



# Principles of Good Use for the AACP Curriculum Quality Perception Surveys 2009 Survey Administration

At the request of the Institutional Research and Assessment Committee (IRAC), this guide was developed with the intent to provide member colleges and schools written guidance for the administration of the surveys and subsequent use of the survey results. The remainder of this guide will suggest appropriate administration, data analysis, and follow-up strategies for these four surveys. Additional assistance is available by contacting Jennifer Patton, Director of Institutional Research & Data Systems at [jpatton@aacp.org](mailto:jpatton@aacp.org).

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## **Table of Contents**

### **Section 1 – Introduction,**

- 1.1 – Purpose and Survey Development
- 1.2 – Overview of major changes between 2008 and 2009 surveys

### **Section 2 – Timing of Administration**

- 2.1 – Standard recommendations
- 2.2 – Adding items
- 2.3 – Considerations for preparation of your ACPE self-study

### **Section 3 – Survey Methodology**

- 3.1 – Four sources of error in survey research
- 3.2 – References on survey research
- 3.3 – Frequently-asked-questions about survey research methodology

### **Section 4 – Interpreting Data and Results**

- 4.1 – Appropriate uses for survey results
- 4.2 – Selecting comparison colleges/schools
- 4.3 – Inappropriate interpretation of data
- 4.4 – Evaluating multiple perspectives
- 4.5 – Non-response versus “unable to comment”

### **Section 5 – Following up on Action Plans**

- 5.1 – Creating an action plan
- 5.2 – Post survey follow-up
- 5.3 – Communicating results

### **Section 6 – Appendices**

- 6.1 – Overview of survey sections
- 6.2 – Mapping of items to ACPE Standards 2007

## **Section 1 – Introduction**

### **1.1 - Purpose and Survey Development**

Graduating Student, Alumni, and Faculty surveys were initiated and designed by the AACP/ACPE Task Force on Assessment and Accreditation in 2002. These quality perception surveys were intended to gather information on program issues and curriculum quality. With the release of ACPE's Standards 2007, the Institutional Research and Assessment Committee (IRAC), AACP staff, ACPE staff, and an external consultant revised the three surveys and created a Preceptor survey. The purpose of the revised surveys is to help member colleges and schools gather data for both continuous program improvement and accountability (accreditation) purposes. In spring 2008, a total of 84 colleges/schools of pharmacy elected to participate in the surveys by administering them to their various stakeholder groups.

Following administration, data were aggregated from each respective survey and analyzed using Rasch analysis. Data were downloaded into SPSS version 11.0 and de-identified through elimination of the school and user codes by AACP staff. Data were uploaded into Winsteps version 3.63.0 (Chicago, IL). Rasch analysis was conducted by a subgroup of the IRAC. One AACP staff member and one IRAC subgroup member ran the actual analyses and the entire subgroup discussed proposed item deletions and rewordings. Proposed revisions were taken to the entire IRAC during an onsite meeting at AACP headquarters where final decisions were made as to the deletion, addition, or rewording of items. Comparison of results from the Rasch analysis showed marked improvement in the evidence of reliability and validity for the 2008 versus 2007 version. Changes to the 2009 version consisted mainly of wording changes for additional clarity or reordering of items to improve the logical flow within specific constructs.

Rasch analysis places both items and persons on the same interval level scale of measurement. This allows for the examination of how difficult items are versus how able the respondents were to answer the item. Since the items on these surveys were all constructed with agreement scales, the item difficulty was interpreted as how difficult it was to agree with each respective statement. Among other things, Rasch analysis can provide information on whether respondents are using the rating scale as intended, whether multiple constructs exist within a subset of items, identify potentially bad items, and identify potentially redundant items. The detailed results of the Rasch analysis are beyond the scope of this users guide. If you have additional questions regarding the analysis contact Dr. Cecilia Plaza, Director of Academic Affairs & Assessment at [cplaza@aacp.org](mailto:cplaza@aacp.org). The revised versions of the four surveys were made available to member colleges and schools starting in March of 2009.

