



General Advice for Hosting a CCNE On-Site Evaluation

The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) is committed to ensuring that the on-site evaluation of baccalaureate and/or graduate nursing programs is collegial and contributes to the continuous quality improvement of the programs at your institution. CCNE has developed this document to provide advice and guidance for: developing the self-study document, hosting the on-site evaluation, and establishing the on-site resource room.

The Self-Study Document

The self-study process is an opportunity for the nursing unit to engage in an in-depth evaluative process leading to the continuous quality improvement of the nursing program(s) under review for accreditation by CCNE. This programmatic analysis should result in a self-study document that clearly articulates the program's compliance with CCNE's accreditation standards. The self-study document is the product of the self-study process and addresses program compliance with each of the four standards and the associated key elements and elaborations.

The CCNE accreditation standards include a Glossary and provide a list of supporting documentation for each standard to assist program representatives in developing self-study materials and in preparing for the on-site evaluation.

Whether an institution is hosting an on-site evaluation for one or more nursing programs, a *single* self-study document addressing *all* programs under review must be developed (separate self-study documents are not prepared for each program under review). To facilitate the review process, the self-study document must be organized by standard and key element. The self-study process affords the program the opportunity to identify its strengths, its performance with respect to student achievement, and areas for improvement, as well as its plans to address continuous improvement. The narrative should also include a detailed plan of action addressing any areas that the program has identified as needing improvement. Where appropriate, the narrative should include individualized information for each degree/post-graduate APRN certificate program under review. All institutions are encouraged to use the CCNE self-study document template, which is available on the CCNE Online Community (www.ccnecommunity.org) and on the CCNE website at <http://www.aacnnursing.org/CCNE-Accreditation/Resource-Documents/Program-Resources>.

It is particularly helpful to the evaluation team and other CCNE reviewers (e.g., at the committee and Board levels) if the self-study document:

- includes a table of contents (including page numbers) for both the main document and the appendices;
- begins with a concise introduction of the nursing program(s) and the institutional setting;
- uses a minimum font size of 10; and
- includes tables, where appropriate. For instance, tables are particularly helpful when presenting faculty

qualifications and teaching responsibilities, student headcount enrollment data, graduation/completion data and other outcomes data, and information linking the curricula to the required professional nursing standards and guidelines.

The self-study document is to be no longer than 90 pages of narrative for one or two degree/certificate programs and no longer than 100 pages of narrative for three or more degree/certificate programs. For example, if a master's degree program and a post-graduate APRN certificate program are presented for accreditation, then the page limit is 90 pages. If a baccalaureate degree program, master's degree program, and Doctor of Nursing Practice program are presented along with a post-graduate APRN certificate program, the page limit is 100 pages. The introduction and appendices are excluded from this page limit. However, the appendices should be judiciously selected and pertinent to the program's demonstration of compliance with the standards and key elements. It is appropriate for the program to reference and provide web links to documents, such as catalogs and handbooks, referenced within the self-study document instead of providing hard copies in the appendices. While the following documents should be referenced in the self-study document, it is not necessary to include them in the appendices; instead, they should be made available to evaluators in the on-site resource room:

- current faculty curricula vitae;
- university reports;
- meeting minutes;
- examples of student work;
- student, alumni, employer, or other constituent survey instruments; and
- summaries/analyses of survey responses.

It is acceptable that the materials in the resource room be provided electronically. However, if they are provided electronically, the institution must ensure that there are computers available for use by the team and that print versions of documents are available, if requested. Regardless of the format (print or electronic) of the materials provided, the team must have a private and secure room that is large enough for the entire team to conduct its work.

At least six weeks prior to the on-site evaluation, the program must submit an electronic copy of the self-study document (including appendices), the Program Information Form (PIF), the agenda, and verification that the program has afforded its communities of interest the opportunity to provide third party comments via the CCNE Online Community (www.ccnecommunity.org). CCNE and the evaluators who have been assigned to the team have access to the electronic versions of these materials via the CCNE Online Community as soon as the documents have been uploaded by the institution. Importantly, the program needs to contact each member of the team in advance of the due date to determine if any member of the team would like to receive a hard copy of the self-study document (including appendices) or the other materials, and to provide these documents if requested. Please do not send hard copies of these documents to the CCNE office unless specifically requested to do so. The PIF, which provides an overview of the institutional setting and the nursing program(s), is available both on the CCNE Online Community at www.ccnecommunity.org and on the CCNE website at <http://www.aacnnursing.org/CCNE-Accreditation/Resource-Documents/Program-Resources>.

