

UNITED COUNCIL FOR NEUROLOGIC SUBSPECIALTIES

Accreditation and Certification FAQs

Q: What is accreditation?

A: Accreditation is the process of peer-review that ensures an educational training program meets the minimum program requirements established by the subspecialty to produce a competent fellow.

Q: What is the difference between the *core curriculum* and *program requirements*?

A: The subspecialty *Core Curriculum* describes the subject matter that must be addressed during the course of fellowship training and is used by the Certification Council to develop UCNS certification examinations. The *Program Requirements* are used by the Accreditation Council to review training programs. All training programs must meet the requirements set forth in the *Program Requirements* as they are the minimum standards established by the subspecialty for an educational training program.

Applying for Accreditation

Q: How do I apply for accreditation?

A: Apply for UCNS Accreditation by visiting the UCNS website, <http://www.ucns.org/>. Select your subspecialty in the “Subspecialty Members” box to access program requirements, core curriculum, and the Program Information Form (PIF). The PIF is the subspecialty-specific electronic template used by the UCNS to help you show that your program is in compliance with program requirements. Download the PIF and the accompanying appendix templates and complete the application offline. The PIF includes instructions on deadlines, fees, and how to submit the documentation to the UCNS executive offices for review.

Q: What must I do to submit to begin the accreditation process?

A: All programs seeking accreditation must submit the following:

1. Completed Program Information Form (PIF)
2. Completed PIF Appendices A-G
3. Application Fee

Applications received without all three items listed will not be processed.

Q: When can I submit my application?

A: Program applications may be submitted by December 1 for spring review and June 1 for fall review.

Application Review

- Q: Will my program be required to undergo a site visit?
A: The Accreditation Council reviews applications and progress report materials submitted by program directors and the UCNS reserves the right to initiate a site visit if the Accreditation Council deems it necessary.

Continuing Accreditation

- Q: How do I maintain my accreditation?
A: Accreditation is awarded for a specific duration (term or cycle) and programs must submit continued accreditation documentation to maintain accreditation when the term or cycle is completed. Your original notification letter will indicate the length of your accreditation term and estimated date of next review. UCNS staff will contact you in advance of the review requesting necessary documentation.
- Q: How long is an accreditation term or cycle?
A: Accreditation terms are determined by the Accreditation Council depending upon the strength of the application. Decisions are made according to the strengths and weaknesses of the program. Provisional accreditation is generally two to three years. Full accreditation is generally three to five years. The Accreditation Council reserves the right to shorten an accreditation term if the program is out of compliance with its subspecialty program requirements.
- Q: Will I be notified when I need to apply for continuing accreditation?
A: Yes. Prior to your continued accreditation review, UCNS staff will e-mail you a Reaccreditation Information Form (RIF). The RIF will contain your previously submitted program information with space to accommodate program updates. Additional information may also be requested if issues were identified in your previous notification letter.

Program Changes

- Q: What do I do if I am retiring as program director?
A: UCNS must be notified in advance of a change in program director. A letter from the Department Chair describing the change and his/her selection for a new program director must be submitted to the Accreditation Council accompanied by the new program director's CV. A template letter and description of the program change request process may be found at <http://www.ucns.org/go/about/program>.
- Q: What do I do if faculty members join or leave my program?
A: UCNS must be notified in advance if there is a change in key faculty members. A letter from the program director describing the changes and corresponding CVs must be submitted to the Accreditation Council. A template letter, which must be submitted to UCNS as soon as possible to avoid any changes in your accreditation status, may be found at <http://www.ucns.org/go/about/program>.
- Q: How can I change the number of fellows enrolled in my program?
A: UCNS must be notified in advance if you wish to increase the approved complement of fellows. The Accreditation Council determines the fellow complement based on the faculty to fellow ratio. Faculty considered for the ratio are primary faculty who are UCNS certified or eligible in

the subspecialty of the training program. If a program has sufficient certified or eligible faculty, the program director may submit a program change request. A template letter and description of the process may be found at <http://www.ucns.org/go/about/program>.

