

GUIDELINES FOR ON-SITE EVALUATION TEAMS

Purpose for the Evaluation

An on-site evaluation team visit to an institution seeking initial accreditation or reaccreditation occurs only after the institution has completed its own internal review and has prepared and submitted electronically an Analytical Self-Evaluation Report (ASER) and, if applicable, Branch Analytical Self-Evaluation (BASER) through the Accreditation Management System (AMS). The on-site team visit is an essential element of the peer review evaluation, which adds significant validity and credibility to the accreditation process.

A significant benefit of the accreditation evaluation process is its purposeful focus on the broad spectrum of operational issues. Accreditation encourages the institution to analyze and evaluate its functions qualitatively in terms of its own mission, objectives, and efforts to improve the quality of its performance. The report of the on-site evaluation team, the institution's response to the team report, and other factors affecting the accredited status of the institution are used by the Accrediting Commission in making its decision on accreditation.

Requirements for the Number and Composition of the Team Members

The number and composition of team members required for on-site visits is determined by ACCET with the provision that professional judgment be utilized to ensure the appropriate size and composition based upon the pertinent circumstances. Some of the factors considered in determining the number and composition of the team include size of the institution, number of students, type of programs offered, and the need for translators. Typically, on-site teams to institutions seeking initial accreditation or reaccreditation will be composed, at a minimum, of the following:

Team Composition	Type of Visit, Institution and Site
<u>3-Person Team:</u> Management Specialist, Curriculum Content Specialist, and Commission Representative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial accreditation visit to a main or branch campus of a vocational or avocational institution. • Reaccreditation visit to a main campus or branch campus of a vocational institution.
<u>2-Person Team:</u> Management Specialist/Commission Representative and Curriculum Content Specialist.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaccreditation visit to a main campus or branch campus of an avocational institution. • Reaccreditation visit to an auxiliary classroom of a vocational or avocational institution.

Additional team members may be required such as additional curriculum content specialist(s) for the review of programs in different fields and/or programs delivered in whole or part by interactive distance learning (IDL). For vocational institutions, additional team members may also be required to assist with the on-site verification of completion and placement at campuses with large

enrollments to ensure an adequate review by the team.

Note: Other types of on-site evaluations typically are conducted by a one-person team (a Commission Representative), including visits relative to changes of ownership, complaints, Readiness Visits (RV), and Quality Assurance Visits (QAV). The primary exception is a new program visit that may be conducted by a two-person team comprised of a Curriculum Content Specialist and Commission Representative.

Team Members

Commission Representative – The Commission Representative is employed by ACCET and is assigned the responsibility of monitoring and facilitating the integrity and comprehensiveness of the on-site evaluation process. This individual is well versed with ACCET's standards, policies, and procedures and serves as an overall resource for the team in reviewing various operational elements. The Commission Representative will work closely with the Team Chair to assure that all of the areas of examination are covered and that consistency, thoroughness, and fairness are maintained both during the visit and in the preparation of the on-site evaluation team report. The Commission Representative serves as a member of the team.

The Commission Representative carefully screens potential team members in order to verify that conflicts of interest, such as competing institutions in the same market area or prior/current professional affiliation, do not exist. Upon selection of the team, the Commission Representative notifies the institution of the team's composition by name and affiliation to provide the institution an opportunity to reject a team member for cause, relevant to a potential conflict of interest or bias. Specific responsibilities of the Commission Representative include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) coordinating the logistics of the on-site evaluation (hotel accommodations, travel arrangements, visit schedule, team roster); (2) conducting the pre-visit orientation of the on-site evaluation team; (3) facilitating the interpretation and implementation of ACCET policies and procedures; and (4) submitting the team report to ACCET within ten (10) days after the conclusion of the on-site evaluation. During the visit, the Commission Representative generally will be assigned responsibility for Standard VII – Admissions and Student Services and Standard IX-B Employer Sponsor Satisfaction, and Standard IX-D Completion and Placement, including verification of the completion and, if applicable, the placements statistics reported on Document 28.1 – Completion and Placement Statistics.

