

## NCOPE Virtual Site Visit Policy and Procedure

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### Introduction

NCOPE has initiated a virtual site visit process for institutions that are in good standing with NCOPE and CAAHEP. The temporary virtual site visit process replaces the traditional on-site visit but retains all major components. Please refer to the site visit manual and accreditation manual for an overview of site visit components, expectations and protocols on the NCOPE website. The purpose of this document is to describe the virtual site visit process.

Background: The self-study in combination with the site visit are critical and sensitive parts 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 should understand that the purpose of the site visit is to provide a professional judgment of the quality of the educational program and to encourage the program's continued improvement.

Many accreditation agencies and CAAHEP's Committees on Accreditation have moved toward virtual site visits due the challenges posed by the 2019-2021 pandemic with positive feedback from both site visitors and programs. CAAHEP has also accepted the virtual site visit as an alternative to on-site visits to address the need to encourage programs continuous improvement through the accreditation process.

Requirements: The requirements for the site visit remain as stated in the original CAAHEP Policy 206. An on-site visit is required to be a part of the evaluation process to assist with further determination of compliance with the Standards. Site visitors represent both the CoA and CAAHEP.

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

Process: The process has changed due to the 2019-2020 pandemic. The changes in the site visit process include the following, as explained in this document:

- Pre-site visit orientation to assess technical issues, coordination of access to online resources (e.g., leaning platform) and agenda
- Proposed schedule for site visit
- Communication with clinical sites
- Video recording a virtual tour

## Eligibility

Programs are eligible to participate in a virtual site visit if they meet the following criteria:

- 1) The program is seeking continuing accreditation status who were in otherwise good standing with NCOPE and CAAHEP.
- 2) The self-study review committee endorses the use of a virtual site visit based upon their assessment of the self-study and any documentation submitted at their request.

*A virtual site visit opportunity may also be granted if the above criteria is not met based upon a recommendation from the accreditation review committee.*

## Logistics and Responsibilities

### Participation in a Virtual Site Visit

Programs eligible to participate in a virtual site visit based upon the criteria defined above are not required to do so and may opt-out from the virtual site visit should they believe they lack the resources to enable a successful virtual site visit or prefer an on-site visit. Opt-out requests must be submitted in writing to the NCOPE Executive Director.

### Technology and Privacy Considerations

The online platforms used to execute the virtual site visit use secure SSL internet protocols and require that the persons representing the program can meet the technology requirements defined in appendix A. The site visitors and representatives of the sponsor institutions are not allowed to record any portion of the visit and the program director must complete the consent to participate in a virtual site visit form as verification of the privacy requirements and practices.

<https://www.cognitofirms.com/NCOPE1/ConsentForVirtualSiteVisit>

Recording of any part of the virtual site visit is not allowed, unless otherwise noted. If evidence of recording is detected, the site visitors will place the interview on hold and verify and not resume until they can confirm the recording has ended and has been deleted. The NCOPE staff are to be notified if the site visitors identify that any portion of the virtual visit was recorded. If recording concerns persist, the virtual visit will be ended, and NCOPE staff immediately notified.

### Communication

All email correspondence between the sponsor and site visit team must concur to email addresses provided by NCOPE, which end in “@ncope.org.” Synchronous video chat will be facilitated using the Microsoft Teams platform, which meets the following security standards: ISO 27001, ISO 27018, SSAE16, SOC1 Type I & II, SOC2 Type I and II, HIPAA, FERPA, GLBA and EU Model Clause (“EUMC”).

### Site Visit Duration and Schedule

The site visit duration will span one and one half (1.5) days, which may be further divided based upon mutual agreement of the lead site visitor and program director. For example, the site visit can be split into three consecutive 4-hour days. The schedule will consist of the same events typically held during a traditional on-site site visit, which is defined in the [Accreditation Manual](#), with the exception of the facilities tour which must be submitted prior to the site visit. Please see appendix B, below for the requirements of the facilities tour for a virtual site visit.

### Sponsor Responsibilities

Sponsor responsibilities are consistent with those defined in Chapter 7 of the [Accreditation Manual](#) with the following additional items required prior to the site visit:

1. A facilities tour video in lieu of a live tour typically administered during an on-site visit, which is defined in Appendix B.
2. Participation in a technology training and testing sessions with an NCOPE staff member.
3. A list of participants for each event on the site visit schedule.

## Site Visitor Composition and Responsibility

Site visit team member composition and responsibilities are consistent with those defined in Chapter 7 of the [Accreditation Manual](#) with the additional requirement of participating in a technology training and testing sessions with an NCOPE staff member.

## Virtual Site Visit Fee

The virtual site visit has a fixed fee of \$1,200 that covers administrative costs, training, supplies, and technology resources. In the event additional expenses are accrued, NCOPE reserves the right to charge the sponsor institution the actual costs beyond those defined above.

