



ACCENT® Program Guidelines

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Introduction

The Advances in Clinical Chemistry Education and New Technology (ACCENT®) Program was established in 1982 to provide continuing education (CE) specific to clinical laboratory professionals. ACCENT grants credit to various educational activities developed by AACC and outside organizations. Learners use CE credits to obtain and maintain state and board licenses.

Many states and organizations accept ACCENT CE credit. The American Association for Clinical Chemistry (AACC) is an approved provider for the following groups, though more accept ACCENT credit:

- **States:** California, Florida, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, Rhode Island, West Virginia
- **Organizations:** ABCC, AAB, ABFT, ASM, ASCLS, ASCP, AMT, ACS, IFCC, NRCC

Definitions

- **Provider:** formal grantor of CE credits; ACCENT operates on a sole provider model, meaning that AACC is the Provider of all ACCENT credits.
- **Activity Organizer:** Organization/group that plans, organizes, and delivers an educational activity.
- **Planner(s):** Person(s) determining and/or selecting the educational content.
- **Faculty:** Persons delivering and/or influencing the educational content during delivery, including speakers, panelists, moderators, course instructors, authors, or any other similar role.
- **Learners:** Persons with a scientific background participating in an educational activity for the purpose of learning.
- **Live activity:** Learners participate in the educational activity at the same time (synchronous learning); faculty are most often delivering the activity in real-time to learners, but on occasion, the faculty may pre-record the content.
- **Enduring activity:** Learners participate in the educational activity at their own pace (asynchronous learning); faculty are not delivering the activity live. An activity may be both live and enduring if a recording of the live activity is posted.
- **Ineligible company:** An ineligible company is one whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients.
- **Sponsors:** Ineligible companies contributing money to the Activity Organizer that is used in support of planning and/or delivering the educational activity.
- **Supporters:** Ineligible companies contributing in-kind resources to the Activity Organizer that is used in support of planning and/or delivering the educational activity.
- **Endorsers:** Ineligible companies that agree to endorse the educational activity formally and publicly for the purpose of marketing and/or communicating the educational activity. An example might be an ineligible company that is acknowledged in the program documentation or promotions as an educational partner but does not fall into the Sponsors or Supporters definition above.

Requirements

ACCENT-accredited activities must meet the following criteria to be favorably reviewed:

- The activity must be relevant to the scope and practice of clinical laboratory medicine and may include methods, technology, management, and other relevant topics.
- The activity must serve an educational need relevant to clinical laboratory medicine.
- The activity must be delivered at an appropriate educational level for the intended audience.
- The activity must allocate a reasonable amount of time to meet the learning objectives.
- The activity must use appropriate teaching methods for the learning objectives.
- The activity must be presented free from bias.
- If applying to grant credit in support of California-licensed clinical laboratory professionals, the activity must be specific to the clinical applications of laboratory medicine.

Allowable Types of Educational Activities

ACCENT-accredited activities must be designated as one of the following types of activities to be evaluated:

- Conferences/meetings, including recordings
- Webinars, including recordings
- Courses/workshops, including recordings
- Certificate programs
- Journal articles
- Self-assessment materials

Planner and Faculty Guidelines

Planners and Faculty should be content experts and selected based on their credentials in the subject of the educational activity. They will most often have a scientific or medical background, but experts from other fields may be included in the accredited program if they can teach valuable insights from the clinical laboratory medicine community.

Planners and Faculty are expected to complete a financial disclosure as described in the “Disclosure requirements/COI resolution” section.

When an event has multiple Sponsors/Supporters, employees of Sponsors and Supporters may serve as Planners and/or Faculty in the accredited program, provided they (1) are qualified to deliver the educational material, (2) do not engage in promotional activities on behalf of the Sponsor or Supporter, and (3) are invited based on their own credentials, not due to their employment by the Sponsor or Supporter.

When an Activity Organizer meets the definition of an ineligible company, or the activity has a sole Sponsor, employees of the Activity Organizer/Sponsor are not eligible to serve as Faculty of an ACCENT-accredited educational activity. This includes, but is not limited to, authoring, presenting, and/or moderating the educational content. This policy is in place to avoid the perception of bias and/or promotion on behalf of the Activity Organizer/Sponsor. It is possible for employees of the Activity Organizer/Sponsor to serve as Faculty in a non-accredited session within an ACCENT-accredited educational activity, provided it is delivered separately from the accredited content.