Note:

The self-study document must be uploaded as one document/file (including appendices). If the program prefers to keep the documents separate, one zip or compressed folder may be uploaded, and documents within this zip or compressed folder must be clearly labeled to facilitate their review.

The On-Site Resource Room

The resource room should be a dedicated secure space for the team with internet access and a printer. The resource room serves as a centralized location for the team to leave their belongings, review materials, and conduct executive sessions. Additionally, while most evaluators travel with their own laptops, it is possible that an evaluator may ask to use a computer for the duration of the on-site evaluation. As a courtesy, such equipment requests should be made in advance through the team leader.

The resource room provides access to materials referenced in the self-study document that were not included in the appendices. These materials should help document and demonstrate program compliance with the accreditation standards and their key elements. It is not necessary for resource room materials to be available in hard copy if they are easily accessed electronically and the team has been provided appropriate computer and file access. However, if they are provided electronically, the institution should be prepared to provide the team with print versions of documents, if requested. It is helpful for the program to organize the resource room materials by standard and key element as well as to provide an index of available materials. Programs can expect the team to review:

- samples of student work;
- the schedule of courses offered (with instructors identified) for the past three years;
- faculty curricula vitae and teaching assignments;
- course syllabi;
- personnel manuals;
- survey responses and data summaries;
- course evaluation responses and data summaries;
- meeting minutes that document compliance with standards and key elements;
- the nursing unit budget for the current and previous two fiscal years;
- evidence that the program afforded its constituents the opportunity to send third-party comments to CCNE in advance of the review and in accordance with CCNE policy;
- a record of formal complaints, if any, for the past three years; and
- a summary of faculty accomplishments and publications (presented in the aggregate, not individually by faculty member).

Consistent with U.S. Department of Education requirements, the program must accurately advertise its programs. Promotional materials or recruitment literature used by the program (including catalogs, bulletins, publications, and websites) must accurately describe the program's offerings, outcomes, accreditation/approval status, academic calendar, recruitment and admission policies, grading policies, degree/certificate completion requirements, tuition, and fees. The program also needs to provide data related to graduation/completion rates, NCLEX-RN® pass rates, certification examination pass rates, and employment rates for graduates of the program(s), as required by the standards, so determinations can be made about compliance.

Facilities and Support

CCNE evaluators typically arrive the day prior to the on-site evaluation and typically depart on the final day of the review. Hotel rooms (single, non-smoking) are to be reserved and guaranteed by the institution for each member of the evaluation team. However, team members are responsible for the payment of their hotel accommodations, which is then reimbursed by CCNE. It is important to provide each team member emergency (not office) contact information for a designated program representative in the unlikely event that travel plans are impacted by unforeseeable circumstances (e.g., weather, illness).

When choosing a hotel for the evaluators, please take into consideration that the team will continue its work into the evening. As such, internet access, a business center with a printer, and a meeting space that is large enough for small group work is preferable. This meeting space could be an individual hotel room/suite or a small meeting room. If possible, individual sleeping rooms should also have a desk with appropriate lighting and internet access. CCNE recognizes that the availability of hotels, particularly in rural areas, is limited; and appreciates the program's efforts to select accommodations that facilitate the work of the team.

Please be sure that appropriate personnel are available during the on-site evaluation to assist the team and to escort them to and from appointments with various constituent groups.

Transportation

Team members are responsible for their own travel arrangements. However, it is helpful for evaluators to receive information about traveling to and from the airport and hotel. For instance, if the hotel provides complimentary van service to and from the airport, please inform team members of the availability of that service.

The program is responsible for transporting the team between the hotel and the institution. Please provide the team leader with specific details about who will meet the team, at what time, and where. Keep in mind that due to varying departure schedules, team members may need to bring and store their luggage on site the final day of the evaluation.

