



CoARC Communication to our Communities of Interest:

Response to AARC Position Statement on Respiratory Therapist Education

January 28, 2016

The mission of the Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) is to ensure that high quality educational programs prepare competent respiratory therapists for practice, education, research and service. To achieve its mission, the CoARC holds programs accountable to their communities of interest - the profession, patients, employers, students and their families, practitioners - and to one another, by ensuring that program graduates are competent to fulfill their expected roles. The CoARC uses the *Accreditation Standards for Entry into Respiratory Care Professional Practice* to ensure that all accredited programs can prepare students to successfully complete the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) credentialing examinations. These examinations objectively assess the extent to which program graduates have achieved the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities required of a Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT).

On January 5th, 2016, the American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC) revised its [position statement](#) on Respiratory Therapist Education. The AARC's new position is that all programs applying for accreditation be able to award a minimum of a baccalaureate degree upon student completion of programmatic and degree requirements. The position statement emphasizes that the AARC supports continuing the accreditation of existing associate degree programs that meet the CoARC Standards.

The CoARC acknowledges that respiratory therapists with baccalaureate and graduate education are needed in larger numbers to serve as educators, researchers, managers, clinical specialists, and other roles throughout the healthcare delivery system. Likewise the CoARC recognizes the prominent role played by associate degree respiratory therapy programs. To support the increasing extent and complexity of the skills required of graduates of Respiratory Care programs and the associated movement of the profession toward baccalaureate and graduate degrees, the CoARC Board of Commissioners, in collaboration with the AARC, is proposing the following change to Standard 1.01 in the *Accreditation Standards for Entry into Respiratory Care Professional Practice*, to be effective January 1, 2018:

~~An~~ Except as provided in the following sentence, an educational sponsor must be a post-secondary academic institution accredited by a regional or national accrediting agency that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) and ~~must be~~ authorized under applicable law or other acceptable authority to award graduates of the program a ~~an associate or higher~~ baccalaureate or graduate degree upon ~~at the~~ completion of the program. For programs that were accredited prior to January 1, 2018, an educational sponsor must be a post-secondary academic institution accredited by a regional or national accrediting agency that is recognized by the USDE and that is authorized under applicable law or other acceptable authority to award graduates of the program an associate or equivalent degree upon completion of the program.

The intended effect of this change is that if the sponsor of a proposed Respiratory Care educational program is capable of granting only an Associate degree (or equivalent) upon completion of the program, the sponsor must receive approval for the program at, or prior to, the November 2017 meeting of the CoARC Board.

To facilitate a consensus, information will be provided to, and input solicited from, all the CoARC's communities of interest during the formal revision process outlined below. Before finalizing any changes to the Standards CoARC will provide advance public notice of the proposed revisions. The CoARC has also developed an FAQ (see last page of this announcement) in an effort to address concerns and questions from sponsoring institutions, programs, and students.



COMMISSION ON ACCREDITATION FOR RESPIRATORY CARE

CoARC STANDARD 1.01 REVISION PROPOSED TIMELINE

January 2016:

1. Blast email all accredited programs and place an announcement on the CoARC and AARC web sites announcing the first draft of the revised Standard 1.01. Disseminate a call for comment (with an **April 1, 2016** deadline) to all communities of interest* and outline the procedure for those wishing to provide input to the CoARC.

**Communities of interest include all the bodies within the CoARC organizational structure; related bodies or organizations (the American Association for Respiratory Care, the American College of Chest Physicians, the American Society of Anesthesiologists, the American Thoracic Society, the Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions, the National Network of Two-Year Community Colleges, and the National Board for Respiratory Care; RT educational program representatives (CEOs, deans, program directors, medical directors, site visitors, and advisory committee members); respiratory therapy educators; practitioners; consumers; employers; regulators (licensure boards, state higher education commissions); recognition bodies (Council for Higher Education Accreditation); accreditors (regional, national, and specialized accreditors); Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors; students; and the public at large.*

2. Use the CoARC web site and Survey Monkey to collect data and feedback from CoARC's communities of interest.
3. CoARC Accreditation Policies/Standards/Bylaws Committee (April– May 2016):
 - Review the data collected from the survey, and from any correspondence, e-mails, or telephone calls regarding the proposed change in the Standards.
 - Propose revisions to the first draft for review by the Full Board at June meeting.
4. At June 2016 CoARC Board meeting:
 - Hold a Standards Open Hearing (time TBD);
 - Review, discuss, and approve any proposed changes to the first draft of Standard 1.01.

Following June 2016 CoARC Board meeting:

5. Blast email all accredited programs and place an announcement on the CoARC and AARC_web sites announcing the final draft of revised Standard 1.01. Disseminate a call for comment (with an **October 1, 2016** deadline) to all communities of interest* and outline the procedure for those wishing to provide input to the CoARC.
6. Use the CoARC web site and Survey Monkey to collect data and feedback from the communities of interest.
7. At 2016 AARC International Congress (October 15-18, San Antonio, TX):
 - Hold a Standards Open Hearing (time and location TBD).
8. CoARC Accreditation Policies/Standards/Bylaws Committee (September– October 2016):
 - Review the data collected from the survey, and from any correspondence, e-mails, or telephone calls regarding the proposed change to the Standards.
 - Recommend revisions to the final draft for review by Full Board at June meeting.
9. At November 2016 CoARC Board meeting:
 - Review, discuss, and approve any proposed changes to the final draft of Standard 1.01.

Following November 2016 CoARC Board meeting:

10. Send the final version of the Standards to the CoARC's collaborating organizations (AARC, ATS, ASA, and ACCP) for endorsement as per CoARC Bylaw 2.05.01.
11. The endorsed Standards' revision will be posted on the CoARC web site and will go into effect following endorsement. An e-mail announcement will be distributed to all communities of interest.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(PROPOSED CHANGES TO STANDARD 1.01)

What effect would the change have on existing accredited associate degree programs?

Existing associate degree programs will be able to participate in the accreditation process provided that they continue to comply with CoARC Standards and Policies.

My sponsoring institution has submitted a Letter of Intent application for an associate degree program. How will this change impact us?

There will be no impact on your application as long as Provisional Accreditation is granted prior to January 1, 2018 (see below). The process for seeking an Approval of Intent remains the same.

How many applications for new associate degree programs have there been in recent years?

In 2012, there were two Letter of Intent applications submitted by sponsoring institutions limited to granting an Associate degree. Since 2012, there have been no applications submitted by such institutions; two applications for associate degree programs were submitted by sponsoring institutions able to grant a baccalaureate or higher degree.

What if my program has a Letter of Intent or Approval of Intent as of January 1, 2018? Will we still receive accreditation?

No. All sponsoring institutions seeking accreditation of an associate degree program must receive Provisional Accreditation prior to or at the November 2017 CoARC Board meeting. As of that date, for programs having only the Letter of Intent or Approval of Intent status, the process will be terminated.

What happens if my associate degree program withdraws after January 1, 2018 and we subsequently seek reaccreditation?

In the reaccreditation process, applicant programs are considered to be new programs and must therefore comply with current, applicable Standards. Accordingly, after January 1, 2018, for such an application to be considered, this means that the program sponsor would need to be capable of awarding a baccalaureate or graduate degree upon program completion.

Will this proposed change have any impact on CoARC's plans to establish a threshold for the higher cut score on the NBRC TMC exam?

No. Compliance with this new threshold will be required starting with the annual reports due on July 1, 2018.

For questions regarding this communication, please contact Tom Smalling, Executive Director, at 817-283-2835 ext. 101 or by email at tom@coarc.com.