

TEAM EVALUATOR MANUAL

For use with the Accreditation Standards

*A Publication of the Accrediting Commission
for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges*

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Foreword

The Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges' (ACCJC) Accreditation Standards serve as the foundation for the institutional self evaluation of educational quality and institutional effectiveness review and the review by the External Evaluation Team. The Standards are presented in four sections, but they relate to the institution in its entirety.

The process of **institutional self evaluation** provides an opportunity for an institution to conduct a thorough evaluation of its educational quality and institutional effectiveness against the Eligibility Requirements (ERs), Accreditation Standards, including federal requirements, Commission policies, and the institution's own objectives. The process of **external evaluation** allows peer professionals from colleges in the Western Region (administrators, faculty, etc.) to consider the quality of the programs and services and institutional effectiveness in support of student success. This peer evaluation process, both self evaluation and external evaluation, is unique to higher education accreditation in the United States.

Accreditation should not be seen as an event that takes place every six years where compliance with ACCJC's Accreditation Standards and other requirements are assessed. Every ACCJC accredited institution must meet all Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies at all times. The accreditation process provides an opportunity for the institutional leadership to take stock of the continuous improvement of the institution in cooperation with the college stakeholders. This is the context into which an External Evaluation Team conducts a visit to a member institution. The teams will determine whether the Standards are met continuously and whether an institution sustains its educational quality and institutional effectiveness.

This *Team Evaluator Manual* has been revised for currency and in response to requests from former team members to provide more information about the external evaluation process and the accreditation requirements. Accreditation requirements, as expressed in ACCJC's Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards, and the key steps in the accreditation process have not changed.

Introduction

The *Team Evaluator Manual* is designed to be used by persons serving as members of external evaluation teams visiting institutions that have completed an educational quality and institutional effectiveness review (institutional self evaluation). It is intended for use with the *Guide to Evaluating Institutions* and the *Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education* which provide additional and important information for external evaluation teams with regard to each Accreditation Standard and Standard subsection. The external evaluation visit format described in this *Manual* is used by all teams visiting institutions seeking candidacy, initial accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation.

Private, non-governmental accreditation rests on a model of evaluation that involves both internal and external review of an institution. The accreditation paradigm includes the following elements:

- standards of good practice that are accepted by the member institutions;
- internal, self evaluation by the institution at periodic intervals;

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- assessment of the self evaluation and the institution against the Accreditation Standards by external, peer reviewers with recommendations to the institution and the Commission;
 - decision by an independent Commission regarding the accreditation status of the institution;
 - follow-up by the institution to address the institution's own plan for improvement as well as the team recommendations identified in the external evaluation processes;
 - possible follow-up visits by Commission representatives; and
 - review and decision by the Commission.

The External Evaluation Team, made up of professional peers who volunteer their services, offers independent insights based on careful analysis of the Self Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (Institutional Self Evaluation Report) and on an on-site evaluation. The team:

- evaluates the institution using the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies;
- confirms and finds evidence that verifies the assertions in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report that Accreditation Standards are met;
- calls attention to problem areas inadequately recognized by the college itself;
- assures the Commission that the institution continues to meet Eligibility Requirements;
- assures the Commission that the institution has addressed recommendations of previous visiting teams, resolved the deficiencies and now complies with the Standards;
- assures the Commission that the institution has developed and adheres to sound evaluation and planning procedures to foster improvement of student achievement and student learning;
- assures that the college has set expectations (institution-set standards) for satisfactory student achievement (course completion retention and persistence; program, certificate and degree completion; graduation and transfer rates; licensure pass rates; and job placement) and determines whether the institution is meeting its standards.
- reinforces and extends the college's commitment to its continuing pursuit of excellence; and
- assures the Commission that the institution merits candidacy status, initial accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation or advises the Commission that the team cannot recommend such action.

The importance of these judgments in maintaining the quality of education in all institutions deserves the team's best efforts as it develops the External Evaluation Report to the institution and to the Commission. Team members have a special responsibility to maintain the integrity of the accreditation process and outcomes which enables private, nongovernmental accreditation to meet its goals. Quality assurance to the public and institutional improvement for institutions can only be achieved through the conscious commitment of all who participate.

1 The Role of the Federal Government

The 2008 Higher Education Opportunities Act, and subsequent changes to federal regulations by the U.S. Department of Education (USDE), put into law several requirements for accrediting agencies that seek federal recognition. The ACCJC holds USDE recognition and therefore will hold institutions accountable to federal regulations. Through USDE recognition, ACCJC's member institutions qualify for a variety of federal financial aid programs. Each time federal regulations change, the Commission may need to revise its compliance components and the requirements to which institutions must conform. Therefore, all external evaluation teams that conduct external evaluation visits are required to review the following requisites of federal law:

- the institution's continued compliance with the Commission's Eligibility Requirements;
- the institutions distance learning programs and services to students;
- the off-campus locations where 50% or more of a program is offered;
- data on Student Achievement;
- data on Student Learning;
- records of formal student complaints;
- all student and public information released by the college about its credit requirements for programs, certificates, and degrees; length of programs; costs; student degree/certificate completion rates; transfer rates; job placement; licensure pass rates; and federally required campus crime statistics; and
- information on the health of the financial aid program(s) on the campus including loan default rates over the past three years, plans to reduce those rates, reviews of financial aid program(s), and audits of same.

2 The Role of the Accrediting Commission

2.1 Communication with the Institution

About two years before the anticipated date of the educational quality and institutional effectiveness review and visit, the Commission office advises the institution of its upcoming self evaluation and external evaluation visit. The college is invited to select dates for the visit and to indicate any special expertise or experience it would like represented on the team.

2.2 Team Chair Selection

The Commission selects team chairs of external evaluation teams for their expertise and accreditation experience. The typical Team Chair has experience as a chief executive officer of an institution.

