</td>
<td>TBD based on program and site visitor schedules</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.1. Annual Reports

Each program shall be required to submit the NCOPE Annual Report by the specified deadline. Failure to do so may result in Administrative Probation. Staff shall screen the Annual Report for completion and for any possible noncompliance with Standards. The staff shall forward these Annual Reports to the Chair for further review. The Chair shall submit to the BoD any Annual Report of a program with noncompliance concerns. Upon review and consideration, the BoD shall determine if no action is needed or if a Progress Report, Focused Site Visit, Comprehensive Review or Adverse Accreditation recommendations may be warranted.

NCOPE requires each accredited program to submit an Annual Report. The purpose of the annual report is to provide outcome-based evaluation of programs for the 5 years between full evaluations. Questions are designed to elicit self-evaluation of program compliance with the Standards. For maximum benefit to the program, the report should be discussed with the entire program faculty and should be incorporated into, or flow directly from a program's ongoing evaluation. Annual reports provide evidence, program self-reflection and proposed updates to the program on the following outcomes to ensure compliance with the CAAHEP Standards:

1. Retention rates
2. Graduation rates
3. Placement (e.g. residency, job placements)
4. Exam results (e.g. number of graduates passing ABC exams)
5. Student learning outcomes (e.g. portfolio)
6. Student survey
7. Graduate survey (e.g. program self-reflection about graduate survey responses)
8. Employer survey (e.g. program self-reflection about employer survey responses)

Established Thresholds. Here are some examples of outcomes thresholds that programs must meet/maintain for accreditation (to be determined by NCOPE):

- Graduate Surveys are administered six (6) months to one (1) year post graduation and have a 50% or greater return rate.
- Employer Surveys are administered six (6) months to one (1) year post graduation and have a 50% or greater return rate.
- Retention of 90% or greater of total enrollment, including attrition due to academic dismissal, clinical dismissal, or student withdrawal.
- Positive Placement of 90% or greater. Positive Placement requires the graduate to be employed as a [Name of Profession] or continuing their education.
- Certification Success of 90% or greater.
Failure to Meet Established Thresholds. Failure to meet the established thresholds will result in recommendations from NCOPE and require an action plan be developed by the program and submitted to NCOPE. The action plan should provide documentation regarding how the deficiencies will be corrected. Non-compliance, inability to correct deficiencies in a timely manner, or serious deviation from the threshold in any particular measure may trigger an unscheduled comprehensive review, progress report, or a change in the program’s accreditation status.

Procedure
1. Programs will provide information on an annual basis using the Accreditation Management Portal (AMP). Failure to do so within 30 days of the determined deadline may result in a program being placed on administrative probation.
2. NCOPE completes an annual accreditation compliance form for each of the education programs and saves the form to the accreditation folder. The form includes details related to the following:
   a. The program’s compliance with CAAHEP Standards. The purpose of the annual report is for programs to continuously reassess compliance.
   b. Recommendations and/or requests for further documentation.
   c. Documentation of the need for further consultation and/or site visit.
3. The NCOPE board reviews the summary of annual reports at the next board meeting. The Board is advised of program outliers, programs that do not meet the established thresholds or are out of compliance. The Board’s actions may be one of the following:
   a. Acceptance of the report with no further action required.
   b. Acceptance of the report contingent upon receipt and approval of additional information.
   c. Request for clarification of one or more items.
      • If there are areas of noncompliance with the Standards, deficiencies will be identified and Progress Reports will be required to demonstrate actions taken to become compliant with the Standards. (See Sections II.F.1. and II.F.2.)
4. Transparency of Outcomes. All programs must publish, preferably in a readily accessible place on their websites, the outcomes measures required by the NCOPE. The Programs may publish additional outcomes, such as graduate satisfaction, employer satisfaction, and programmatic summative measures.
   a. At all times, the published results must be consistent with and verifiable by the online Annual Report of the program.
   b. Each year in the Comments tab of the Annual Report, the program must state the website link (or other publication) where its results are published.

8.2 Comprehensive Review

In preparing materials for comprehensive review, refer to Self Study Process and Report and Site Visit. The Program Director shall find the schedule of self study deadlines and site visits through the NCOPE Accreditation Calendar (found on AMP). Specific dates for the site visit are set after the selection of the
visiting team.