## **1.2 – Overview of major changes between 2008 and 2009 surveys**

### **Faculty Survey**

- IRAC resolved that there demographic data should not be released to any college/school except in aggregate in respective summary reports given that faculty represented a vulnerable population with regard to this survey

### **Graduating Student Survey**

- Deleted item that read “assure that medication use systems minimize medication errors”
- The section on Student Services and The Student Experience were changed from dichotomous response option of agree/disagree to the scaled response set used in the rest of the survey.
- Added an age range item to the demographic section of the survey

### **Preceptor Survey**

- Deleted item that read “students at my site have the opportunity to interact with other healthcare professionals”

### **All 4 surveys**

- In the curriculum section of all 4 surveys the item related to the competency on “retrieve and evaluate the health sciences literature” was broken into 2 items to read “search the health sciences literature” and “evaluate the health sciences literature”

## Section 2 – Timing of Administration

### 2.1 – Standard recommendations

All four surveys are available for administration only through the AACP online survey system and are open for a period of four months. It is the responsibility of the college/school to administer the survey during the specified months.

Survey	Available	How Often to Administer	Who to Survey
<b>Graduating Student Survey</b>	First Monday of March-end of June	Every year	All students graduating from the Pharm.D. as a first professional degree program
<b>Faculty Survey*</b>	First Monday of March-end of June	At least every three years to allow two data points per self-study	All full-time and part-time faculty responsible for teaching in the Pharm.D. as a first professional degree program
<b>Preceptor Survey*</b>	First Monday of May-end of August	At least every three years to allow two distinct data points per self-study	All introductory and advanced preceptors, or an appropriate representative sample, who have been assigned sufficient students to make informed judgments about student performance and education as well as had an opportunity to form an opinion of your institution
<b>Alumni Survey*</b>	First Monday of May-end of August	At least every three years to allow two distinct data points per self-study	All alumni, or an appropriate representative sample, ideally no more than three years post-graduation but no more than five years
<i>*These three surveys can be administered at a more frequent interval if the college/school institutes a major change to the curriculum, program, or leadership</i>			

### 2.2 – Adding items

The current AACP survey instruments allow users the ability to add a link to their own surveys using an online survey tool such as SurveyMonkey or Zoomerang™. The link directs participants to an online survey instrument that is developed by the college/school. Each college/school collects, analyzes, and interprets responses to these data. The additional items essentially form a second survey in that they are not linked to the AACP survey items. In responding to additional items, respondents leave the AACP survey system so references to specific items on the AACP survey should be avoided (eg, if you strongly agreed on item 38...). Individual responses to specific items on the AACP survey cannot be linked to the same individual on specific additional items because they are de facto 2 separate surveys.

By adding your own questions you can specifically investigate issues of local importance related to the program. For example, you may have recently implemented a plan for distributing Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) to Professional Year 4 (P4) students prior to Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (APPEs). You may want to ask for some general feedback on the impact of having a PDA on 4<sup>th</sup> year experiences. A series of open-ended questions may also be very informative in terms of gathering the most important issues from the student perspective. For example, students might be asked what aspects of the PharmD program were most or least valuable and how the curriculum could have better prepared them for their 4<sup>th</sup> year experiences.

Before adding additional questions, the appropriate individuals or committee(s) should review the existing items on the AACP surveys to determine the necessity of asking additional items. The survey questions can be accessed through the AACP online survey system at <http://aacp.surveydomain.org>. A username and password is required for access. If you are not a survey coordinator of the AACP surveys, the dean or designate can send an email request to Jennifer Patton requesting copies of the surveys. Timing of survey administration and survey burden should also be considered before creating additional survey items. Should you decide additional items are required, a copy of the survey questions should be sent to [jpatton@aacp.org](mailto:jpatton@aacp.org). The IRAC will review received questions at the end of each survey cycle to determine whether they should be added to the appropriate AACP survey.

### **2.3 – Considerations for preparation for your ACPE self-study**

Timing of the administration of the surveys should be planned so that data can be forwarded to the appropriate internal committees with enough time to conduct thoughtful analysis, interpretation, and development of an action plan. For example, for a fall site visit planned in 2011 the Preceptor and Alumni surveys should be conducted no later than May-August of 2010 to allow for time to process, interpret, and make decisions about these data at your college/school.

## Section 3 – Survey Methodology

While this section is not intended as an exhaustive review of the literature on proper survey methodology the following is a resource to guide your efforts, containing recommended references.

