

Public Information

Programmatic Accreditation Practices

April 2022



Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors

Public Information - Programmatic Accreditation Practices

About this report

This report is based on a survey of members of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors on their practices related to the information they make publicly available and their requirements for data that programs must make available to the public.

Contributors to this report accredit programs in these professions and fields:

- Acupuncture and Herbal Medicine
- Advanced Cardiovascular Sonography
- Anesthesia Technology
- Anesthesiologist Assistant
- Applied Engineering
- Architecture
- Art and Design
- Art Therapy
- Assistive Technology
- Athletic Training
- Audiology
- Blood Banking Technology/ Transfusion Medicine
- Business
- Cardiovascular Technology
- Chiropractic
- Clinical Laboratory Sciences
- Clinical Research Professional
- Construction
- Counseling
- Credibility Assessment
- Cytotechnology
- Dance
- Dentistry
- Diagnostic Medical Sonography
- Early Childhood Teacher
- Emergency Medical Services – Paramedic
- Engineering Technology
- English Language Programs
- Exercise Physiology
- Exercise Science
- Funeral Service
- Genetic Counseling
- Health Education
- Health Informatics/Information Management
- Healthcare Management
- Inclusive Rehabilitation Sciences
- Industrial Technology
- Intraoperative Neurophysiologic Monitoring
- Kinesiotherapy
- Lactation Consultant
- Landscape Architecture
- Library/Information Studies
- Marriage and Family Therapy
- Medical Assistant
- Medical Education
- Medical Illustrator
- Montessori Teacher
- Midwifery
- Music
- Naturopathy
- Neurodiagnostic Technology
- Nuclear Medicine Technology
- Nursing
- Nurse Anesthesia
- Nurse Practitioner
- Nutrition and Dietetics
- Occupational Therapy
- Orthoptics
- Osteopathic Medicine
- Optometry
- Orthotics and Prosthetics
- Pedorthist
- Perfusion
- Personal Fitness Training
- Pharmacy
- Physical Therapy
- Physician Assistant
- Podiatric Medicine
- Polysomnographic Technology
- Project Management
- Public Health
- Public Policy, Affairs and Administration
- Psychology
- Recreational Therapy
- Rehabilitation/Disability Studies
- Respiratory Care
- Social Work
- Speech-Language Pathology
- Surgical Assistant
- Surgical Technologist
- Theatre
- Urban Planning

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Specialized and professional accreditors review programs at colleges and universities against

Report at a glance

an established set of educational quality standards with the desired result being that students achieve the necessary competencies for safe and effective practice in a variety of professions. Accreditation standards are developed and established in collaboration with peers and subject matter experts in their respective disciplines, including practitioners, employers, educators and members of professional associations and other communities of interest. This inclusive process is critical to ensure that students attain essential learning outcomes and skills to meet the needs of today's workforce.

Accreditors adhere to a public interest mandate by working to ensure that education programs produce competent practitioners. This obligates accreditors to make key information about the quality of college and university programs available so that the public (students and parents, where applicable) can make informed choices about where to get an education.

This report compiles data obtained in a survey completed by fifty-two member agencies of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) on the information these accreditors make available as well as their requirements for accredited programs to make data publicly available.

The Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) is a membership organization that communicates the value of specialized and professional higher education accreditation and promotes quality by facilitating discussion among and providing educational opportunities for programmatic accreditors.

ASPA members accredit programs for more than 100 different disciplines, from construction to nursing and architecture to occupational therapy.

ASPA member accreditors post key

information related to the accreditation process and program status. All respondents post their accreditation standards on their websites, and 90% or more post their agency's accreditation policies and procedures, notices of updates to standards, contact information for accredited programs, the process for filing complaints about programs, and identification of the members of their decision-making body.

All respondents post the accreditation status of programs in directories or databases, and 71% or more include details about probation and adverse actions. Many respondents also publish aggregate data on program performance, for instance, graduation rates.

Programs are required to make public key information related to their accreditation status and performance. All respondents require programs to indicate their accreditation status and 50% or more require programs to make information about probation or adverse actions publicly available. Most respondents require programs to post graduation rates.

Overall, it is apparent that specialized and professional accreditors ensure that key information is made available to the public related to the quality of accredited programs.

Introduction

Specialized¹ and professional accreditors set standards² that define expectations for educational quality in programs³ at colleges and universities⁴. Students completing these programs achieve learning outcomes that equip them with the competencies necessary for entry-level practice in a variety of professions. Accreditation standards and processes are developed collaboratively with input from subject matter experts in a profession, including practitioners, employers and industry representatives, educators, and representatives from professional associations and other communities of interest.