2.3 Team Selection

Commission staff develops the peer evaluation teams from a roster of experienced educators who have exhibited leadership and balanced judgment. In compliance with federal regulations, teams are comprised of both academics and administrators. An average team has instructional and student services administrators, a chief executive officer, a business officer, and three academics. Teams consist of individuals with expertise and/or experience in learning outcomes and resources, career/technical education, distance/correspondence education, planning, research, and evaluation. Teams may also include a trustee and Commissioners or Commission staff. Each evaluator is chosen to bring perspective to the task, but not as a “representative” of an organizational constituency; team members represent the Commission.

Each team is selected to provide experienced, impartial professionals appropriate for the institution being evaluated, and to address any special concerns the college may have expressed. Colleges may ask for special expertise, but they may not request specific individuals. Teams are reflective of the diversity of the college and the region.

The size and complexity of the institution being evaluated will determine the number of persons on the team. The Commission seeks a balance of experienced and first-time evaluators, and each team includes persons with experience at institutions similar to the college being evaluated.

2.4 Team Training

All first-time evaluators are required to complete an online Accreditation Basics course prior to team service. The course is available on the ACCJC website at: www.accjc.org.

All evaluators are required to attend an External Evaluation Team Training workshop prior to the visit. All team chairs are required to attend a Team Chair Training workshop each time they serve and are in attendance at an External Evaluation Team Training workshop with their teams.

2.5 Materials from the ACCJC

The Commission office sends copies of all previous external evaluation reports, any Follow-Up Reports, a list of substantive change reviews since the last external evaluation and Commission action letters to the Team Chair and team. The Team Chair also receives the most recent Annual Report, Annual Financial Report and a summary of complaints against the institution.

2.6 Materials from the College

The college sends copies of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report, catalog, and most recent class schedule to the team members and Commission eight weeks before the visit. Colleges may include additional materials that could inform the team about the college.

3 The Role of the Evaluator

3.1 Peer Review

The External Evaluation Team provides an independent, peer review of an institution. The team uses the Accreditation Standards to prepare a report for the institution's use which analyzes the adequacy of its resources, the effectiveness of its procedures, the quality of its performance in pursuit of its stated goals, and its evidence of student achievement and student learning. The team seeks to verify quality and integrity and to inspire continuous improvement of institutional performance.

The role of the peer evaluator is that of a colleague who shares a commitment to educational excellence by making diagnostic recommendations that improve the institution's ability to meet the Commission's Accreditation Standards. The task of the evaluator is to look for coherence between what the institution asserts and what evidence it provides in support of its assertions.

3.2 Conflict of Interest

The Commission makes a special effort to maintain the integrity of the accreditation process. To this end, evaluators are expected to disclose any possible conflict of interest before accepting an assignment. Commission policy identifies the following conditions under which an evaluator should decline an invitation to serve or ask for an assignment to another team. As prescribed by the Commission's "Policy on Conflict of Interest for Commissioners, Evaluation Team Members, Consultants, Administrative Staff, and Other Agency Representatives," the Commission will not knowingly invite or assign participation in the evaluation of an institution anyone who has:

- any current or prior employment at the institution/district/system being evaluated;
- current or prior candidacy for employment at the institution/district/system being evaluated;
- any current or prior service as a paid consultant or other business relationship with the institution/district/system being evaluated;
- any written agreement with an institution/district/system that may create a conflict or the appearance of a conflict of interest with the institution/district/system;
- personal or financial interest in the ownership or operation of the institution/district/system;
- close personal or familial relationships with a member of the institution/district/system;
- other personal or professional connections that would create either a conflict or the appearance of a conflict of interest; or

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- receipt of any remuneration, honoraria, honorary degrees, honors or other awards from the institution/district/system.

A conflict of interest arising from one of the relationships described above typically expires five years after the relationships ends. Team members or team chairs who have any questions about possible conflict of interest should contact the ACCJC President.

3.3 Expectations of Evaluators

Evaluators are expected to:

- know the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and pertinent Commission policies;
- recognize the Standards as the necessary conditions for high quality education;
- recognize the Standards as statements of best practice in higher education;
- understand that institutions are accredited using ACCJC's Accreditation Standards rather than the regulations or requirements of other groups (see Note 1 below);
- appreciate that peer review lies at the heart of the accreditation process;
- remember that team members represent the Commission;
- maintain objectivity and flexibility;
- rely on evidence in making judgments about the institution; and
- maintain confidentiality. (See Note 2 below.)

Note 1

As a voluntary, nongovernmental agency, the Commission is not obligated to exercise the regulatory control of state and federal governments, nor to apply their mandates regarding collective bargaining, affirmative action, health and safety regulations, and the like. Furthermore, the Commission does not enforce the standards of specialized accrediting agencies or other nongovernmental organizations, nor the laws and regulations of state agencies although institutions may wish to review the publications of such other agencies as part of the self evaluation process. The Commission has its own standards and expects that institutions and teams will apply them with integrity, imagination, and an attitude of humane concern for students and the public interest.

Note 2

The Commission's "Policy on Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions" requires that team members keep confidential "...all institutional information examined or heard before, during, and after the team visit and after the Commission acts." The "Policy on Public Disclosure and Confidentiality in the Accreditation Process" requires External Evaluation Team members to refrain from discussing information obtained in the course of service as an evaluation team member. Information that should remain confidential includes the "...current Institutional Self Evaluation Report; previous External Evaluation

Reports; interviews and written communication with campus personnel, students, governing board members, and community members; evidentiary documents; and evaluation team discussions.”

The Team Chair will make assignments and seek information from evaluators well ahead of the visit. It is very important that each individual prepare materials and respond quickly to requests by the Team Chair. Each evaluator should read the Institutional Self Evaluation Report carefully, especially those areas in which the Team Chair has given him/her a specific assignment.

Each evaluator should thoroughly read the historical materials sent by the Commission because they provide the accreditation background of the institution during its last cycle. During preparation, the evaluator should identify members of the college community to interview and prepare interview questions based on identified issues. Evaluators should come to the first team meeting prepared to summarize the key issues they have identified in their areas of responsibility, present drafts of questions for interviews, and share lists of those individuals or groups to be interviewed.

