

## ACOE's Policy on Extension of Accreditation—May 20, 2020

The Accreditation Council on Optometric Education (ACOE) has considered the impact of COVID-19 on the site visit schedule and implications regarding site visit scheduling and terms of accreditation. The following circumstances exist:

- Thirty-two ACOE site visits scheduled to occur between March and June 2020 were required to be postponed due to the COVID-19 interruption;
- Seven ACOE site visits are scheduled to occur in the fall of 2020, but it is uncertain whether these will take place, as facilities such as universities and VA facilities are currently not allowing visitors and it is unknown when visitors will be allowed;
- It is uncertain when Council members and ACOE consultants will be comfortable travelling, or will be allowed to travel by their employers;
- For the calendar year 2021, the ACOE already has 39 site visits planned, and adding the site visits postponed from 2020 to the 2021 site visit calendar is not possible with current resources and personnel; and
- Since the USDE requires that an on-site visit must occur within a reasonable period following a virtual visit, the Council continues to believe at this time that virtual visits will create extra work and add expense to the process.

Utilizing the discretion the USDE has granted on a temporary basis to accrediting agencies to extend the period of accreditation to programs, and utilizing the ACOE Temporary Policy for Virtual Site Visits, Granting Extensions of Accreditation, Providing Good Cause Extensions, and Granting Retroactive Accreditations consequently adopted by ACOE on March 27, 2020, the following motion was passed by ACOE during a virtual meeting on May 20, 2020.

- *M/S/C: The ACOE will extend the term of accreditation for all accredited programs in good standing for one year. Programs holding the probationary status of Accredited with Conditions will not receive this extension. (Vote tallied:9-0.)*