Sponsor, Supporter, and Endorser Guidelines

All organizations contributing to planning and delivering the educational activity should be disclosed to learners and in the appropriate section of the ACCENT application. This includes ineligible companies serving as Sponsors, Supporters, and Endorsers as defined above. A PDF copy of a countersigned document outlining the type and terms of support with Sponsors, Supporters, and Endorsers, such as a letter of agreement or memorandum of understanding, must be uploaded as part of the ACCENT application.

Types of contributions include:

- **Financial contributions:** Financial support by Sponsors in support of the activity, including sponsorship, educational grants, or other forms of direct monetary support.
- **In-kind contributions:** Non-monetary support offered by Supporters, including, but not limited to, space, food and beverages, product use, or any other similar services that contribute to the success of the educational activity.

Sponsors, Supporters, and Endorsers may be acknowledged in registration, program, and promotional materials using text and logos. Any acknowledgement must not include products from commercial organizations.

Logo, Trademark, and Product Placement Guidelines

ACCENT-accredited educational activities may include logos, trademarks, and products in the contexts outlined here:

- **Logos and trademarks:** Logos and trademarks may be included in registration, program, and promotional materials. Activities may be delivered using branded slides. Logos and trademarks should not be so prominent that they interfere with the learners' understanding and should not obscure or detract from the educational content. Exceptions may be made when the use of a trademarked name is necessary for learners to understand the methodology of a study being presented OR when there are several options being compared, with evidence-based advantages and disadvantages outlined for all options.
- **Products:** Products should be used sparingly in educational content. Photos of products may be appropriate to include in slides as representative examples but, when possible, should have logos and trademarks removed or blurred to avoid the perception of promotion. Product use for demonstration purposes is only appropriate as an example of an evidence-based technique and should not be demonstrated by an employee of the company.

Disclosure Requirements and COI Resolution

All Planners and Faculty must complete a financial disclosure form within 6 months of the educational activity. Disclosures must follow the ACCENT [financial disclosure template](#) or ask for the same information. If an Activity Organizer develops their own disclosure form, a copy must be included with the application. Disclosures may be collected electronically or on paper, but all must be compiled into the [template disclosure spreadsheet](#) and uploaded to the ACCENT application.

It is the sole responsibility of the Activity Organizer to collect and provide disclosure forms and include all sessions for which credit is requested. Disclosure forms must be provided for all faculty in a session for it to be considered for credit. Missing disclosure forms will delay the processing of the ACCENT Application and may result in a rejected application or a determination that a session is not eligible for credit. The ACCENT Program Administrator may contact the applicant to provide missing disclosure forms, if the application is received at least 30 days prior to the activity start date, but this should not be assumed. If additional disclosure forms are provided less than 30 days prior to the activity start date, a late fee will be assessed as the application was not complete.

The ACCENT Review Board reviews and mitigates the financial disclosures so that accredited activities may be delivered free from bias. The ACCENT Program Administrator will contact the applicant with any questions about disclosures.

Disclosure policy:

ACCENT requires all individuals in a position to control the content of an accredited continuing education activity to disclose any financial relationship(s) with an **ineligible company** that have occurred within the past 24 months. There is no minimum financial threshold; we ask that you disclose all financial relationships, regardless of the amount. You should disclose all financial relationships regardless of the potential relevance of each relationship to the education. Even if a product is not specifically referenced or discussed during the activity, individuals must disclose their financial relationship(s) with the ineligible company. An ineligible company is one whose primary business is producing, marketing, selling, re-selling, or distributing healthcare products used by or on patients. For specific examples of ineligible companies visit accme.org/standards. For example, if a speaker, moderator, author, or planning member has a financial relationship with an ineligible company where they (1) receive grant or research support; (2) are paid salary or consulting fees; (3) hold stocks or bonds; (4) serve on a board/committee/advisory board; (5) received support for travel expenses or honoraria, etc.; and/or (6) have intellectual property or royalty income, then the relationship(s) must be disclosed below. The intent of this disclosure is not to prevent planners with relevant financial relationships from planning or delivering content, but rather to provide learners with information that allows them to make their own judgments of whether these financial relationships may have influenced the educational activity with regard to exposition or conclusion. Information on disclosed relationships with ineligible companies submitted by faculty involved in planning, selecting, developing, or presenting educational content will also be reviewed by the ACCENT Review Board to ensure compliance with ACCENT accreditation policies and standards.

Application Components

When developing your ACCENT application, Activity Organizers should download and complete the [application template](#) to make sure you have all the necessary details when submitting the online application. A brief overview of the essential application components is below.