The team will assess the Institutional Self Evaluation Report as a means for determining whether the institution meets Accreditation Standards and for identifying potential areas for improvement. Thus, each evaluator must share concerns with the team, maintaining balance and perspective, and cross-validating when conflicting information is discovered. While it is important to listen to any member of the college community who wishes to be heard, the evaluator must distinguish between the problems of individuals and those problems that could affect learning and teaching. In short, the evaluator must be diagnostic, impartial, and, ultimately, able to make recommendations for improvement to the institution.

Evaluators are expected to arrive on time and to be present continuously for the entire visit, including the Team Chair’s oral report in the final meeting to the college on the last day. Team members are expected to devote their time during the visit to the assignments made by the Team Chair.

Although efforts are made for team members to attend a number of classes, it is not possible to visit every class or meet with every member of the faculty. Since most members of the faculty will have participated in the preparation for the external evaluation visit, all should be aware of the presence of the evaluation team and have opportunities to communicate with team members.

Evaluators are expected to review the courses/programs/services offered through distance/correspondence education to ensure they are characterized by the same concerns for quality, integrity, and effectiveness that apply to more traditional modes of instruction. Evaluators should also visit off-campus locations where 50% or more of a program is offered.

If the institution converts clock to credit hours for purposes of federal financial aid, the team is expected to verify the college adheres to the federal conversion formula.

During the visit, evaluators should give particular attention to the extent to which the college has carried out or addressed recommendations made in the most recent accreditation cycle. Recommendations that required the institution to correct deficiencies in order to meet the Standards should be carefully examined. The college must respond to every recommendation. Evaluators should note carefully the sections in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report that describe action taken on, or responses to, earlier recommendations. The evaluator may find that there are instances in which the college has not agreed with a team recommendation. In such cases, the college report should state the reasons for the disagreement. Evaluators should also pay attention to the college's discussion of the status of the self-identified action plans from the previous Institutional Self Evaluation Report. These were reported on in the college's Midterm Report to the Commission. The team should determine whether the college further considered the self-identified action plans that resulted from its previous self evaluation review.

The team must also verify that the college continues to meet the Eligibility Requirements, the Commission's core criteria for institutional eligibility for accreditation. Because these basic criteria must be continuously met, Commission policy requires that all accredited institutions include in their Institutional Self Evaluation Report evidence demonstrating that they continue to meet these requirements. The Eligibility Requirements can be found in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*.

Above all else, the evaluator should assess the institution's educational outcomes for students in the classroom, laboratory, and the college environment generally, and whether this is effective and in line with the institution's mission and goals. The team should also evaluate the institution's evidence of institutional achievement; its structures, processes, and procedures; its resources; student achievement and learning; and plans for sustainability.

3.4 Evaluators to Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems

The Commission evaluates colleges based on the Accreditation Standards regardless of how functions are organized. However, in multi-college districts/systems, key functions related to the Standards are organized among the colleges and district/systems in many ways. In order to ensure that evaluation of all member institutions, regardless of how they are organized, is equitable, the individual colleges are the unit of analysis for accreditation and are held responsible for meeting the Standards. Nonetheless, the Commission recognizes that the district/system plays a substantial role in the institution's ability to meet the Standards and it expects that the district/system will support the colleges in this matter. The Commission's "Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College Multi-Unit Districts or Systems" can be found in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*.

Evaluators to these institutions will be supplied with a "functional map" of the delineation of functions of the district/system and the colleges. This "map" will account for all major functions regardless of whether it is a college or district/system function. The "map" will address all Standards and reflect

consultation between the college and the district/system in its development. In its self evaluation, the college will reflect on how the district/system functions affect the college's ability to meet the Standards. (The Commission expects that the district/system chief executive officer (CEO) and governing board be involved in the development of the Self Evaluation Report.)

As much as possible, the Commission conducts external evaluation visits to institutions in multi-college districts/systems simultaneously so that it can consider district/system issues when taking action on the accredited status of these institutions.

Evaluators on evaluation teams to colleges in multi-college districts/systems may be part of a small district/system team under the direction of a "Chair of Chairs" who may be selected from the team chairs involved. This team, consisting of all the team chairs plus team evaluators selected for their expertise, will meet with district/system administrators before the college visits and explicitly identify problems pertaining to the Standards that are related to district/system functions. If recommendations are necessary, this team will ensure that they are included in the External Evaluation Report to each college as appropriate.

4 The Role of the Team Chair

The Team Chair organizes the evaluation visit, makes necessary arrangements for the team, speaks for the team, and is the author of the final External Evaluation Report. Prior to the visit, the Team Chair contacts the institution and members of the team to ensure that needed resources will be available and that members are appropriately assigned. During the evaluation visit, the Team Chair organizes team discussions, sees that all necessary contacts are made, sees to the needs of the team, and assures that the limited time of the team is used effectively. At the conclusion of the visit, the Team Chair conducts a final open meeting with members of the college staff. At this meeting the Team Chair reports the major findings of the team.

4.1 Before the Visit

The Team Chair makes a visit to the campus well before the scheduled team visit. Several months may have passed since the self evaluation was completed, and significant changes may have occurred which will materially affect the course and conduct of the site visit. Visiting the college gives the Team Chair the opportunity to establish personal relationships with key individuals, get a sense of the physical layout of the team room, learn of any significant changes which may have occurred at the college, and begin logistical arrangements for the team, including assessment of computer hardware and software needs. The pre-visit also provides the college with a clearer sense of what the team will need and the opportunity to correct any deficiencies the Team Chair may note.

4.2 Correspondence with the Team

The Team Chair corresponds with the team members to welcome them to the team, to make assignments, to provide information about travel and accommodations, to indicate the team schedule, and to set the tone for the entire visit.

4.3 Manager of the Site Visit

The Team Chair is responsible to the Commission for the successful completion of the evaluation site visit. In this capacity, the Team Chair guides the team during the visit, ensuring that the institutional outcomes are assessed in light of the institutional mission and the Accreditation Standards and that team members have the support necessary to complete their assignments.

