

Guide to Approval



NAACLS

National Accrediting Agency
for Clinical Laboratory Sciences

The Guide to Approval
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Dear Colleague:

Thank you for your interest in the programmatic approval process provided by the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS). NAACLS accredits clinical doctorate in clinical laboratory science (CDCLS), clinical laboratory scientist/medical technologist (CLS/MT), clinical laboratory technician/medical laboratory technician (CLT/MLT), histotechnologist (HTL), histotechnician (HT), diagnostic molecular scientist (DMS), cytogenetic technologist (CG), and pathologists' assistant (PathA) educational programs. NAACLS also independently approves phlebotomist (PBT) and clinical assistant (CA) educational programs. NAACLS is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

Recognition by CHEA affirms that standards and processes of accrediting organizations are consistent with quality improvement, and accountability expectations that CHEA has established. NAACLS also confirms the Code of Good Practice of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors. It is assumed that NAACLS volunteers also support the Code.

The Guide to Approval is designed to familiarize and assist you with the programmatic approval process. Section I contains the Core and Unique Standards for Accredited Educational Programs. Section II contains procedures for review of the initial and continuing approval process. Section III contains a description of the self-study process and documentation required for each Standard. Section IV contains Options and Processes for Programmatic Accreditation. The appendix, which includes fact sheets, matrices, and other information useful for preparing the Self-Study Report document.

Separate Guides are available for accredited programs.

Follow the steps listed in the guide, and submit your materials to NAACLS. If you have questions, contact us at 773.714.8880 or info@naaccls.org.

We look forward to working with you and helping you make approval an achievable goal for your program.

Sincerely,

The NAACLS Staff

PREAMBLE

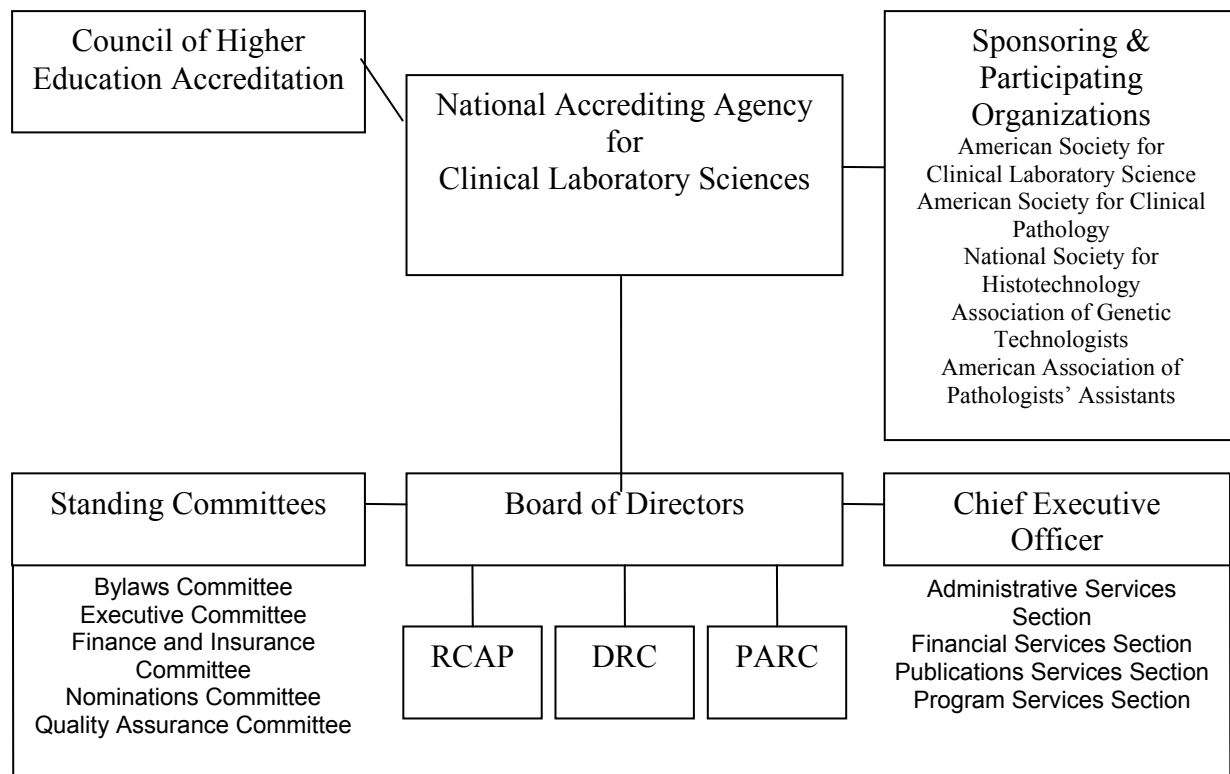
About NAACLS

National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS)

The National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS) is a nonprofit organization that independently accredits clinical doctorate in clinical laboratory science (CDCLS), clinical laboratory scientist/medical technologist (CLS/MT), clinical laboratory technician/medical laboratory technician (CLT/MLT), histotechnologist (HTL), histotechnician (HT), diagnostic molecular scientist (DMS), cytogenetic technologist (CG), and pathologists' assistant (PathA) educational programs. NAACLS also independently approves phlebotomist (PBT) and clinical assistant (CA) educational programs.

