



Site Visitor Manual

National Commission on Orthotic and
Prosthetic Education

Guidelines and information for site visit team
members to facilitate the site visit process.

This document should be reviewed in conjunction with the current version of the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Programs in

- Orthotic Prosthetic Technician: [CAAHEP Technician Standards](#)
- Orthotic Prosthetic Assistant: [CAAHEP Orthotist Prosthetist Assistant Standards](#) •
Orthotist Prosthetist Practitioner: [CAAHEP Orthotist Prosthetist Standards](#)

[The NCOPE Accreditation Manual](#) should be the primary reference site visitors use to complement the information shared within this manual. Additional context about site visits can also be found at the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors website: <https://www.aspa-usa.org/> and the [CAAHEP Policy and Procedures Manual](#). Should the site visitor or other education stakeholders have any concerns or questions prior to, during, or after the site visit, they should [contact the NCOPE staff](#) responsible for academic program accreditation for additional guidance.

Contact us:

National Commission on Orthotic and Prosthetic Education (NCOPE)
330 John Carlyle St., Ste. 200
Alexandria, VA 22314
Tel: 703-836-7114
Fax: 703-836-0838
info@ncope.org

| |
|--|
| Revised: October 2018; February 2020, March 2023, August 2023, May 2025 NCOPE Approved |
|--|

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| 1. Introduction | 3 |
| Site Visit Team Members..... | 3 |
| NCOPE Training for Site Visitors..... | 4 |
| NCOPE Expectations of Site Visitors | 4 |
| Withdrawal of Site Visitor Appointment..... | 6 |
| 2. Responsibilities of the Site Visit Team..... | 7 |
| Before the site visit..... | 7 |
| During the Site Visit | 9 |
| After the Site Visit | 14 |
| 3. Evaluation of the Site Visit..... | 15 |
| 4. Site Visit Expenses | 15 |
| Travel Regulations | 15 |
| Lodging/Meals..... | 16 |
| APPENDIX | 17 |
| Suggested interview techniques and questions..... | 18 |
| CAAHEP Recommendations for evaluation of distance education programs | 25 |
| Relevant Links and Site Visitor Resources..... | 27 |

1. Introduction

The *NCOPE Site Visitor Manual* has been developed by NCOPE to facilitate the site visit processes. It includes the list of site visitor responsibilities before, during, and after a site accreditation visit. Team members are responsible for thoroughly reviewing and understanding the CAAHEP Standards and Procedures to assess the Applicant Program’s compliance with them.

Site Visit Team Members

Site visitors are professional colleagues who are interested in the applicant program's well-being and continued improvement. When this spirit prevails, sufficient information will be gathered during the visit to provide a sound basis for the team's evaluation. Great care should be taken by Site Visit Team members to avoid statements of “how it should be done” or “how we do it at our institution“. Such expressions can easily be interpreted in a fashion that detracts from the “objective” reviewer posture each site visitor should assume. An attitude for receptiveness to the applicant institution's

philosophy and approaches not only makes the visit more productive but often yields dividends in "food for thought" as one returns home.

To facilitate the spirit of the site visit process, site visitors are encouraged to remember that:

1. The Site Visit Team is a team. It must work as a unit. Accordingly, the chairperson is the official spokesperson for the team, is in full charge of the visit, and must ensure that the evaluation is comprehensive and thorough. The complete cooperation of members in carrying out their respective assignments is essential.
2. The highest form of professional confidence is entrusted to those with the responsibility for making a site visit. The opinions of site visitors about the program being visited must be confined to the team and to members of NCOPE.
3. Should problems be encountered that are not addressed in this Site Visit Manual, the Chairman of NCOPE or members of the Commission are available. The number to call in Alexandria, VA is: (703) 836-7114.

NCOPE Training for Site Visitors

At the AOPA and/or AAOP Annual Meetings or at other sites as specified, NCOPE conducts training sessions for potential site visitors. These training sessions will focus on the issues encountered in the analysis of the Self-Study Report, procedures and policies to govern site visitors, and the guidelines for preparing the Site Visit Team Report to the Commission. Every effort will be made to ensure that all site visitors have the same understanding of all elements of the review process. Deans and/or program directors will nominate faculty members and practitioners to the roster of potential site visitors. For any nominee's name to be added to the roster, he or she must attend a training workshop.

NCOPE Expectations of Site Visitors

1. Preserve the Confidentiality of Peer Review Process
NCOPE accreditation guidelines require disclosure upon request of site visit team members. However, site visit team members shall make no disclosure about individual program evaluations and recommendations resulting from the site visit team review process.
It is expected that an annual [Conflict of Interest/Confidentiality form](#) (COI) must be on file.
2. Understand and Preserve the Intended Character of the Site Visit Team The Site Visitors act as an inquiring arm of NCOPE/CAAHEP responsible for presenting the facts about the applicant program to NCOPE. Each site visitor has the responsibility for fact-finding and fact clarification and writing a final report on the program reviewed.

3. Protect the Integrity of the Site Visit Team

The Site Visit Team is a team and must work as a unit. Although, the chair is the official spokesperson of the team, all Site Visitors are entrusted with the highest form of professional confidence and have an equal voice.