4.4 Author of the External Evaluation Report

The Team Chair is responsible for writing a clear, concise, well-organized and coherent document that will stand up under the careful scrutiny of a wide variety of readers. The report should honestly reflect the views of the team, setting forth the limitations and difficulties which the institution is experiencing and the plans and potential it has for overcoming them. When the written reports from the team members are well written, the Team Chair can often use major portions in the final report. However, team members should understand that the Team Chair is expected

to produce a coherent, unified account of the team findings. In doing so, the Team Chair has considerable editorial latitude in constructing the final report.

5 Analysis of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report

5.1 Preparation and Documentation

An evaluator will want to look at how the Institutional Self Evaluation Report was developed, written, and edited; what evidence exists of broad involvement by campus constituencies; and the nature and quality of the evidence offered in support of the college's assertions. In addition, the evaluator will want to determine if the Self Evaluation Report serves as an effective vehicle for evaluation of the institution by noting if an external evaluator could use the Report to assess the integrity, quality, and effectiveness of the institution. Evidence cited in the Report should provide the means for determining the extent to which the institution meets or exceeds the Accreditation Standards.

5.2 Quality of the Institutional Self Evaluation Report

Regarding responses to previous recommendations and Commission actions, the Institutional Self Evaluation Report should provide evidence the institution fully addressed the recommendations, resolved deficiencies, and now complies with Accreditation Standards. If there have been other reports and visits, these issues should have been incorporated into the Self Evaluation Report. The External Evaluation Team should verify that the evidence referenced in the Self Evaluation Report demonstrates that the institution meets or exceeds the Accreditation Standards and that the institution is achieving its mission, educational goals and objectives. The college should provide evidence that systematic and effective institutional planning and evaluation are being incorporated into institutional decision-making. The Self Evaluation Report should also identify issues of concern to the institution.

5.3 The Guide to Evaluating Institutions

Reference to the *Guide to Evaluating Institutions* and the *Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education* was made in the Introduction to this *Manual*. These *Guides* are designed to be used by institutions conducting a self evaluation and preparing an Institutional Self Evaluation Report as well as by teams conducting an external evaluation visit. The *Guides* are meant to provoke thoughtful consideration about whether the institution meets the Accreditation Standards and they are also intended to provide guidance for a holistic, systemic view of an institution and its quality. These common *Guides* are predicated on the belief that both institutional members and external evaluators use the Standards to assess the institution, and that they should be using the same tools to conduct that assessment.

Evaluators should reference the *Guides* each time they engage in activities associated with an external evaluation visit. In the main body of the *Guides*, evaluators will find "Questions to Use in Institutional Evaluation." Here the reader will find the Standards followed by sample questions about their application at an institution. The questions are designed to guide a thoughtful examination of institutional quality. There are many other questions that institutions could develop to stimulate thorough self-reflection. Likewise, there are many other questions team members can and should ask to determine the degree to which the institution

is meeting the Standards and ensuring institutional quality and improvement. The questions should not be used as a substitute for the Standards or as substitutes for thorough introspection and examination. At the end of each Standard, there is a list of potential sources of evidence. This non-exhaustive list is not meant to indicate that each of the documents must be present, but that these might be sources of the evidence. There may be many other sources that institutions should provide and teams should look for.

A section entitled "Characteristics of Evidence" in the *Guide to Evaluating Institutions* provides some guidance on the nature of good evidence that self evaluation teams and external evaluation teams will use to evaluate an institution. There are several different kinds of evidence required during an accreditation review - evidence of structure, evidence of resources, evidence of process, evidence of student achievement, and evidence of student learning - and each requires careful consideration. Evaluators will want to be thoughtful about the kinds of evidence they consider, and the degree to which their conclusions are supported by appropriate evidence.

6 During the Site Visit

The external evaluation visit is the culmination of a great deal of work by many individuals at the institution being visited. If implemented well, the self evaluation process will be of great value to the institution. External evaluators need to be sensitive to the impact of their presence on the multiple internal and external publics and stakeholders who interact with the college. The evaluator must not provide comments or epithet about 'how it is done' on his/her campus.

For evaluators, the team experience provides an opportunity to make a professional contribution which is not duplicated by any other experience. Working together with a group of colleagues, External Evaluation Team members are able to become part of the life of an institution in a very special way.

External evaluation teams have the responsibility of determining whether the institution meets or exceeds the Accreditation Standards and of providing guidance to the institution in the form of recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the institution. The team's judgment about the educational quality of the institution assists the Commission in giving assurance to the public that the college is meeting its mission and educational purposes.

As noted above, the team will be looking for evidence that the institution can demonstrate and support its assertions. In addition, the team will seek evidence of quality regarding the policies referenced in the Commission's Standards, particularly, the "Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education" and "Contractual Relationships Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations." These policies are found in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*.

6.1 Initial Meeting of the Visiting Team

The team generally meets the day before the first day of the scheduled visit. At this first planning session, the evaluation team reviews assignments, examines supplementary materials, arranges schedules, discusses the Self Evaluation Report of the institution, and may actually spend time at the institution examining evidence. Team members should come to this meeting prepared to summarize the key issues they have identified in their primary areas of responsibility, present drafts of questions for interviews, share lists of those individuals or groups to be interviewed, and present lists of additional evidence for review.

6.2 Meeting with Institutional Staff

Early in the visit, the team meets with administrators, the self evaluation steering committee, and other members of the college staff most involved in preparation of the Self Evaluation Report. At the meeting, the general plan of the visit is discussed with institutional staff. Team members can clarify questions they have about the institutional self evaluation and schedule meetings with individuals or groups such as the governing board, faculty, administration, classified staff, students, and others.

The first meeting may be followed by a brief tour of the campus to familiarize team members with the physical plant and the locations for campus appointments.

