



ACEN Accreditation Manual Supplement for International Programs

Revised July 2025

Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing
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POSITION STATEMENT ON ACCREDITATION OF INTERNATIONAL NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The ACEN is committed to quality in all types of nursing education programs and encourages self-evaluation, peer review, and the promotion of educational equity, access, and mobility through the functions of accreditation. Recognizing that accreditation is one way of enhancing the quality of nursing education and is a way to facilitate the nursing profession being the best and strongest it can be worldwide, the ACEN welcomes nursing programs outside the United States and U.S. Territories to pursue international nursing accreditation.

The ACEN asserts that accreditation is a voluntary, self-regulatory process by which non-governmental entities recognize educational institutions or programs that have been found to meet or exceed standards and criteria for educational quality. The ACEN acknowledges that nursing education programs located outside of the United States and its Territories can benefit from adherence to best practices and generally accepted guidelines for nursing education incorporated in the ACEN Standards and Criteria. To fulfill its mission to support the interests of nursing education, nursing practice, and the public, the ACEN seeks to broaden the impact of accreditation to encompass nursing education programs across the globe.

Therefore, in a spirit of cooperation, openness, and mutual respect consistent with its organizational values, the ACEN extends accreditation and related services to international nursing education programs.

Original Statement: February 2010

Revised August 2018

Revised August 2022

Revised July 2025

INTERNATIONAL CANDIDACY PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

Nursing programs located outside the U.S. considering accreditation by the ACEN should contact the ACEN to begin the process. The international candidacy process has three steps:

Step I: Establishing Eligibility

All nursing education programs accredited by the ACEN must meet the following eligibility requirements as listed below:

- Placement within a governing organization that is accredited by an approved accrediting agency or holds unconditional approval by the appropriate regulatory agency that has legal authority for education programs within the country.
- Placement within a governing organization that is authorized to grant the credential awarded at the completion of the program.

Nursing education programs located outside the United States and its Territories must meet the following additional eligibility requirements.

- Program faculty and students must speak and understand English. The program must produce all documents and written materials required for the accreditation processes in English.
- The region in which the program is located must be safe for travel as identified by the U.S. State Department at the time of the travel for the ACEN peer evaluators and/or staff.
- Program must agree to host a minimum of two onsite visits, including a mandatory onsite Advisory Visit for International Candidacy and the onsite initial accreditation visit. **[NOTE:** Nursing education units seeking accreditation for a second nursing program have the option of declining the Advisory Visit for International Candidacy as a component of the candidacy process.]
- The program has financial resources adequate to meet all fiscal responsibilities related to the ACEN accreditation processes including International Candidacy Eligibility Application, Candidacy, and two onsite visits.
- The nursing program must establish and provide documentation that it has obtained requisite governmental and regulatory approval to seek ACEN accreditation, if required.

To verify eligibility, the international program must complete and submit the International Candidacy Eligibility Application to determine their eligibility for International Candidacy. The International Candidacy Eligibility Application must be accompanied by an [International Candidacy Eligibility Application fee](#). Once the ACEN has received the application fee, the application will be reviewed. This process takes approximately two business weeks.

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ACEN determines a program's eligibility and suitability for ACEN accreditation by reviewing the [International Candidacy Eligibility Application](#). Possible results of the review include the following:

- a. The program is deemed eligible to pursue International Candidacy.
- b. The program is asked to submit additional information/clarification.
- c. The program is deemed ineligible to pursue International Candidacy and will be withdrawn from the process.

Step 2: Candidacy Presentation and International Candidacy Advisory Visit

International nursing education programs determined to be eligible for International Candidacy will be scheduled for a mandatory onsite International Candidacy Advisory Visit. In preparation for the onsite International Candidacy Advisory Visit, programs will submit an International Candidacy Presentation, which will be provided to reviewers a minimum of six weeks prior to the onsite visit.

The International Candidacy Presentation will address the same selected Criteria as other programs pursuing Candidacy with the ACEN. See the [Candidacy Presentation – Written Instructions](#).

The onsite International Candidacy Advisory Visit will be conducted by one or two ACEN representatives. The purpose of the onsite International Candidacy Advisory Visit is to determine whether a program may proceed with the Candidacy process. Following the onsite International Candidacy Advisory Visit, an International Candidacy Advisory Visit for International Candidacy Report is submitted by the reviewers.

Based on the recommendations of the reviewers in the International Candidacy Advisory Visit Report, the ACEN will take one of the following actions:

