

Virtual Site Visit Policy and Disclosure Statement – COVID-19

Adopted April 23, 2020

Revised October 22, 2020

On March 13, 2020, the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) began a period of social distancing and compliance with stay-at-home orders at the local, state, and federal levels due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the same time period, universities in the United States and abroad began a period of campus closures and distance learning. On March 17, 2020, the United States Department of Education issued guidance allowing recognized agencies to proceed with virtual site visits, on a temporary basis, on the condition that they are followed, within a reasonable time frame, by an in-person visit to campus. Due to the necessity for continuation of quality assurance activities, CEPH will continue to conduct site visits virtually until it is safe to resume in-person visits.

Virtual Site Visit Eligibility

The Council will notify eligible units. A standard format on-campus visit by the full site visit team may be required depending on the need to properly evaluate the unit. Both initial and reaccreditation site visits are eligible. This policy will be adjusted as federal, state, and local guidance is adjusted and university plans are finalized.

Virtual Site Visit Scheduling

Visits that were originally scheduled from June 15, 2020 forward will continue to take place as scheduled; only the format will differ.

The following requirements apply when hosting a virtual site visit:

Before the visit:

- The final self-study and the electronic resource file will be provided, as scheduled, for site visitors to access and review in advance of the site visit.
- The unit must ensure that the site visit team has access to appropriate and knowledgeable participants in all required meetings.
- The unit must ensure that participants have access to appropriate technology allowing their full participation in the site visit. This includes internet access and access to an electronic device that has audio and video capabilities.
- Contingency plans must be in place – for example, participants may plan to use a laptop computer but may experience internet difficulty and should be able to switch to a smart phone for the meetings.
- School/program representatives and CEPH staff work together to develop a site visit agenda, modified for the virtual format.

During the site visit:

- The unit must ensure confidentiality of all meetings. Log-in information may NOT be shared beyond scheduled participants in each meeting.
- No one other than individual(s) listed in the site visit agenda participant list may be present in the meeting room during interviews with site visit team members. As with on-site visits, the dean (or designee) and/or program director may not attend all meetings. They are to be present only when indicated on the agenda.
- Legal counsel shall not be present at any stage of the virtual site visit, including the exit briefing meeting.
- No part of the site visit may be audio or video recorded, unless explicitly agreed upon by CEPH and the school or program.
- If, for any reason, the site visit team is not able to hold required meetings for technological or other reasons, CEPH will schedule a subsequent, in-person or virtual, site visit.

After the site visit:

- The school/program will work with CEPH staff to identify a mutually convenient date to host a half-day onsite visit with one CEPH representative. This individual may be a staff member, a site visitor, or a Councilor, at CEPH’s discretion. The school/program is responsible for travel fees incurred by the onsite CEPH representative. The onsite visit must occur within one year of the CEPH meeting during which the Council reviews the site visit team’s report.
- The Council may require a longer onsite visit or additional visitors for the onsite visit based on the need to adequately evaluate the unit.

Virtual Site Visit Process

- Other than the method of participation and some possible adjustments to the number of participants and/or meeting lengths, the virtual visit will parallel an on-site visit in every way, including a series of discussions over two (PHP/SBP) or three (SPH) days and an exit briefing on the final day.
- CEPH will provide Zoom (or equivalent platform) meeting rooms for each session on the agenda and will coordinate the technical aspects necessary to establish each meeting.
- The program is responsible for working with all attendees other than site visitors to ensure that participants have the appropriate equipment to participate in the sessions with video. CEPH requires all attendees to participate with audio and video.

Acknowledgement

As the dean/program director of the _____ at the _____, I have read and agreed to the foregoing requirements for the program to participate in a virtual site visit by CEPH. I understand that the virtual site visit must be followed by an onsite visit by a CEPH representative(s). I also understand that the accreditation decision will be made based on the virtual site visit, unless the Council requires additional information prior to making an accreditation decision.

The unit agrees to pay the site visit review fee invoiced by CEPH. The unit also agrees to pay the travel expenses incurred by the CEPH representative(s) related to the onsite follow-up visit. As the authorized representative, I agree that the unit will not challenge the results of the visit or CEPH’s decision relative to the accreditation of the school or program for any reason related to the site visit being conducted virtually.

Print Name

Signature

Title

Date