6.3 Remainder of the Visit

Team members arrange conferences, make classroom and distance education (DE) visits, hold individual interviews, attend team meetings scheduled by the Team Chair, and review documents provided in the team room. Class schedules should be available and staff contacts arranged. Schedules of faculty office hours and telephone directories are helpful. One or more open sessions where any member of the college community may meet with team members on any aspect of the self evaluation should be held. These sessions should be informal conversations, not large forums for formal presentations by special groups or special interests.

As mentioned previously, the Team Chair receives a summary of any formal complaints about the institution which have been received by the Commission. One or more team members may be asked to verify that any issues related to those complaints have been addressed. Some members of the team will also be allowed access to the formal file of student complaints to ascertain if the issues were reasonably addressed. Occasionally, someone at the institution challenges the accreditation process, self evaluation, or visit. Information concerning these matters should be brought to the attention of the Team Chair and the team as a whole.

6.4 Team Meetings during the Visit

Meetings of the External Evaluation Team are held several times during the visit to summarize the work accomplished, to share concerns, and to plan for the remainder of the visit. In the late morning of the final day, the team meets to review findings and make final plans for the preparation of its External Evaluation Report, including what recommendations are to be included.

6.5 Team's Confidential Recommendation to the Commission

Drafts of the individual team members' written statements on their assignments are due prior to the end of the visit. The team will finalize its recommendations for institutional improvement or for correction of deficiencies at the end of the visit. The subject of these recommendations will be shared with the institution's CEO by the Team Chair in a private meeting.

The team will also make a decision on its confidential recommendation to the Commission for action on the institution's accredited status. This will NOT be shared with the institution. Team members also sign the Confidential Recommendation Form (see Appendix A). The signatures verify that the team recommendation was discussed with every team member and approved by a majority of the team members. For institutions that are applicants for reaffirmation of accreditation, the team will make a recommendation to:¹

- a. Reaffirm Accreditation
(requires no further institutional action until the Midterm Report)

¹ See "Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions" in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*.

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- b. Reaffirm Accreditation with a Follow-Up Report by a certain time
(based on the team's assessment that some of its recommendations need more immediate attention)
 - c. Reaffirm Accreditation with a Follow-Up Report and Visit
(based on the team's assessment that some of its recommendations need more immediate attention and that the institution's progress should be verified by a small team)
 - d. Defer Action on Accreditation
(based on the team's assessment that receipt of specified additional information from the institution is pending or that the institution should be permitted to address serious weaknesses within six months or less)
 - e. Issue a Warning
(based on the team's assessment that the institution has deviated from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards or Commission policies to an extent that gives concern to the Commission)
 - f. Impose Probation
(based on the team's assessment that the institution is in substantial non-compliance with the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards or policies to a major extent)
 - g. Order Show Cause
(based on the team's assessment that the institution has deviated from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards or policies to such an extent that it should be asked to demonstrate to the Commission why its accreditation should not be withdrawn)
 - h. Terminate Accreditation
(based on the team's assessment that the institution has deviated from the Commission's Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards or policies to such an extent that it no longer can be accredited)

Once the team has met, the Team Chair meets with the CEO of the institution to review major team findings and to ensure that the team has made no major errors of fact. The team's confidential recommendation to the Commission is not discussed, but the Team Chair reviews key team recommendations with the CEO of the college.

6.6 Oral Report at Conclusion of the Team Visit

The team holds a final meeting with members of the college community. At this meeting, the Team Chair provides an oral report that articulates the major team findings. While team members are expected to be present for this final meeting, the Team Chair is the spokesperson for the team. The oral report should not be filmed or recorded by the institution.

Team members should expect to depart immediately at the end of this meeting. Expressing thanks for assistance, enjoyment at meeting people or observing institutional activities is appropriate, but team members should avoid engaging in extended conversations about the visit. Team members should not respond to questions from the college community or the press any time after the visit.

Note: Under no circumstances should the visiting team's confidential recommendation concerning candidacy or accreditation of the institution be revealed. This recommendation must be acted upon by the Commission before the official outcome of the visit is determined.

7 After the Site Visit

7.1 Team and College Review of the External Evaluation Report Draft

Following the external evaluation visit and prior to the submission of the final report to the Commission, the Team Chair submits a draft of the report to team members for comment. After the Team Chair adds the comments as appropriate, he/she sends a final draft to the CEO of the institution for correction of any factual errors. It is very important that team members communicate with the Team Chair about the draft in a timely manner.

Communication between the institution and the evaluation team should only occur through the Team Chair and/or the Commission office. Contacts by individuals from the institution or in the course of other professional activities should always be referred to the Team Chair or the Commission office.

7.2 Expenses and Reimbursements to Evaluators

The ACCJC President is authorized to reimburse each evaluation team member for necessary travel, food, and lodging expenses.

Evaluators receive expense forms as part of the packet of information from the Commission office. Team members make their own travel and lodging reservations under the direction of the Team Chair and are reimbursed after the visit. Personal expenses not identified on the expense form are the responsibility of the team member. Receipts for public transportation and for lodging and meals should be attached. Team members must secure approval in advance from the Commission staff for rental cars.

7.3 Evaluation of Team Members, Team Chair, and the Visit

In order to ensure the effectiveness of the evaluation process, the Commission requires that each of the Commission's representatives be evaluated. Each team member is asked to evaluate the Team Chair, the Team Chair evaluates team members, and the CEO of the institution evaluates the team and the visit. (See Appendices B and C for the evaluation forms for Team Chair and team members.)

8 The Comprehensive External Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (External Evaluation Report)

8.1 Preparing the External Evaluation Report

The External Evaluation Report is not usually a long document. It should be an honest and constructive document that the Commission can use in making a decision about the accredited status of the institution as well as a document that the institution can use for improvement. The report should:

- evaluate the institution in light of its own stated mission, objectives, and Accreditation Standards;
- make favorable comments when commendation is due;
- provide evidence to support the recommendations of the team and provide a fair and useful estimate of the effectiveness of the institution;
- emphasize student achievement and student learning outcomes;
- avoid naming individuals, either in praise or blame. Comment, if necessary, on the office, not the officeholder;
- avoid being too prescriptive, leaving the specific remedy to be developed and implemented by the institution;
- serve the institution well for the next six years; and
- be comprehensive in its scope.

