

END OF YEAR REPORT for 2021

DECEMBER 30, 2021

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COAMFTE

Commission on Accreditation for
Marriage and Family Therapy Education

Letter from COAMFTE Leadership

Dear Colleagues:

In 2021, COAMFTE made significant strides to formalize and implement strategic endeavors, which have been planned, reviewed, and analyzed over the past several years. COAMFTE accomplishments and formal revisions were intended to address the changing landscape of education identified by the COAMFTE community. With an emphasis on sustainability and increased independence, the Commission engaged in a comprehensive evaluation of COAMFTE's infrastructure, policies, and procedures, which included:

- Transitioning and enhancing the governance structure
- Streamlining and efficiency in the accreditation process
- Developing informative resources for transitioning to Accreditation Standards Version 12.5
- Supporting, engaging, and communicating with stakeholders

COAMFTE is proud of the work accomplished during 2021 and is pleased to share the 2021 End of Year Report, which is a response to the 2021 AAMFT Charge.

Elizabeth Fawcett, Chair
Carol Messmore, Chair-Elect

Implementation of Innovation

In alignment with COAMFTE's mission, a recurrent theme across the Commission's work this year was the transition of several innovative initiatives into formal policy and procedure.

Transitioning and Enhancing the Governance Structure

*Goals: Transitioning and Enhancing the COAMFTE Governance Structure
Expanding the pool, responsibilities, and roles of COAMFTE volunteers*

Responding to Charge: To stimulate the improvement of professional marriage and family therapy education



Following the bylaw changes in 2020, the Commission made considerable advances toward its goal of shifting the primary responsibility of Commissioners from review to a strategic board.

The COAMFTE Chair initiated a Policy and Strategy Subcommittee intended to develop policies and strategies that support the Commission's evolution from a review board to a strategic board. In anticipation of the changes to COAMFTE governance, innovative pilot projects were set in motion to transition COAMFTE into a board structure that is separate and distinct from AAMFT. This goal aligns with the AAMFT Strategic Plan, "AAMFT and the COAMFTE will be separate and distinct entities but strategically partnered to benefit the profession of marriage and family therapy."

These transitions required the Commission to revise and update policies and procedures.

Policy and Procedure Revisions: The Commission researches, develops, and implements policies and procedures to align with feedback from communities of interest, with expectations of professional accreditors, and with recommended practices of accreditation process. In 2021, the Policy and Strategy Subcommittee was charged to review and revise the current COAMFTE Accreditation Manual: Policy and Procedures in order to:

- Align procedures with Accreditation Standards Version 12.5
- Increase stakeholder involvement in COAMFTE accreditation and governance
- Expand service opportunities within the COAMFTE community
- Strengthen policies and reviewer qualifications in support of COAMFTE volunteers
- Formalize pilot initiatives into ongoing COAMFTE procedures

The updated COAMFTE Accreditation Manual: Policy and Procedures was published to the COAMFTE website on December 1, 2021.

Modernization of Conflict of Interest Policy: The COAMFTE Conflict of Interest policy was updated and expanded for Commissioners, Accreditation Reviewers, Eligibility Criteria Reviewers and Site Visitors. The new policy removes restrictive geographical constraints, and it identifies and clarifies potential areas of conflict that align with recommended practices in accreditation. (*COAMFTE Accreditation Manual: Policy and Procedures*)

Formal Establishment of the Accreditation Review Committee (ARC): Early this year, the COAMFTE Policy and Strategy Subcommittee was charged with assessing the feasibility of converting the Accreditation Review Project (ARP)* into a permanent formal Accreditation Review Committee (ARC). The subcommittee specifically considered issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion as they discussed qualifications of ARC members. In their proposal of ARC composition and terms of service, the subcommittee prioritized:

- Increased volunteer opportunities with fewer travel barriers, allowing for a more diverse pool of reviewers
- Inclusion of doctoral students as tertiary reviewers
- Scaffolded qualifications for different volunteer review opportunities – from doctoral students to program directors

** “Accreditation Reviewer Project (ARP): The implementation of the Accreditation Review Project is intended to reduce the review workload as well as to increase the skill set for potential future professional members on the Commission. In 2020, Accreditation Reviewers completed Annual Report, Self-Study, and Accreditation Decision reviews independently with the mentorship of the Commission. In addition, the Commission Leadership hosted a focus group with the ARP members to gather continued feedback for the ARP pilot process. In review of the focus group findings and Commission discussion at the Fall 2020 Meeting, the Commission will be recommending a future workgroup in 2021 to consider the eligibility qualifications, training, timing, and review process for the ARP.”*
(2020 EOY Report)

Strengthening Attention to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- A statement on Diversity and Inclusion was added to the Policies and Procedures manual to demonstrate COAMFTE's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice advocacy.
- Additions to policies now include consideration of diversity in composition of volunteer groups and review teams.
- Gender demographic on the annual report expanded to be more inclusive.