The Site Visitors are not inspectors, and should not view themselves that way. Interviews conducted by team members are not interrogations. Team members should avoid statements of "how it should be done" or "how we do it at our institution or program."

4. Know the Main Objectives of the Site Visit Team

- Confirm that the program has a clear mission and goals that it regularly assesses.
- Review data and information, and to verify and clarify, as needed, the description of the program as presented in the Self-Study Report.
- Provide an occasion for the exchange of information among colleagues, and for learning about innovative developments responsive to common problems and opportunities in a common field.
- Assess the program under review against its own stated goals.
- Assess the program against the NCOPE Standards.
- Use the site visit findings as the basis for writing an evaluative report to the NCOPE.

5. Have an in-depth knowledge of the following:

- Peer review and accreditation process.
- Most current CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines*, including knowledge their interpretations and the problems frequently encountered in their application.
- The applicant program's Self-Study Report, including the full scope of the program's resources, operations and components.
- Self-study reviewers report
- Existing procedures for accreditation, including the mechanism for reconsideration.

Withdrawal of Site Visitor Appointment

Individuals may be deleted from the roster of active site visitors if they: voluntary resign, are inactive for a period of three or more years, or fail to correct any deficiencies revealed on the evaluative process.

CAAHEP Policies

- Standards of Ethical Conduct. All members and representatives of NCOPE, including officers, members, site visitors, and staff, will adhere to ethical standards of conduct.
- Site Visitor Consultation Policy. Consultation by non-board member site visitors - either paid or unpaid - is not specifically prohibited by NCOPE. The practice of consulting is at the sole discretion of the individual doing the consultation and is considered outside of NCOPE/CAAHEP accreditation process. Site visitors cannot visit as NCOPE representatives any program for which they have consulted. Consultation with programs that he or she has visited as a site visitor is also prohibited. Site visitors may not use their role as an NCOPE/CAAHEP site visitor to promote themselves for financial gain
- Professionalism. All individuals associated with NCOPE education, including committee members, site visitors, consultants and other representatives, will maintain the highest standard of professionalism and integrity and will conduct themselves in a manner that fosters respect for the integrity, expertise and reliability of all.
- Confidentiality. NCOPE requires that its procedures and the actions of its site visitors are consistent with the need to maintain confidentiality during the review process in accordance with NCOPE and CAAHEP policies. All information made available to site visitors for and during their evaluation will be considered confidential. Disclosure of any information obtained during the accreditation process will be a breach of confidence. Team members are also privy to a number of opinions expressed by individuals during interviews; these too will be confidential. Site visitors will refrain from discussion of any aspect of a sponsor institution, even positively, with anyone other than representatives of the sponsor institution, or individuals involved in the accreditation process.

2. Responsibilities of the Site Visit Team

The primary purpose of the site visit is to verify evidence of compliance with the standards. Therefore, information received should be checked for completeness. The director of the program will expect all site visitors to understand the major aspects of the program. The primary responsibilities of the site visit team include:

Before the site visit

1. Confirm participation.

Selected team members should promptly notify NCOPE of their willingness to participate in a scheduled site visit. Any real or potential conflict of interest should be considered and ruled out. Site visitors will decline any assignment in which a real conflict of interest may be perceived.

2. Review Self-Study Report

Team members will review the contents of the Self-Study Report in relation to the CAAHEP *Standards*. When necessary, the team captain should communicate with the program for any clarification of submitted materials.

- i. Every member of the Site Visit Team is expected to have complete familiarity with the applicant program's Self-Study Report. The Self-Study Report is the result of much labor on the part of the host institution. When questions that are clearly answered in the report are asked during the site visit, confidence in the site visit process is greatly shaken.
- ii. The Site Visit Team chairperson may ask each member to be particularly familiar with certain portions of the Self-Study Report and draft specific sections of the Site Visit Team Report.
- iii. Review of the applicant program's supplementary documents and resources such as the university bulletins, catalogs or websites and the applicant program's brochures, pamphlets and/or handbooks.

3. Review the Self-Study Reviewers written comments

Team members will review the comments written by the self-study reviewers. The site visit team will provide a narrative response to each of the Self-Study Reviewers' issues of concern following the site visit.

- i. Each member of the Site Visit Team should become particularly familiar with the areas of the Self-Study Report whose first review prompted questions by NCOPE. Thorough preparation will enable the team to focus quickly on the items that must be resolved during the course of the visit. But the team should also explore any other possible items missed in the Self-Study Report.

4. Review the site visit activities and expectations for the Site Visitor Report Review the list of activities noted in the "During the Site Visit" section and the outline for the Site Visitor Report (found in the appendix).

5. Special Obligations of Chairperson

In addition to the above, the chairperson of the Site Visit Team has the additional responsibility to consult with the applicant program's representative and the Site Visit Team members regarding scheduling details for the site visit.