The Agenda

The program has primary responsibility for preparing the agenda for the on-site evaluation. When developing the agenda, please take the following into consideration:

- schedule constituent meetings in one-hour blocks unless a shorter or longer meeting is appropriate for the team to collect the information it needs;
- reserve time on the agenda for occasional breaks for the team;
- set aside time for the team to review the materials in the on-site resource room without disruption;
- schedule a meeting with a program administrator at the end of each of the first two days to discuss any questions the team may have or to respond to requests for additional materials;
- allow time in the schedule to transport the team between campuses, clinical sites, and/or teaching sites; and
- reserve the last day of the evaluation for the team to conclude its review of materials in the resource room, seek clarification from program representatives or constituents, finalize the accreditation report, and prepare for the exit interview.

CCNE encourages the program to involve the team leader in the development of the agenda. Once the proposed agenda has been developed, it should be shared with the team leader who may offer suggestions, ask questions, and/or request changes to the agenda. The finalized agenda, along with the complete self-study document (including appendices) and the PIF, should be uploaded to the CCNE Online Community (www.ccnecommunity.org) six weeks prior to the evaluation. If questions or concerns arise, CCNE staff are available to provide assistance.

If the program has elected to host a joint evaluation by CCNE and another regulatory or approval entity, please notify both CCNE and the team of this arrangement at least six weeks in advance of the on-site evaluation.

The on-site evaluation team will expect a tour of the program's physical facilities as well as an opportunity to observe students engaged in classroom and clinical activities. If there are no opportunities for the team to observe students in class, the program should make arrangements to provide the team access to these activities in advance of the evaluation (e.g., a video or opportunity to observe online classes for each program under review). If the team is to access classes remotely, the program must provide the team with all necessary access codes, passwords, specific instructions, and technology support.

It is common practice for the team to meet with a variety of constituents, including students, faculty, alumni, community representatives (e.g., employers of graduates and/or agency representatives), program administrators, and institutional officials. The majority of these meetings will be face-to-face. However, CCNE recognizes that, for nontraditional programs and/or those with substantial distance learning offerings, technology may be the best way to facilitate a meeting between a constituent group and the team (e.g., audio or web conferencing). The manner in which these meetings are facilitated (face-to-face or via technology) is at the discretion of the program. However, the program must ensure that sessions with the team are not recorded and that *only* members of the designated constituent group participate in the meeting. In addition, it is important that the program arranges for the team to meet with students who are representative of each degree/certificate program under review for accreditation.

The program should provide name tags for each member of the evaluation team. This helps to identify the members of the team to the program's communities of interest. It is also helpful if the program provides the team with a list of participants' names, titles, and affiliations, if known in advance.

Please note that the chief nurse administrator may only attend meetings that are specifically designated for program officials. Additionally, faculty may not attend sessions that are designed for students or alumni (even if a current faculty member is enrolled as a student or is an alumnus).

Finally, it is at the chief nurse administrator's discretion as to who will attend the exit interview. Minimally, it is expected that all members of the evaluation team and the chief nurse administrator participate in the exit interview.

Dining

As members of the team have limited access to transportation and are unfamiliar with the geographic area, it is helpful to provide the team with names and addresses of several area restaurants offering a variety of food options, prices, atmospheres, etc. It is also helpful to the team if the hotel has a restaurant on site that offers breakfast, dinner, and room service.

Working lunches are acceptable and work well if sufficient time is included in the schedule to transport the group to and from the luncheon site, *and* if the designated group is small enough to permit meaningful discussion. Meals with very large groups can be unwieldy, making it difficult for the team to interact and gather information. Additionally, receptions are not conducive to gathering information and should not be substituted for small group meetings.

Lunch on the last day of the on-site evaluation should be a working lunch limited to the team. It would be helpful if lunch is brought into the resource room where the team is working; sandwiches, salads, or other light fare is usually well received.

Evaluators are appreciative of the availability of refreshments (e.g., fruit, granola bars, snacks), as well as hot and cold drinks (including some caffeine-free and low-calorie choices) throughout the day.

Fees

Information regarding the fees for the on-site evaluation can be found at <http://www.aacnursing.org/Portals/42/CCNE/PDF/Fee-Structure.pdf?ver=2017-06-28-145002-740>.

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