### 3.1 – Four sources of error in survey research

When conducting survey research it is important to address the four potential sources of error in survey research. The four sources of error are coverage, sampling, measurement, and non-response. (Salant & Dillman 1994, Dillman 2000) Coverage error occurs when the sampling frame does not include all the salient features of the target population. Sampling error is potentially operating when a researcher samples only a subset of a population instead of conducting a census of the entire population. Measurement error occurs when a respondent provides an answer that is inaccurate or lacks precision to the degree that varies from the “correct” answer. Non-response error occurs when a significant number of subjects do not respond to the questionnaire and the extent to which the non-responders differ from those that did participate in the survey.

While coverage and sampling error are separate considerations they are often addressed together. Both can be minimized by using appropriate sampling techniques that consider sufficient sample size and key relevant features of the larger population that should be reflected in the sample (e.g., gender, age, educational background). The goal of minimizing coverage and sampling error is to increase the confidence that results from the sample are sufficiently representative in order to generalize to the greater population. Measurement error can occur when there are potentially sensitive items that may cause social desirability bias. For example, respondents provide answers they believe those administering the survey want to hear or that might make them “look bad” if they answered truthfully. With regard to non-response error, research has shown that individuals responding to surveys differ from those that do not such that they can essentially be self-selected and may no longer reflect the sample that was determined to be representative of the larger population. The lower the response rate, the higher the probability that those that did respond differ significantly from those that did not respond, thus limiting the ability of the researchers to make valid generalizations to the entire population in question. Strategies for reducing potential survey error are addressed in more detail in the references listed below in Section 3.2 – Selected references on survey research.

### 3.2 – Selected references on survey research

Dillman DA. *Mail and Internet Surveys: The Tailored Design Method*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; 2000.

Draugalis JR, Coons SJ, Plaza CM. Best practices for survey research reports: a synopsis for authors and reviewers. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 2008; 72(1): article 11 available at: <http://www.ajpe.org/view.asp?art=aj720111&pdf=yes>

Harrison DL, Draugalis JR. Evaluating the results of mail survey research. *J Am Pharm Assoc*. 1997; NS37: 662-6.

Fink A, Kosecoff J. *How to Conduct Surveys: A Step by Step Guide*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, Inc; 1998.

Fowler FJ. *Survey Research Methods*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications; 2009.

Kerlinger FN, Lee HB. *Foundations of Behavioral Research*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Orlando, FL: Harcourt College Publishers; 2000: 599.

Salant P, Dillman DA. *How to Conduct Your Own Survey*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.; 1994.

### **3.3 – Frequently-asked-questions about survey research methodology**

#### **What if I cannot survey all of the alumni and preceptors?**

A sample is used to obtain data from a small, but representative group, in order to describe the entire population. (Salant & Dillman, 1994) It is not necessary to survey the entire population of alumni and preceptors to obtain the desired information but rather appropriate sampling techniques could be used. In the case of students and faculty however it is desirable to survey the entire population. For example, if your college/school has additional items that are tracked longitudinally those items can be added to the end of the AACCP surveys and thus it would make sense to survey the entire group of graduating students every year. Faculty at a particular college/school can represent a diverse group based on discipline, background, and/or appointment therefore making it more difficult to maintain a representative sample. However, sampling would be appropriate for preceptors and alumni. In regard to alumni, this is historically a group with low response rates on surveys so it is even more imperative to obtain a representative sample and use aggressive follow-up to reduce non-response bias.

#### **What if the response rates are low?**

The lower the response rate for a survey the greater the possibility of bias operating in the results of the study. As noted by Draugalis and colleagues (2008), response rates less than 60% should be explained. If the sample is representative of the larger population in question, response rates greater than 60% should generally provide greater confidence in those data produced from the surveys. In addressing low response rates it is important to ask how different or similar are those that responded from those that did not respond. For example, suppose you sample alumni that graduated in the past 3 years but achieve only a 22% overall response rate. If your sample is 60% female and 40% male, reflecting your original population, but the respondents are 90% male and 10% female, there is potential non-response error operating since the respondents are not representative of the sample. As noted earlier, non-response error can occur when a significant number of subjects do not respond and the extent to which those that did respond differ from those that did not respond. In this example, given the distribution of male to female respondents relative to the original representative sample and the overall low response rate, the potential for non-response error needs to be addressed in interpreting and reporting the results of the survey. In addressing potential non-response error it is important to describe the respondents and how they compare to the larger population you are attempting to generalize to in the survey. In this example, it would be critical to explain that the original population of alumni that graduated in the past 3 years had a certain gender distribution and that the actual respondents differed from that distribution as well as the potential impact that has on the ability to generalize to all alumni that graduated 3 years or less from your institution.