The chairperson of the Site Visit Team will be expected to communicate with the applicant program at the earliest possible opportunity:

1. To consult with the program head and members of the Site Visit Team to reconfirm the dates for the visit.
2. To provide guidance to the applicant program's head about:
 - (a) The site visit agenda. The Chair may request specific information and/or arrangements for interviews that are needed to clarify any concerns or issues in the Self-Study Report as raised by the NCOPE. This may include interviews with specific university, college or school-wide faculty or officials, alumni or students. A mutually satisfactory agenda will be arranged in consultation with the Program Director of the program being visited. NCOPE and the chair of the site visit team will be contacted if a change in the length of the visit is deemed appropriate. The program personnel may be asked to assist in arranging for appropriate accommodations and ground transportation. When possible, travel arrangements of the team members will be coordinated. Late arrival to or early departure from the sponsor institution reduces the efficiency of the site visit and can adversely affect the site visit team's ability to evaluate the educational program completely and objectively.

The chair of the site visit team may request modifications to the agenda in advance of the site visit, if needed. The agenda should permit the site visitors to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the program

(b) Preparation of additional data. Request documentation or reports be made available during the site visit to clarify problems noted in the preliminary review of the Self-Study Report. This may include minutes of faculty meetings, specific reports and documents, and university affirmative action records available in case the team wishes to review them.

3. Communicate with the Team

Following review of the written report and the supplementary documentation, team members will communicate with each other to develop strategies for data collection and evaluation, outline specific areas of scrutiny, and identify concerns.

During the Site Visit

Site visitors must exercise tact and care in everything said and done, both when soliciting information and when answering questions. Site visitors are invited guests of the institution and are expected to provide a professional service for which the facility has paid.

1. Preliminary Team Meeting

Arrangements should be made for the site visitors to meet prior to the formal agenda. At this meeting the team should compare notes and decide how they will conduct the various interviews and discuss any other concerns.

2. Orientation

All program personnel and representatives of the administration will be clearly informed about the purposes, function, and mechanics of the on-site evaluation and its relationship to the accreditation processes of NCOPE and CAAHEP.

3. Collect & Interpret Data

The team members will collect, verify, and interpret all information likely to demonstrate how the program meets the *Standards* through interviews, review of documents and inspection of facilities. Interviewing those who make the program function--faculty, students, and administrators--is largely what the site visit is all about. Sometime must be spent reviewing appropriate records and inspecting facilities. Some of the visit must also be devoted to team conferences to establish an early consensus about the report that must be prepared for NCOPE. However, interviewing will consume the most time and should yield the greatest dividends in terms of the site visit objectives, if the Self-Study Report has been well-prepared and thoroughly studied in advance.

- i. Interview all key program personnel, support staff, students, graduates, and representation of advisory committees

*Refer to the suggested interview techniques and questions in the appendix.

The team will fulfill its consultative role by conveying to school administrators how the school or program is viewed from "within" as generally perceived by faculty and students. This consultative dimension is generally only possible however, if the team has had an adequate opportunity to meet alone with faculty and student representatives. If the site visit has gone well, the last meeting with the program need be merely a courtesy call. On the other hand, if there are items that need more attention, arrangements should be made between the Chair of the Site Visit Team and the program head to resolve any remaining site visit requirements.

- ii. Review and analysis of relevant documentation and reports

When the question of conformity depends on specific data, it is important that an adequate auditing process be undertaken of those records supporting the factual presentation in the Self-Study Report. Care should be exercised to assure that the most relevant records are reviewed, and that an appropriate sampling technique is employed. Site visitors will be provided a copy of the self-study, curriculum map completed by the program, and a set documentation defined in the NCOPE Accreditation Manual under Chapter 10 – Site Visit Resources.

Familiarity with the following records is likely to be important.

- Records Relevant to Purpose, Eligibility, Program Mission
- Records Relevant to Curriculum
- Records Relevant Affiliation Agreements
- Records Relevant to Admissions
- Records Relevant Student Assessment
- Records Relevant Faculty Qualifications

Records Relevant to Introduction, Purpose, Eligibility, Program Mission and Program Jurisdiction

The team may wish to examine a sample of minutes of school-wide and/or program-wide faculty meetings. Where appropriate, the program's annual report(s), but not an individual faculty member's report, may be reviewed. The Site Visit Team Chair should arrange before arrival to have such minutes and reports available in case the team wishes to review them. Such materials should be read with a view to better understanding of the program's policy-making process and its past and future directions.

The team will need to examine any mission goals, or objective statements that the program has as well as planning and internal assessment documents. Such an examination is fundamental to other steps in the review in order to provide perspective on the distinctive aspects of the program.

Records Relevant Curriculum

The team, with the aid of appropriate faculty or administrators, may request a review of student transcripts and/or degree requirement control sheets to determine the basis on which course and other degree requirements are waived or met, and to determine if completion of course prerequisites is enforced. If an internship program exists, the team should review a sample of the documents relating to students in the internship program. Also, the team should note the adequacy of managing the internship program, e.g., the job availability, description, letters of appointment, and supervisory activities.

Final transcripts should also be a part of this review to determine if standards for graduation are enforced. And if a final comprehensive examination or master's thesis is required, samples should be reviewed to determine standards and quality.

Records Relevant Affiliation Agreements

The team will ask to see records verifying current agreements with clinics or fabrication sites to ensure mutual agreement between the program and the rotation, internship, clinical and practicum site.

