



The Accreditation Review Committee
for the Anesthesiologist Assistant

Site Visitors

Scripts, Talking Points, & Conversational Starters

June 2024

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Site visitors are
supportive
consultative
nurturing

The site visit is the most critical and complex aspect of the accreditation process. From the education program's perspective, it is also the most visible function of the Accreditation Review Committee for the Anesthesiologist Assistant (ARC-AA). The ARC-AA is responsible for assuring that those engaged in the site visit are qualified and competent.

The Site Visit Team must accurately and reliably collect, review, interpret, verify, and document all information about the education program. The accreditation recommendation made by the ARC-AA to the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) depends upon the information gathered. Unless this information is accurate and fully documented, the ARC-AA will find it difficult to reach a fair and objective decision concerning the education program.

Since the accreditation process can be influenced by the performance of the Site Visit Team, the scripts, talking points, and conversational starters have been developed to ensure consistency and fairness.

During the site visit, the site visit team will sound repetitive to themselves. The same introduction of who the team members are and why you are there should be repeated with each group of individuals you meet with. Many questions are asked multiple times; however, each time to a different group of stakeholders. As a site visit team, you are looking for common themes. The goal is for a conversational approach placing at ease the people you are talking with.

Program Director | Before the Opening Session

- Purpose of this session is to set the stage and the tone for the site visit.
- Explain you are representing the ARC-AA and the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)
 - Tell them who that is and what they do
- Explain the purpose of the site visit is to obtain info by talking with different groups of people, looking at records, etc., and providing feedback to the program.
- Evaluation of the program is based on the CAAHEP *Standards*; we would like to be a helpful consult to them.
- Explain you will collect information, draft the Site Visit Report, and present the site visit team's findings during the Closing Summation at end of the site visit.
- Identify rough time frame of process above (no promises!)
 - Projected ARC-AA Board meeting: _____.
 - CAAHEP meets every other month; however, we cannot guarantee which month the recommendation will appear on their agenda: _____.

Opening General Session

Please read this script at the beginning of the on-site review. If not your style, ensure the key points are covered.

Opening Conference Script

Good morning. We represent the Accreditation Review Committee for the Anesthesiologist Assistant (ARC-AA), which operates under the auspices of the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). CAAHEP is the accreditor. We are here to gather information through observation, interview, and review of documentation to verify, clarify, and amplify the contents of the self-study report prepared by the program. We will objectively report our findings to the ARC-AA relative to the CAAHEP Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Educational Programs for the Anesthesiologist Assistant. Additionally, we are a consultative and facilitative team for the accreditation process.

As site visitors for ARC-AA, a Committee on Accreditation of CAAHEP, we understand that information has been made available to us about the program, institution, and faculty. We agree to respect and protect this information. All discussions and written information provided prior to, during, and after the site visit will remain confidential.

While the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) generally requires written permission from the parent or eligible student to release any information from a student's education record, FERPA allows disclosure without consent to accrediting organizations carrying out their accrediting function (34 CFR § 99.31).

To ensure the confidentiality of the site visit, the ARC-AA prohibits the use of audio or video recording of any portion of the site visit, including conversations with students and staff, team meetings, deliberations, or the summation except for the purposes of security. The ARC-AA reserves the right to take disciplinary action against sponsoring institutions/programs whose representatives knowingly violate this policy, including cancellation of a site visit scheduled or in progress, or recommendation of probationary accreditation or similar sanction.

We will share our findings with you at the end of this review visit during the Closing Summation.

Talking points to cover

- Introductions of everyone and their role (not just the site visitors)
- Express thanks for the hospitality, as appropriate (if extended thus far—nice hotel, appreciated program director picking you up, etc.)
- Say a word about the Self-Study Report (thorough, helpful, clear, informative, interesting, etc.), if appropriate
- Purpose of this session is to set the stage and the tone for the site visit.
- Explain you are representing the ARC-AA and the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP)
 - Tell them who that is and what they do
- Explain the purpose of the site visit is to obtain info by talking with different groups of people, looking at records, etc., and providing feedback to the program.

