



Fall 2021 COVID-19 Accreditation Guidelines
ATS Commission on Accrediting
(effective June 7, 2021)

In June 2021, the ATS Board of Commissioners issued these *Fall 2021 COVID-19 Accreditation Guidelines** to update and replace its [Spring 2021 COVID-19 Accreditation Guidelines](#). These guidelines allow for three types of accreditation visits in fall 2021: (1) *an online visit* conducted virtually through interactive means (e.g., Zoom) when either the host school or the visiting committee as a whole has significant health concerns about an onsite visit, including any visits where local, state/provincial, or national regulations do not permit an onsite visit; (2) *an onsite visit* when neither the host school nor any member of the visiting committee has health concerns about conducting an onsite visit; or (3) *a hybrid online/onsite visit* when the host school has no health concerns about an onsite visit but one or more members of the visiting committee do, in which case the committee member(s) with the concern will participate virtually. All visits, regardless of type, will be conducted with appropriate attention to health and safety concerns and to the complexities associated with varying visit modalities.

Unlike previous versions of these guidelines, schools may no longer request that a visit (or a report) be postponed purely for COVID-related reasons, but may do so for other reasons per [Policies and Procedures](#) III.B.1 and VI.A.6. Also, schools that offer at least half of a degree online must have, or petition for, comprehensive distance education approval per [Policies and Procedures](#) IV.F (i.e., waivers to offer at least half a degree online without comprehensive distance education approval are no longer allowed). Like previous versions of these guidelines, comprehensive visits conducted entirely online must host an onsite follow-up visit (by at least one visitor or staff member) when it is reasonable and safe to do so to verify that the school has appropriate physical resources.

Schools with comprehensive visits scheduled for fall 2021 are encouraged to consult with their Commission staff liaison as soon as possible to discuss which type of visit will be conducted. Any onsite visit may be converted by Commission staff either to an online visit or to a hybrid visit at any time prior to the visit, if health-related concerns should surface from the host school, a visiting committee member, or Commission staff.

*NOTE: These guidelines for fall 2021 are consistent with the [coronavirus-related guidelines](#) issued by the US Department of Education on December 11, 2020, that extended permission for virtual visits to US schools through June 2021, or for 180 days after the current health crisis is no longer declared a national emergency. That US declaration was still in effect in June 2021, when these guidelines were issued. Schools and the Board of Commissioners should document any accreditation-related actions taken under these guidelines.