Records Relevant Admissions

The team may request to see admissions data on all or a random sample of enrollees who entered during the self-study year so that a judgment can be reached on the program criteria (e.g. prerequisites). The team may also wish to review a sample of the records that support the presentation of these data.

Records Relevant Student Assessment

Team members may wish to review the distribution of grades earned by students enrolled in several typical classes and to compare the results of this distribution with a cross-sectional profile of the admissions credentials of these students. This process may prompt or answer questions concerning (1) the admissions process in general and/or (2) the implied rigor of the graduate programs.

Records Relevant Faculty Qualifications

Team members may wish to review faculty CVs to ensure faculty are appropriately credentialed or licensed for the content area.

iii. Inspecting pertinent facilities and resources.

Program resources must be sufficient to ensure the achievement of the program's goals and outcomes. Resources include, but are not limited to faculty, clerical and support staff, curriculum, finances, offices, classroom, laboratory, and ancillary student facilities, clinical affiliates, equipment, supplies, computer resources, instructional reference materials and faculty/staff continuing education.

The team may wish to visit the following locations and resources to ensure appropriate safety measures and ability to meet the CAAHEP standards:

- Classroom space
- Clinical assessment space, if applicable to program
- Lab space
- Tools and Equipment
- Student resources such as the library

4. Exit Summation Conferences

- Program Director: After collection and interpretation of data, team members will arrange to meet the Program Director to confirm the data and discuss the site visit team's conclusions and recommendations. It is important to determine whether any of the conclusions have been based on faulty interpretations or incomplete information. This is an ideal time for the team to function as consultants, providing ideas and suggestions to help the program personnel address identified shortcomings.
- Program Director and designated representatives: The site visit team members will provide program personnel and administration officials with an objective oral review of the findings of the team. Those present during the summation conference will be documented. Team members will try to evaluate the degree of concurrence expressed by those present regarding the team's observations and determine the likelihood of correcting those Standards cited as 'not met'. The team should reiterate their function and review the sequence of events for the accreditation process including the program's right to verify the facts in the report, the ability of the program to inform NCOPE of improvements made prior to the close of the agenda, and the reconsideration mechanism.

The team will not indicate NCOPE's accreditation recommendation and will not leave a copy of the Site Visit Report with the program.

5. Site Visitor Report Overview and Outline

a. Document findings

Team members will carefully document all findings on the site visit report form. Evidence will be provided to substantiate all Standards 'not met'. For all Standards cited as 'not met' reference will be made to the number/letter designation of the applicable Standards(s). The site visit team will come to consensus and develop a report to include the following categories:

Response to Self Study Reviewers Issues:

When necessary, the site visit team will provide a narrative response to each of the Self-Study Reviewers' issues of concern.

Concerns

Based upon the self-study review committee's review, programs are typically informed as to concerns or items that require being addressed either during the site visit or sometimes prior to. This tab allows the site visit team to identify if the concerns have been satisfactorily addressed.

Citations

The site visit team will evaluate the program against each standard and identify if program has met or not met the standard. The team must write a clear, concise, complete rationale (reason) for each standard cited as "Not Met" on the site visit report.

Strengths, Enhancements & Impressions

Enter the standard reference, and then write a brief statement of the program strength or enhancement related to the standard identified. The impressions tab captures qualitative information about the teams experience during the site visit.

Changes

Describe any significant differences found on-site compared to the pre-visit documentation.

Persons:

Affiliates: List the affiliates of the program

Interviewed: List the Name and position of all individuals interviewed during the site visit.

Team Consensus: The site visitor report should be developed in a collaborative manner prior to the exit summation conference.

The team will begin to assemble its impressions prior to the final day of the site visit. The team should develop a consensus and a draft of the team's report without representatives of the education program present.

All members of the team should be involved in the development of the report with the ability to comment, though allocating drafting responsibilities will vary.

If it should happen that a consensus cannot be arrived at, then all members of the team should have the same perception of the inhibiting causes, and an agreement should be arrived at on how the failure to achieve consensus will be overcome. In the event that consensus cannot be achieved on an assessment of an individual standard, then a statement on the diversity of judgment should be included in the discussion of that item in the team's report along with as much factual data as possible.

Neither the team's consensus nor lack of it should ever be conveyed to anyone at the host institution.

Objective and Unbiased: The report should be concise with references to CAAHEP standard compliance and rationale for noncompliance.

It is extremely important to call attention to the fact that the Site Visit Team serves as scribes and holds the responsibility of presenting only the facts and assessments that could be drawn from the documentation provided prior to the visit and information captured during the visit. The actual recommendation for accreditation made to CAAHEP is performed by the NCOPE Board of Directors and not the site visitors. This procedure has been adopted to ensure that CAAHEP Standards are applied in precisely the same way to every program which applied for peer review.

Timelines: The site visitor report will be reviewed for accuracy prior to its submission. Errors identified will be corrected. Consistency between the observation and impressions of the site team and their documentation is essential. The site visit report will complement and validate, not duplicate, the Self-Study Report submitted by the program.

