

Frequently Asked Questions: Accreditation of Combined Programs

Question	Answer
Topic	
<p>How and when can combined programs opt into the accreditation process?</p>	<p>The opt-in window for programs currently listed as unaccredited combined programs in the Accreditation Data System (ADS), opened on October 1, 2024, and will close on June 30, 2025. Instructions on how to opt in have been sent to the program director and designated institutional official (DIO) for unaccredited combined programs listed in ADS. Programs that opt in will receive a status of initial accreditation effective July 1, 2025.</p> <p>As Graduate Medical Education Committees (GMECs) are responsible for review and approval of applications for ACGME accreditation and major changes in programs, DIOs should obtain GMEC approval prior to July 1, 2025.</p>
<p>What are the implications for an unaccredited combined program currently listed in ADS that decides not to opt into the ACGME accreditation process?</p>	<p>Residents or fellows who enter an unaccredited combined program on or after July 1, 2026 will not be considered to be enrolled in an ACGME-accredited program, even if each of the participating programs is ACGME accredited. Residents who complete an unaccredited combined residency program and seek to enter an ACGME-accredited fellowship program will not be considered to have met the eligibility requirements specified in Common Program Requirement (Fellowship) III.A.1. These residents <i>may</i> be eligible for appointment to an ACGME-accredited fellowship program under the eligibility exception requirements in section III.A.1.c), if exceptions are permitted for the subspecialty.</p> <p>In addition, combined programs that choose to remain unaccredited after July 1, 2025 should consult with the relevant certifying boards regarding the board eligibility status for their graduates who began training on or after July 1, 2026.</p> <p>Residents who entered an unaccredited combined program listed in ADS before July 1, 2026, will, upon program completion, be considered graduates of an ACGME-accredited program.</p> <p>The listing of unaccredited combined programs will be removed from ADS effective July 1, 2025. After this date, unaccredited combined programs will not have access to ADS</p>

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	and will not participate in related processes such as the ACGME Resident/Fellow and Faculty Survey, the ADS Annual Update, etc.
Should a program planning a novel combined format that will be offered only one time or infrequently submit an application for accreditation?	No. The ACGME will accredit only programs that plan to offer an ongoing combined program in one of the combined formats listed on the Combined Programs page of the ACGME website. Programs interested in designing a novel combined program format for a single resident/fellow or a format that will not be offered every year should contact the applicable certifying board(s) to ensure that the resident/fellow meets the board's eligibility requirements for certification.
Will combined programs be assessed accreditation-related fees?	The application process and fee will be waived for existing combined programs that opt into ACGME accreditation before June 30, 2025. All new combined programs must submit an application and will be assessed an application fee. All combined programs that achieve ACGME accreditation effective July 1, 2025 and beyond will be required to pay the ACGME annual accreditation fee, which will be due starting 2026. Information regarding the current fee structure is available here . Combined programs receive a 50 percent discount on annual accreditation fees.
Which Review Committee will accredit and be responsible for communicating with a combined program about accreditation-related matters?	The ACGME will assign existing and future combined program formats listed in ADS that pursue accreditation to one of the specialty Review Committees offering the combined format. A list of combined formats and the corresponding Review Committee assignments appears on the Combined Programs page of the ACGME website.
When a combined program uses the same participating sites as the participating programs with which it is affiliated, are separate program letters of agreement (PLAs) for the combined program required?	No; the PLAs in place for the participating specialty/subspecialty programs are sufficient and combined program-specific PLAs are not needed if program sites are the same as those used in the participating programs.
Do applications for accreditation of a combined program require a site visit?	Generally, yes. If at least one of the participating specialties that make up a combined program requires an application site visit, then the combined program application will require a site visit. If none of the participating specialties that make up a combined