## **Section 4 – Interpreting Data and Results**

This section will outline for survey users some basic principles to keep in mind after the data are collected, including appropriate and inappropriate uses of these data, and creating action plans.

### **4.1 – Appropriate uses for survey results**

These surveys are intended to help colleges and schools with collecting data about their programs for the purposes of programmatic improvement for the preparation of the accreditation self-study reports. Results from these surveys can be used to identify areas of strength or opportunities for improvement. In general, the survey items were designed to assess broad areas of focus rather than to specifically pinpoint the source of an issue. For example, assume a large percentage of students answered “disagree” to the questions about student services meeting their needs. In this case these survey data could help programs identify student services as an area needing further data collection from students in order to clarify what the specific issues are (see Section 5 for suggested follow-up strategies). The survey may also be used to provide data to answer questions of local interest. For example, take the case where a couple of vocal students have raised concerns about the introductory pharmacy practice experiences (IPPEs). If the survey results all indicate that a large majority of these students agree or strongly agree with all of the positive statements related to IPPEs then further follow-up may not be necessary in this case.

Data from the surveys should be used in combination with data from other sources in a process known as triangulation to form a more complete assessment of a given issue. For example, student responses on the curricular items show that students feel that they are not being prepared to achieve the stated outcome area related to promoting wellness and disease prevention services. This particular outcome could be linked to the program’s curricular map to form a more complete assessment of the situation. Another source of data on this subject may come from student performance evaluations during the APPEs.

### **4.2 – Selecting comparison colleges or schools**

Comparisons with the national averages and peer groups can be a valuable basis for identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses. At the end of the administration cycle AACCP closes the surveys to compile a summary report that includes all colleges/schools that participated in the surveys. The summary report is published on the AACCP web site for your use. In addition to the national report, participating institutions may request one peer group comparison from AACCP for each of the four surveys at no charge. An aggregated summary report is compiled from a minimum of five peer schools. Each school designates their peer group and should make selections based on criteria such as size of student enrollments, mission, curriculum structure, and geographic location. Requests for peer comparisons should be sent to Jennifer Patton, Director of Institutional Research & Data Systems at [jpatton@aacp.org](mailto:jpatton@aacp.org).

### **4.3 – Inappropriate interpretation of data**

These surveys are not intended to provide cut scores for “good versus bad” outcomes but rather to identify areas in need of further exploration. These surveys ask respondents for their level of agreement concerning various facets of the program – essentially asking for their opinion. Opinions represent the reality of perception of the respondents so there are no right or wrong answers per se. It can be just as important to determine why respondents strongly agreed with an item as it is if they strongly disagreed.

Having the same items across the different surveys does not necessarily mean that these items should be compared across all four groups of respondents (students, alumni, preceptors, and faculty). In the version of these surveys available in 2007 where there were 23 curricular content items in common across all four surveys, the Rasch analysis demonstrated that each group was interpreting the items

differently or using the rating scale in a different manner. Based on this information it would not be appropriate, for example, to calculate a mean rating scale score for each group of respondents and run a one-way ANOVA across to determine differences for the 2007 data. The alumni, preceptor, and faculty surveys were revised to have abbreviated curricular content areas for the 2008 survey administration cycle based on Rasch analysis. The graduating student survey, however, retained the more detailed curricular content area items since the students, having been exposed to the entire curriculum, were most able to answer these items.

#### **4.4 – Evaluating multiple perspectives**

While statistical comparisons of these data among respondent groups may not be appropriate they still allow for the consideration of multiple perspectives as it is important to recognize and address discrepancies between stakeholder groups. For example, if a majority of students *disagreed* that the curriculum prepared them to interpret and apply drug use and health policy while a majority of faculty *agreed* with that same statement then follow-up is probably necessary. The school may want to investigate why students do not feel this outcome is being delivered in the curriculum while faculty feel that it is. Again, other assessment data such as curricular maps or measures of student performance may be useful in this investigational process.