The timeline and distribution of the site visitors report are as follows:

- DRAFT REPORT: The entire team should complete one draft of the report. Final submission of the site visitors report can only be submitted by the team chair within two weeks of the end of the site visit.
- PROGRAM RESPONSE TO DRAFT REPORT: The program director will be emailed the draft report from the NCOPE office.
- FINAL REPORT: If no major revisions are required, the final Site Visitors Report will be submitted directly to the NCOPE Board of Directors for review and action/recommendation to CAAHEP. If the report identifies any noncompliance issues, it will first be reviewed by the NCOPE Academic Review Committee for comment before proceeding to the Board. If substantial revisions are necessary, the Site Visit Team Chair must notify the Commission of the additional time needed.

After the Site Visit

1. Allow sufficient time at the end of the site visit and prior to the exit report to confer with the Program Director to obtain clarification and additional information, as necessary.
2. Submit the Site Visit Report to the NCOPE staff within two (2) weeks of the site visit.
3. Submit a reimbursement for expenses form or bill.com payment request within 30 days of completion.

3. Evaluation of the Site Visit

Peer evaluation of team members will be completed after each site visit. Additionally, the Program Director and the senior officer of the sponsor institution who participated in the site visit are each given the opportunity to evaluate the site visitors both as a team and as individuals.

No site visitor will be contacted without first obtaining authorization from the program generating the unfavorable questionnaire.

4. Site Visit Expenses

NCOPE, not the applicant institution, will reimburse site visitors for allowable expenses. Team members that opt to use the "[Expense Reimbursement Form](#)" may download a copy directly from the NCOPE Website and submit the completed form with receipts to the NCOPE Staff claim their expenses. Team members that wish to use the electronic Bill.com service should contact the NCOPE staff for guidance on creating an account and submitting expenses.

There are no honoraria for site visits, and the only allowable expenses are those identified on the [NCOPE Expense Reimbursement Form](#).

Travel Regulations

Site Visit Team Member's Responsibility

You, as a member of the Site Visit Team, have several responsibilities in connection with travel. These responsibilities are no less important than your responsibilities for carrying out **your** Site Visit Team assignment. In all cases, you are expected to exercise the same care in incurring expenses during the site visit that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business.

Authorization

Your authorization to travel as a member of a Site Visit Team to evaluate an education program will be a letter from the NCOPE staff. The program to be visited, other members of the team, the dates for the visit, and other pertinent information will be included within the letter. A lead site visitor can self-identify when initially volunteering or one will be designated by the NCOPE staff.

Travel by Common Carrier

Tickets: The responsibility for purchasing the travel ticket rests with each individual member of the Site Visit Team.

Air Accommodations: All team members will use coach air travel accommodations. If first class air accommodation is used, the individual Site Visit Team member will be

personally responsible for the difference between coach fare and first class fare. Rail Accommodations: You are authorized a first class seat for day-time travel.

Transportation To and From the Carrier Terminal

Reimbursement will be allowed for taxicabs and for limousine fares (plus tip of 15%) to, from, and between common carrier terminals. Please provide receipts. The site visit team can also secure a rental vehicle if the cost is comparable to or lower than the use of a taxicab or other ride service needed for ground transportation during the visit.

Travel by Privately Owned Automobile

If you drive a privately owned automobile, reimbursement will be allowed at the current IRS mileage rate on either standard highway map distances or your odometer reading. You will be reimbursed for highway, bridge, and tunnel tolls, ferry fares and parking fees if they are itemized and receipts are submitted with your travel voucher.

Travel by privately owned automobile is not to exceed the cost by common carrier.

Lodging/Meals

In the interest of keeping the Site Visit Team costs reasonable, NCOPE has adopted the following guidelines for lodging and meals:

1. The education program staff is to arrange hotel accommodations for each Site Visit Team member and should notify them using the contact information provided to them by the NCOPE staff. If the program is unable to book hotel accommodation for the team members, the site visit team members will be notified by a program representative or NCOPE staff member and a suggested hotel will be identified. In those rare instances, the team members will be asked to make their own arrangements.
2. Receipts will be required for reimbursement of meal expenses. Copies of all receipts will be sent to NCOPE, for billing purposes to invoice the program at the conclusion of the visit. You are expected to exercise the same care in incurring meal expenses during the site visit that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business.

When all expense reports are received from the team using the expense reimbursement form or bill.com, the education program will be billed by NCOPE for the total cost of the site visit.

APPENDIX

- A. Suggested interview techniques and questions
- B. CAAHEP Recommendations for evaluation of distance education programs
- C. Site Visitor Report Outline
- D. Site Visit Checklist
- E. CAAHEP/NCOPE Site Visitor Agreement
- F. Site Visit Team Questionnaire

Suggested interview techniques and questions

For interviews with university and program administrators, faculty and students

A. Interview Techniques

While expert interviewers may find this reminder somewhat presumptuous, it is worth cautioning site visitors against falling into the oldest 'trap' of the interview process: allowing the person being interviewed to dominate the interview by asking questions of you, the person conducting the interview. Also, comparisons with one's own experience should be avoided. The result may be time consumed without the priority questions being answered--or answered as fully as otherwise possible. Above all else, site visitors should be thoroughly prepared for every interview. Such preparation generally requires a focus on two fundamental questions: (1) on which aspects of the Self-Study Report can the person being interviewed offer the best insights; and (2) what are the important, priority issues that must be covered in the limited time available?

