

Amendment to ACOE's Policy on Extension of Accreditation—October 23, 2020

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

- Twenty-two ACOE site visits for residency programs seeking initial accreditation have yet to be conducted. Eleven of the twenty-two are programs with site visits postponed from 2020 and the other eleven are scheduled for spring 2021.
- The ACOE is concerned about additional delays for these programs seeking initial accreditation and has amended its Temporary Policy for Virtual Site Visits, Granting Extensions of Accreditation, Providing Good Cause Extensions, and Granting Retroactive Accreditations to allow for virtual visits to proceed associated with these programs.
- Twenty-seven ACOE site visits are scheduled to be conducted in 2021, twenty of which are scheduled to occur between March and June 2021. These are currently accredited programs that underwent a one-year extension of accreditation following ACOE's Policy approval dated May 20, 2020.
- It continues to be uncertain when Council members and ACOE consultants will be comfortable travelling, or will be allowed to travel by their employers;
- Given the significant lift associated with supporting site visits anticipated during the first half of 2021, ACOE is amending its Policy on Extension of Accreditation to allow for flexibility around balance of workload.

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 October 23, 2020.

- *M/S/C: The ACOE will allow for extension of the term of accreditation for the twenty-seven accredited programs in good standing scheduled for site visits in 2021 for up to one additional year. Programs holding the probationary status of Accredited with Conditions will not receive this extension. (Vote tallied 10-0).*

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.)*