Team Chair – Each on-site evaluation team will have a Team Chair who is designated by the Commission Representative and who may be any one of the team members other than the Commission Representative. The Team Chair will provide direction during the on-site evaluation process, will generally lead the team during the opening session and during the exit briefing, and will designate appropriate opportunities for the team to caucus. The Team Chair will work closely with the Commission Representative to assure the integrity, comprehensiveness, and objectivity of the on-site evaluation process. The person assigned the role of Team Chair must be an experienced ACCET on-site evaluation team member. There is no Chair in the case of one-person teams.

Management Specialist – This individual serves on the on-site evaluation team as a peer evaluator and is one who possesses demonstrated experience and expertise as a manager or administrator of

an institution, business, agency, or association. This team member will generally be assigned primary responsibility for evaluating the following standards for accreditation: Standard I - Mission, Goals, and Planning, Standard II – Governance and Management, and Standard III – Financial Capability and Responsibility.

Curriculum Content Specialist – This individual serves on the on-site evaluation team as a peer evaluator and is one who possesses demonstrated experience and expertise as: (1) an educator/trainer in relevant fields, most commonly in a private career school, college or university, business/industry training program, or other continuing education institution and/or (2) a practitioner working in relevant fields. This team member will generally be assigned primary responsibility for evaluating the following standards for accreditation: Standard IV – Curriculum Design and Development, Standard V - Instructional Delivery and Resources, Standard VI – Qualifications and Supervision of Instructional Personnel, Standard VIII – Student Assessment and Achievement, and Standard IX – Institutional Effectiveness (IX-A Student Satisfaction and IX-C Certification and Licensure).

For institutions offering programs delivered by interactive distance learning (IDL) and/or e-learning, individual(s) with experience and expertise in interactive distance learning and/or e-learning will be selected to participate on the visit, in addition to the Curriculum Content Specialist.

As applicable, team members also will evaluate specific criteria for specific types of educational modalities, degrees, and/or programs (e.g. interactive distance learning, occupational associate degrees, nursing and allied health, English for Speakers of Other Languages).

Selection and Training of Team Evaluators

To be eligible to serve as a team evaluator, an individual must have the necessary relevant experience and expertise as well as the appropriate training and/or experience in evaluating institutions and/or their programs to effectively serve as an objective team evaluator. ACCET will assess the subject matter expertise of candidates based on a review of their resumes, professional recommendations, and/or previous team evaluator experience. Prior to participating on an on-site visit, a new team evaluator must have: (1) attended a Team Evaluator Workshop, and/or (2) completed ACCET's online evaluator training. To ensure the objectivity of evaluators, the Commission Representative organizing the on-site visit will verify that all potential team evaluators have no conflicts of interest with the institution to be visited, including providing the institution the opportunity to reject team evaluators based on conflict of interest, as previously described.

Procedures for the On-Site Evaluation Team

After studying the ASER/BASER, the team on-site evaluation team will:

1. Verify the accuracy and substance of the data in the ASER/BASER by inquiry, observation, and sampling techniques and seek additional information and/or clarification, whenever necessary.
2. Seek answers to questions stimulated by the ASER/BASER and make a penetrating inquiry of the objectives, management, staff, clientele served, methodologies, educational programs, and

outcomes of the programs.

3. Determine the extent to which the ACCET standards, policies and procedures are being met.
4. Assess objectively the merits of the educational programs in terms of the institution's mission, objectives, clientele, and other relevant issues.
5. Sign and abide by the Affirmation of Professionalism and Ethics as attested in Document 7.1

Visit Overview and Sample Schedule

The on-site team visit is the focal point of the accreditation process. Over the period of two days, the team works to validate the written ASER/BASER, to provide the Commission with an objective “snapshot” of the institution represented in a written report from which a verbal overview will be given as an exit briefing.

Most visits begin in the morning of the first day, and the team remains at the site into the evening to observe classes and interview students. In this typical schedule, the team returns in the morning of the second day to conclude data gathering, then comes together in the afternoon to produce the report. This visit is concluded later in the afternoon or early evening of the second day. Travel to and from the institution is planned such as to allow ample time to complete the team’s evaluation.

Note: This is only a sample schedule. Not only is flexibility required in the preplanning stages (some institutions do not have operating hours or classes in the evening), but also during the course of the visit.