- Evaluation of the program is based on the CAAHEP *Standards*; we would like to be a helpful consult to them.
- Explain you will collect information, draft the Site Visit Report, and present the site visit team's findings during the Closing Summation at end of the site visit.
- This site visit is part of a CAAHEP accreditation process, which begins with writing the Self-Study Report; other steps include an Executive Analysis, Site Visit, official Site Visit Findings Letter, Confirmation of the Factual Accuracy (or alleging factual inaccuracy), Program's Response to the Findings Letter, review by the ARC-AA Board members and formal recommendation to CAAHEP, and finally CAAHEP's final decision
- Identify rough time frame of process above (no promises!)
 - Projected ARC-AA Board meeting: _____.
 - CAAHEP meets every other month; however, we cannot guarantee which month the recommendation will appear on their agenda: _____.
- Possible accreditation recommendations (identify the one appropriate for site visit):
 - Seeking Initial Accreditation
 - Initial Accreditation
 - Withhold Accreditation
(program is given an opportunity to Request Reconsideration in advance)
 - Seeking Continuing Accreditation
 - Continuing Accreditation
 - Probationary Accreditation
(program is given an opportunity to Request Reconsideration in advance)
- For the Dean or Leadership, ask a question to verify what the self-study report states.
 - I understand from the Self-Study Report that you are accredited by XYZ and are due again ABC, is that correct? (or something similar that verifies what the self-study report has said and the Dean / leadership are familiar.)
 - It appears from the Self-Study Report that the program has some challenges with XYZ (enrollment, or adequate faculty or adequate resources or adequate budget). Is that something that you feel can be managed and is being addressed? Or something like that. If the challenge is medical direction and the medical director is present, then I would not do that.

Conversational Starters

- Conversation starters are questions to start the conversation and are the foundation of the site visit. Phrasing the question properly will elicit more information and accurate information.
- The use of open questions is encouraged, focusing less on one-word answers. Open ended questions can produce facilitative responses and reduce the need for additional questions. Direct questions are appropriate when the need is immediate information, or the interviewee is rambling or being vague. Avoid “why” questions; this often puts the interviewee on the spot.
- The questions that follow are broadly divided into groups based on who is being interviewed. Where possible, questions are further categorized by the portion of the **Standards** that may apply. Review of the **Self-Study Report** may point to specific areas of inquiry. Questions related to such areas may then be asked of the various interviewees.
- Do not read a question verbatim as all questions are meant to serve as a conversation starter. Time will not allow interviewers to ask all questions listed. Also, some may not apply as question topics include a wide range of areas that might be evaluated during any given site visit.
- The same questions may be asked several times with different groups of people each time. Depending on the interviewee, different answers or perspectives may be given.

Program Director

1. What, if anything, has changed since the Self-Study Report was submitted (personnel, course length, etc.)?

Resources / Assessments

2. Tell us about the space allocated for program administration. (assessing its adequacy)
3. Tell us about the ancillary student facilities/services to achieve program goal(s) and outcomes?
4. Tell us about the financial resources of the program, describing how they are adequate to enable achievement of the program goal(s) and outcomes.
5. How does the program annually assess its resources and outcomes and use the results to improve the program?
6. How does the evidence gathered from the Resource Assessment support the analysis and action plan of the program?

Admissions / Fair Practices

7. What information do applicants and student receive about the program prior to admission and enrollment?
8. Are admission procedures non-discriminatory and followed as published?
9. A student approaches you and tells you in confidence that a classmate is routinely taking a controlled substance. What would you do?
10. What is the student attrition rate for the program? Would you describe the circumstances leading to student loss?

Curriculum

11. How is the didactic and clinical activity assigned to students sequential, integrated, and consistent with the overall instructional plan of the program?
12. How is instruction in the clinical setting properly coordinated with all other components of the curriculum?

13. Describe your preceptor training program.
14. How do you evaluate the preceptor program?
15. Describe your tracking mechanism for student competencies during their clinical experience. How do you track student experience by age, pathologies, complaint, gender, categories of surgical procedures, and technical proficiencies?
16. Does the medical director review and approve the educational content of the program's curriculum?
17. Does the Medical Director's input help students develop effective communication skills with physicians and convey information and perspective?

Evaluations / Assessments

18. How does the program maintain records of all the programmatic evaluations for the program goal(s) and learning domains?
19. How do you ensure the programmatic evaluation instruments are valid and reliable with identifiable "cut scores"?
20. You receive a call from a clinical preceptor with concerns about a student who has one more month to complete their training. The preceptor feels the student is weak and needs more experience before he graduates. What would you do?
21. Do the results of the programmatic evaluations indicate that the program goal(s) is(are) being accomplished?

Outcomes Measurement / Assessment

22. Is there evidence that utilization of program evaluation results in appropriate modification of the program to improve student outcomes?
23. What is the pass rate on the National Certification exam?
24. What is the response rate and result of graduate surveys?
25. What is the response rate and result of employer surveys?
26. How is computer technology (clinical simulations, instructional software, etc.) current and utilized in the educational process?