- **Activity Organizer Information:** Activity Organizers must indicate a point-of-contact to receive application status updates from the ACCENT Program Administrator.
- **Activity Information:** Activity Organizers must submit complete information about the activity, including when and where it takes place and what will be taught.
- **State Accreditation:** Due to state licensure procedures, the states of Florida and California require additional information and approval for ACCENT accredited activities. Note that an activity's accreditation status with these states does not require it to take place within those states. The ACCENT Review Board advises that Activity Organizers indicate their desire to accredit their program for individuals with those states' licensures, if they are anticipating any attendance from individuals licensed in those states.
- **Activity Program/Schedule Documentation:** Activity Organizers must submit a program, a flyer, and/or any other activity materials that indicate the activity's schedule. This documentation should be provided via file upload and via online documentation (such as a hyperlink to a website).
- **Registration and Participation Documentation:** Activity Organizers must submit a description and example of how participants will register for the activity. The application template includes examples of acceptable documentation. Activity Organizers will also be asked how they verify participation.
- **Faculty Information:** Activity Organizers must submit a Faculty Disclosure Spreadsheet as described in the [Disclosure Requirements](#).
- **Methods of Support:** The Activity Organizer must disclose any ineligible companies that are Sponsors, Supporters, or Endorsers of the activity, as defined above.

Application Evaluation Process

All ACCENT Continuing Education Accreditation applications are evaluated by the ACCENT Review Board, and only after all application documents are submitted in full. Submission of an ACCENT Continuing Education Accreditation Application does not guarantee that the activity will be accredited.

Unless otherwise noted, all communications will come from education@aacc.org and will be addressed to the point-of-contact included in the application. The application evaluation process typically takes 20 business days following application submission.

Steps in the ACCENT application evaluation process are as follows:

1. The Activity Organizer will receive a confirmation of receipt from the ACCENT Program Administrator at Education@aacc.org.
2. The ACCENT Program Administrator conducts the preliminary review of the application, checking for completeness.
3. The ACCENT Program Administrator will contact the Activity Organizer if additional documents or information are required for the application to be complete. Then, the ACCENT Program Administrator will forward all submitted items to the ACCENT Review Board for their review.
4. The ACCENT Review Board conducts their review to determine the activity's compliance with our accreditation standards.
5. The ACCENT Program Administrator will contact the Activity Organizer for more details, if requested by the ACCENT Review Board. These additional details will be forwarded to the ACCENT Review Board for consideration.

If Approved by the ACCENT Review Board

6. The ACCENT Program Administrator will provide the Activity Organizer a tentative accreditation approval message, contingent on payment of the ACCENT application fee.
7. An invoice for the ACCENT Accreditation Fee will be sent to the Activity Organizer for payment.
8. Once payment is received, the ACCENT Program Administrator will provide the finalized accreditation information.

If Declined by the ACCENT Review Board

9. The ACCENT Program Administrator will provide the Activity Organizer with the determination and the reasoning. Decisions are final and may still incur the application fee if substantial work is completed in evaluating the materials.

Credit Calculation

The following principles are used when calculating the total credits awarded for ACCENT-accredited activities:

- Credits are awarded for instruction time, including lectures, Q&As, panel discussions, and guided interactive discussions and/or exercises.
- Credits are calculated based on the expected duration of the activity and rounded down to the nearest 0.25 credits.
- For activities with multiple sessions, credit eligibility is determined at the session level and cannot be awarded for part of a session. Therefore, if any session Faculty are not eligible to deliver ACCENT-accredited activity, then the full session will not be eligible for credit and will be deducted from the activity's credit count. Other sessions within the program may still receive ACCENT credit.
- Time spent on non-instructive introductory remarks exceeding 5 minutes, breaks, mealtimes, or any other non-instruction time are not included in the total credit count.

Credit Claim Timeline

Generally, credits may be claimed from the activity start date until one year after the activity end date. For enduring activities lasting longer than 60 days, there may be a shorter window after the activity end date, which will be communicated by the ACCENT Program Administrator. An Activity Organizer may choose to give a shorter timeline and should communicate that to participants.

Guidelines for Activity Organizers After Approval

Activity Organizers are responsible for ensuring that the activity is delivered in accordance with the guidelines set out here. The ACCENT Review Board may request additional materials if there is evidence that the activity is not following the guidelines, including slides and/or recordings. Egregious violations may result in removal of ACCENT credit from the activity.