This focus on educational standards that produce competent practitioners protects the public interest by ensuring that members of the public receive effective healthcare and work in safe environments, to name but a few examples. For students to make an informed decision about where to get an education, accreditors have an obligation to make key information about the quality of college and university programs available to the public as well as to set standards and evaluate program compliance with these standards.

In early 2022, the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA) surveyed its accreditor members to determine:

- the extent to which information about the accreditation status of programs is posted for public consumption,
- what types of information about the accreditor’s processes and operations are made available to the public, and
- what types of data pertaining to accreditation status and performance the accreditor requires accredited programs to provide to the public.

This report summarizes the responses provided by 52 ASPA member agencies.

For the most part, information is shared with the public via accreditor websites. Some respondents indicated they employ other means as well that included blog posts, e-mail publications, and presentations at workshops and conferences.

Information about the Accreditation Process

All 52 respondents share their accreditation standards with the public. Figure 1 displays⁵ the percentages of accreditors that share a variety of other information related to the accreditation process.

¹ The terms “specialized,” “professional” and “programmatic” are used synonymously in this report.

² The term “standard” is used generically in this document. Accreditors may use other terms such as “evaluative criteria” to denote the requirements for programs to demonstrate quality.

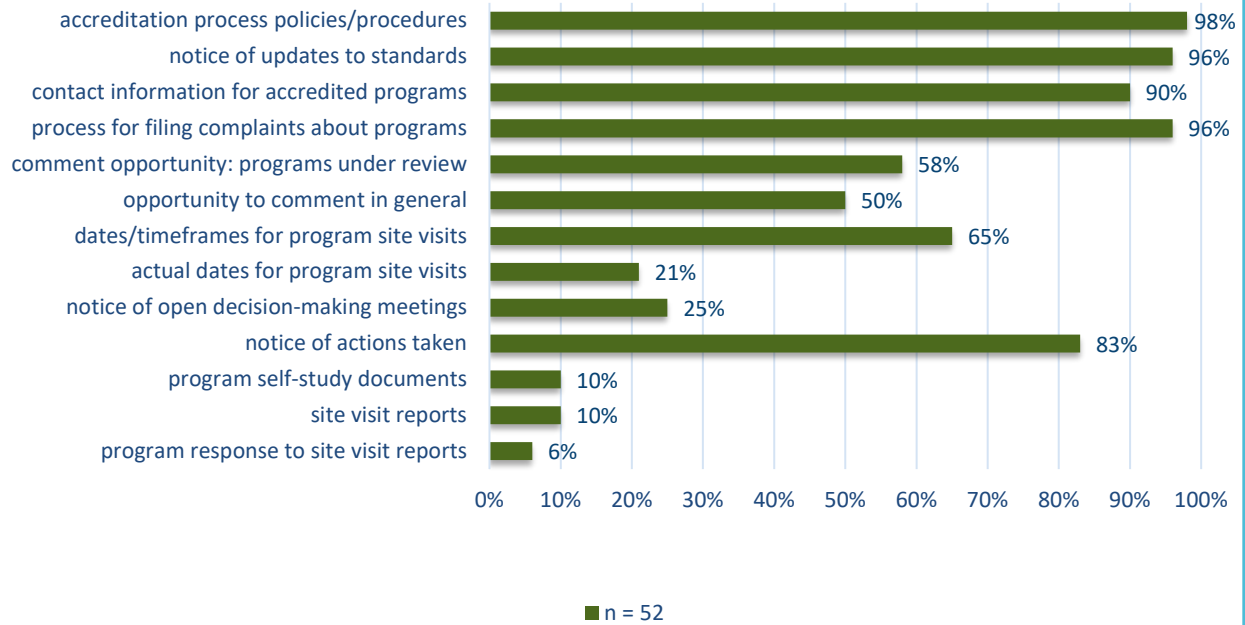
³ Several ASPA members also serve as institutional accreditors in the instance of single purpose schools (e.g., podiatry); “program” is used generically in this report for brevity.

⁴ The phrase “colleges and universities” is used for brevity in this report; ASPA members also accredit programs in hospitals and healthcare settings and postsecondary adult education programs in public K-12 school districts.

⁵ Ten percent of respondents indicated that although their decision-making meetings were not open to the public, the dates of these meetings were posted on their websites.

