



## Accreditation Process Information

### Accreditation

Accreditation is a voluntary process whose major purpose is to ensure quality in a marriage and family therapy program. All accredited programs are expected to meet or exceed all standards of accreditation throughout their period of accreditation. The integrity of an institution and the program is fundamental and critical to the process of accreditation. Accreditation standards are regarded as minimal requirements for quality training. For additional information about accreditation please refer to [About Accreditation: Why is Accreditation Important \(video\)](#).

### Accreditation Standards

Programs must continually evaluate themselves in relation to their institution's mission and their own program mission, goals and educational objectives. Accreditation standards, like other aspects of accreditation, are part of a slowly evolving, continuous process. In the long view, there are continuing conversations among accreditors, training programs, trainees, trained professionals, employers, and consumers from which the standards and other aspects of accreditation evolve.

### COAMFTE Accreditation Process

Programs seeking COAMFTE Accreditation are required to demonstrate compliance with current accreditation standards (Version 12 Accreditation Standards). Programs must submit a Self-Study and host a Site Visit. The entire accreditation process takes a minimum of one full year. Programs should review current accreditation standards and begin collecting information for a Self-Study two (2) years in advance of applying for accreditation. Programs are encouraged to attend Accreditation Trainings, including webinars and trainings at the AAMFT Annual Conferences.

### Self-Study

The purpose of a Self-Study is to help programs become more effective by clarifying their goals, assessing achievements, identifying problems, and implementing needed changes. The Self-Study is a program's comprehensive analysis of its educational resources and effectiveness in relation to its stated mission and educational objectives. Self-Study materials must be prepared in accordance with the current set of standards. Program submitting a Self-Study must:

- Provide a narrative response to each Eligibility Criterion and Key Element describing program's compliance (Note: 'program meets this key element' is NOT an acceptable response)
  - Describe how the program is meeting the requirements of the Criterion/Key Element
  - Respond to each component of a Criterion/Key Element
- Include appendices/exhibits as supporting evidence for the narrative (Note: 'evidence will be provided during the Site Visit' is NOT an acceptable response)
  - Include aggregated data
  - Do not include raw data
  - Provide examples of surveys
  - Include contextual explanation for all supporting documentation
- Complete and submit all required forms

**Self-Study Organization**

Programs submitting a Self-Study must include the following documents in the order noted under ‘Contents’. The Self-Study submission cannot exceed 20 MB. Self-Study submissions that exceed 20 MB will not be accepted and will be returned to the program:

Document	Contents ( <i>in the following order</i> )	Format	Submission
Self-Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ SS1 – Application Form</li> <li>○ SS1B – Distance Education Form (if applicable)</li> <li>○ SS2 – Cover Page</li> <li>○ SS3 – Eligibility Criteria Narrative Template</li> <li>○ SS4 – Eligibility Chart A</li> <li>○ SS5 – Eligibility Chart B</li> <li>○ SS6 – Self-Study Narrative Overview</li> <li>○ SS7 – Mission, Goals, and Outcomes Template</li> <li>○ SS8 – Self-Study Narrative Template</li> <li>○ Supporting Exhibits/Appendices (evidence supporting the eligibility and Self-Study narrative responses)</li> <li>○ SS9 – Program of Study</li> <li>○ SS10 – Faculty Summary</li> <li>○ SS11 – Supervisor Summary</li> <li>○ SS12 – Program Composition and Student Achievement (Initial Programs Only)</li> <li>○ SS13 – Feedback to the Commission Form (optional)</li> </ul> <p>All COAMFTE forms are found on the <a href="#">COAMFTE Accreditation Resources</a> website.</p>	<p>One electronic; read only; USB Flash Drive;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PDF format;</li> <li>• All Self-Study components must be combined in <u>one PDF</u> document in the order noted in ‘Contents’ with bookmarks linking to each individual component.</li> <li>• PDF document shall <u>not</u> exceed 20 MB.</li> </ul>	<p>Mail 1 USB Flash Drive to:</p> <p>COAMFTE/AAMFT 112 South Alfred Street Alexandria, VA 22314</p>
Site Visit Forms	<p>Forms SS 14-15 (Site Visit Date Request Form and Conflict of Interest Form)</p> <p>Note: Programs are not required to submit SS16 at the time of their Self-Study Submission</p>	<p>Electronic; PDF Format</p>	<p>E-mail to: <a href="mailto:coa@aamft.org">coa@aamft.org</a></p>
Self-Study Addendum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Self-Study Addendum Template</li> <li>○ Supporting Exhibits/ Appendices (evidence supporting the narrative response)</li> </ul> <p>All COAMFTE forms are found on the <a href="#">COAMFTE Accreditation Resources</a> website.</p>	<p>Electronic; read only; USB Flash Drive;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PDF format;</li> <li>• All Self-Study Addendum components must be combined in <u>one PDF</u> document in the order noted in ‘Contents’ with bookmarks</li> </ul>	<p>Mail USB Flash Drive to:</p> <p>COAMFTE/AAMFT 112 South Alfred Street Alexandria, VA 22314</p>

		linking to each individual component. PDF document shall <u>not</u> exceed 20 MB.	
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**Self-Study Submission**

Self-Study must be submitted in the required format. Submission deadlines are April 1<sup>st</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. In order to be reviewed in the appropriate cycle, the Self-Study must be received by the noted deadline.