To remain compliant:

- **Continue guideline adherence:** Activity Organizers must ensure that all involved in delivering the activity continue to adhere to the ACCENT guidelines, including Planners, Faculty, Sponsors, Supporters, Endorsers.
- **Disclose financial relationships:** Disclose all financial relationships reported in the application to learners before and during the activity. This may be on an activity's website, in program/registration materials, in an introduction slide, and/or verbally as part of a live or recorded activity. The purpose of disclosure is to provide learners with information that allows them to judge whether these financial relationships may have influenced the Planner's or Faculty's planning or delivery of the activity.
- **Communicate accreditation information:** In addition to disclosing financial relationships, provide information found in the [Front Matter Template](#) to learners on the website and/or in program materials. Activity Organizers may make minor modifications to the template to account for variations in formats or compliance with multiple accreditation guidelines provided the same essential information is provided.
- **Report substantive changes:** If there is a substantive change in application information, inform the ACCENT Program Administrator so the ACCENT Review Board can determine if it affects the accreditation decision. Substantive changes include Faculty changes; additional Sponsors, Supporters, and Endorsers; change in date, delivery method, or the core activity plans. Late changes may result in reducing or revoking credit if they change the nature of the activity or introduce the potential for bias. Changes should be due to extenuating circumstances, not lack of completeness in the initial application.
- **Verify participation:** Maintain records of participant's registration and/or participation in accordance with what was described in the application. This is necessary to reduce, as much as possible, the opportunity for falsely claiming credit. Records should include a participant's name and email address. Learners self-report their level of participation when completing the evaluation.

Evaluation and Certificate Guidelines

Evaluations and certificates are administered by the ACCENT Program according to the below guidelines. The Activity Organizer is responsible for fielding inquiries from participants regarding the activity's accreditation (i.e., questions about the activity itself, requests for the evaluation link, etc.). For any inquiries regarding technical or system concerns (i.e., errors with the evaluation link, request for certificate reprints, etc.), the Activity Organizer should forward to the ACCENT Program Administrator.

- **Evaluation Link:** Once the activity's accreditation has been finalized, the ACCENT Program Administrator will provide an evaluation link to the Activity Organizer. The Activity Organizer must then provide the evaluation link to all verified learners once they have completed the activity. Should any technical concerns occur with the evaluation link, the Activity Organizer should report it to the ACCENT Program Administrator at their earliest convenience.
- **Number of Credits Claimed:** Learners should only claim credits commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity and must claim by the [credit claim deadline](#). ACCENT Continuing Education Credits can only be claimed in increments of 0.25 credits, and must be rounded down to the nearest 0.25 increment when calculating total credits.
- **Awarding the ACCENT Credit Certificate:** Certificates are provided to learners based on completion of the activity, including the activity evaluation. The date the evaluation is completed is included on the certificate as the credit claim date and cannot be changed.
- **ACCENT Credit Certificate Components:** The ACCENT Certificate includes the following information:
 - Activity Information: ACCENT Activity Number, Title, Start and End Date, Credit Claim Deadline, Location, Format, Maximum Eligible Credits, State-specific Accreditation Information
 - Learner Information: Name, Address, Credits Claimed, Attestation
 - Provider Information: Signature affirming credits, Credit Claim Date, Provider Name, Provider Address, Address, California Agency Number, Florida JP Number
- **Evaluation Data:** The Activity Organizer may request evaluation data from the ACCENT Program Administrator a maximum of three times. Data can be provided no sooner than 1 month after the activity's start date and no later than 1 month after the evaluation closes. This evaluation data will include a report of quantitative responses and comments from learners.

Data Retention and Reporting Guidelines

The Activity Organizer is responsible for keeping activity learner records for 3 years, and must provide those records to the ACCENT Program Administrator upon request. The ACCENT Program Administrator will keep a record of evaluations for at least 3 years and report out regularly to state licensing boards and other certification organizations that request it. ACCENT certificates are available to participants through their AACC Profile.

The Activity Organizer may request evaluation data from the ACCENT Program Administrator a maximum of three times. Data can be provided no sooner than 1 month after the activity's start date and no later than 1 month after the evaluation closes. This evaluation data will include a report of quantitative responses and comments from learners.

Reporting Guideline Violations

If you participate in an ACCENT-accredited activity that you believe violated the guidelines, contact education@aacc.org with the activity name, date, activity organizer, and potential violation. Members of the ACCENT Review Board will review the report and determine how to respond. Egregious violations may result in removal of ACCENT credit from the activity.