1. Information about the Accreditation Process

Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors, 2022

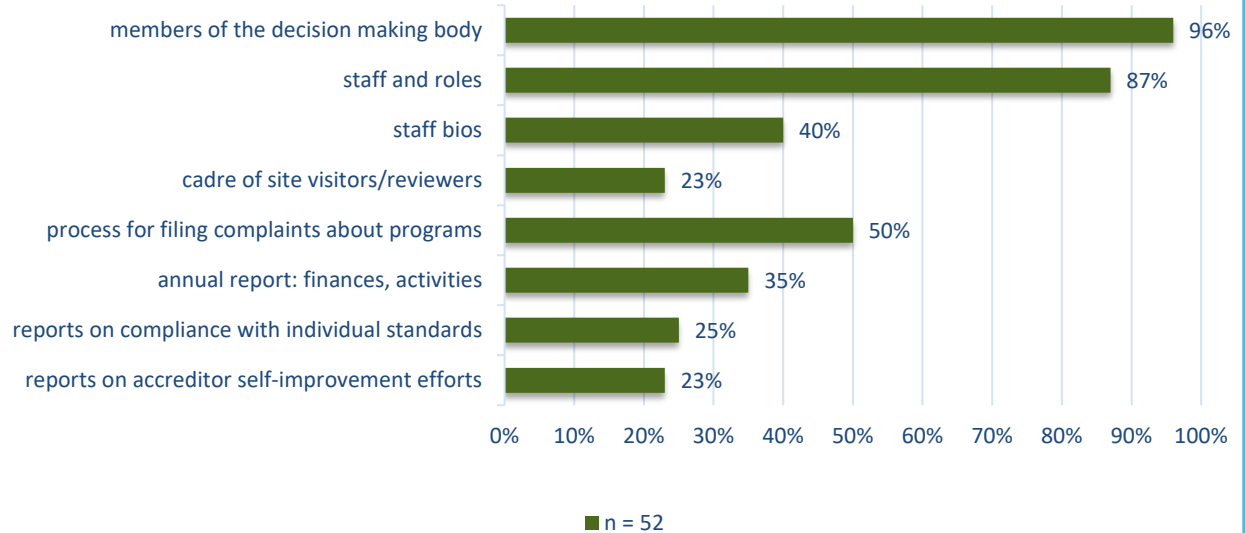


Information about the Accrator – Governance and Operations

Figure 2 displays the responses related to public information about the accretor's volunteers and staff, as well as reports on various activities.