8.2 Considerations for the Report

In preparing the written report, consider the following:

- *Internal Consistency*
Does the report have internal consistency and flow logically, with no mixed or conflicting messages?
- *Clarity*
Does the report say exactly what is intended so that there can be no accidental or deliberate misinterpretation?
- *Perspective*
Does the language of the report clearly represent observations, findings, conclusions and recommendations as coming from the team as a whole, not just one member or one point of view?
- *Institutional Focus*
Does the report deal fairly with the entire institution, without advocating selectively for constituency or other special interests?

- *Documentation*

Does the narrative of the report support the recommendations? Do the observations, findings, and conclusions clearly state the context or evidence on which the statements are based? Are the specific Standards cited to refer the institution to statements of best practice and Commission expectations?

- *Tone*

Is the tone of the report appropriate to the circumstances and the intended effect? Unduly harsh criticism or language can affect the climate of an institution and can be harmful to individuals. The report should encourage the institution to take appropriate actions. Accreditation employs the language of diplomacy, while being direct and clear as to meaning.

- *Restraint*

Does the report stray into enforcement or advocacy of matters outside the purview of the Commission's standards of good practice? Advocacy of other positions, objectives, or compliance requirements, no matter how praiseworthy or fashionable, must be cast within the language of the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies.

- *Audience*

Consider who may read the report, and with what purposes in mind. The document will be available to any persistent reporter, government agency, or legislator. Review the report through public eyes.

8.3 Sample Format for Team Member Evaluation Report

Team members form Standard teams and will prepare a written report to the Team Chair on the areas they have been assigned. A sample template for the team members' evaluation report is included in Appendix D. In addition, the Team Chair has copies of reports from teams visiting other colleges which can be used as models. Team members also have the report from the previous team to the institution being evaluated. If the report from the previous team was not well constructed, it may be a source of examples of things not to do as an evaluator. Team members should be alert to changes in format or expectations which may have been developed since the time of the example evaluation reports.

8.4 Format of the Team Chair's Evaluation Report

The complete External Evaluation Report is written by the Team Chair. A template for the report is included below so that team members can understand what the entire report includes and how their report to the Team Chair contributes to the whole. Following is a format for the External Evaluation Report.

1. **Title Page**

This page states the name of the institution visited, dates of the visit, and name of the Team Chair/author of the report. It includes the statement: "This report represents the findings of the External Evaluation Team that visited (name of College) on (dates)."

2. Introduction

This section is a brief statement of the nature of the institution and its accreditation history. General observations about the institution and about the visit are stated in the introduction. If there are commendations to be made, they could be appropriately included in the introduction. Many external evaluation reports also include a list of the current team's recommendations numbered as they are in the body of the report.

3. Responses to Recommendations of the Previous Evaluation Team

This section of the report evaluates efforts by the institution to address previous recommendations, correct any deficiencies noted, and meet Accreditation Standards. The institution is free to disagree with the recommendations and to select its own solutions to concerns raised by a previous evaluation team. Thoughtful responses to team recommendations are expected from an institution, whether in agreement or not.

4. Evaluations Using Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies

This section provides most of the substance of the report and is the section to which each team member makes a contribution. The team members' reports, as described in Section 8.3 of this *Manual*, are used by the Team Chair in writing the External Evaluation Report for the college and the Commission. The teams' written reports note whether evidence has been offered to demonstrate that the institution is accomplishing its published objectives and that these objectives are appropriate to higher education and comply with Accreditation Standards. The report establishes whether the institution meets each Eligibility Requirement, Accreditation Standard, and pertinent Commission policies.

5. The Team Recommendation to the Commission

At the end of the visit, the team makes a confidential recommendation to the Commission concerning the accreditation status of the institution. At no time should the content of this recommendation be revealed to the institution. The range of actions available to the team is determined by Commission policy and has been summarized in Section 6.5 of this *Manual*. The complete Commission policy language for each action is found in the "Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions" in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*. A copy of the Confidential Recommendation Form is included in Appendix A. As stated earlier, the team should discuss these options at the last team meeting.

9 Principles of Effective Recommendations

1. Recommendations are the *team's best advice* on how an institution can act to correct deficiencies and to improve, but a team cannot usually describe all the steps needed.

The team needs to choose a level of generality/specificity that best serves the college's needs. Recommendations should be confined to those matters that involve the Accreditation Standards.
2. Recommendations should reference the Eligibility Requirements (ERs) and Accreditation Standards.

Both the college and the Commission should be able to tell at a glance which Standard(s) is being addressed. This can be accomplished by using language from the Standard and citing the Standard at the end of the recommendation (i.e., Standard II.A.6.c., ER 20).
3. Recommendations should flow logically and clearly from the observations, findings, and conclusions in the External Evaluation Report.

The college will have difficulty responding to and understanding the rationale for a recommendation that has no prior reference in the report.
4. Recommendations should make it clear whether they are designed to bring the institution to a level that meets the Standard ("In order to meet this Standard, the team recommends that the college...") or whether they are designed to strengthen a condition that already meets the Standard ("In order to increase effectiveness, the team recommends that the college...").

The content of the observations, findings, and conclusions sections of the External Evaluation Report should include a comment on whether or not the institution meets the Standard. ("The College does not meet the Standard," "The College partially meets the Standard," or "The College meets the Standard.")
5. Recommendations should set expectations that an institution take an action or complete a task, using language such as "complete the program review," "implement the new budgetary process," etc.

For example, recommendations that merely tell an institution to "design a new budgetary process" often result in an institution's failure to implement the recommendation, and recommendations that tell an institution to "review" or "consider" something frequently result in no action or improvement at all.
6. Recommendations which relate to several Standards should be combined into overarching recommendations.

