

# COMMISSION ON MASSAGE THERAPY ACCREDITATION (COMTA)

## SELF STUDY REPORT REVIEW PROCESS

The Self Study Report (SSR) review process is designed to verify whether institutions and programs meet the COMTA Standards. This review process includes a group of peers reading the SSR; examining the exhibits submitted with the SSR; touring the facility; reviewing files at the institution or program, observing classes; interviewing students, staff and faculty; and rating the extent to which the COMTA Standards have been met. The SSR review process consists of both a review of documents and an On-Site Review as outlined below.

**Effective 1 January 2010, all SSR's are to be submitted using the online submission system. A \$500.00 fee will apply for all SSR's submitted in any other way.**

### THE PROCESS

#### Submission of Self Study Report

Institutions and programs applying for accreditation or reaccreditation are required to submit a Self Study Report (SSR) no later than January 1 for accreditation consideration at the October Commission meeting and no later than July 1 for accreditation consideration at the April Commission meeting. The SSR submission includes the following:

- SSR narrative and exhibits in electronic format
- On-Site Visit Fee (Appendix A.3)
- Commission staff conducts a preliminary review of the SSR to ensure that it is complete. If the SSR is complete, Commission staff will work with the school to arrange the Peer Review and On-Site Visit

#### Document Review

The initial peer review of the SSR will be conducted via electronic media. During this document review, specialists in the areas of management, administration, content and education will read the SSR narrative and examine the exhibits provided with the SSR. Through this process, they will be able to verify whether the institution or program meets many of the COMTA Standards. If the SSR narrative is unclear or there are incomplete exhibits, the review team may request that specific documentation be gathered and made available to the team during the on-site visit.

#### On-Site Visit

Following the document review, the team will conduct further verification of the SSR in an on-site visit. This on-site will generally last two days per main campus and one day per additional location, but may be longer depending on the size of the institution or program and the scope of the verification tasks that must be completed on-site. During this on-site review, the site visitors will tour the facility; review student, staff and faculty files; interview students, staff and faculty; observe classes and clinics; and review any additional exhibits they determined they needed based on the document review.

#### After the Site Visit

After the site visit, the institution or program will receive an electronic copy of the Peer Review Report, which is a culmination of the document review and the observations from the On-site Visit. This report lists all of the Standards and identifies whether the reviewers were able to verify that the institution or program met the Standards or did not meet the Standards.

The institution or program will be asked to submit a response to the Peer Review Report (if required), providing explanations and/or additional documentation for those Standards that were not met.

#### Accreditation Decisions

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Prior to the Commission meeting at which a decision is made whether or not to accredit an institution or program, a copy of the SSR with the associated exhibits, the Peer Review Report and the response are made available in the online submission system to all Commissioners who do not have a conflict of interest with the institution or program. Two Commissioners will be assigned as the primary reviewers for each school. These two Commissioners review all of the documents, and make a recommendation regarding accreditation to the Commission as a whole. Following discussion, the entire Commission votes whether to grant accreditation, deny accreditation, or defer an accreditation decision pending additional information. Following the Commission meeting, Commission staff sends a letter to the institution or program informing them of the Commission decision.

### **GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS**

#### **On-Site Review Preparation**

During the on-site review, the visitors will need access to the following items. When possible, please collect these items and store them a room or office set aside for the team members to work in during the on-site visit.

- Catalog
- Student and/or faculty handbook
- Faculty files, including professional practice credentials; transcripts or diplomas; evidence of professional development; completed annual evaluations
- Student files, including copies of high school diploma, transcript, GED or equivalent; documentation of Ability to Benefit; documentation of transfer credit
- Documentation of denials of admission for the past two years
- Verifiable records of initial graduate employment
- Employee files, including I-9 documentation
- Schedules for each day of the visit, including times that classes meet, rooms in which they meet, instructors teaching each class, instructor availability during non-teaching hours
- State law book

#### **Overview of Site Visit**

The on-site visitors will continue the SSR review process begun by the team during the document review. During their review, the site visitors will be:

- Observing classes and clinic
- Interviewing students
- Interviewing faculty members
- Interviewing administrative staff
- Interviewing management personnel
- Reviewing student files
- Reviewing staff personnel files
- Reviewing faculty personnel files
- Verifying policies and procedures

In order to facilitate this review, please:

- Be prepared for interruptions of both office routines and classes during the visit
- Inform students of the site visit and prepare them for interruptions of approximately 30 minutes during their classes
- Ask faculty to be available for interviews before or after they teach.
- Remind all management and administrative personnel that they should plan to be available throughout the site visit, with the exception of meal breaks.
- Provide a private room for use by the site visitors during the visit.

The site visit will conclude with a brief exit interview, during which the site visitors will provide a general overview of their findings. The site visitors cannot make any predictions about the outcome of the Self

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Study Review process; it is the responsibility of the Commission to make accreditation decisions. However, the visitors can provide general feedback about the areas where the institution or program appears to meet COMTA Standards and areas where improvement is needed.

### **Program Conduct during the Accreditation Process**

1. In the accreditation process, the program shall be completely candid, providing all pertinent information.
2. With due regard for the rights of individual privacy, a program shall provide the Commission with access to all parts of its operations, and with complete and accurate information about the program's affairs, including reports of other accrediting, licensing and auditing agencies.
3. The program shall cooperate with COMTA in preparation for the accreditation process and shall comply with COMTA's requests for reports and self-studies.
4. The chief administrative officer of the institution or program (as the case may be) shall sign a statement on every report submitted to the Commission certifying the report is a full and honest disclosure. Submissions via the online system are considered "signed" when the school uses the "submit work" function within the system.
5. A failure to report honestly, in and of itself, constitutes a breach of integrity. This includes:
  - i) Presentation of false information,
  - ii) Omission of essential information,
  - iii) Distortion of information with the intent to mislead, or
  - iv) Plagiarism of reports