



Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education

International Services Program

Guidelines for Preparing Electronic Documents for Submission

Preparing for evaluation for purposes of certification requires the submission of an in-depth and broadly-based, self-assessment document, usually referred to as the self-study report (SSR). SSRs have traditionally been submitted on paper; however, ACPE now requires electronic copies. ACPE staff has drafted the following guidelines to assist a school of pharmacy in preparing and submitting an electronic SSR.

Please note that SSRs have to be accessed and stored by ACPE staff, as well as by all the members of the evaluation team (“reviewers”), some of whom may use different hardware and software platforms from those used at ACPE. With regard to external links in a report, it should also be remembered that reviewers may not always have access to the Internet while reviewing a report.

Provide start-up directions: Inform ACPE of any specific hardware and/or software needed to access the self-study report; include clear directions on how to begin. Provide the name, email address, and full phone number of a technical contact (at the school) in the event that a reviewer experiences problems. Note: the electronic report should ideally be provided as ONE file in a commonly used digital format, such as an Adobe Acrobat PDF file.

Make all computer-based media both Macintosh and PC compatible: Reviewers will come from a variety of computing environments. Any document or application included in the SSR must run on both Macintosh and PC computers.

Provide required applications: Provide installers for any applications needed for reviewing the SSR along with the means for uninstalling the applications. Be sure to have the proper licensing agreements when distributing any application.

Facilitate in-document note taking: Use applications for presenting text-based documents that allow note taking within the document. Disable document features (e.g. Adobe Acrobat® passwords) that prevent a reviewer from making notes.

Organize the materials for quick search and retrieval: Make information quickly and easily accessible. Provide instructions on how to navigate the report, using PDF attachments, bookmarks, and/or hyperlinks within the report to help organize and direct reviewers to the appropriate documentation. Information that is difficult to locate, separated from the main documents or embedded in several layers of menus may be overlooked by a reviewer.

Whenever possible, appendices and supporting documentation should be included in the same file as the SSR itself. This facilitates distribution of documents by ACPE to the several different groups of individuals who will need to access and review the reports and appendices.

Files are stored - and thereafter accessed - electronically by reviewers. If documents are in multiple files, the hyperlinks may not work properly.

Structure documents for on-screen reading: Wherever possible, break information into screen-sized chunks that are legible at 72 DPI. Use simple navigation so that the reviewer either scrolls through a document or pages through it. Avoid making the reviewer have to both scroll and page within the same document.

Facilitate printing: Ensure that documents can be printed on 8.5 x 11-inch paper while maintaining legibility and logical page breaks.

Viewing critical documents: Components that are critical to the evaluation should be visible to a reviewer. Distorted images, graphs, charts, etc., which cannot be properly viewed on a reviewer's computer will not be considered in the evaluation.

Limit web access or file downloads to optional materials: The school should submit all information and materials that are required for the SSR. Ideally, the SSR should not link to external documents, such as on the Internet, unless they are only supplementary.

Select the most appropriate medium for the content: If the technology gets in the way of clarity or speed, then a reviewer may overlook information or not understand your school or program in detail. Use the medium that presents each piece of information in the most accurate and effective way possible.

Use computer-based video, animations and audio sparingly: Avoid using computer-based video, lengthy animations and audio except where they add to information about your school or program or present the content more effectively than other methods. If these media are used, give the reviewer full control over playback including the ability to fast-forward or skip presentations.

File naming and submission: Please follow the instructions that will be provided to you for the naming of your files. This helps ACPE to identify your files accurately and completely when they are received. **Ideally reports should be submitted as a single PDF file** (as noted above); however, if it is necessary to submit multiple files, they should be ZIPPED into one file. Additionally, **filenames should be kept as short as possible**. Certain Internet-based platforms (such as SharePoint, which is used by ACPE) limits the total number of characters that can be used to save files in directories and sub-directories (referred to as the "path" in computer terminology.)

ACPE staff will be happy to receive comments or answer questions about these guidelines or other issues. Please contact our office at +1 (312) 644-3575 or by email at international@acpe-accredit.org.