Thus, it is important that the Site Visit Team respect what is unique about the program being reviewed and the many ways in which a program can achieve excellence. During the interviews, the nuances, unique features, and special ways of doing things that characterize the program will have to be drawn out from the persons being interviewed. And what is being heard will have to be weighed against standards that are themselves not rigidly promulgated or defined. Accordingly, the interview process will be less directed, and a good deal of unstructured give and take will be quite appropriate. The goal will be to perceive and understand the program in relation to NCOPE Essentials. The formal matter-of-fact interview approach should give way to an informal conversation designed to create clear perception and understanding of the character and substantive elements of the program.

The sections below provide suggestions about the kinds of issues that site visitors ought to raise in these interviews. A few general observations about interviewing are in order. When conducting the interviews, the Site Visit Team should be continuously aware of the requirements of the report that must be prepared for NCOPE because different needs of the report may be met by using different interview techniques as illustrated below.

The people/individuals or categories of personnel you will interact with are:

1. Program Director
2. Program Admin
3. Faculty
4. Students
5. Department Head or Dean
6. Communities of Interest (CoI)

| | 1 Sponsorship | 2 Program goals | 3 Resources | 4 Student and Graduate Evaluation/Assessment | 5 Fair Practices |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|
| Program Director | <p>What is the mission of the program?</p> <p>How is the program supported academically and financially by the university?</p> <p>What is the governance structure of the program?</p> <p>What is the programs interface with other departments?</p> | <p>How program goals are determined?</p> <p>How often does your Advisory Council meet? Has the Advisory Council made any recommendations for Program changes? Has the program acted upon those recommendations, why or why not?</p> <p>What have been the most significant developments in the program in the past five years?</p> <p>What has been the participation of students in the selfstudy?</p> | <p>Do you get the support you need from the Administration?</p> <p>Do you have difficulty getting faculty?</p> <p>Does the program have adequate ancillary faculty?</p> <p>Curriculum Development – who is responsible for it?</p> <p>Resource assessment – Adequate facilities? i.e. Equipment and space to support the students & the curriculum</p> <p>If the program were to have a significant increment in the resources, how would you like to see increases spent?</p> <p>What are the prevailing standards and procedures regarding faculty selection and development?</p> | <p>Describe the methods to evaluate the Program overall & the programmatic outcomes.</p> <p>Describe methods used to evaluate students.</p> <p>Describe methods used to evaluate clinical sites/rotations.</p> <p>What is the requirement to be a clinical preceptor and/or mentor?</p> <p>How do you examine the results and implications of outcomes from different levels of assessment: institution, program, and course, student learning outcomes?</p> | <p>Reminder to address the following topics if there is an issue in the Self Study with any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publications and Disclosure - Lawful and Non-discriminatory Practices - Safeguards - Student records - Substantive Change - Agreements <p>Where are Student Records housed and how are they maintained securely?</p> <p>What methods does the program use to promote the health and safety of patients, students, and faculty associated with the educational activities?</p> |

| | 1 Sponsorship | 2 Program goals | 3 Resources | 4 Student and Graduate Evaluation/Assessment | 5 Fair Practices |
|----------------------|--|---|---|--|--|
| Program Admin | <p>What is the programs interface with other departments?</p> <p>How does the Administration regularly evaluate the Program?</p> | <p>Is the Administration involved in the planning of its future development?</p> <p>Has the Advisory Council made any recommendations for Program changes? Has the program acted upon those recommendations, why or why not?</p> <p>What have been the most significant developments in the program in the past five years?</p> | <p>Does the program utilize grant money for operations?</p> <p>How does the school recruit for the program?</p> <p>What constitutes the 'Communities of Interest' (Col) for this program?</p> | | <p>Reminder to address the following topics if there is an issue in the Self Study with any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publications and Disclosure - Lawful and Non-discriminatory Practices - Safeguards - Student records - Substantive Change - Agreements <p>What methods could the faculty members use to improve communication to ensure .. any of the topics listed above?</p> <p>What methods does the program use to promote the health and safety of patients, students, and faculty associated with the educational activities?</p> |

| | 1 Sponsorship | 2 Program goals | 3 Resources | 4 Student and Graduate Evaluation/Assessment | 5 Fair Practices |
|----------------|---------------|---|--|---|------------------|
| Faculty | | <p>What is the faculty role in the planning for program development?</p> <p>What are the program goals and learning domains? How does the program assess its effectiveness in achieving its stated goals and learning domains?</p> <p>Describe an example of how you have used evidence from institution, program, course, student learning, and graduate assessments to improve the program.</p> <p>Has the Advisory Council made any recommendations for Program changes? Has the program acted upon those recommendations, why or why not?</p> | <p>Do faculty feel they have adequate support and resources for implementation of curriculum?</p> <p>If the program were to have a significant increment in the resources, how would you like to see increases spent?</p> <p>What are the current teaching, research, and service interests of faculty members?</p> <p>Are faculty members supported by the dean &/or program head in matters relating to professional goals and interests?</p> <p>Do you find secretarial and support personnel resources to be generally adequate?</p> <p>Are computer and library resources readily available and adequate?</p> <p>What single message, if any, would you like the team to convey to the dean, program head, or president of your university?</p> | <p>Do program faculty and administration regularly assess the program and plan its future development?</p> <p>Were you or other faculty involved in the preparation of the Self-Study Report?</p> <p>Describe methods used to evaluate students? How often of these methods employed?</p> <p>What assessment methods are you using to evaluate your courses and student learning within your courses?</p> <p>What are key areas used to assess student knowledge, skills and behavior?</p> <p>What methods do you use to connect and integrate learning across courses?</p> | |