This will help to avoid repeating recommendations over and over for each relevant Standard. Standard references should be rechecked when recommendations are combined since sometimes in the consolidation process, the links to specific Standards are weakened or lost. Overarching recommendations should be presented in their complete form in the Standard where they first occur and referenced thereafter.

-
7. **The report should be consistent in its stance on key issues.**
Complimenting a college and making a recommendation on the same issue elsewhere in the report leads to confusion, and such inconsistencies will only serve to weaken the impact of the report.
 8. **Recommendations should reference previous team recommendations if there is a continuing or recurring issue.** In the response to previous team recommendation section of the External Evaluation Report, the new recommendation should be referenced.
 9. **Recommendations should not contain references that are not part of the Standards.**
Terms like “Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),” “shared governance,” “matriculation,” and “collegial consultation” have specific meaning in the systems which govern some member institutions. While the principles included in these terms may be embodied in the Accreditation Standards, avoid creating confusion that may result from the use of these specialized terms.
 10. **Recommendations should not be based on the standards of governmental agencies, the legislature, or organizations.**
The relevant standards for the team are those of the ACCJC.
 11. **Recommendations should be diplomatic, but not to the point of vagueness.**
The college needs to know what the problem is and not be put in the position of trying to guess what the appropriate response might be. The same comment might be made about recommendations which are clichés, or unsupported generalities.
 12. **Recommendations should not be prescriptive.**
Describing how a problem should be solved should be left up to the institution.
 13. **Recommendations should not merely tell the college to “continue to” engage in a particular activity.**
Recommendations are intended to provide advice in areas where the college needs direction that will enable it to improve or meet the Standards.

10 Special Issues

10.1 Distance Education and Correspondence Education

Recognizing that most institutions must make use of the growing range of systems for delivery of instruction, including various electronic means, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges has adopted a policy based on principals of good practice to help assure that distance education complies with the Higher Education Opportunities Act -- 2008 (HEOA) and is characterized by the same concerns for quality, integrity, and effectiveness that apply to the more traditional face-to-face mode of instruction.

Distance education (DE) is defined as a formal interaction which uses one or more technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and which supports regular and substantive interaction between the students and instructor, either synchronously or asynchronously. Distance education often incorporates technologies such as the Internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, in conjunction with any of the other technologies.

Correspondence education (CE) is defined as education where the interaction between instructor and students is limited, is not regular and not substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student. Correspondence education may also use the technologies listed above.

Education delivered through these means may occur on campus as well as off campus. These interactions between the students and the faculty member may be synchronous or asynchronous.

For a complete definition of distance education and correspondence education, refer to the *Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education* and/or the Commission's "Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education." The team will determine whether the institution uses the appropriate definition for these alternate delivery modes.

Team evaluators are expected to assess distance learning activities of the college, using both the Accreditation Standards and the "Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education" found in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*.

In addition, the HEOA 2008 requires that institutions which offer distance education or correspondence education (DE/CE) must have processes in place through which the institution establishes that the student who registers in a DE/CE course or program is the same person who participates each time in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. This requirement will be met if the institution verifies the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the institution's discretion, such methods as a secure log-in and password, proctored examinations, and/or new or other technologies and/or practices that are developed and effective in verifying student identity. The

institution must also publish policies that ensure the protection of student privacy and will notify students at the time of class registration of any charges associated with verification of student identity.

10.2 Records of Student Complaints

Teams will review the formal complaints/grievances filed by members of the institution (faculty, staff, students) to determine that relevant policies and procedures are being followed and whether patterns to the complaints are obvious that could indicate a need to be addressed by the institution. The institution is expected to provide, for the team's review, complaint files for the period since the last comprehensive visit. The team will also ascertain whether the college website informs the public how to file a complaint with the ACCJC.

10.3 Off-Campus Sites

The College should provide a list of off-campus sites, including locations, programs offered, and enrollment. The team should make reference in its report to any new (since the last comprehensive review) sites that have not gone through the Commission's Substantive Change review process. The team needs to carefully review all off-campus sites where 50% or more of a degree, program, or certificate can be earned to assure they comply with Standards. (See Substantive Change Policy in the Accreditation Reference Handbook.)

10.4 Institutional Effectiveness

As mentioned elsewhere in this Manual, the institution must establish standards of success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution's mission. It will set expectations for course and program completion, student persistence from term to term, degree and certificate completion, State licensing examination scores, job placement, and transfer rates. The institution must demonstrate it gathers data on institution-set standards, analyzes results on student achievement, and makes appropriate changes/improvements to increase student performance, educational quality, and institutional effectiveness. Evaluation teams will identify these institution-set standards, determine their reasonableness, review the data and analyze the college's performance, describe the institution's overall performance, and determine whether the institution is meeting its standards.

10.5 International Programs

Colleges offering international programs for non-U.S. nationals must include an addendum to the Self Evaluation Report which demonstrates how the program conforms to the Commission's policy on "Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education for Non-U.S. Nationals." Teams must address these programs in the External Evaluation Report.

11 Frequently Asked Questions

How can the Self Evaluation Report be used as a primary source document?

The institution has the responsibility to show that it meets or exceeds the Accreditation Standards; therefore, accreditors expect the team to use the Institutional Self Evaluation Report as a primary source document for the external evaluation visit. A team should confirm that the assertions and evidence presented in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report are in fact observable at the institution.

Team members should begin by understanding the meaning of the Accreditation Standards. The self evaluation represents the institution's understanding of its performance against those Standards. The team should use the Self Evaluation Report to acquire, through interviews, meetings, direct observation, and examination of written evidence, enough information to support a professional judgment that the institution meets or exceeds the Standards.

How do I cross-validate? What happens if I get conflicting versions of an event?

In any college, there may be differences about what the facts are, about how the facts should be interpreted, and about what values the facts represent. In a good Self Evaluation Report, these differences will be directly addressed without pressure to reach a false consensus just to make the college look good. Just as validation involves a special type of assessment, cross-validating asks you to confirm that the information you receive, from whatever source, is correct, and not just the opinion or point of view of one individual or group.