Revision of COAMFTE Volunteer Qualifications and Criteria: With an intent to expand the pools of eligible candidates, COAMFTE revised policies related to qualifications, criteria and skills needed by the Commission and associated committees, workgroups, and taskforces. The updates are intended to be inclusive of different experience levels, to allow increased opportunities for various volunteer activities within the COAMFTE community, and to support expertise and leadership experience. Highlights of the changes are noted below in the *Summary of COAMFTE Policy and Procedure Revisions*.

Summary of COAMFTE Policy and Procedure Revisions

1. **COAMFTE Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement** updated to reflect the Commission's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in its actions and policies, and to align with expectations defined in the Accreditation Standards, Version 12.5.
2. **Commission Professional Member Qualifications** strengthened to include necessary expertise and experience for strategic decision making.
3. **Accreditation and Eligibility Reviewer Roles, Responsibilities, and Composition** clarified and formalized to support reviewer processes.
4. **Conflict of Interest Policy** modified for all COAMFTE volunteers to remove geographical constraints and to identify and clarify areas of potential conflict.
5. **Confidentiality Policy** renewed for consistency with the new Conflict of Interest Policy and to provide confidentiality guidelines.
6. **Complaint Policy** adjusted to allow anonymity in the complaint process.
7. **Accreditation Submission and Review Procedures**
 - **Renewal Notification** provided to programs one year in advance.
 - **Eligibility Criteria Step** needed only for programs seeking initial accreditation, which aligns with Accreditation Standards Version 12.5.
 - **Review Processes** renewed to include Accreditation Review Committee members who make recommendations that help inform Commissioners in accreditation decision-making.
 - **Site Visit Procedures and Expenses** restructured to be inclusive of both virtual and on-campus site visits.
 - **Graduate Achievement Data Requirements** changed to implement a pilot project for collection of licensure rate data.
8. **Program Disclosure Policies** updated to align with transparency requirements for policies and materials, outlined within Accreditation Standards Version 12.5 Eligibility Criteria.

Streamlining and Efficiency in the Accreditation Process

In response to feedback from programs and volunteers, during the past several years the Commission and the Standards Review Committee (SRC) focused on standards revision and streamlined accreditation processes that could reduce the burdensome amount of time spent on accreditation report submission and review.

Goal: Decreasing expenditures of COAMFTE processes

Responding to Charge: examination and implementation of strategies that lead toward a decrease in financial dependence on AAMFT

Virtual Site Visits Pilot / Experiment:

During the last phase of the Virtual Site Visit Pilot, which concluded in the Spring of 2021, the Virtual Site Visit Task Force completed the following tasks while considering the benefits, areas of improvement, and possible negative unintended consequences in their analysis of feedback provided by site visitors and programs:

- Analysis of data collected during the pilot and experimental projects, including site visitor feedback, program director input, and cost-benefit analyses.
- Revision of criteria for which programs would be eligible for virtual site visits
- Identification of areas for improvements in the Virtual Site Visit Process.
- Recommendations of Virtual Site Visit Fees for 2022 – 2025.

Revised Site Visit Procedures and Expenses:

At the COAMFTE Summer 2021 Meeting, the Commission examined recommendations from and voted to accept the Virtual Site Visit Task Force report. Formally revised COAMFTE Site Visit Policy and Procedures were approved at the COAMFTE Fall 2021 Meeting. COAMFTE Site Visit procedures (including fees) have been restructured to incorporate both virtual and campus-based site visits in 2022.

Eligibility Criteria step Eliminated for Renewal of Accreditation: The Commission aligned Eligibility Criteria (EC) process with Accreditation Standards Version 12.5, which requires EC submission only for programs seeking initial accreditation.

Based upon the Virtual Site Visit Task Force findings and recommendations, the Commission will implement new site visit policy and procedures in 2022:

Two pathways for completing site verification activities: (a) virtual visits and (b) on-campus visits.

