



Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education International Services Program

Guidelines for Interim Reports during the Certification Term

June 2017 Version

Interim Reports During the Certification Term are an important mechanism by which ACPE monitors and evaluates a college or school's compliance with Certification Quality Criteria between on-site evaluation visits. Such written interim reports may be requested for a number of reasons, such as:

- to provide an update or additional details on issues or initiatives on which a college or school is working; or
- when a specific area of concern regarding a Quality Criterion has been identified by the college or school (for example, in a self-study) or by ACPE.

The ACPE Board of Directors may request an interim report following a comprehensive on-site evaluation, a focused on-site evaluation, a substantive change, or a previous interim report. When a focused visit is scheduled, ACPE generally requests the college or school to submit an interim report six weeks ahead of the visit. Specific issues to be addressed in the interim report are itemized in an *Actions and Recommendations Letter (A&R)* or an *Interim Report Action Document (IRAD)* from ACPE. Generally, each issue will refer to a specific Quality Criterion or combination of Criteria.

The purpose of this document is to improve the efficiency of the reporting, submission and evaluation processes, to minimize unnecessary work and effort by all parties, and to provide additional guidance to colleges and schools regarding reporting expectations. Terminology used in ACPE's A&R's and IRAD's (i.e., when an interim report is requested) is explained below so that the expectation, content, and level of detail required by ACPE are more clearly communicated and appropriately addressed by the college or school.

ACPE provides a template for interim reports, and colleges and schools are requested to use the template. It may be downloaded from the ACPE website, as follows:

<https://www.acpe-accredit.org/pdf/ISP/InterimReportTemplate.docx>

ACPE urges colleges and schools to ensure that their reports:

- are concise but provide the expected level of detail (as detailed below);
- do not exceed the word limits detailed below;
- wherever possible, primarily focus on changes that have already been implemented and assess the impact of such changes on the program;
- whenever appropriate and **always when requested**, include data that provides evidence to support what is described in the text (*see additional guidance regarding data below*)
- when applicable, make judicious use of appendices to illustrate specific points in the main text
- answer three questions related to the monitoring request:
 - **WHAT?** (What is the problem/issue? Provide a very brief, objective description of the issue and, as applicable, the need for improvement or reason for monitoring, partial or non-compliance.)

- **SO WHAT?** (What are the implications for the program? How is the quality of the program affected by this issue? If changes have already been made or are in process, what has been the impact of the changes? Provide a brief, subjective description.)
- **NOW WHAT?** (What will be done next by the college or school? Provide the intended timeline.)

Content and Required Level of Detail

ACPE uses three standardized terms to indicate the **required level of detail** when an interim report is requested:

- **A copy of [document name]:** The college or school is required to submit the document or table (e.g., a strategic plan, an evaluation plan, academic staff bylaws, academic staff resource table). Generally, no additional explanation is required unless specifically requested. A short explanatory paragraph, however, should be provided if the document contains new information that may impact future compliance with standards, for example, an initiative or objective described in a strategic plan.
- **Brief description:** The college or school should provide ACPE with a brief description of progress or developments on the issue* in question since the last report or certification review. The text of the report (excluding any tables, charts, appendices, etc.) must **not exceed 400 words** (*approximately one page*) **per requested issue** (bullet point).
- **Detailed description:** This should include a detailed description of progress and/or developments on the issue* since the last report or certification review and, where applicable, the college or school's evaluation of the impact and/or effectiveness of relevant strategies and initiatives. The text of the report (excluding any tables, etc.) must **not exceed 800 words** (*approximately two pages*) **per requested issue** (bullet point).

* In Actions and Recommendations Letters and Interim Report Action Documents, an "issue" is generally indicated as a bulleted item under a specific Quality Criterion. For example, if a cited Criterion has three main bullets associated with it, this would constitute three requested issues.

Colleges and schools that submit interim reports in which the above word limits have been exceeded may be requested to resubmit an amended report that complies with the specified word limits. The deadline for re-submission will be 10 business days from the original due date.

The specific wording of ACPE's request will clarify the required **scope and content** that needs to be addressed by the college or school. ACPE will endeavor to ensure that requests for information are clear so that the college or school's response can be appropriately focused. **If the scope of a request is not clear, please communicate with ACPE staff.** If applicable, requests for additional requirements (such as tables or charts) will be clearly stated in ACPE's letter.