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	<p>program require an application site visit, then the combined program will not require an application site visit</p> <p>Information on the ACGME application process is available here.</p>																																				
<p>Are combined programs participating in Advancing Innovation in Residency Education (AIRE) pilots eligible for accreditation?</p>	<p>Combined programs participating in an AIRE pilot will not be eligible for accreditation. Once the AIRE pilot ends and the Review Committee and certifying board(s) approve the combined experience, the specialty should contact the ACGME to establish an accreditation pathway.</p>																																				
<p>What will happen to the ACGME-approved complement of the participating programs and the combined program?</p>	<p>Participating programs will retain their existing approved complement. Fractional FTE from the combined program will no longer be added to the participating programs. Residents from the combined program should only be listed in ADS for the combined program and will only count toward the approved complement for the combined program.</p> <p>Below are examples of what is currently displayed in ADS for a participating program, and how it will change on July 1, 2025.</p> <p>Before:</p> <div data-bbox="779 935 1892 1255" style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <p>Core Positions: 87 Combined Positions (.5 per resident) ⓘ: 11 Total Approved Resident Positions: 98 Total Filled Resident Positions*: 82</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="6">Complement Breakdown: Approved</th> <th colspan="6">Complement Breakdown: Filled</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Years:</th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4</th> <th>Total</th> <th>Years:</th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Approved:</td> <td>12.0</td> <td>25.0</td> <td>25.0</td> <td>25.0</td> <td>87.0</td> <td>Filled:</td> <td>28.0</td> <td>25.0</td> <td>29.0</td> <td>0.0</td> <td>82.0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><small>*The Total Filled Positions field will reflect the previous academic year information and will automatically update after the current Annual Update is submitted. Totals may vary due to off cycle residents. Combined residents are not included in this this total and should not be listed in this program. These residents should be entered in the combined program.</small></p> </div> <p>After:</p>	Complement Breakdown: Approved						Complement Breakdown: Filled						Years:	1	2	3	4	Total	Years:	1	2	3	4	Total	Approved:	12.0	25.0	25.0	25.0	87.0	Filled:	28.0	25.0	29.0	0.0	82.0
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For a combined program that will not be seeking ACGME accreditation, what steps need to be taken to archive/export the existing program data?	If an existing combined program does not opt into accreditation before June 30, 2025, ADS access will be disabled. Program directors and DIOs are encouraged to make local copies of any data that they deem necessary.																																				
If the same person is the program director for the combined program and another program, must they have extra FTE support? [Requirement 3.1.]	The program leadership support must be exclusive to the combined program and cannot “double-count” toward any other ACGME-accredited program.																																				
For a combined program with participating programs in different Sponsoring Institutions, what should be done to address the error message “ <i>Sponsorship of an accredited program in the following specialties is required to begin this application</i> ” that appears when initiating a program application in ADS? [Requirement 2.2.a.]	At present, combined program applications where the participating programs are not all sponsored by a single Sponsoring Institution must be handled manually by ACGME staff. For further assistance, contact the executive director of the Review Committee assigned to oversee the combined program. See the list of assigned Review Committees on the Combined Programs page of the ACGME website.																																				
What is the process to request a complement change in the combined program?	Any complement changes in combined programs must have support from all the participating program directors. If the participating programs exist at multiple Sponsoring Institutions, the DIOs of all Sponsoring Institutions must also support the change. While submitting the complement change request, the combined program																																				

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	<p>director must specify the names and titles of the above-listed personnel, with a statement that they all support the complement change request.</p> <p>Please also see any specialty-specific instructions for complement changes on the relevant Review Committee section of the ACGME website.</p>
<p>How will graduate board certification data and compliance with requirement 8.8. be assessed? [Requirement 8.8.]</p>	<p>Existing unaccredited combined programs have been preparing their graduates for board certification in accordance with requirements published by the certifying boards and the participating programs' specialties. This data has been reported in ADS annually. Therefore, Review Committees will assess compliance with requirement 8.8. (and other requirements pertaining to graduate board certification) by including performance of residents who graduated prior to the combined program attaining Initial Accreditation. In other words, the graduate board certification metric will not reset during the transition to ACGME accreditation, and Review Committees may start citing programs not meeting the minimum requirement.</p>
<p>How often must combined programs report resident Milestones in ADS? [Requirement 8.2.]</p>	<p>In a typical academic year, combined program residents spend less time in each participating specialty compared to their participating program peers. Therefore, combined program directors must report Milestones data to ADS for each resident, for each participating specialty, on an annual basis at the end of the academic year. Programs that combine specialty and subspecialty education may have to use the "not yet achieved level 1" or "not yet assessable" options on the subspecialty Milestones for some residents during the initial years of training.</p> <p>Note that the program director must still evaluate the residents on a semi-annual basis.</p>

Additional questions may be submitted to accreditation@acgme.org.