Virtual site visits as the default method for conducting site visits, with exceptions as noted:

- Programs seeking initial accreditation
- Programs whose self-study report was deferred or denied
- Programs that request a site visit following a self-study review recommendation of denial of accreditation.
- Programs determined to be unable to make identified corrections to key element deficiencies within the two-year time frame described in the Corrective Actions Policy
- Programs with deficiencies in Standard I (Outcome Based Education Framework & Environmental Support)
- Programs that have not transitioned to Accreditation Standards Version 12.5

Flat fee for the virtual and on-campus site visits and an additional fee for travel expenses per site visitor for programs hosting an on-campus visit.

Annual Reporting: The annual report form was updated to align with Accreditation Standards Version 12.5 and current best practices for program accreditation. The Commission considered several factors in their effort to support programs maintaining COAMFTE accreditation:

- On the Notice of Intention Survey, 95% of programs, as indicated adoption of Accreditation Standards Version 12.5 beginning January 1, 2022.
- Annual success indicators require Graduate Achievement Data collection.
- Programs report consistent barriers to data collection and reporting of graduate exam pass rates.

At the recent COAMFTE 2021 Fall meeting, the Commission voted to change the Student Achievement Criterion III licensure exam pass rates for master's programs to the Graduate Achievement Data indicator of licensure rate, benchmarked at 70% for each cohort. In addition, the Annual Report will be updated with specific reporting requirements such as regulatory transparency, faculty sufficiency and disclosure of adverse actions needed to maintain accreditation under Accreditation Standards Version 12.5.

New Accreditation Software: COAMFTE improved services for accreditation submission and review processes powered through the EdVera accreditation platform launched in July of 2021. During the first cycle of annual reports processed using the new data-based evaluation technology, COAMFTE reviewers and programs indicated appreciative feedback for the efficient automation offered through EdVera. Programs now have the ability to see previous reports and navigate the Annual Report process with detailed instructions and features. Staff found the new platform saved time, and they learned new options for future automation of accreditation processes.

Standards Revision / Procedure Updates

Goal: Innovation in Standards that promote improvement in MFT education

Goal: Streamlining Standards to decrease hardship and expense associated with accreditation processes

Responding to Charge: Establishing and maintaining standards that will ensure that institutions and agencies meeting them provide students with appropriate learning resources to acquire the requisite skills, knowledge, and ethical sensitivity to be professionally competent.

Developing Resources for Transitioning to Accreditation Standards Version 12.5

The COAMFTE standards were streamlined based on stakeholder feedback and years of detailed SRC research including comparison to other accreditors. In coordination with SRC recommendations and with an intent to reduce program and volunteer workload, the 2021 Policy and Strategy Subcommittee streamlined the following accreditation processes:

- Emphasis on minimum threshold
- Innovative reporting – new self-study tables to foster consistency
- Eligibility Criteria step eliminated for renewing programs
- Updated policy and procedures to align with Accreditation Standards Version 12.5 and to continue efficiency efforts to streamline and to be less resource intensive

In addition, the 2021 Standards Revision Committee developed and published the following resources intended to support program success in the self-study process, and to foster consistent interpretation by COAMFTE volunteers/reviewers.

- **Self-Study Template** - streamlined efficient tables for reporting
- **Self-Study Training Resource** - examples and samples intended to foster consistency of program submission and accreditation review
- **Standards Transition Framework** – guidance for programs adoption of Accreditation Standards Version 12.5 while bridging from the COVID accreditation accommodations to the new standards in 2022
- **Self-Study Checklist** – preparation tool for programs entering the accreditation process
- **Examples and Samples** for eligibility criteria and self-study reporting

Distance Education Procedures

In 2021, the Commission continued to research the changing higher education landscape and accreditation procedures related to distance education. To support programs shifting permanently to a virtual delivery format, the Policy and Strategy Subcommittee revised review forms and streamlined reporting procedures to align with Accreditation Standards Version 12.5.

Stakeholder Engagement and COI Relationships

COAMFTE makes an effort to engage with stakeholders on a regular basis by sending informative communications, interacting during trainings, and creating increased opportunities for volunteer involvement on COAMFTE committees.

Goal: Engaging with stakeholders to communicate value of COAMFTE accreditation

Responding to Charge: Stimulating the improvement of professional marriage and family therapy education, including helping training institutions and agencies develop quality programs by fostering ongoing Self-Study and development.

Supporting Stakeholders during the Pandemic and Transition to Accreditation Standards Version 12.5

As the challenges of the pandemic continued to impact MFT training programs in 2021, the Commission convened the Transition Framework Committee and charged the Standards Review Committee to recommend a timeline and strategies for bridging the emergency COAMFTE standards accommodations to the new Accreditation Standards Version 12.5. Based on committee recommendations and the Commission's goal to ensure that students demonstrate competency in program outcomes prior to graduation, the Commission provided support in the following ways to programs maintaining compliance with COAMFTE Accreditation Standards:

- Extended flexible modifications to COAMFTE-accredited programs through December 31, 2021, to support student achievement of the foundational and advanced curricular areas.
- Reviewed reported changes to program curriculum, delivery format, and areas of concern via a required survey to gather information about program specific COVID modifications, related to standards version 12.