Q: Do I need to contact UCNS if the duration of my program changes?

A: Yes. Subspecialties have specific parameters regarding program duration. Your notification letter indicates the duration of training for which your program is approved. If you would like to request a different duration, please consult your subspecialty program requirements and submit a request to the Accreditation Council with supporting documentation describing the curriculum for your proposed program. A template letter may be found at <http://www.ucns.org/go/about/program>.

Fees

Q: What fees are associated with accreditation?

A: Programs are required to remit an application process fee (due whenever a Program Information Form (PIF) or Reaccreditation Information Form (RIF) is submitted) and an annual accreditation fee. Fees are described in the instructions of UCNS application forms.

Q: Will you send an invoice when annual accreditation fees are due?

A: Yes, accredited programs are invoiced when annual fees or continued accreditation processing fees are due. Programs seeking initial accreditation are not invoiced.

Accreditation Decisions

Q: What does *provisional accreditation* mean?

A: *Provisional accreditation* is granted for initial accreditation of a program, or for a previously accredited program that had its accreditation withdrawn and has subsequently applied for reaccreditation. *Provisional accreditation* implies that a program is in a developmental stage. It remains to be demonstrated that the proposal for which accreditation was granted will be implemented as planned. Accordingly the Accreditation Council will monitor the developmental progress of a program accredited on a provisional basis.

Q: What is a progress report?

A: Programs may be awarded accreditation under circumstances in which additional clarification and follow up is needed. A progress report is a specific response to questions or concerns that have arisen in the process of Accreditation Council deliberations. The Council's accreditation recommendation may be reversed if the progress report is not received or does not address the question or concern. It is important to submit this information by the date identified in your notification letter.

Q: What does *deferral of accreditation* mean and how do I respond appropriately?

A: The Accreditation Council may defer a decision on the accreditation status of a program. The primary reason for deferral of accreditation action is lack of sufficient information about specific issues precluding an informed and reasonable decision.

Please respond to each item listed in your notification letter to assure the Accreditation Council has all the necessary information to make a decision. Please submit your responses by the due

date indicated in your notification letter to ensure that your program will be reviewed. If you have questions, notify UCNS staff.

Q: What does *withhold accreditation* mean and how do I respond appropriately?

A: The AC may *withhold accreditation* when it determines that the proposal for a new program does not substantially comply with the UCNS approved program requirements for the subspecialty. The Accreditation Council will cite those areas in which the proposed program does not comply with the standards. The proposed withhold status is intended to allow the program the opportunity to respond to the deficiencies identified by the Accreditation Council without requiring a new application, Program Information Form (PIF), and application process fee. Please submit your responses by the due date indicated in your notification letter to ensure your program will be reviewed. If you have questions, notify UCNS staff.

Q: Can a program's accreditation end?

A: Accreditation may be withdrawn from a program if the program is found to be in substantial noncompliance with the program requirements. Programs are given the opportunity to respond to any areas of noncompliance before accreditation is withdrawn.

A program may also request voluntary withdrawal of its accreditation. Additional details regarding withdrawal of accreditation may be found in the Accreditation Policies and Procedures document.

Program Information Forms

Q: What is the difference between the *Sponsoring Institution*, *Primary Institution*, *Participating Institution*, and *Other Participating Institution*?

A: UCNS defines the various educational institutions as follows:

Sponsoring Institution: The institution that assumes the ultimate responsibility for a program of GME. This entity is typically responsible for multiple GME programs and is overseen by a Designated Institutional Officer. This terminology is the ACGME's and UCNS follows the ACGME model.

Primary Institution: The institution that is used most heavily for actual clinical training during the fellowship.

Participating Institution: An institution to which fellows rotate for a required experience.

Other Participating Institution: An institution that provides specific learning experiences within a multi-institutional program of GME.

Q: Is a program required to have each of the type of institution?

A: Each program must have a designated sponsoring institution, and a primary institution, which may or may not be the sponsoring institution. Educational programs may take place at only one location; however, UCNS allows programs to utilize multiple educational centers to ensure students receive all required educational experiences.