1. **Approval of International Candidacy:** The nursing program **(a)** demonstrated it is currently compliant with the selected ACEN Standards and Criteria reviewed or demonstrated the potential to be compliant with the ACEN Standards and Criteria reviewed within the Candidacy timeframe, and **(b)** demonstrated the potential to achieve ACEN accreditation based upon the ACEN Standards and Criteria reviewed. Approval of International Candidacy does not guarantee that the program will achieve initial accreditation.
2. **Extension of Time to Achieve Candidacy (Deferral):** The nursing program **(a)** made an inconsistent presentation to demonstrate it is currently compliant with the selected ACEN Standards and Criteria reviewed or made an inconsistent presentation to demonstrate the potential to be compliant with the ACEN Standards and Criteria reviewed during the Candidacy timeframe, and **(b)** made an inconsistent presentation to demonstrate the potential to achieve ACEN accreditation based upon the ACEN Standards and Criteria reviewed. The program is advised to complete specified actions/implement specific changes or modifications; the program will need to resubmit the Candidacy Presentation within one year of notification (deferral). To proceed, the program must submit an International Candidacy Presentation Addendum within one year of notification describing how the recommended actions/concerns have been addressed. If the Addendum is approved by the ACEN Directors, International Candidacy is approved with the onsite accreditation visit to be scheduled within the Candidacy timeframe as noted above. If the

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Addendum is not approved, then the program is disapproved, and the ACEN will withdraw the program from the International Candidacy process.

3. Disapproval of International Candidacy: The nursing program **(a)** did not demonstrate it is currently compliant with the selected ACEN Standards and Criteria reviewed or did not demonstrate the potential to be compliant with the ACEN Standards and Criteria the Candidacy timeframe, and **(b)** did not demonstrate the potential to achieve ACEN accreditation based upon the ACEN Standards and Criteria reviewed. ACEN withdraws the program from the candidacy process. No fees will be refunded if a program is withdrawn.
4. Program Ineligibility: ACEN withdraws the program from the International Candidacy process. No fees will be refunded if a program is withdrawn.

NOTE: If a program's Candidacy expires prior to scheduling an initial accreditation site visit, then the program must restart the candidacy process to renew its candidate status. The Candidacy process can be restarted at any time after either being disapproved, withdrawn, or when the program's Candidacy has expired.

Additional information about the International Candidacy Advisory Visit:

The section of the *ACEN Accreditation Manual* related to the Site Visit applies to all programs located outside the United States and its Territories.

Length of Visit

International Candidacy Advisory Visits for nursing programs located outside the United States and its Territories will be a minimum of five days for a single program. The onsite portion of the visit will be a minimum of three full days. A nursing education unit with more than a single nursing program or multiple locations may require additional days.

Assignment of Site Visit Team

Peer evaluators for international programs will be selected from a pool of peer evaluators. The number of peer evaluators will be determined by the ACEN and will be based on the program type(s), number of additional locations, and on-ground transportation logistics.

NOTE: The International Candidacy Advisory Visit will have one or two ACEN reviewers assigned as noted above.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Team Chair, Team Members, and nursing program as listed in the ACEN Accreditation Manual apply to all nursing programs, including those located outside the United States and its Territories. The following additional responsibilities apply in reference to visit arrangements:

Please note that all international nursing programs must pay all fees associated with the International Candidacy Advisory Visit prior to any visit taking place. If any invoice received from the ACEN is not paid within an acceptable timeframe prior to any visit, the visit will be cancelled. The [schedule of fees](#) for international programs is used for the components of the visit.

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Area	Responsibility	
	Nursing Education Unit	Peer Evaluator/ACEN
Travel	Responsible for all travel costs incurred for each peer evaluator; air travel will be at business class or higher for each evaluator; International Candidacy Advisory Visit fees and airline travel expenses will be submitted prior to the International Candidacy Advisory Visit; additional fees incurred during the International Candidacy Advisory Visit will be submitted upon receipt of the invoice. Responsible for arranging all local and on-ground transportation during the onsite visits subject to ACEN approval.	Responsible for working with the ACEN staff to book airfare in accordance with ACEN travel policy (ACEN books international travel for the peer evaluator but works with the peer evaluator to determine the itinerary).
Hotel Accommodations	Responsible for arranging hotel accommodations for reviewers/peer evaluators following confirmation of visit dates and providing confirmation information to the Team Chair. Responsible for directly paying the costs for hotel accommodations; accommodations are subject to ACEN approval. Accommodations must include a separate, private room for each reviewer/peer evaluator at a hotel pre-approved by ACEN.	
Food/Beverages	Provide customary food/beverages during the hours that reviewers/peer evaluators are on-campus or visiting clinical settings (e.g., lunch and bottled water); may make arrangements for restaurant(s) at hotel to be included in room arrangements (e.g., breakfast, dinner).	Food not provided by the program during the site visit will be invoiced to the program; reviewers/peer evaluators will be reimbursed for their expenses.
Interpreter and Translator Services	Responsible for providing and arranging professional interpreter services/devices during the visit as needed; interpreter and translator services are subject to ACEN approval.	
Cultural Sensitivity	Provide information in advance of each visit related to customs, traditions, and expectations related to but not limited to dress and food.	Familiarization with local customs and traditions; review cultural packet provided by the ACEN prior to the visit. Abide by customs and traditions to the fullest extent possible during the onsite visit.
Agenda for International Candidacy Advisory Visit	Proposed detailed agenda for each visit due to ACEN a minimum of eight weeks in advance of the visit. Responsible for arranging interviews between reviewer/peer evaluators and the nurse administrator, administrators of the governing organization, faculty, clinical agency representatives, current students, graduates, public, general education faculty, and student services personnel.	Team Chair drafts agenda in collaboration with the nurse administrator.