- Developed and executed a transition framework designed to guide programs in planning operating strategies during the challenges of the pandemic and to inform the actionable changes needed for programs to transition from the current COVID accommodations to the new Accreditation Standards Version 12.5.

Engaging with Stakeholders via COAMFTE Trainings

The COAMFTE Chair created an Education and Training Workgroup to develop resources to assist programs and other communities of interest prepare for the transition to Accreditation Standards Version 12.5. The Education and Training Workgroup created and published the following resources:

- 2021 Accreditation Workshop – focused on transitioning to Accreditation Standards Version 12.5, attended by over 60 participants
- Notice of Intention Survey and Early Adopter Form – developed to inform the Commission of a program’s intent to transition to Accreditation Standards Version 12.5, and to notify programs of areas that need attention for change
- Brief Video Presentations for NEW areas in Accreditation Standards Version 12.5
 - Competency Evaluation (including hour change)
 - Faculty Ratio
 - Understanding the new Supervision Credentials
 - Informing Students about Regulatory Differences
 - Transitioning to Telehealth
- Two Eligibility Criteria training presentations – one for public/programs and one for reviewers
- Question and Answer meetings for programs seeking initial accreditation – hosted by COAMFTE Leadership

Communicating with Additional Stakeholders

- **Meetings with Tracy Todd:** The COAMFTE Leadership Team met quarterly with the CEO of AAMFT. The main focus of these meetings in 2021 was to maintain transparency of operations with AAMFT, and to learn of changes in AAMFT that could impact COAMFTE.
- **Meetings with AMFTRB:** The COAMFTE Leadership Team also met with representatives from AMFTRB quarterly. Discussion focused on the use of telehealth in MFT programs in the Accreditation Standards Version 12.5. COAMFTE and AMFTRB held reciprocal presentations, where AMFTRB was invited to update COAMFTE stakeholders about licensure regulations related to telehealth at the COAMFTE Accreditation Workshop, and COAMFTE presented updates to Accreditation Standards Version 12.5 at the AMFTRB Annual Meeting.

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)

The Council for Higher Education and Accreditation (CHEA) standards and procedures for recognition were updated in 2021 with an implementation date of January 1, 2022. COAMFTE will seek continued recognition from CHEA according to the new 2021 recognition policy and process during the program's regular review cycle in December 2024.

Goal: Complying with and maintaining recognition of CHEA standards

Responding to Charge: Providing an authoritative guide to programs in the field of marriage and family therapy, which deserve public and professional confidence and support, including providing prospective students with a dependable basis for the selection of educational programs and providing state boards which license or certify marriage and family therapists with a list of accredited graduate degree and post-degree programs.

Program Directory on COAMFTE Website

The COAMFTE Program Directory is maintained to reflect transparent and publicly accessible information including each program's accreditation status and contextual information. Information in the directory is intended to assist prospective students so that they can make informed choices, and to provide details of a program's current accreditation status to relevant stakeholders and to the public.

Program Accreditation: Initial, Renewal, Maintenance

Through the process of review and granting accreditation to programs that demonstrated substantial compliance with COAMFTE Accreditation Standards Version 12, the Commission reviewed programs for initial, renewal, and maintenance of accreditation.

Goal: Maintaining Quality MFT Education

Responding to Charge: Ongoing oversight and assurance of quality MFT education through accreditation.

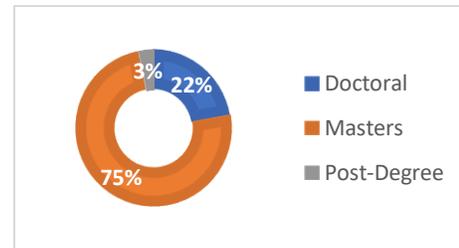
The Commission reviewed the following at the Spring and Fall COAMFTE Meetings in 2021.

Type of Review	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Total 2021
<i>Initial Accreditation</i>	1	0	1
<i>Renewal of Accreditation</i>	11	6	17
<i>Response to Stipulations</i>	7	11	18
<i>Annual Reports</i>	61	66	127
<i>Special Reports</i>	0	0	0
<i>Plan of Closure</i>	1	1	2
<i>Corrective Action</i>	3	0	3
<i>Branch Location</i>	1	3	4
<i>Total</i>	85	87	172

The Eligibility Review Committee reviewed 40 Eligibility Criteria Reports. The Commission reviewed a total of 24 Self-Studies, and COAMFTE conducted 12 Virtual Site Visits and one campus-based focused Site Visit in 2021.