Where data exists for the same issue from multiple stakeholders, it may be helpful to look across those groups for general agreement on important issues. For example, students and faculty may both indicate disagreement with the items related to the adequacy of the physical facilities for the program. Corroborating data from multiple perspectives can be helpful in determining high priority areas for follow-up or action plans.

#### **4.5 – Non-response versus “unable to comment”**

The rating scales used in the surveys have an “unable to answer” category to allow respondents to indicate that an item asks for information that does not apply to them. The “unable to answer” choice was necessary in order to keep the surveys as general as possible for use across all possible respondents and curricular structures. Use of this response choice is different from non-response because by using the “unable to answer” category users are indicating that as their response they are indeed unable to answer for a variety of reasons. If a substantial percentage of respondents indicate that they are “unable to answer” you should consider whether the item represents an area that the respondent should know about. If the items address an area respondents should be able to answer it is important in interpreting the results to consider why they chose “unable to answer”.

Non-response occurs when the respondent does not choose any of the available response options. This could occur for a variety of reasons such as lack of attention to detail, not wanting to answer the item for fear that their response will cause an adverse action, or not understanding the item. While it is difficult to know exactly why a respondent did not answer a particular item, ensuring confidentiality of responses for example, can help reduce non-response to potentially more sensitive items. In the AACP online survey system, respondents are not allowed to move on to the next section of items without answering all the items in the current section. This is to ensure that no items within a given section are inadvertently missed. In this case answering “unable to answer” may be used by respondents as an alternative to not responding to an item. Therefore, a response of “unable to answer” may be due to either situation and should be considered when interpreting results. (Dillman, 2000)

## **Section 5 – Following up on Action Plans**

### **5.1 – Creating an action plan**

The assessment process does not stop with the reporting or interpretation of these survey data. A key component of completing the assessment loop is creating an action plan based on survey findings (Maki, 2004). Creating an action plan is essential in addressing both continuous improvement efforts as well as accountability to stakeholders such as ACPE so that these data can be used for both purposes. An important goal of the survey assessment process should be to insure that the results of the data collection are used to inform changes to the program. As with any plan or goal, creating specific and measureable action plans are helpful in achieving change.

### **5.2 – Post survey follow-up**

One way to obtain more detailed information from stakeholders about areas or items of concern is to develop a more detailed follow-up survey. While this method can provide valuable additional information, follow-up surveys will still be subject to the same potential limitations as noted earlier in the survey guide. Other follow-up methods described below may provide more dynamic information.

Another strategy for following-up on survey findings is to conduct focus group discussions with stakeholders. The advantage of this methodology is the ability to obtain detailed information as well as to ask for clarification. The disadvantages include the time involved and the potential volume of qualitative data generated. The following reference provides useful information about qualitative data methods for assessment purposes.

Chism, NV. Banta, TW. Enhancing institutional assessment efforts through qualitative methods, *New Directions in Institutional Research*. 2007; (136): 15-28.

There are several other follow-up techniques that can be useful for gathering additional information on survey findings. The first is via a “town hall” meeting. In this technique a facilitator calls a general meeting on one or more specific topics. For example, the Dean may announce a meeting to discuss student affairs survey findings. The meeting is usually publicized and open to all who wish to attend. Among the advantages of this technique are that it is less formal and includes the potential for broader participation than a focus group even though not all in attendance may choose to participate.

Another valuable resource for survey follow-up can be found in campus based Human Resource offices and Teaching and Learning centers. These offices often offer consultants to help campus units with problem solving and can provide a valuable, more impartial perspective.

### **5.3 – Communicating results**

Communicating survey results is important both to inform and to build rapport with stakeholders. You may want to consider using a targeted approach to communicate results to various internal stakeholders. Share relevant results with each group and present the results in a manner that allows each group to focus on areas of interest or targeted areas for improvement. For example, student affairs offices may be most interested in data on student services in the student survey while experiential directors may be most interested in the results of the preceptor survey. Reports should help stakeholders understand the interpretation as well as the potential implications of the results. These data can also help programs to determine both the areas most in need of attention and strengths of the program.