Medical Director

1. Describe your involvement with the program, including screening, lectures, practical evaluations, and clinical contact.
2. Do you teach any classes for the program? Which classes?
3. How do you evaluate student progress?
4. Who has the final decision on who passes/fails the program?
5. Describe your involvement with the admissions process.
6. What was the last incident for which you counseled a student?
7. What medical activities/practice are you involved in?
8. Describe how a grievance is (would be) handled.

Consortium Chair/Dean

Institutional Sponsorship

1. Is the AA education program's sponsoring institution appropriately accredited?
2. If the sponsor is a consortium, is there written agreement specifying governance, lines of authority, and degree granting responsibility that is followed by all parties?

Resources / Assessments

3. Does the program annually assess its resources and outcomes and use the results to improve the program?
4. Are ancillary student facilities/services adequate to achieve program goal(s) and outcomes?
5. Are the financial resources of the program adequate to enable achievement of the program goal(s) and objectives?

Admissions / Fair Practices

6. Are all students appropriately enrolled in the educational institution?
7. Do AA education students have access to all services ordinarily provided to other enrollees at the educational institution?
8. Do all students have the same privileges and status as other students enrolled in the educational institution?
9. Do all students receive the same type of credit for course work as other students in the educational institution?

Advisory Committee Members

1. How often do you meet?
2. Who is the chair of the group?
3. What recommendations have you made in the past year?
4. Have your recommendations been accepted? How many? Which recommendations have not been accepted?
5. What are the strengths of the program? Weaknesses?
6. How much support for the program do you perceive from the school and clinical affiliates?
7. Are the program's goal(s) and learning domains representative of the needs of the communities of interest served by the program (students, graduates, faculty, college administration, employers, physicians, and the public)?
8. Do the communities of interest review program goal(s) and learning domains annually?
9. Is the curriculum consistent with the material covered in the appropriate national and/or state credentialing examinations?
10. Is the instructional plan, including curriculum content and length, credit granted, and student progress documentation sufficient to accomplish the program's goal(s) and outcomes considering the number and types of students enrolled?

Faculty

Resources / Assessments

1. Describe how the number of faculty are (not) adequate to support the curriculum design and number of students enrolled in the program?
2. Is the support staff adequate to support the curriculum and the faculty?
3. The classroom space allocated for the program, is it adequate and appropriate?
4. Are instructional materials and supplies adequate?
5. Are libraries/learning resources readily accessible and sufficient to support the curriculum, lesson plans, and number of students?
6. Is the laboratory equipment readily available and sufficient to support the curriculum and lesson plans of the program?
7. Do the clinical facilities and resources provide each student with learning opportunities commensurate with national practice standards?

Curriculum

8. Is instruction based on clearly written course syllabi?
9. Are the required competencies and levels of accomplishment known and understood by all faculty and students?
10. Is instruction in the clinical setting properly coordinated with all other components of the curriculum?
11. Is the medical director's input sufficient to ensure achievement of the program's goal(s) and outcomes? Is it consistent for each student?
12. Is the curriculum consistent with the material covered in the appropriate national credentialing examinations?
13. Is computer technology (clinical simulations, instructional software and Internet) current and utilized in the educational process?
14. Who coordinates and schedules the program? Classroom? Clinical?
15. How are teaching assignments determined?
16. What tests, handouts, and additional resources do you use?
17. Describe a lesson plan for a given lecture (i.e., pathophysiology of shock).
18. Who writes the exams? How often are they revised? How are revisions documented?
19. Explain the grading procedure.
20. In the past two years, how many students have failed the didactic phase? Clinical phase?
21. Who does skill testing?
22. How many students are assigned to each instructor in practical labs?
23. How often are guest lecturers used in the program? For what topics?
24. How are guest lecturers evaluated?
25. Does the medical director's input facilitate achievement of program goal(s) and outcomes?

Evaluations / Assessments

26. Describe how and when evaluations of the students are conducted.
27. Do the students and faculty have adequate knowledge of progress toward required competencies?

28. How are the evaluation instruments designed and utilized.
29. Describe the methods you use to evaluate the program. When did you last do any of these activities?
30. Describe how competency is evaluated in each component of the program, including classroom, lab, clinical.
31. How are student records accurately maintained?