**Self-Study Review**

- Self-Studies received by the submission due date will be reviewed by staff for completeness
- Complete Self-Studies will be forwarded to COAMFTE for review of program's compliance with the current Accreditation Standards at the time of submission
- Self-Studies that are incomplete will be returned to programs
- COAMFTE responds to Self-Study documents submitted for accreditation in one of three ways. It may:
  1. Approve the Self-Study application and require a Site Visit. In some cases, additional documentation may be requested
  2. Deny a Site Visit. This action is taken when it appears from examination of the Self-Study document that:
    - a. The program seeking accreditation does not meet the standards; or
    - b. The program seeking initial accreditation status does not meet standards and cannot be expected to achieve compliance with the standards within five years
  3. Defer a Site Visit based on an incomplete Self-Study and request the missing information
- Programs will receive the Self-Study Review letter indicating the COAMFTE recommendation and areas of deficiencies.

**Site Visit**

The purpose of an accreditation Site Visit is to determine the accuracy and completeness of the Self-Study document and gain an understanding of those aspects of a program which cannot be fairly and adequately evaluated from documentation alone.

Following the review of a program’s Self-Study, a program will receive the Self-Study Review Letter indicating whether a Site Visit has been recommended and any standards with remaining deficiencies. If the reviewers determine that the program provided substantial information to demonstrate compliance with the Accreditation Standards, a Site Visit will be recommended. For any standards with indicated deficiencies, programs will need to provide additional documentation demonstrating how the requirements of that standard are met.

Site Visit Schedule

Site Visits are generally scheduled during the Spring and Fall cycles: Spring, March 15 – May 15 and in the Fall, September 15 – November 15. Site Visits generally occur over a two-day period, Monday and Tuesday (travel days are Sunday and Wednesday). Programs applying for accreditation are required to submit Site Visit Forms at the time they submit a Self-Study.

Preparation materials, including program Self-Study materials and any additional documentation submitted by a program are sent to Site Visitors for their review and preparation prior to the Site Visit.

During a Site Visit, programs will need have the following items available in the Resource Room for the Site Visitors:

- Internet access (wi-fi)
- 1 computer
- 1 printer
- Additional electric plugs (please note that Site Visitors will bring laptops)
- Extension cords

*The Site Visit Team will have meals on their own; beverages and light snacks in the Resource Room are always welcomed during the review process.*

The Site Visit Team will need access to the following on-site materials:

- Program Syllabi
- Faculty/Supervisor CVs/Resumes
- Program Manuals, Handbooks, etc.
- Materials not included in the Self-Study or Program's Response to the Self-Study Review Letter
- Samples of student and graduate records (academic and clinical) for the period of two years
- Documentation of complaint policy and records of student complaints

Programs should make a note of the following:

- The Program Director does not participate in meetings with faculty, supervisors, students, and administrators (even if a Program Director is on the faculty and provides supervision)
- Closing Remarks – please note that the Closing Remarks Meeting is not a conversation or a dialogue but a courtesy on behalf of the Site Visit Team and is not a mandatory part of the visit. Only the individual delivering closing remarks speaks during the meeting. The Program Director is required to be at the Closing Remarks Meeting; however additional program personnel may attend at the Program Director's discretion. Those in attendance may not include legal counsel. During the Closing Remarks Meeting the Site Visit Team will summarize its observations as related to compliance with accreditation standards.
- Site Visit Report – The final Site Visit Report is forwarded to the Program Director and the Chief Executive Officer of the institution within forty-five (45) days of Site Visit completion. Please provide the Team Chair with the contact information for the Chief Executive Officer prior to the team's departure.
- Program's Response to Site Visit Report – must be sent to the COAMFTE office at [coa@aamft.org](mailto:coa@aamft.org) within thirty (30) days of the receipt of Site Visit Report.

#### Site Visit Team Composition

Accreditation Site Visit Teams generally consist of three to four qualified Site Visitors, for a single and dual program respectively. A Commission representative (generally staff) may accompany a Site Visit Team. The number of Site Visitors may vary depending on program size, complexity, and special needs. Every effort is made to ensure that Site Visitors have the appropriate background, knowledge, and experience with regard to the type of program being visited. Site Visit Teams also make every effort to be sensitive to issues of ethnicity, gender, and other diversity concerns. Site Visitors who cannot assure the Commission of their objectivity due to a potential conflict of interest will not be selected (see Conflict of Interest policy, *Accreditation Manual: Policies and Procedures*, p. 30).

**Accreditation Process Document Due Dates/Fees**

All fees and documents must be received at the COAMFTE office on the dates noted below. Current fees are available on the COAMFTE website, see [Accreditation Fees](#).

Document	Fee	Submission Date
Application for Accreditation	Application for Accreditation (Initial/Renewal)	April 1/October 1
Self-Study	N/A	
	Site Visit	
	Annual Sustaining/Maintenance of Accreditation	January 31
	Annual Sustaining/Maintenance of Accreditation Late Fee	<i>Per Invoice</i>
Annual Report		January 31/July 31
Special Report		
Response to Stipulations		