

**LIAISON COMMITTEE ON MEDICAL EDUCATION (LCME)**  
**ACCREDITATION PROCESS**

*The Survey Process for New or Developing Programs<sup>1</sup>*

New medical education programs leading to the M.D. degree undergo a three-stage, transitional accreditation process prior to achieving full accreditation status. This process is available only for new programs that have not admitted or enrolled any students. Developing programs that have already enrolled students without holding preliminary or provisional accreditation are not eligible for LCME consideration until the educational program is complete (i.e., at least one class of students has graduated). At that time they may apply for full accreditation, with the understanding that if and when full accreditation is granted it will take effect with the next entering class after the decision to grant full accreditation was made. Branch campuses of existing medical schools which intend to begin offering a complete and independent medical education program must initiate the process for new programs prior to admitting any students to the new program.

**a. Initiation of review**

New programs seeking LCME accreditation should contact the Secretariat for advice and consultation. The process begins formally when the chief executive officer of the institution planning to offer the new program submits a written request to the Secretariat seeking LCME accreditation. The institution must also pay the appropriate application fee: \$25,000 if it has never previously applied for accreditation or has not been evaluated for LCME accreditation in the preceding three years, or a reapplication fee of \$10,000 if it has been evaluated for accreditation within the previous three years. Secretariat staff are available for additional consultation as needed. Institutions are encouraged to take advantage of such opportunities, in order to facilitate orderly development of the program and full understanding of the accreditation process and standards of evaluation.

**b. Stage 1: Consideration for preliminary accreditation**

Upon written request for evaluation and payment of the application fee, new programs will receive instructions from the Secretariat regarding the conduct of a planning self-study and completion of a modified Medical Education Database. The modified database provides written documentation of those elements deemed by the LCME to be essential prerequisites to the admission of a charter class. Those prerequisites are summarized in the LCME document “Guidelines for New and Developing Medical Schools.” The planning self-study is a self-evaluation of the institution’s mission and goals, including an analysis and description of how and when the educational program is expected to achieve full compliance with all accreditation standards.

Prior to receiving preliminary accreditation status, programs must not recruit or advertise for students; solicit or collect application fees; collect application information; initiate a process for reviewing admissions applications; schedule interviews for potential matriculants; or issue letters of admission. Programs engaging in any of the above actions will forfeit their eligibility for consideration as a new program, and may not apply for LCME accreditation until the educational program is complete and at least one class has graduated.

Upon completion of the modified database and accompanying summary report of the planning self-study,

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<sup>1</sup> The process described here for new programs assumes a four-year curriculum. For programs of different duration, the Secretariat will develop alternative timetables and deadlines to adjust for differences in program length.

the institution submits those documents to the LCME Secretariat staff for screening. The Secretariat will review the materials and determine whether the documentation is adequate or whether additional information is needed from the program. When the documentation is determined to be complete, the Secretariat will request that the LCME authorize a limited survey of the program. If the visit is authorized, the survey team will include at least one member of the LCME and one member of the Secretariat staff. The limited survey will be conducted in the same format as limited surveys of fully accredited schools (see details in the section on “LCME Accreditation Actions”), concluding with oral exit conferences with the dean and with university leadership. The survey team will prepare a report of its findings for consideration at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the LCME.

If the LCME determines that the school fully meets the expectations outlined in its *Guidelines for New and Developing Medical Schools* and has developed satisfactory plans for its educational program, it will grant the status of **preliminary accreditation**. Once preliminary accreditation is awarded, the program may begin accepting applications for enrollment. If the program does not enroll a charter class within two years of receiving preliminary accreditation, it must reapply for accreditation as a new program and pay a reapplication fee of \$10,000.

If the LCME denies preliminary accreditation status to the program, the decision may be appealed according to the appeal procedure described elsewhere in this document. A program which has been denied preliminary accreditation may not reapply for a period of one year from the time the final decision to deny was communicated in writing to the institution. If students are admitted after preliminary accreditation has been denied, the program will forfeit its eligibility for reapplication as a new program and may not apply for LCME accreditation until its educational program is complete (i.e., until at least one class has graduated from the program).

### **c. Stage 2: Evaluation for provisional accreditation**

After receiving preliminary accreditation and admitting a charter class, the program updates its planning self-study and completes additional sections of the Medical Education Database. The Secretariat will schedule a limited visit to take place before the midpoint of the second year of the curriculum, to review progress in the implementation of the educational program and the status of planning for later stages of the program. The survey team will include at least one member of the LCME or Secretariat staff.

If, upon review of the limited survey report, the LCME determines that the program is in full compliance with all relevant accreditation standards, it will grant **provisional accreditation** status to the program. If minor noncompliance issues are noted, the program still may be granted provisional accreditation, but the LCME may request a written progress report addressing the noncompliance issue(s).

If the LCME determines that there are substantial noncompliance issues that could be resolved within a relatively limited period of time, it may continue the program’s preliminary accreditation status for an additional year. If continuation of preliminary accreditation status is granted, the program may be required to cease admitting new students and focus its resources on students already enrolled. The LCME may request a written progress report or conduct a limited or Secretariat survey within the one-year continuation period to assess progress in achieving substantial compliance. If the program demonstrates satisfactory compliance, it may then be granted provisional accreditation status, and may again enroll new students.

If the LCME determines that there are substantial noncompliance issues that can not be resolved within a relatively limited period of time, or that a program whose preliminary accreditation has been continued has failed to remedy the problems identified at the time initial accreditation was continued, it will give

notice that it intends to withdraw preliminary accreditation. A decision to withdraw preliminary accreditation is subject to appeal. If the LCME makes a final decision to withdraw preliminary accreditation, it will make every effort to help enrolled students transfer to other accredited programs. If preliminary accreditation is withdrawn, the program may not reapply for LCME accreditation for a period of one year from the time the final decision to withdraw was communicated in writing to the institution.

#### **d. Stage 3: Evaluation for full accreditation**

After receiving provisional accreditation status, the program once again updates its self-study and completes the remaining sections of the Medical Education Database. The LCME Secretariat will schedule a full accreditation survey to take place late in the third year or early in the fourth year of the curriculum. If, upon review of the survey report, the LCME determines that the program fully complies with all accreditation standards, **full accreditation** status will be granted for the balance of an eight-year term that began when the program was granted initial accreditation status. If minor noncompliance issues are found, the LCME may grant full accreditation status but require additional progress reports as necessary.

If the LCME determines that there are substantial noncompliance issues that could be resolved within a relatively limited period of time, it may continue the program's provisional accreditation status for an additional year. If continuation of provisional accreditation status is granted, the program may be required to cease admitting new students and focus its resources on students already enrolled. The LCME may request a written progress report or conduct a limited or Secretariat survey within the one-year continuation period to assess progress in achieving substantial compliance. If the program demonstrates satisfactory compliance, it may then be granted full accreditation status, and it may again enroll new students if it had been required to suspend new admissions.

If the LCME determines that there are substantial noncompliance issues that can not be resolved within a relatively limited period of time, or that a program whose provisional accreditation has been continued has failed to remedy the problems identified at the time provisional accreditation was continued, it will give notice that it intends to withdraw provisional accreditation. A decision to withdraw provisional accreditation is subject to appeal. If the LCME makes a final decision to withdraw provisional accreditation, it will make every effort to help enrolled students transfer to other accredited programs. If provisional accreditation is withdrawn, the program may not reapply for LCME accreditation for a period of one year from the time the final decision to withdraw was communicated in writing to the institution.