

Physician Assistant Program Accreditation Analysis and Survey of Program Directors

Corresponding Author: Dr Jon Lewis, PharmD, BCPS – Assistant Professor

South College

School of Physician Assistance Studies

616 Marriott Drive, Nashville, TN 37214

629-802-3296

jlewis@south.edu

Co-Investigator: Jeff Peacock, PA-C, MPAS, MBA – Program Director

South College

School of Physician Assistance Studies

616 Marriott Drive, Nashville, TN 37214

Co-Investigator: Paul M Miller, PhD - Associate Professor

South College

School of Physician Assistance Studies

400 Goody's Lane, Knoxville, TN 37922

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Abstract

Purpose: To inform physician assistant program directors via citation analysis post implementation of the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) Accreditation Standards, 5th edition.

Methods: This research used descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and the coefficient of determination to analyze the citations reported by ARC-PA during January 2021 – February 2023. Concurrent first-time taker Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) results were utilized to determine if a correlation exists between pass rates and citations. Additionally, a survey was sent to each institution's current program director to investigate leadership concerns and differences between programs placed on a provisional, continued, or probation status by ARC-PA.

Results: Of the 98 program submissions for accreditation, 13 submissions resulted in a probation status outcome. For these 13 programs placed on probation, 46.2% and 30.8% were cited for being non-compliant with leadership Standards A2.09 and A1.02, respectively. Pearson correlation analysis indicates a significant negative correlation between ARC-PA citations and first-time taker PANCE pass rates ($p = 0.023$, 95% CI = [-0.49, -0.04]). This is particularly true for programs with continued accreditation ($p = 0.007$, 95% CI = [-0.67, -0.13]), as well as programs that performed below the 85% benchmark ($p = 0.013$, 95% CI = [-0.94, -0.22]) for first-time taker PANCE pass rates. Although a negative correlation is observed between the number of levied citations and PANCE pass rates, the coefficient of determination does not indicate that the number of citations can predict PANCE pass rates ($R^2 = 0.0368$). Regarding survey data, 42.86% of programs placed on probation cited institutional support as their biggest program weakness or threat. Conversely, 22.22% of programs with provisional status and 12.5%

of programs with continued status reported institutional support as their biggest weakness or threat.

Conclusion: This research identifies leadership as a deficit of concern associated with programs placed on probation. Additionally, a significant negative correlation exists between the number of citations and first-time taker PANCE pass rates – especially for programs with first-time taker PANCE pass rates below 85% or for programs with continued accreditation status.

Key words: *accreditation, physician assistants, education, citations, ARC-PA, PANCE*