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	Agenda should include time for reviewer/peer evaluators to take breaks, review program materials/documents as well as travel to/from hotel/college and all scheduled meetings on the agenda. See the ACEN Program Guidelines for additional information.	
Security	Prior to reviewer/peer evaluators' travel, assessment will be made at the time of the visit to determine security needs for reviewers/peer evaluators. Arrangements and associated costs are the responsibility of the nursing program. All security arrangements are subject to ACEN approval.	

Substantive Change During Candidacy

Programs approved for Candidacy by the ACEN must notify the ACEN of changes that occur in the program during the entire Candidacy process; eligibility for both Candidacy and Candidate status are based upon the information provided in the Candidacy Eligibility Application or the Candidacy Presentation. Changes that occur can affect the program's eligibility to pursue and/or achieve initial accreditation. See *ACEN Policy #34 Candidacy for Governing Organization/Nursing Program Seeking Initial Accreditation* and *Policy #3 Eligibility for Initial or Continuing Accreditation*. Go to the [ACEN Accreditation Policies Website Page](#).

Initial and Continuing Accreditation Visits

SELF-REVIEW AND SELF-STUDY REPORT

The sections of the *ACEN Accreditation Manual* related to the self-review and Self-Study Report apply to all programs, including those located outside the United States and its Territories. All programs electing to participate in accreditation activities are required to abide by the policies ([Visit the ACEN Policies Page](#)) and procedures as outlined in the [ACEN Accreditation Manual](#).

Length of Visit

International Accreditation visits for nursing programs located outside the United States and its Territories will be a minimum of five days for a single program. The onsite portion of the visit will be a minimum of three full days. A nursing education unit with more than a single nursing program or multiple locations may require additional days.

Assignment of Site Visit Team

Peer evaluators for international programs will be selected from a pool of peer evaluators. The number of peer evaluators will be determined by the ACEN and will be based on the program type(s), number of additional locations, and on-ground transportation logistics.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Team Chair, Team Members, and nursing program as listed in the ACEN Accreditation Manual apply to all nursing programs, including those located outside the United States and its Territories. The following additional responsibilities apply in reference to visit arrangements:

Please note that all international nursing programs must pay all fees associated with the International Candidacy Advisory Visit and the accreditation site visit prior to any visit taking place. If any invoice received from the ACEN is not paid within an acceptable timeframe prior to any visit, the visit will be cancelled. The [schedule of fees](#) for international programs is available.

Area	Responsibility	
	Nursing Education Unit	Peer Evaluator/ACEN
Travel	Responsible for all travel costs incurred for each peer evaluator; air travel will be business class or higher for each evaluator; International Candidacy Advisory Visit fees and airline travel expenses will be submitted prior to the International Candidacy Advisory Visit; additional fees incurred during the International Candidacy Advisory Visit will be submitted upon receipt of the invoice. Responsible for arranging all local and on-ground transportation during the onsite visits subject to ACEN approval.	Responsible for working with the ACEN staff to book airfare in accordance with ACEN travel policy (ACEN books international travel for the peer evaluator but works with the peer evaluator to determine the itinerary)

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Hotel Accommodations	Responsible for arranging hotel accommodations for reviewers/peer evaluators following confirmation of visit dates and providing confirmation information to the Team Chair. Accommodations must include a separate, private room for each reviewer/peer evaluator at a hotel pre-approved by ACEN Responsible for directly paying the costs for hotel accommodations; accommodations are subject to ACEN approval	
Food/Beverages	Provide customary food/beverages during the hours that reviewers/peer evaluators are on-campus or visiting clinical settings (e.g., lunch and bottled water); may make arrangements for restaurant(s) at hotel to be included in room arrangements (e.g., breakfast, dinner)	Food not provided by the program during the site visit will be invoiced to the program; reviewers/peer evaluators will be reimbursed for their expenses.
Interpreter and Translator Services	Responsible for providing and arranging professional interpreter services/devices during the visit as needed; interpreter and translator services are subject to ACEN approval	
Cultural Sensitivity	Provide information in advance of each visit related to customs, traditions, and expectations related to but not limited to dress and food	Familiarization with local customs and traditions; review cultural packet provided by the ACEN prior to the visit. Abide by customs and traditions to the fullest extent possible during the onsite visit.
Agenda for International Candidacy Advisory Visit	Proposed detailed agenda for each visit due to ACEN a minimum of eight weeks in advance of the visit. Responsible for arranging interviews between reviewer/peer evaluators and the nurse administrator, administrators of the governing organization, faculty, clinical agency representatives, current students, graduates, public, general education faculty, and student services personnel. Agenda must include time for reviewer/peer evaluators to take breaks, review program materials/documents as well as travel to/from hotel/college and all scheduled meetings on the agenda. See the ACEN Program Guidelines for additional information.	Team Chair drafts agenda in collaboration with the nurse administrator.
Security	Prior to reviewer/peer evaluators' travel, assessment will be made at the time of the visit to determine security needs for reviewers/peer evaluators. Arrangements and associated costs are the responsibility of the nursing program. All security arrangements are subject to ACEN approval.	