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**Educational programs shall regularly undergo a comprehensive review to assure that the program continues to be in compliance with the Standards. This review shall include a complete Self Study and a Site Visit. The time between comprehensive reviews shall not exceed five (5) years.**

### 8.3 Progress Reports

**Progress reports shall be required by NCOPE whenever a program is not in full compliance with the Standards. The required documentation and deadline for the Progress Report shall be individualized for each program, dependent on the Standard(s) that is/are not in compliance.**

**Procedure**

1. Following acceptance of a Program Response to Self-Study (PRSS), quarterly Progress Reports are required until all deficiencies are corrected.
2. For each deficiency, the report should indicate either:
   a. Compliance
   b. Progress towards compliance
      i. the report should summarize the progress made toward correcting the deficiency,
      ii. the documentation that is being submitted
      iii. any additional action to be taken (if any) with a timeline for completion, and documentation verifying this.
   c. If no progress has been made toward correcting the deficiency,
      i. a statement to that effect should be included,
      ii. rationale for this, and
      iii. a specific action plan for rectifying the deficiency in the future.
3. NCOPE will review the Progress Report at the next board meeting
   a. The Board’s actions may be one of the following
      i. Acceptance of the progress report with no further action required.
      ii. Acceptance of the progress report contingent upon receipt and approval of additional information. The acceptance letter will specify requested information to be submitted.
      iii. Denied: Progress is inadequate to bring the program into compliance with the cited Standards in a timely manner
      iv. If a change in status is indicated, the program will be notified of NCOPE’s action.
4. NCOPE documents the status and saves the form to the accreditation folder.
   a. The program’s progress toward addressing the CAAHEP Standards.
   b. Recommendations and/or requests for further documentation.
   c. Documentation of the need for further consultation and/or site visit.
8.4 Reports of Substantive Change

NCOPE Board of Directors must have timely notification of expected or unexpected substantive changes within 6 weeks of occurrence. The purpose of the report of substantive change is to maintain open communication lines with NCOPE, prevent or address potential areas of noncompliance, and safeguard students. The sponsor must report substantive change(s) as described in Appendix A to CAAHEP/NCOPE in a timely manner.

Changes requiring a Report of Substantive Change include the following:

1. Program Director changes;
2. Transfer sponsorship, mergers, or consolidations;
3. Change/addition/deletion of courses that represent significant departure in curriculum content. This may include a substantial increase/decrease in clock or credit hours for successful completion of a program;
4. Change in method of curriculum delivery;
5. Change in the number of students admitted to the program;
6. Change or additional program locations (May require a focused site visit to assure patient access and student safety);
7. Change in degree awarded, including when an institution with one accredited O&P educational program adds a different O&P educational program;
8. Change in degree-granting institution from the currently accredited program;

8.4.1 Program Director Changes

The program must inform NCOPE promptly if there is a change in the Program Director of an accredited orthotic and/or prosthetic educational program is changed.

1. If the position is vacant, written notification should include the following:
   a. The name, credentials, title and effective date of appointment of the interim Program Director.
   b. The process to put a qualified leader in place on a permanent basis.
2. If the position has been filled by an acting or permanent Program Director, written notification should include the following:
   a. The name, credentials, title and effective date of appointment of a new Program Director.
   b. The Program Director's curriculum vitae. The curriculum vitae should detail orthotic and/or prosthetic experience, and should give particular attention to experience and qualifications in academic teaching and administration.
   c. The Program Director should summarize his/her experience and qualifications relevant to the current Standards. If educational deficiencies exist, a plan for addressing the Program Director's educational deficiencies to meet the Standards must be included.

8.4.2 Transfer Sponsorship, Mergers, or Consolidations

The accreditation status of the existing program may not simply be transferred to the additional/changed program until the procedures for adding to or changing an educational program are followed. The program must inform NCOPE of its intent to transfer/merge/or consolidate program sponsorship.
1. The current sponsor must submit a letter signed by the President/Dean indicating the impending change.

2. The new sponsor must submit a “Request for Transfer of Sponsorship Services” form.
   
a. This is part of the RAS – it is a selection on the form and is how programs “formally” request a transfer through the CAAHEP web site and “Request for Accreditation Services (RAS).

3. NCOPE has the discretion of requesting a new self-study report with or without a site visit review.

Applying for a transfer of sponsorship does not guarantee that the transfer of accreditation will be granted. NCOPE will review the information at its next scheduled meeting and determine compliance with the Standards.

1. The institution housing the program will be notified by the NCOPE Chair of the results of the credentials review as soon as possible following the meeting.

2. If review of credentials for a director of an established orthotic and prosthetic educational program reveals noncompliance with the current Standards, the program may receive a deficiency and be required to submit a progress report to NCOPE.

**8.4.3 Change/addition/deletion of courses that represent significant departure in curriculum content or changes in format**

When an institution housing an accredited educational program makes the decision to add/change/delete significant portions of the program or make changes the format of the program (e.g. weekend or distance programs), the program is subject to accreditation procedures. Changes may include a substantial increase/decrease in clock or credit hours for successful completion of a program.

The accreditation status of the existing program may not accrue to the additional/changed program until the procedures for adding to or changing an educational program are followed. The program must inform NCOPE of the following:

- The reason for the proposed change,
- The proposed changes
  - Course sequencing
  - Content changes, learning objectives and expected student outcomes
  - Delivery methods
  - Resources necessary to implement the planned change
- The potential implications related to the changes, such as
  - Faculty workload
  - Potential negative consequences and how they might be addressed.

Minor program changes or additions may be submitted with the Annual Report in lieu of a separate review.