| 1 Sponsorship | 2 Program goals | 3 Resources | 4 Student and Graduate Evaluation/Assessment | 5 Fair Practices |
|------------------|-----------------|---|---|---|
| Students | | <p>Can they describe the program goals? What are they?</p> <p>Do you feel the curriculum meets these goals?</p> <p>Can you give an example of a strength of the program?</p> <p>Can you give an example of an area of the program that could be improved?</p> <p>What advice would you give someone entering the program?</p> | <p>Which single educational experience in this program have you most enjoyed?</p> <p>What is your evaluation of the academic support services - library, computer facilities, etc.?</p> <p>What is your evaluation of student services - career counseling and placement, etc.?</p> <p>Is there support if an issue arises in either the classroom or the clinical setting?</p> | <p>Do students participate in the governance and/or development of the program?</p> <p>Are students required to complete a student survey of instruction at the end of each course?</p> <p>If you have a message to university administration (i.e. president or dean or the faculty), what would it be?</p> <p>Are you given sufficient feedback for your progress in the program?</p> |

| | 1 Sponsorship | 2 Program goals | 3 Resources | 4 Student and Graduate Evaluation/Assessment | 5 Fair Practices |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|--|------------------|
| Department Head or Dean | <p>What is the mission of the program</p> <p>How is the program supported academically and financially by the university?</p> <p>What is the governance structure of the program?</p> <p>What is the program's interface with other departments?</p> | <p>What have been the most significant developments in the program in the past five years?</p> <p>What changes in the program's mission and character do you see in the next 5 years?</p> <p>How are program goals determined? How do these fit within the broader goals for the department or school?</p> <p>What do feel are the strengths and weaknesses of the program?</p> | <p>Level of dedication to program</p> <p>How is the program supported academically and financially by the university?</p> <p>What is the governance structure of the program?</p> <p>What is the programs interface with other departments?</p> | | |

| | 1 Sponsorship | 2 Program goals | 3 Resources | 4 Student and Graduate Evaluation/Assessment | 5 Fair Practices |
|--|---|--|---|---|------------------|
| <p>Communities of Interest (CoI)</p> <p>(i.e. Preceptors / Clinical rotation site mentors OR Advisory Council members OR graduates/alumni of the program)</p> | <p>What is your involvement in the program?</p> | <p>Can you describe the program goals?</p> <p>Do you feel students from this program are well prepared to enter the profession?</p> <p>What are the programs strengths?</p> <p>What would you suggest to add to enhance the program?</p> <p>What can the program do to ensure that the program meets current and future expectations in areas such as technology, interprofessional communication and professionalism?</p> | <p>(For alumni) In what ways are you as alumni involved with the program?</p> <p>Have you ever provided input into program development?</p> | <p>Have you ever provided student assessment?</p> <p>Question for Graduates: Beyond achieving a passing grade, how do you determine your readiness for future O&P practice?</p> | |

CAAHEP Recommendations for evaluation of distance education programs

This document describes the special evidence that would likely be needed to evaluate Distance Education (DE) programs (i.e. students do not attend any campus location during the entire program) to determine the degree to which they meet the CAAHEP *Standards and Guidelines*. For most Standards, the evidence provided by the program (e.g. self study report) and the evidence gathered by the Committee on Accreditation (NCOPE) (e.g. site visit) would not vary for an on-ground program versus a DE program. For example, a faculty member needs to meet the qualifications, whether s/he is teaching in a classroom or online. However, there may be some elements of some Standards that require different evidence due to the inherent differences in the delivery of the program in a DE mode.

1. Program Goals and Outcomes
How do you monitor and evaluate affective behaviors in online students? How does the Medical Director confirm competency in all learning domains? What techniques do you use to engage online students? How do you keep in contact with online students? What types of evaluation techniques do you use?
2. Advisory Committee
How do you ensure input from all COI's was solicited, assessed and implemented as appropriate? (i.e., what tools do you use?)
3. Resources: Type and Amount
What sort of multimedia elements do you use? How do you back up your data? What testing format do you use?
4. Resources: Support Staff
Do you have adequate support staff to meet the needs of all students, including those in remote locations? How do you accommodate IT support, academic advising, student health services, etc., for distance education students? How is advisor and/or instructor meeting time scheduled/ handled? How do you counsel or tutor students who are struggling? What learning management system do you use and how do you train faculty on the system?
5. Resources: Laboratory Facilities
How do you provide laboratory experiences for distance students? (i.e., via clinical affiliates, simulation, etc.)
How do you ensure inter-rater reliability when evaluating skills at remote lab sites? For rolling enrollment programs (where students may be of various levels of knowledge and skills acquisition), how do you ensure that all of the students' needs are being met?
6. Resources: Clinical Affiliates

With affiliate sites that are located far away, how does the program evaluate student progress in that remote clinical site? How do you evaluate preceptors in seated and distance programs?