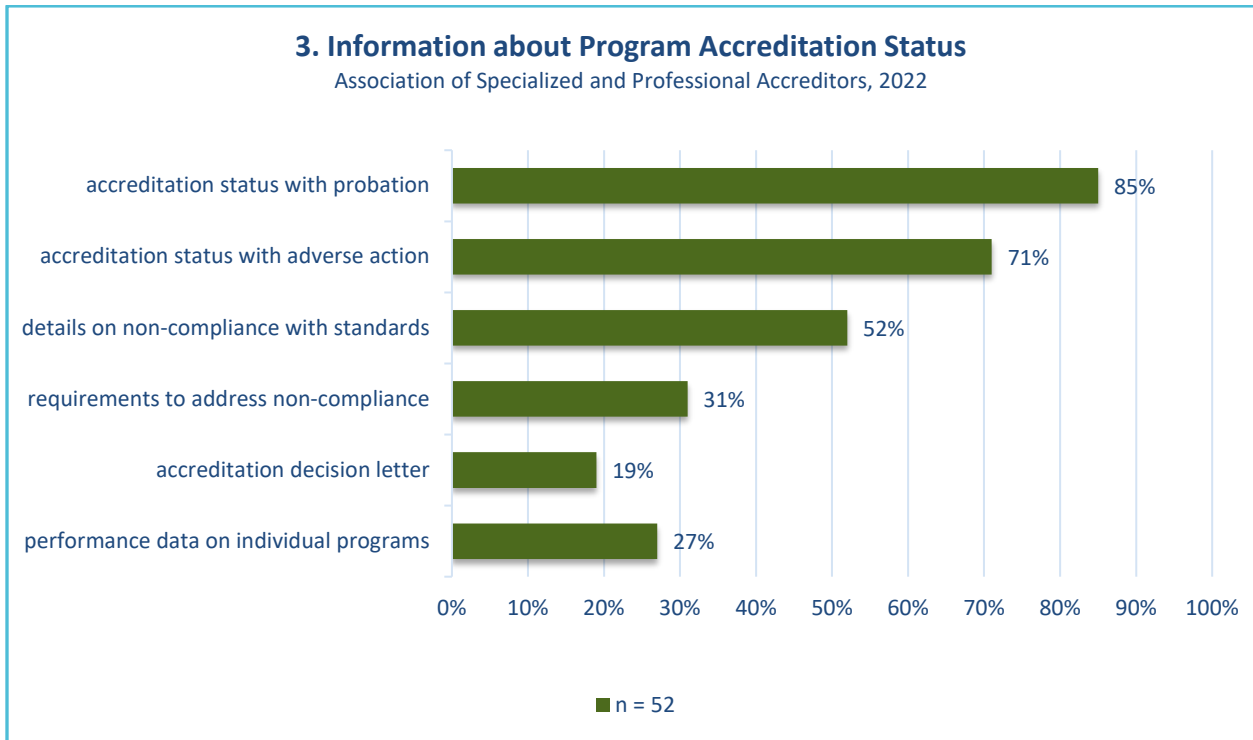
2. Information about the Accretor

Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors, 2022



Information about the Accreditation Status of Programs

All respondents post the accreditation status of their programs in directories or databases on the accreditors' websites. Most accreditors include details about probation and adverse actions for individual programs. Figure 3 displays the range of information that is made available among the respondents.



In addition to the current accreditation status, respondents indicated a range of historical information about programs that they make available to the public:

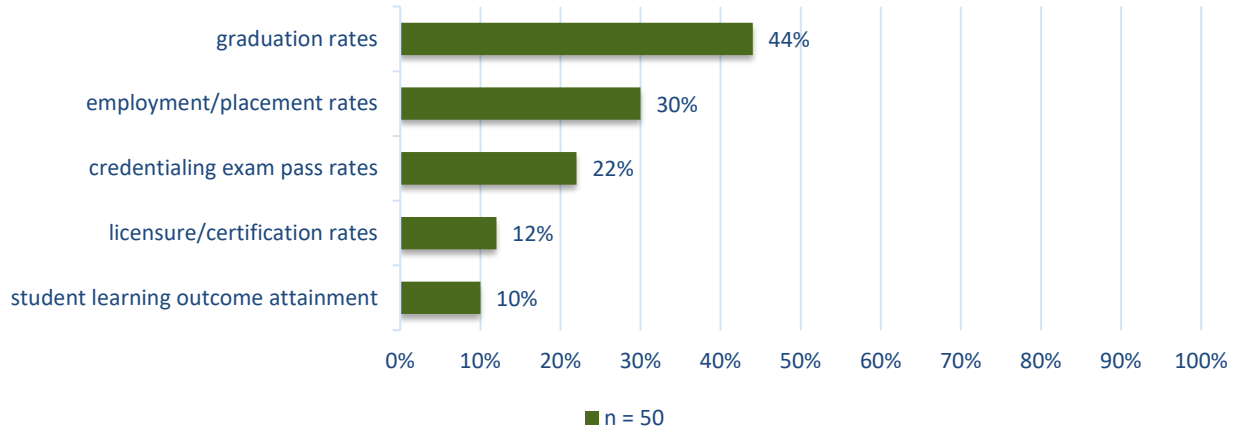
- date of initial accreditation (75%)
- date of last visit (47%)
- date of most recent action (69%)
- information pertaining to the most recent accreditation cycle (63%)
- complete accreditation history (22%)

Aggregate Performance Data

Fifty-four percent of respondents indicated that they report aggregate performance data of their accredited programs. Figure 4 displays the percentages of indicators reported across respondents.

4. Publicly Reported Aggregate Program Performance Data

Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors, 2022



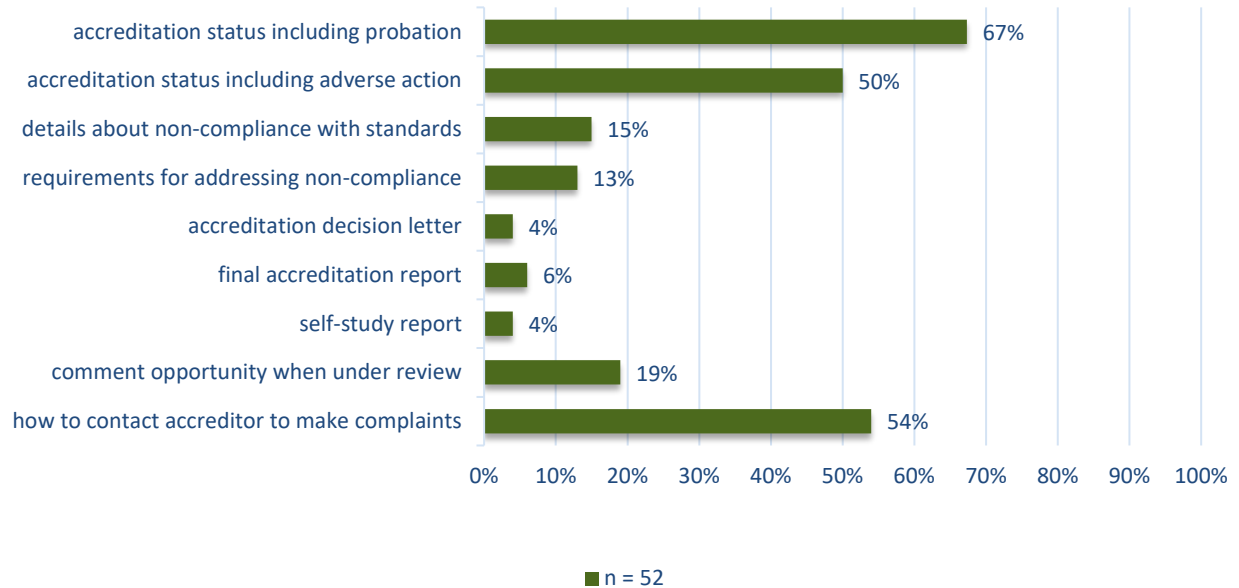
A small number of respondents indicated that they either currently or plan to share aggregate data with members of their professional association and program administrators.