## Site Visit Timeline

### Pre-Site Visit

- 8-12 weeks prior to the site visit
  - The sponsor is given the opportunity to opt-out of the virtual site visit
  - The sponsor provides the NCOPE staff with potential dates that the site visit can be held
  - The sponsor completes the [Review/Site-Visitor Conflict of Interest \(COI\) Identification Declaration Form](#) if not already submitted or additional COI opportunities have been added since previous submission of the form
- 5-8 weeks prior to the site visit
  - The members of the site visit team are provided to the sponsor including the NCOPE provided email address for the lead site visitor
- 3-5 weeks prior to the site visit
  - A tentative schedule is provided to the lead site visitor for consideration and review
- 2 weeks prior to the site visit
  - The final schedule must be set by consent between the lead site visitor and the sponsor, including the list of participants for each event
  - The sponsor submits the required/requested documentation to the site visit team members using the resources provided by NCOPE
  - The sponsor provides the site visitors any credentials necessary to access resources hosted by the sponsor (for example a test student account for their LMS platform)
  - The sponsors representatives and site visitors must successfully complete a technology training and testing session hosted by the NCOPE staff
- 1 week prior to the site visit
  - The virtual facility tour video must be submitted using the resources provided by NCOPE

### Site Visit and Post-Site Visit

- The site visit and post-site visit timelines are unchanged related to those defined in the [NCOPE Accreditation Manual](#) under Chapter 7.

## Appendix A – Technology Requirements

The technology requirements are designed to ensure the virtual site visit participants have a trouble-free technology experience, allowing the stakeholders to focus on the specific objectives of the site visit. In the event a participant does not believe they meet these requirements, it may still be possible to

conduct the virtual site visit, but it will require the approval of the NCOPE clinical resource director. Furthermore, it is possible the technology requirements can be met, but participation may not be possible due to factors outside of NCOPE's control such as institutional firewalls at the sponsor organization, which will be assessed during a technology training and testing session. Should the participants at the sponsor institution fail to successfully complete technology training and testing, the virtual site visit may be postponed or canceled.

### Connectivity

- All participants must have a stable internet connection capable of delivering a minimum of 5 MB/second downstream and 2 MB/sec upstream to each device on the connection.
  - This includes and is not limited to institutional T3/T1 dedicated lines, cable modems, fiber internet service, or 5G/4G LTE cellular connectivity.
  - Internet performance can be assessed for free by running a speed test at: <https://www.speedtest.net/>
- If connecting through a wireless (Wi-Fi) connection, the connection should use encryption to ensure all data transferred between the device and router is protected from vulnerabilities.
  - Please contact your internet service provider or institutional IT department for guidance.

### Hardware

- Acceptable devices for participation include modern tablets including any iPad manufactured after 2017 or a desktop/laptop/convertible computer running a modern version of MacOS / OS X or Windows 10.
  - Smartphone based devices may be used by current/former students, individuals working at clinical/technical facilities, and persons serving on the advisory committee who are not on the faculty/staff of the O&P program if the device can install Microsoft Teams from either the Apple App Store or Google (Android) Play Store and it features a front-facing "selfie" camera.
- Each device must have a built-in or externally attached webcam capable of outputting a minimum of 720P resolution (which most laptops and tablets manufactured after 2017 are capable of) and an internal or external microphone capable of capturing audio.
- If the device is going to be used simultaneously by more than one person, it must also have speakers adequate to enable all participants to clearly hear audio output and a microphone capable of detecting all participants voices even when adhering to social distancing policies. The screen must also be of adequate size, resolution, and brightness to enable all participants to see it for the duration of their participation.

### Software

- Tablets running iOS/iPadOS (Apple-based products) should be running version 12.0 or higher.
- Windows devices should be running Windows 10 Home, Pro, Education, or Enterprise edition.
- Apple laptops/desktops should be running MacOS / OS X version 10.10 (Yosemite) or higher.
- Chrome Browser and one additional alternative modern browser including Safari, Firefox, Opera, or Microsoft Edge.
- Microsoft Teams: <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoft-teams/group-chat-software>

- The lead site visitor will be provided a Microsoft Office 365 license and a personal @ncope.org email address to enable access to all cloud-based resources and the ability control the Microsoft Teams platform.

## Appendix B – Virtual Facility Tour Requirements

In lieu of a live guided tour of the educational facilities, the program faculty and staff must generate and submit a virtual facility tour video one week prior to the actual site visit. The tour is designed to demonstrate compliance with standard III, resources and must adhere to the following requirements.

### Specific Spaces/Facilities to be included in the video

- Faculty/staff offices and shared workspaces
- Classroom spaces (i.e., space for didactic instruction)
- Clinical evaluation space, including equipment such as parallel bars
- Laboratory spaces
- Manufacturing/fabrication spaces
- Tools, machinery and fabrication equipment
- Teaching supplies, such as sample orthoses and prostheses
- Storage spaces
- Meeting spaces for use by faculty, staff, and students
- Multi-purpose spaces
- Spaces for secure storage of student files and records if physical copies are maintained in the program space

### Recording and Submission Protocol

- The video must be captured at a minimum resolution of 720P and 24 frames per second. 1080P resolution is preferable.
- The lens must be held in a landscape orientation (where the width of the frame is greater than the height).
- For each space, narration should be provided that identifies:
  - The campus and building name where the space is housed (example: health sciences campus, allied health education building II)
  - The capacity for the space (example: 24 students and 2 instructors)
  - The uses of the space (example: Fitting and dynamic alignment of orthoses/prostheses)
  - Safety features (examples: fire extinguishers, eye wash station, particulate dust filter)
- The narrator is welcome to provide additional commentary and/or demonstrations to further clarify the adequacy of the space to deliver the education program.
- The video may be edited using post-production techniques, but it should not in any way be used to distort the actual space in a manner that misrepresents its actual functionality.
  - Titles and text should be appended to the video to help guide the self-study reviewer if the institution and staff have this ability.
- The final video (or videos if broken into more than one file) must be submitted using the NCOPE virtual site visit page. The only acceptable video format is MP4 and files must be no larger than 250MB in size.