Fair Practices

32. Describe the involvement of the medical director in the program, including interviews/screening, lectures, evaluation, counseling, clinical contact, and determination of competency.
33. Who makes the final decision regarding student failure from the program? How is this process documented?
34. How many times can a student retake an exam?
35. What is the attendance policy?
36. What was the last new piece of equipment the program acquired and when was it purchased?
37. Describe the final practical exam.
38. What type of continuing education do you receive? Clinical practice? Educational theory? When was the last time you attended a continuing education program?
39. What is the total number of contact hours for the 1st year students?
40. How often does the faculty meet as a group? If you do not meet regularly as a group, how do you communicate?
41. How is clinical supervision provided?
42. Same scenario, except the preceptor states they cannot pass the student because of incomplete assessments and "tunnel" vision. What would you do in this situation?
43. How are you evaluated? How often? Who evaluates you?
44. Describe student placement procedures.
45. Describe the student appeal mechanism.

Students

Admissions / Fair Practices

1. Describe what you were told coming into the program regarding attendance, grades, clinical, etc.
2. Do you believe that you were dealt with openly and fairly during the admissions process?
3. Are admission procedures non-discriminatory and followed as published?
4. Do students receive accurate and complete information about the program prior to admission and enrollment?
5. Is there evidence of student exploitation in any portion of the program?
6. Are student records maintained accurately and appropriately?
7. If you were just applying for an AA education program, would you go to this program?
8. (seeking initial) You are in a program that is not accredited. What did the program tell you about it not being accredited?

Curriculum / Classroom Experience

9. Describe a typical class session.
10. How often do you have tests?
11. Is instruction based on clearly written course syllabi?
12. Do you evaluate instructors, guest lecturers, and the program? How often?
13. Describe the practical labs. How many students are assigned to one instructor?
14. Is adequate and appropriate laboratory space available for your use?
15. Describe how accessible the faculty is to you.
16. Describe your supervision during lab sessions.
17. If you have a guest lecturer and the material is unclear, what do you do? Who do you go to?
18. How many lectures did your class receive from the medical director?
19. Is the curriculum consistent with the material covered in the appropriate national and/or state credentialing examinations?
20. If you could change the curriculum, what would you do?

Clinical Experience

21. Who do you go to if you have a problem in class or a clinical area?
22. What are you allowed to do in the clinical area?
23. Who are you responsible to (i.e., your preceptor): In the clinical area?
24. How do you track your experiences in clinical areas?
25. Is instruction in the clinical setting properly coordinated with all other components of the curriculum?
26. Are the required competencies and levels of accomplishment known and understood by all faculty and students?
27. Is the clinical activity assigned to students sequential, integrated with didactic and clinical instruction and consistent with the overall instructional plan of the program?
28. Describe how you feel about your competence when you are in the clinic.
29. What are the program strengths? Weaknesses?

Resources / Assessments

30. Do the clinical resources provide each student with sufficient learning opportunities to ensure achievement of the program's goal(s) and outcomes?
31. Do the clinical facilities and resources provide each student with learning opportunities commensurate with national practice standards?
32. Do AA students have access to all services ordinarily provided to other students enrolled at the educational institution?
33. Do students and faculty have adequate knowledge of progress toward required competencies?

Evaluations / Assessments

34. How are evaluations of the students conducted frequently and appropriately?
35. Are the evaluation instruments appropriately designed and utilized?

Graduates

1. Is the curriculum consistent with the material covered in the appropriate national and/or state credentialing examinations?
2. What is the greatest strength of this program?
3. What is the greatest weakness of this program?

Clinical Faculty

1. How do the clinical resources provide each student with sufficient learning opportunities to ensure achievement of the program's goal(s) and outcomes?
2. Describe how the clinical resources are sufficient to provide reasonable assurance of parallel clinical education for each student?
3. Is the clinical activity assigned to students sequential, integrated with didactic and laboratory instruction, and consistent with the overall instructional plan of the program?
4. How do you learn about curriculum changes?
5. How accessible is the faculty to help with a "difficult" student in the clinic?
6. How often do you have AA education students?
7. What do you allow students to do? (IVs, meds, suction, bagging, assessments, etc.)
8. How many students do you precept at one time?
9. Describe what you do with a student who you are assigned with (i.e., orientation, skills, drills, evaluations).
10. What do you do if you have problems with a student (skills, attitude, knowledge)? To whom do you report it?
11. What do you do if AA education students report having problems with a clinical preceptor (skills, attitude, knowledge)? To whom do you report it?
12. Do you have contact with other clinical instructors from the program? How often?
13. How do you feel about serving as a preceptor to the AA education students? How does the staff feel about serving as preceptors to the AA education students?
14. What are the students from this program particularly good at (strengths of the program)? What needs improvement?