Information that Accreditors Require Programs to Make Public about Accreditation Status

All respondents require programs to provide their accreditation status to the public. Figure 5 displays additional requirements that accreditors impose regarding public information related to accreditation status.

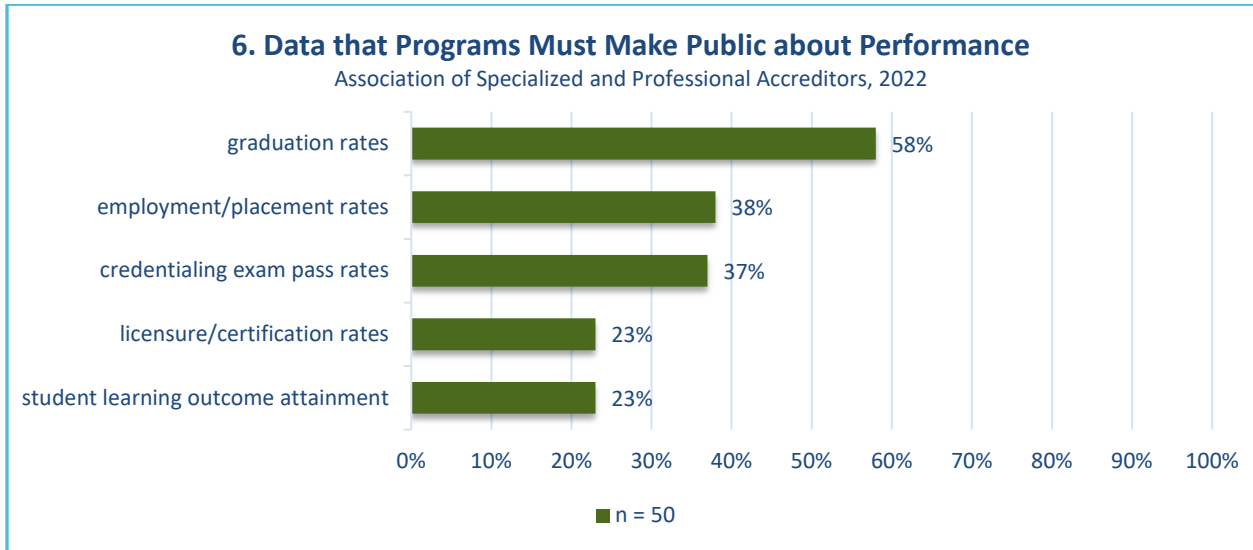
5. Information Programs Must Make Public about Accreditation Status

Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors, 2022



Information that Accreditors Require Programs to Make Public about Performance

Figure 6 displays the percentage of accretor responses and the types of performance data that programs are required to make available to the public.



Twenty-one percent of respondents indicated that they post online reports containing performance data submitted by their accredited programs. Programs are required to post a link to the report on the accretor's website to ensure public access to the data.

Limitations of this Analysis

The findings for this work are reported based on the wording of the survey questions. There is a broad array of practices, organizational structures, and usage of terminology across accretors for the diverse professions represented by the respondents. With such diversity among accrediting agencies, all survey queries may not have been interpreted in the same manner by all participants.

Conclusion

Specialized and professional accretors set quality standards for programs at colleges and universities so that students who complete such programs are prepared to practice safely and effectively in their chosen profession. Stakeholders can be assured that as part of the accreditation enterprise, key information is made available to the public related to the quality of accredited programs to facilitate informed choices about education.