NAACLS is comprised of three review committees, the Board of Directors and the executive office staff. The Review Committee for Accredited Programs (RCAP) reviews CLS/MT, CLT/MLT, HTL, HT, DMS, CG and PathA programs for accreditation. The Doctoral Review Committee (DRC) reviews CDCLS programs for accreditation. The Programs Approval Review Committee (PARC) reviews PBT and CA programs for approval. The Board of Directors functions as the governing unit of NAACLS and grants final accreditation and approval awards. The executive office staff facilitates both the accreditation and approval processes.

NAACLS is an autonomous, nonprofit organization established in 1973 as the successor to the American Society for Clinical Pathology (ASCP) Board of Schools. ASCP and the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science (ASCLS) are sponsoring organizations of NAACLS. The American Association of Pathologists' Assistants (AAPA), the National Society for Histotechnology (NSH) and the Association of Genetic Technologists (AGT) are participating organizations. NAACLS is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).



Primary aspects of the NAACLS program approval process for phlebotomy programs are: (1) the self-study process; (2) evaluation by the Programs Approval Review Committee (PARC), and (3) evaluation by the Board of Directors. Evaluation is based on Standards, which are the minimum criteria used when determining program approval.

NAACLS conducts various functions of program approval including: (1) drafting and reviewing Standards and Competencies for the operation of specialized programs; (2) selecting representatives to serve on the PARC and the Board of Directors, and (3) granting approval awards based on a program's self-study process.

The Programs Approval Review Committee (PARC) is comprised of educators and administrators. Members are appointed by the Board of Directors for staggered terms to assure continuity on the committee. Occasionally, a member may be appointed to fill an unexpired term. The chairman and vice-chairman are elected annually by committee members.

Program Approval: History, Purpose and Benefits

Since 1987, NAACLS has actively reviewed programs for approval status. The purpose of program approval is to identify educational programs that are structured to assure that graduates possess stated career entry level Competencies. The Competencies, established with input from various professional groups, specify the minimum requirements in knowledge and skills to function effectively in the occupation.

Program approval provides a measure of assurance to potential students and employers of graduates that the program is structured in conformity with nationally accepted minimum career entry level Competencies.

Program approval does not equal nor lead to programmatic approval.

Approval is a process of external peer review in which an agency grants public recognition to a program of study that meets established qualifications and educational standards. Approval of a specialized program is known as program approval. Participation in the approval process is voluntary since there is no legal requirement for specialized programs to participate. However, there are factors that make approval valuable. The benefits include, but are not limited to, the following.

Approval:

1. Identifies for the public specialized programs that meet established standards of educational quality.
2. Stimulates improvement of educational standards by involving faculty and staff in self-evaluation, research and planning.
3. Promotes a better understanding of the goals of professional education.
4. Provides reasonable assurance that practitioners meet minimum educational standards upon entry into the profession.
5. Assists specialized programs in achieving their objectives.

Basic Eligibility Criteria for Becoming an Approved Program

NAACLS applies the following basic eligibility criteria when it considers an applicant program for initial approval:

1. The sponsoring institution and affiliates, clinical and/or academic, if any, must be accredited by recognized state, regional and/or national agencies.
2. The institution must be legally authorized under applicable state law to provide postsecondary education.

Review of Programs

Programs that seek approval by NAACLS are evaluated by either the PARC and by the Board of Directors. The diagram on page 4 illustrates this process.

PARC Evaluation

The Programs Approval Review Committee (PARC) has representatives from laboratory education programs and administrators. The PARC evaluates programs seeking approval and forwards its approval recommendations to the Board of Directors. PARC members serve as readers of Self-Study Reports for programs. NAACLS notifies the sponsoring institution of the PARC's approval recommendation to the Board of Directors. The PARC meets in the winter and summer annually.

Board of Directors' Evaluation

The Board of Directors evaluates the PARC's approval recommendations for accuracy, objectivity and consistency. The board may approve a recommendation, amend it or return it to the committee for re-evaluation. NAACLS notifies the sponsoring institution of the board's approval action. The board meets in the spring and fall annually after the PARC's meetings.

Standards

The minimum national standards used for the development and evaluation of accredited or approved educational programs. They are developed through a process that requires input from and review by peer groups, sponsoring and participating organizations, affiliating organizations, other interested professional groups, as well as the public. The Standards describe the general characteristics of an acceptable program.

NAACLS Philosophy of Approval

Approval in the United States is a voluntary process whereby educational programs and institutions request review by their peers. In the NAACLS process of approval, there are several steps and parties of review:

1. The Self Study process, which culminates in the Self-Study Report,
2. The Paper Review process, which includes both the review and its response,
3. The review by the Program Review Committee, and,
4. The review by the NAACLS Board of Directors

All of these parties are dedicated to a common goal, quality enhancement of laboratory education. Only through full and open communication and cooperative efforts can this goal occur.