



Annual Review of Programs The Next Accreditation System-International

ACGME International (ACGME-I) is excited to announce that all accreditation will transition to an annual review of programs, or the Next Accreditation System-International (NAS-I), beginning 1 July 2021. Once NAS-I is implemented, all ACGME-I accredited programs, with the exception of those on Initial Accreditation, will be reviewed annually by the International Review Committee International (RC-I). During the first half of 2021, education will be provided to designated institutional officials (DIOs), program directors, faculty members, and residents and fellows in several formats, including through an NAS-I web page on the ACGME-I website, workshops, and special electronic newsletters. This first communication provides a quick overview of basic information.

The staff of the ACGME-I looks forward to working with you throughout the transition to an annual review of programs. We sincerely hope this information is useful and welcome any feedback on how to best meet your information needs.

Question 1. *Why is ACGME-I transitioning to an annual review of programs?*

Answer: A pilot use of NAS-I in Singapore, which has participated in ACGME-I accreditation for over 10 years, has shown benefit both educationally as well as from the standpoint of avoiding burden to the program and its staff. The annual review of programs in Singapore has resulted in fewer citations, quicker resolution of citations, and more frequent monitoring by the RC-I. Programs in Singapore have also found that the annual review provides timely feedback. Based on this positive experience, the RC-I has determined that this model of accreditation would be beneficial for all ACGME-I accredited programs.

Question 2. *What is an annual review, and how is it different from the current way the ACGME-I accredits programs?*

Answer: Currently, the ACGME-I accreditation system is episodic consisting of a site visit and evaluation by the RC-I every three to four years. This system is also process-based, requiring periodic documentation of detailed processes of education through the Program Information Form (PIF).

An annual review, or NAS-I, involves continuous review by the RC-I of all programs that are not on Initial Accreditation based on the annual submission of data (see Question 3 below). There will be no PIF and no required periodic internal review. Instead, the RC-I will use information already collected and updated in the Accreditation Data System (ADS) to annually evaluate programs.

Question 3. *What data will the Review Committee-International use to make accreditation decisions in the NAS-I?*

Answer: Programs will continue to be responsible for updating information in ADS each year. The NAS-I does not require programs to enter additional data; however, there is a need for

enhanced accuracy and completeness of the information entered into ADS since this data will directly affect accreditation decisions on an annual basis.

The RC-I will use all available data including specific data listed to make annual accreditation decisions:

- ACGME-I Resident/Fellow Survey results;
- ACGME-I Faculty Survey results;
- Information on clinical experience (such as Case Logs) completed by program graduates (NOTE: Although residents must enter procedures into the Case Log System throughout their educational program, only the Case Logs of graduated residents are used when the RC-I evaluates programs.);
- Program responses to existing citations;
- Scholarly activity of residents/fellows and faculty members;
- Major changes reported by the program, such as changes in program director, faculty members, participating sites; and,
- Information submitted in the annual update on the program's learning and working environment.

Although evaluation of residents/fellows using the Milestones is an important component of quality graduate medical education, residents'/fellows' Milestones assessments are not used during the RC-I's evaluation of a program. Programs will only receive citations related to the Milestones if the data is not reported.

Question 4. *What process does the Review Committee-International use to make accreditation decisions, and how will programs be informed about their accreditation status?*

Answer: Beginning in early 2022, all programs beyond initial accreditation will receive an annual accreditation decision. The RC-I will meet twice a year, once at the beginning of the year and again in late spring. Most programs will receive a Letter of Notification during the first few months of the year indicating their accreditation status. Some programs will be asked to provide additional clarifying information the RC-I feels it needs before it can render an accreditation decision. A very small number of programs (in the United States, this is approximately one percent of programs) will undergo a site visit when the RC-I has concerns about the information submitted and wishes to further clarify the program's annual data prior to rendering an accreditation decision. If additional clarifying information or a site visit is requested, the program will receive an accreditation decision and a Letter of Notification before June of each year.

One advantage of the annual review is that citations can be resolved each year without a site visit. Note that in addition to making an annual accreditation decision, the RC-I can add citations, extend citations, or resolve citations annually. The RC-I can also provide annual feedback on areas that may need additional attention by the program director and the Program Evaluation Committee (PEC) and can give the program commendations for innovative educational practices or work to resolve citations.

Question 5. *When will the program have a site visit?*

Answer: All *currently* scheduled site visits for programs on Continued Accreditation and Continued Accreditation with Warning have been cancelled. Within the next few months, all programs will receive notification of the due date for a Self-Study, which is completed approximately every seven years. Approximately 18 months following submission of a program's Self-Study, the program will have a full site visit.

Question 6. *What is a Self-Study?*

Answer: The Self-Study is an objective, comprehensive evaluation of the program with the goal of program improvement. The Self-Study process requires that programs first develop a set of program aims. Program aims are the program's and institutional leaders' views of key expectations for the program and how it differentiates itself from other programs. The Self-Study uses information from the PEC's annual reviews of the program over the past seven years, an analysis of the program's opportunities and threats, and input from key stakeholders such as residents, fellows, faculty members, or graduates.

The program submits a brief, approximately five-page summary of its Self-Study process, and approximately 18 months later a team of ACGME-I Field Staff members visit the program to review how the planned improvements are occurring. Fellowship programs conduct their Self-Study at the same time and in partnership with their core residency program. Site visits for all fellowship programs are scheduled to occur at the same time as the visit to the core residency program.

Question 7. *Will Sponsoring Institutions also be reviewed annually?*

Answer: No, the annual review of programs uses aggregated data from all programs to determine benchmarks. Programs with data below a benchmark will be more carefully considered by the RC-I. The number of Sponsoring Institutions is not sufficient to statistically determine benchmarks and for that reason, they will continue to undergo a site visit and be reviewed periodically.

Question 8. *I understand that in the US there are Clinical Learning Environment Review, or CLER, visits to Sponsoring Institutions. Will my institution have a CLER visit?*

Answer: In the United States, review of the clinical learning environment as part of the Clinical Learning Environment Review (CLER) Program occurs independently and is not used in accreditation decisions for individual programs. Because of the differences in health care internationally, CLER reviews will not occur as part of ACGME-I's annual review of programs.

Question 9. *How can programs get more information about this transition and the new annual review process?*

Answer: ACGME-I staff members will conduct workshops for program directors, faculty members, and program and institutional coordinators in the first few months of 2021. Resources will also be added to ACGME-I's distance education portal, *Explore*. Additionally, a web page dedicated to annual review, or NAS-I, is available on the ACGME-I website at <https://www.acgme-i.org/Institutions/NAS-I>. The page includes articles on NAS implementation in the United States, information on the Self-Study process and other resources.

The following articles are included on the NAS-I web page referenced above :

Bryne LM, Miller RS, Philibert I, Ling LJ, Potts JR, Leih-Lai MW, Nasca TJ. Program Performance in the Next Accreditation System (NAS): Results of the 2015-2016 Annual Data Review. *JGME*. 2017;9(3): 406-410.

Bryne LM, Miller RS, Nasca TJ. Implementing the Next Accreditation System: Results of the 2014-2015 Annual Data Review. *JGME*. 2016;8(1): 118-123.

Philibert I, Lieh-Lai M. A Practical Guide to the ACGME Self-Study. *JGME*. 2014;6(3): 612-614.

We also welcome questions. Questions or concerns from program directors, program coordinators, faculty members, and others should be sent by e-mail to ACGME-I Executive Director Lorraine Lewis at llewis@acgme-i.org.