Assessment results from these surveys can also be shared externally such as through the ACPE self-study process. For the purposes of accreditation it is as important to collect these data as it is to provide thoughtful analysis and plans of action based on the results. Other external audiences may include prospective students, alumni, and campus level governance bodies.

## Section 6 – Appendices

### 6.1 – Overview of survey sections

#### **Graduating Student Survey**

The Graduating Student Survey contains 88 items in 8 sections:

- Demographics (9)
- Professional Competencies/Outcomes (20)
- Doctor of Pharmacy Curriculum (7)
- Pharmacy Practice Experiences (16)
- Student Services (5)
- The Student Experience (18)
- Facilities, Experiential Sites and Educational Resources (8)
- Overall Impressions (5)

#### **Faculty Survey**

The Faculty Survey contains 72 items in 9 sections:

- Administrative System (10)
- Recruitment and Retention (9)
- Infrastructure (11)
- Role and Governance (2)
- Faculty Development (5)
- Curriculum, Teaching, and Assessment (20)
- Developing and Supervising Students (4)
- Academic Roles (5)
- Demographics (6)

**The final section of the Faculty Survey, Demographics, is an optional section. This information is not provided in the raw data report that is available to colleges/schools.**

#### **Preceptor Survey**

The Preceptor Survey contains 42 items in 4 sections:

- Demographics (10)
- Communication (7)
- Curriculum (18)
- Resources/Support (7)

#### **Alumni Survey**

The Alumni Survey contains 45 items in 4 sections:

- Demographics/Employment (13)
- Development/Communication (13)
- Curriculum (15)
- General Impressions (4)

## 6.2 – Mapping of ACPE Standards to AACP Surveys

	Standards 2007		Surveys			
	Number	Title	Faculty	Student	Alumni	Preceptor
MISSION, PLANNING & EVALUATION	1	College or School Mission and Goals	16	85-87	42-45	
	2	Strategic Plan	31-32			
	3	Evaluation of Achievement of Mission and Goals				
ORGANIZATION & ADMINISTRATION	4	Institutional Accreditation				
	5	College or School and University Relationship				
	6	College or School and other Administrative Relationships				
	7	College or School and Governance	1-4, 6-13, 19-20		14	37
	8	Qualifications and Responsibilities of the Dean	1-2, 5		15-16	
CURRICULUM	9	The Goal of the Curriculum		36	20	
	10	Curricular Development, Delivery, and Improvement	40-46	30, 34-35	22	
	11	Teaching and Learning Methods	38-39	28, 31-33	21, 23	23
	12	Professional Competencies and Outcome Expectations	47-57	10-29, 84	20, 31-41	25-35
	13	Curricular Core-Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, and Values		29, 47	24-25	
	14	Curricular Core-Pharmacy Practice Experiences		37-38, 40-46, 48-52	25, 27	11-12, 18-21, 23-24, 36, 38
	15	Assessment and Evaluation of Student Learning and Curricular Effectiveness	46	28		22
STUDENTS	16	Organization of Student Services		53-59, 63	26	
	17	Admission Criteria, Policies, and Procedures		64		
	18	Transfer of Credits and Waiver of Requisites for Admission with Advanced Standing				
	19	Progression of Students	61			
	20	Student Complaints Policy		61		
	21	Program Information		58, 70		15
	22	Student Representation and Perspectives		60-62, 65-66		
	23	Professional Behavior and Harmonious Relationships	58-60	59, 67-68, 70-75	17-19, 30	13-14
	24	Faculty and Staff-Quantitative Factors	14, 20, 27-28, 62-65	69		
FACULTY & STAFF	25	Faculty and Staff-Qualitative Factors	11, 33-37		29-30	15, 37
	26	Faculty and Staff Continuing Professional Development and Performance Review	12-13, 15-18, 33, 34, 36			15-17, 39
	27	Physical Facilities	21-24, 26, 28-30, 39	76-81		
FACILITIES & RESOURCES	28	Practice Facilities	22, 28	39-40, 49, 51-52	28	15, 37, 40
	29	Library and Educational Resources	25, 28	82-83		41
	30	Financial Resources				

\*This mapping table is to be used as a guide and was revised in February 2009 by AACP using an ACPE mapping table dated July 2007. AACP does not assume liability or responsibility for the accuracy or completeness of this information.