Currently COAMFTE accredits 126 programs:

- 28 Doctoral programs
- 94 Master's programs
- 4 Post-Degree programs



Complaints

During the review of several complaints against programs in 2021, COAMFTE leadership noted that the current COAMFTE complaint policy was resource intensive. The Policy and Strategy Subcommittee examined and revised the COAMFTE complaint policies and procedures to align with current best practices in accreditation. COAMFTE voted to update the COAMFTE Accreditation Manual with a revised complaint policy (*COAMFTE Accreditation Manual: Policy and Procedures*).

In 2021, the Executive Committee reviewed and resolved seven complaints against programs. In addition, the Executive Committee referred one complaint to the Commission. The Commission has continued to investigate this complaint. This program's focused interim site visit, held in Fall of 2021, will be discussed at the Winter 2022 COAMFTE Meeting.

COAMFTE Sustainability

Goal: Increasing revenue through additional fee restructuring

Responding to Charge: Examination and implementation of strategies that lead toward a decrease in financial dependence on AAMFT

In 2020, COAMFTE implemented its fee restructure plan, outlined in the COAMFTE Finance Committee Report. This plan was intended to foster independence and sustainability, and to further reduce the Commission's reliance on AAMFT. In 2021, the Commission analyzed the outcomes of the implementation of the new internal COAMFTE business operations and updated fees, which included:



- 15% One Time Increase in Review Fees
- 7% Increase in Annual Fees through 2025

Additional Fee Restructuring: The Policy and Strategy Committee reviewed comparable accreditor fee structures, fee recommendations from the Virtual Site Visit Task Force, and cost analyses based on past and current trends. During the 2021 fall meeting, the Commission voted to accept the Policy and Strategy Committee revised fee structure proposal, which includes a flat fee for all site visits (virtual and on-ground) conducted between 2022-2025. The revised structure includes additional site visitor fees to cover travel expenses for each site visitor assigned to an on-ground site visit; these per-visitor fees increase each year.

Accreditation Process	Fees in 2022
Virtual Site Visit	\$4,880.00 (flat rate)
On-ground Site Visit	\$4800.00 (flat rate) + \$1,760.00 per site visitor
Branch Review	\$1,220.00
Special Report	\$200.00
Late Report	\$500.00

The changes in the COAMFTE Fees will be posted on the COAMFTE website in January 2022.

COAMFTE Volunteers

All of COAMFTE activities, accomplishments and modifications would not have been possible without the commitment and dedication of the COAMFTE volunteers. In 2021, COAMFTE volunteers exceeded the call of duty by serving on committees (some of which were time intensive), addressing numerous issues concerning the changing landscape of education, transitioning to the Accreditation Standards Version 12.5, developing essential resources to support communities transitioning to the new standards, investigating complaints, and responding to changing responsibilities to support the COAMFTE community during these demanding and uncertain times.

[Standards Review Committee members](#)

[Eligibility Review Committee members](#)

[Accreditation Reviewer Program members](#)

[Active Site Visitors](#)

2021 Commissioners

Elizabeth Fawcett, PhD – Chair

Carol Messmore, PhD – Chair Elect

Blake Berryhill, PhD

Lee Johnson, PhD

Christian Jordal, PhD

Dan Lord, PhD

Aaron Norton, PhD

David VanDyke, PhD

Yulia Watters, PhD

Nancy Shankle, PhD, Public Member

Michael Westerfield, PhD, Public Member

2021 COAMFTE Elections Results

Heather Katafiasz, PhD – 3-year term

Jaclyn Cravens Pickens, PhD – 3-year term

Nancy Shankle, PhD – will serve a second 3-year term as Public Member

2021 Chair-Elect Election Results

David VanDyke, PhD - elected as the 2023 COAMFTE Chair. He will serve as the Chair Elect in 2022.

Call for Volunteers in 2021

COAMFTE's aggressive call for volunteers attracted a number of new candidates for the COAMFTE community that will expand the subject matter expertise and new ideas which drive the accreditation process.

- 15 new Accreditation Reviewers were appointed for 2022 and 7 renewed their term for one year.
- 3 new members were appointed to Standards Review Committee (SRC) to fill the open positions
- 5 new members were appointed to Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) to fill the open positions
- 3 new Site Visitors have been trained