**8.4.4 Change or additional program locations**

When an institution having an accredited educational program makes a decision to change the location of that program, the program is subject to accreditation procedures.
The accreditation status of the existing program may not accrue to the additional/changed program until the procedures for changing the location of an educational program are followed. The program must inform NCOPE of the following:

- Illustration and description of the new space (i.e. floor plan) including proposed location of tools, machines, and equipment.
- Digital photos, if possible.
- Description about how change in location will impact the program.

NCOPE will review and take one of the following actions:
1. Request that additional information be submitted
2. Schedule a focused site visit to assure patient access and student safety

8.4.5 A program must apply as a NEW program when one of the following occur:

1. The degree-granting institution is not the same as that of the currently accredited program, or

2. An institution with one accredited orthotic and prosthetic educational program adds a different orthotic and prosthetic educational program. For example, if an institution with an accredited educational program for the orthotic and prosthetic technician adds an orthotic and prosthetic practitioner program.
   - A Letter of Intent to enter the additional/changed program into the accreditation process should be sent at least 18 months prior to the time the first group of students will complete the program. (NOTE: It is imperative that the evaluation process be completed prior to the graduation of the first class of students.) The Letter of Intent must include a description of the addition and/or change, the month and year orthotic and prosthetic practitioner students will enter the new program and the month and year the first class will graduate. The Letter of Intent must be signed by the chief executive officer and by the orthotic and/or prosthetic program director and sent to: the National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education
   - NCOPE may require additional reports or schedule a focused site visit if indicated by information provided in reports or as a result of a formal complaint.

8.4.6 Program discontinuation

Notification of program discontinuation must be submitted to NCOPE as soon as possible. Written notification should describe the plan for permanent closure of the program. The program will follow guidance from the institutional accrediting body.

8.5 Program Retention of Student Records Suggested Policies topics for the CoA to consider:

1. **Outcome Data.** Programs are required to maintain a file of raw data for outcomes for the most current 5-year window (consistent with the most recent accreditation comprehensive review). This includes:
   - Graduate Surveys
   - Employer Surveys
   - Placement data
   - ABC exam statistics

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2. Programs are required to maintain the following documentation for all students:
   a. Grading Policy
   b. Grading Scale
   c. Pass Score
   d. Official roster of students most recently assessed cohort in each of the cognitive domain areas
   e. Copy of blank exam(s) and/or other required assessments covering each objective in the cognitive domain areas.
   f. Grade book or transcripts covering all students in the covered cohorts, documenting satisfactory completion of each objective.
   g. Electronic record keeping is encouraged.
Chapter 9  Reconsideration of an Adverse Recommendation of CAAHEP Accreditation

When NCOPE first formulates a recommendation of Withhold of Accreditation, Probationary Accreditation, or Withdrawal of Accreditation, the Chief Executive Officer of the sponsor will be notified in writing of that NCOPE action. The notification will include the specific areas where the program was found deficient (Standards cited), the rationale for those citations, and the suggested documentation by which the Program may demonstrate its compliance with the Standards. Following NCOPE action, the institution may request reconsideration of an adverse decision to withhold or withdraw accreditation by submitting in writing its objections, together with supporting data and a request for reevaluation.

The sponsor will have fourteen (14) calendar days after receipt of that written notice (sent certified mail, return receipt requested) to request reconsideration of that recommendation or to request voluntary withdrawal of its accreditation or application.

- If the Program does not request reconsideration by the deadline, the original NCOPE recommendation is forwarded to CAAHEP with the correspondence documenting that the Program was notified of its rights and that due process was followed.
- If the Program requests reconsideration, it is notified of a deadline to submit additional (new) material for consideration by NCOPE.

NCOPE will place reconsideration of the original recommendation on its next agenda following the Program’s deadline for submission of materials. The NCOPE Board will review the reconsideration action based on all the materials at the time of the original recommendation as well as all new materials submitted by the Program.

- Following review of the documentation, NCOPE formulates a recommendation to CAAHEP for Initial Accreditation or Withhold Accreditation for new programs, or Continuing Accreditation, Probationary Accreditation, or Withdrawal of Accreditation.
- If NCOPE formulates a recommendation that could change the CAAHEP accreditation status of the program, the recommendation is forwarded to CAAHEP along with the correspondence documenting that the Program was notified of its rights and that due process was followed.
- If NCOPE formulates a recommendation that would not change the CAAHEP accreditation status, but includes citations, the recommendation is not forwarded to CAAHEP and a Progress Report is requested of the Program.

Once the reconsideration is recommended and reviewed, the decision is final and not subject to appeal. CAAHEP will act on NCOPE’s recommendation after NCOPE’s reconsideration.

Appeals Procedures for CAAHEP Accreditation
NCOPE follows the CAAHEP policies and procedures for Appeals (600 Appeals and Complaints).
References:

- Section 601 Appeals of Adverse Accreditation Actions: [https://www.caahep.org/CAAHEP/media/CAAHEP-Documents/PolicyManual05172019.pdf](https://www.caahep.org/CAAHEP/media/CAAHEP-Documents/PolicyManual05172019.pdf)