7. Resources: Clinical Field Internships/Rotations
How do you ensure inter-rater reliability when evaluating skills at remote clinical sites?
8. Resources: Equipment/Supplies
How does program demonstrate equipment and supplies used in the distance site have equivalent and successful student learning experiences? How does program ensure adequate IT/technical support to students?
9. Resources: Personnel
How does program ensure personnel are qualified/experienced to provide distance education?
10. Resources: Resource Assessment
How do you assess adequacy and effectiveness of resources for seated and distance students?
11. Student and Graduate Evaluation/ Assessments
How does program verify identity of individual taking tests?

12. Other Considerations:

Self-Study Report (SSR) for a DE program: NCOPE may minimize the documentation submitted in a self-study report (e.g. copies of every affiliation agreement) for an on-ground program since a site visit team would be tasked with reviewing complete documentation on site. For a DE program, complete documentation, rather than just samples, may be required to allow scrutiny of the evidence, independent of a site visit.

How might evaluation of distance programs change the site visit?

Consider conducting evaluation activities independent of the actual site visit to the program location, which may include:

1. Set online meeting to view program's learning platform or other computer-based learning offerings
2. Attend/view online class, chosen from online class schedule provided by program
3. Conduct conference call interviews with students, recent graduates, employers, faculty and advisory committee members, using standardized interview forms developed by NCOPE
4. Assign additional site visitors to visit program clinical sites local to the visitor

Site visitors may need to consider alternatives to in person site visits of distance education programs. Distance education programs' "site visits" may need to be conducted via video calling, such as Skype. Because evaluation may be distributed among several members of site visit team, it might increase the number of reviewers. Doing interviews via conference calls

and assessments online probably means that the “site visit” may happen over more than the usual two days.

Tasks for Team Chair may increase because of responsibility for compilation and evaluation of information provided from activities conducted independent of a physical visit as well as activities completed during program site visit.

As with any site visit, there will be a General Group Session/Initial Meeting and the only change might be to explain the evaluation activities that have taken place prior to the physical portion of the site visit.

Possible activities to be completed independent of program site visit, at a time determined appropriate by NCOPE:

1. Local evaluators visit designated clinical affiliates to tour facility, conduct clinical instructor and student interviews, and collect other information related to quality of teaching and learning at the site.
2. Conduct conference call interviews of current students, recent graduates, and employers to acquire perspectives of each related to their experiences with the program.
3. Conduct conference call interviews with distant faculty to assess curriculum, instruction, and student evaluation.
4. Conduct conference call with advisory committee to assess its role and responsibilities.
5. Attend online meeting with program director to view learning platform and other computer-based learning offerings, to assist in evaluation of online resources, instruction, and student evaluation.

Relevant Links and Site Visitor Resources

NCOPE Staff Contact Information

- NCOPE Staff Contact Information
 - <https://ncope.org/index.php/ncopestaff/>

Required Annual Disclosures and Agreements

- NCOPE Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement
 - <https://ncope.org/index.php/home-page-v2/about/conflict-of-interest-form/>
- NCOPE Site Visitor Agreement
 - <https://ncope.org/index.php/home-page-v2/academic-programs/institution-educator-info/site-visitor-agreement/>

NCOPE Academic Program Resources

- NCOPE Accreditation Manual
 - <https://ncope.org/index.php/home-page-v2/academic-programs/institution-educator-info/accreditation-manual/>
- NCOPE Policy & Procedure Manual
 - <https://ncope.org/index.php/home-page-v2/about/policy-and-procedure-manual/>
- Maintaining Accreditation / Thresholds (Performance Standards)
 - <https://ncope.org/index.php/home-page-v2/academic-programs/institution-educator-info/maintenance-of-caahep-accreditation/>
- NCOPE Virtual Site Visit Policies & Procedures
 - <https://ncope.org/index.php/home-page-v2/academic-programs/institution-educator-info/virtual-site-visit-policy-procedure/>
- NCOPE Academic Programs Listings:
 - Orthotist/Prosthetist: <https://ncope.org/index.php/home-page-v2/academic-programs/accredited-practitioner-programs/>
 - Orthotic & Prosthetic Technician: <https://ncope.org/index.php/home-page-v2/academic-programs/accredited-technician-programs/>
 - Orthotic & Prosthetic Assistant: <https://ncope.org/index.php/home-page-v2/academic-programs/accredited-orthotic-prosthetic-assistant-programs/>
- Site Visit Documentation Submission Form
 - <https://ncope.org/index.php/home-page-v2/academic-programs/institution-educator-info/site-visit-documentation/>
- Expense Reimbursement Form
 - <https://ncope.org/index.php/home-page-v2/about/expense-reimbursement-forms/>

CAAHEP Resources

- CAAHEP Education Standards and Guidelines
 - <https://www.caahep.org/program-directors/standards-and-guidelines>
- CAAHEP Policy & Procedure Manual
 - https://assets.website-files.com/5f466098a462432df91fef63/64d26207351f957b26869347_PolicyManual_July_2023%207152023.pdf