Submission of Data

Whenever data are requested by ACPE they must be provided. Even when data are not specifically requested, when appropriate, they may be submitted to provide evidence to support the text. Ideally (as/if applicable) data should be submitted as follows:

- **Raw data** (directly from the assessment activity; suitably formatted for ease of assimilation by the reviewer, but not otherwise manipulated in any way)
- **Analyzed data** (summarized and presented in a way that easily allows the reviewer to identify and deduce key findings)
- **Interpreted data** (the college or school's findings and conclusions, the implications for the program, and follow-up action taken or proposed as a result)

Use of Appendices

As noted above, when colleges and schools are submitting appendices, such documents should be used judiciously, primarily to validate points made in the interim report. Unless specifically requested or necessary, documents do not need to be submitted in their entirety; in most cases, the applicable section(s) will suffice. If an appendix contains critical information for ACPE's evaluation of ongoing compliance with Quality Criteria, such as details of a new initiative in a strategic plan, that information should be included in the text of the report. **The text of the report itself should constitute the main component of the college or school's response and the primary basis for ACPE's analysis and evaluation.** When reference is made to a specific aspect of an appendix, the location of the information (e.g., page number, table number) should be clearly stated.

Administrative Changes since Last On-Site Evaluation

In addition to the items specifically requested by ACPE, please **LIST** (include name, position, and effective date) any administrative changes that are relevant to the professional degree program that have been made at the college, school, or university since the last on-site evaluation or interim report. Commentary on these changes (e.g., the impact on the program and any action taken or proposed by the college or school) is not specifically required by ACPE at the time of the submission of the report, but may be subsequently requested if deemed necessary. If the college or school elects to provide a commentary on any change, details should be **brief**. Examples of administrative positions for which changes should be reported include:

- At the university level: president, chancellor, provost, rector, or equivalent positions
- At the college or school level: deans, vice deans, department chairs, divisional directors, experiential coordinator

Inclusion of Additional Information in the Interim Report

It is ACPE's expectation that the college or school will continue to address all the issues raised by the last on-site evaluation team and documented in the Evaluation Team Report, even if the college or school is not subsequently specifically requested to submit an interim report on the issue(s). When submitting an interim report, however, the college or school may elect to also provide an update on

the issues not specifically requested in the A&R or IRAD. Such “voluntary” reporting should be a “brief description” as described above.

Furthermore, the college or school may wish to proactively report to ACPE notable new developments or enhancements at the college or school or in the program. Likewise, this “voluntary” reporting should be a “brief description.”

If a development constitutes a “substantive change” for the program (as defined in Section 13 of ACPE’s Certification Policies and Procedures) the college or school is requested to submit details **via a separate written communication to ACPE.**

Format of the Report

ACPE requires the Interim Report to be submitted electronically as a **single PDF**. Ideally, the electronic version should be submitted by email as an attachment(s).

Should you choose to submit a hard copy, ACPE requests that any printed copies be submitted in an **unbound format** - not spiral bound, not in a binder/file; binder clips are preferable. This request is intended to save the college or school the time and expense of specialized binding, and to facilitate the handling and distribution of reports by the ACPE staff.

Word limits for responses have been provided above. The respective word limits (400 and 800 per requested issue) provide an indication of the level of detail required by ACPE.

For short reports (e.g., less than six pages), an index is not necessary. For longer reports and/or for those including several appendices, an index is requested.

Standardized Tables

To facilitate evaluation, ACPE may request that certain data be submitted in a standardized format using an ACPE-designed template. Examples are:

- Faculty Resource Report (quantitative strength and turnover of academic staff)
- Faculty Addendum (listing of all academic staff with credentials and other data)

These forms may be requested by sending an email to international@acpe-accredit.org.

Submission Deadline

This is the last date by which the report should be received at ACPE’s office. As the members of the ACPE staff usually have to review a high number of interim reports per cycle, **submission by the due date is essential**; however, whenever possible early submission is most appreciated. Interim reports are due either on **April 1 or October 1**; the due date is specified in the A&R or IRAD sent by ACPE to the school or college.

Some Frequently Asked Questions

- **Should we include information relevant to the issue even if it has been previously submitted to ACPE?**

There is no need to repeat information previously reported or submitted to ACPE; such information can, however, be referenced, either by directing ACPE to a previous report or to another section within the interim report itself. Interim reports should update previously submitted data and describe any new developments.

- **We are considering or planning “substantive change” at the college or school. Should we include it in our Interim Report and, if so, where?**

*If the college or school wishes to advise ACPE about new developments or initiatives affecting the program but unrelated to the issue(s) covered by the interim report, this should be the subject of a **separate written communication**, so that the issue can be appropriately addressed in accordance with ACPE’s policies and procedures. Furthermore, “Substantive Change” is a separate item on the agenda of ACPE Commission and Board meetings, so separate documentation is appreciated. Developments defined by ACPE as “substantive change” must be reported in accordance with ACPE’s Substantive Change Policy (see Section 13 of Certification Policies and Procedures).*

- **If we have a question regarding our Interim Report, to whom should it be addressed at ACPE?**

Questions relating to your Interim Report can be emailed to international@acpe-accredit.org. Your question will then be referred to the appropriate member of the ACPE staff. You can also call the ACPE office at +1 (312) 664-3575.