Clinical Preceptors

1. How often do you have a student?
2. Do you have the same student repeatedly or on a single-shift-only basis?
3. What do you do if you have a problem with a student (skills, attitude, knowledge)? To whom do you report it?
4. Can you fail a student for any given clinical day? For example, can you provide input into student competency and progress in the program?
5. What do you allow the student to do?
6. Do you discuss the cases with the student?
7. Describe how you evaluate and provide feedback to the student.
8. Who is the medical director of the AA program?
9. When was the last time you met with the medical director? What was the purpose of the meeting?
10. How often does your service provide continuing education classes for you?

11. If you make an error, i.e., a med error or a missed diagnosis, from whom will you hear about it?
12. How many students do you precept at one time?
13. What are the students from this program particularly good at (strengths of the program)? What needs improvement?
14. If you were starting an AA education program or recommending an education program to a relative or friend, would you choose this one?

Employers

1. How well prepared do you feel the students from this program are for clinical practice?
2. If you employ a new graduate from this program, how long is the supervised orientation period you provide? Does this differ for graduates from other programs?
3. Do you have input into the advisory committee? Comment on its effectiveness.
4. Does your facility participate as a clinical site? Comment on the clinical training program.
5. What are the program strengths? Weaknesses?
6. Given a choice of programs, would you go (or would you send a relative) to this program?
7. What would you add to this program? Delete?

Closing General Session

Please read this script at the Closing Session following your thank you for the hospitality and consideration shown to the on-site review team, please read the following:

Closing Summation Script

As site visitors for the ARC-AA, a Committee on Accreditation of CAAHEP, we understand that information has been made available to us about the program, institution, and faculty. We agree to respect and protect this information. All discussions and written information provided prior to, during, and after the site visit will remain confidential.

Based on the information gathered during this site visit, we have identified the following program strengths:

[Read the Strengths listed.]

Based on the information gathered during this site visit, we have identified the following potential areas of non-compliance:

[State the Standard and the Rationale for each of the program deficiencies listed.]

We have noted the following recommendations:

[Read the Recommendations listed.]

I, as Team Chair, will submit the Site Visit Report to the ARC-AA. The ARC-AA will draft a concise Findings Letter and send it along with the Site Visit Report to the program director. Included with the Report will be suggested documentation that the program will be expected to provide to address the citations.

The program will have 14 days to respond to the factual accuracy of the report. The response should

identify any errors of fact and the documentation provided during the visit that verifies the correct information.

*In addition, the program may submit **new** information by the deadline stated in the communication to address any citations. The program is not required to respond to the "Recommendations" listed in the final report.*

Following the deadline and based on review of all relevant information, the ARC-AA Board of Directors will consider the program's documentation and response at its next scheduled meeting. ARC-AA will meet on_____.

The recommendation formulated by ARC-AA will be forwarded to CAAHEP for its deliberation and action. CAAHEP meets for accreditation actions 6 times per year, every other month, starting in January.

The notification of the program's status of public recognition, including the due date for a Progress Report, if applicable, will be issued by CAAHEP. The program must submit documentation to the ARC-AA addressing each citation to substantiate compliance with the Standards no later than the CAAHEP---specified due date. The program should contact the ARC-AA for any clarification.

Do you have any questions regarding the process?

Talking points to cover

- Thank the program director and staff for their hospitality (if applicable), openness to the thorough evaluation and to your suggestions, etc. (if appropriate). Usually, it is!
- Briefly review the process and tell them where we are: giving the unofficial report. Explain the unofficial Site Visit Report will be sent to the ARC-AA within one week.
- The program will receive the official Site Visit Findings Letter and Site Visit Report within 2 weeks. The program will then have 14 days to agree to the factual accuracy or to allege factual inaccuracies with supporting documentation.
- Read the closing statement on the Site Visit Report.
- Give the unofficial report—both strengths (and elaborate, this is the time for the program personnel to be complimented, if appropriate) and potential areas of non-compliance. If there are specific statements that are particularly complimentary from students or others, pass that on. Hopefully you will have had time previously to go over the potential citations thoroughly with program director and show them the Standard and discuss methods of correcting. If you have done that then you won't need to go over all that in the group meeting.
- If there are numerous citations, you can mention that some of them are fairly simple to correct while others may take further discussion and planning. Some program directors have made corrections or plans overnight, and you can mention that the program is already on their way to making
- Also present the other recommendations briefly and explain if needed.