N LN CNEA Virtual Site Evaluation Visit Policy

In response to the COVID 19 pandemic and in accordance with the U. S. Department of Education’s (USDE) authorized guidelines, the NLN CNEA will temporarily implement the use of virtual site visits to conduct program evaluation visits. In person site visits will resume in accordance with the USDE guidelines.

Program Eligibility Criteria for Virtual Site Evaluation Visit

The NLN CNEA reserves the right to use its discretion in determining program eligibility to participate in the use of the virtual site evaluation visit. The NLN CNEA also reserves the right to discontinue the use of virtual site evaluation visits at any time the Board of Commissioners determines it is in the best interest of the NLN CNEA and the programs and students it represents. This policy will remain in effect in accordance with U. S. Department of Education guidelines until the NLN CNEA Board of Commissioners rescinds it.

Programs seeking initial and continuing accreditation may participate in a virtual site evaluation visit. The NLN CNEA executive director will make the determination of program eligibility for virtual site visits and notify the NLN CNEA Board of Commissioners Executive Committee of any program not meeting the established criteria. The following criteria will guide the NLN CNEA determination that the program is considered to be eligible to participate in a virtual site visit:

1. The governing institution must be in good standing with its institutional accrediting body with no conditions or pending actions;

2. The program must be in good standing with its state regulatory authority and any other nursing accrediting body with no conditions or pending actions;

3. The institution and program must be able to make all relevant participants in the accreditation process available for interactive interviews through the use of synchronous video technology during the scheduled dates of the visit;

4. The institution and program must be able to provide technical support during the scheduled duration of the virtual site visit; and

5. The program must be free of any outstanding compliance concerns that would require an on-site program evaluation visit.
Conducting the Virtual Site Visit

The policies and procedures outlined in this document do not release the program from the responsibility of adequately demonstrating compliance with the NLN CNEA Standards for Accreditation during the virtual site visit. Furthermore, programs must follow the established policies and procedures published in the NLN CNEA Policy and Procedure Handbook. The policy for conducting virtual site program evaluation visits is temporary and does not replace any previously existing NLN CNEA policies, unless specifically stated otherwise in this policy.

The program is expected to adhere to the following:

1. The chief academic nurse administrator and team leader will collaboratively develop the agenda for the virtual visit. All individuals participating in interviews will be expected to use the video capabilities of the technology and identify themselves to the team. Special attention is to be paid to establishing clarity of time zones used to conduct interviews throughout the length of the virtual site visit.

2. The interviews will be conducted through the use of Zoom technology. The program will be responsible for establishing the interview call schedule and sharing the appropriate links and call-in numbers/passwords with the team and NLN CNEA staff. Any executive committee sessions held by the team will be scheduled and administered by NLN CNEA staff.

3. Under no circumstances may any part of the interviews or the team’s exit report be recorded. The recording function of the videoconferencing technology must be disabled during any interview.

4. The program’s self-study report remains due 6 weeks prior to the date of the virtual visit. Additional documentation that would normally be available during an on-campus evaluation visit must be made electronically available to the team during the length of the scheduled visit. It is the program’s responsibility to ensure the team has ready access to all program materials during the scheduled visit.

5. Confidential materials such as student and faculty records must be made available to the team in a secure fashion. The means by which this will be achieved will be agreed upon by the chief academic program administrator and the team leader.

6. Technology disruptions, absence of scheduled interviewees, and lack of supporting documentation sufficient enough to not allow the team to render a decision regarding evidence of standard compliance may lead to the virtual site visit being terminated and rescheduled at a later date. The decision to terminate a virtual visit will be made by the NLN CNEA executive director after discussion with the program’s chief academic nurse administrator and the team leader.
Follow-up Focus Visit

In accordance with the U.S. Department of Education temporary guidelines for virtual site visits, all programs participating in a virtual site visit will receive a follow-up focus visit that will be scheduled to occur on-campus within a reasonable time of the dates of the virtual site visit. The purpose of this visit will be to verify team findings and to collect any additional data that may be used to supplement the team report. The follow-up focus visit will be shorter in length and may be conducted by NLN CNEA staff or a CNEA trained on-site program evaluator. The date of the follow-up focus visit will be mutually agreed upon by the chief academic nurse administrator and NLN CNEA staff. Due to the pandemic, scheduling of these visits will occur when it has been deemed safe to engage in travel and interactions with others.

Board of Commissioners Accreditation Decisions

The accreditation review process and the Board of Commissioners' accreditation decision will follow the established NLN CNEA policies governing these processes. The Board of Commissioners will render a decision to grant or deny accreditation based upon the evidence before them from the self-study report, the written team report, program response to the team report, and the Program Review Committee report and recommendation.

The Board’s decision to accredit a program will be effective at the close of the board meeting in which the decision is made, with the period of accreditation being retroactive back to the last day of the month the virtual site visit was held. For programs that have experienced a postponement of an originally scheduled site visit in spring 2020 or fall 2020 due to circumstances related to the pandemic, the accreditation action will be dated back to the last day of the month of the originally scheduled site visit. The decision to accredit a program will be made with the caveat that the accreditation decision may be changed if evidence exists at the time of the on-site visit that indicates the program is not in compliance with the accreditation standards.

If the Board’s decision is to deny accreditation based upon evidence that the program is non-compliant with the accreditation standards, the board will communicate these preliminary findings to the program and defer the final accreditation decision until a follow-up on-campus site visit can be scheduled. The program will also be given the opportunity to provide additional documentation related to the noncompliant findings.

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