Day One

- 8:00 a.m. Meet for team breakfast, orientation, and assignment review.
- 9:00 a.m. Arrive at institution and begin visit with introductions, facility tour, and opening session; work on individual assignments, including interviews, classroom observations, and file reviews.
- 5:00 p.m. Meet with the institution regarding concerns discovered during the first day.
- 7:30 p.m. Depart institution and go for team dinner. (If there are no evening classes, the first day will end earlier.)

Day Two

- 7:30 a.m. Meet for team breakfast and discussion.
- 8:30 a.m. Arrive at institution and continue data collection.
- 2:00 p.m. Draft report addressing all standards.
- 5:00 p.m. Conduct Exit Briefing and depart.

Responsibilities of Team Members

A. Prior to the Visit

1. Demonstrate appropriate preparation to serve as an on-site evaluator in the accreditation peer-review process by: (a) attending the ACCET Team Evaluator Workshop, (b) completing ACCET's online evaluator training, and/or (c) previously serving as an ACCET on-site evaluator on at least two accreditation on-site visits.
2. Review the policy and procedure documents provided by ACCET.
3. Study the ASER/BASER to gain a general understanding of the institution.
4. Identify points in the ASER/BASER requiring clarification and formulate questions and review tasks for addressing these topics.
5. Participate in a team orientation prior to the onset of the visit to discuss issues identified during the review of the ASER/BASER.

B. During the Visit

1. Verify the representations in the ASER/BASER.
2. Collect data by interviewing, observing, and reviewing documentation as appropriate.
3. Meet with the team periodically to discuss preliminary findings.
4. During the course of the visit, confer with the institution to allow the opportunity for the institution to provide additional information and/or clarification regarding issues and concerns identified by the team. In such unusual circumstances where the team has evidence to indicate potential fraud and/or abuse, the team shall first contact and confer with the ACCET Executive Director for guidance on how to proceed.
5. Draft the pertinent facts including, as applicable, strengths and/or weaknesses in assigned areas.
6. Meet with the team to achieve consensus on findings and ratings pertinent to the standards of accreditation.
7. Conduct the Exit Briefing.

C. Exit Briefing

Give a brief summary relative to the strengths and weaknesses under each of the standards of accreditation. The team is reminded that rating will not be given. The team will advise the institution that:

1. The institution will receive the team report through AMS within 30 days of the visit.
2. The institution will have 14 calendar days from receipt of the team report to respond to all weaknesses cited in the report regardless of the rating received in the standard. In the event that no weaknesses are cited in the team report, the institution should provide a response to the Commission acknowledging receipt and acceptance of the report, including any instructive observations. All responses should be transmitted electronically through AMS to the ACCET office.
3. The institution will be contacted and asked to complete and submit, within ten days of receipt, a Post-Evaluation Questionnaire which will be used by ACCET as part of its ongoing self-analysis to improve its standards, policies, and procedures, but will have no bearing on the final accreditation decision the Commission makes with respect to the institution.

D. After the Visit

1. Team members will return all materials related to the visit including the ASER/BASER to the ACCET staff representative.
2. Within one week, team members will submit the Post-Evaluation form and, as applicable, the expense voucher to the ACCET office.

Team Report

The On-Site Evaluation Team Report is a consensus report drafted at the institution during the visit. It follows the format of ACCET Document 9.3 – On-Site Evaluation Team Report Form. Team members discuss their observations of the institution until consensus is reached regarding each specific element of the standards.

In addition to the report of “Pertinent Facts” (always required), “Strengths” (noted only as appropriate), and “Weaknesses” (noted only as appropriate), each subsection of the standard is scored on the rating scale provided below. Note that a standard with a rating of 4 must have a strength identified in the report, and a rating of 2 or 1 must have a weakness identified. A rating of a 3 may have a strength and/or a weakness; however, if there is a weakness, this means that the institution substantially meets the standard, except for the narrow area of non-compliance identified in the weakness.

TEAM REPORT RATING SCALE

4	Exceeds the standard	Significant strength(s) specified.
3	Meets the standard	Strength(s), if any, specified.
3 with weakness	Substantially meets the standard, except for the narrow area of non-compliance identified in the	Narrow area of weakness(es) specified.

	weakness(es).	
2	Does not fully meet standard: Some change(s) needed to meet the standard	Weakness(es) specified.
1	Does not meet standard: Significant changes needed to meet the standard	Significant weakness(es) specified.