There may be individuals at the college that may attest that certain information was not allowed to be in the Self Evaluation Report; or may suggest alternative interpretations are more appropriate; or may not appear to be credible witnesses on the surface; and others may try to use their cloak of office to give more credence to their statements. Team evaluators should verify through subsequent meetings and discussions with team members and college representatives whether or not information is reliable.

How do I organize all this information which comes from so many sources?

The best way to organize the information is to be fully prepared. That means careful reading of the entire Self Evaluation Report, understanding of the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards and Commission policies in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*, careful review of the *Guide to Evaluating Institutions* and the *Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education*, development of a strategy for meeting with individuals and groups, and thinking about the report before the visit begins.

Once the visit starts, team members will be literally bombarded by hundreds of bits and pieces of information. One way to organize the material is to prepare a report template of the Standards for which you have responsibility, using the report format guide in this *Manual*. As you read the Self Evaluation

Report, make brief notes and indicate any questions you have. Fill in your template with information gathered from the interviews and meetings as your observations and analyses. As you work through the visit with other team members assigned to work with you in Standard teams (described in Section 8.3 of this *Manual*), you will be able to see quickly what areas remain to be covered, what areas need further work, and what areas are complete. When your group completes an area, begin drafting your Standard team's report to the Team Chair for that section. You can always go back and change it as new information becomes available to you.

What do I do if I find an issue that isn't discussed in the Self Evaluation Report?

Remember that the Self Evaluation Report may have been printed as much as four months before the visit. By definition, it is a record of the status of the institution at that time. On the other hand, institutions do not stand still, waiting for the External Evaluation Team to arrive. Your Team Chair makes a pre-visit to the college shortly before the team visit and will brief you on any important events or changes at the institution to that date. Even with this information, more recent developments may be pertinent to the team's work. There have even been cases where the course of events has rendered much of the information in the Self Evaluation Report irrelevant or at least very much out of date. The institution also has a responsibility to provide important new information, especially if that information contradicts that found in the Self Evaluation Report. Often this takes the form of an update to the self evaluation document.

The first level of assessment should be to ask yourself whether the topic is an accreditation issue. In this situation, refer to the Accreditation Standards for information. You should certainly discuss the matter with the Team Chair. If the issue does not seem to be covered by one of the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies, discuss the matter with the team as a whole at the next team meeting. The team decides how to deal with it. If the situation is such that the institution should have provided more current information to the External Evaluation Team, then the team has the opportunity to comment on that in the report.

How should I handle information that does not relate to my specific assignment?

Take note of the information and its source, get copies of any printed information, and take the information back to the Team Chair and External Evaluation Team as a whole so the person with that responsibility can use it. You don't have time to go off on a tangent, but you do have a responsibility to gather useful information for your colleagues. At the same time, if you have not been able to validate some of your own areas, don't forget to ask your fellow team members if they have come across information that you need.

How should I respond to those who ask me to decide who is right and who is wrong on an issue?

There have been instances when individuals or groups on a campus believed that the purpose of the visit was to settle the disputes or disagreements present at the time of the visit. As tempting as it may be, expressing an opinion favoring one side or the other jeopardizes the independence and credibility of the team's work.

Politely, but firmly, remind the person or group that the Accreditation Standards are the basis of the External Evaluation Team's assessment and that it would be inappropriate for the team to interject itself into an individual or group dispute. This issue is especially delicate in individual personnel issues or issues where there may be legal action.

How do I write my report so it sounds like a team effort?

The overall style and tone of the report is very important. Team members are collegial, peer reviewers, not external inspectors. At the same time, the team has the responsibility to point out to the institution areas where the institution should address improvements and issues which indicate that the institution does not meet the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies.

The External Evaluation Report is an important document because it is the vehicle by which critical judgments about institutional performance and quality are expressed by the Commission, and through which formal advice about improvement is given. The report must be a credible and excellent document to have the desired effect. Consider that:

- The External Evaluation Report is analyzed in detail by members of the Commission in reaching decisions about the status of the institution;
- The External Evaluation Report is read by faculty, administrators, the public, and trustees of the institution;
- The External Evaluation Report has a life of six years, in that the institution must respond to recommendations in its Midterm Report (possibly Follow-Up Report(s)) and in the next scheduled educational quality and institutional effectiveness review; and
- The External Evaluation Report is permanently filed at the college and the Commission office. It may be examined by researchers; job applicants at the institution may request copies; and government agencies or the courts may subpoena them.

12 Outline of the Comprehensive External Evaluation Visit (External Evaluation Visit)

This section outlines the important characteristics and processes of a typical educational quality and institutional effectiveness evaluation. While each visit has its own unique characteristics and context, there is a fairly predictable pattern of events.

I. Before the Visit

A. Information from the Commission Office

1. Invitation to serve on an external evaluation team
2. Notice of training workshop
3. Peer Evaluator Training Workshop and resources
 - a. *Team Evaluator Manual*
 - b. *Guide to Evaluating Institutions*
 - c. *Guide to Evaluating Distance Education and Correspondence Education*
 - d. *Accreditation Reference Handbook*
 - e. Twelve Common Questions and Answers About Regional Accreditation
 - f. Peer Evaluator Training Materials
4. Report of previous External Evaluation Team
5. Commission action letters
6. Follow-Up Reports if available
7. Team roster

B. Information from the institution—at least eight weeks before the visit

1. Institutional Self Evaluation Report
2. Current catalog
3. Current class schedule

C. Information from the Team Chair

1. Introductory information and welcome
2. Team survey for making assignments
3. Team member analysis of Institutional Self Evaluation Report
4. Team schedules, logistical arrangements, and other matters of interest

D. Team Member Activities before the Visit

1. Complete the Accreditation Basics course online (for first-time evaluators)
2. Attend mandatory Peer Evaluator Training workshop
3. Read Commission manuals, guides, and related materials
4. Read entire Institutional Self Evaluation Report and related materials
5. Review electronic evidence provided by the institution
6. Respond promptly to Team Chair requests for information and reports
7. Prepare analyses of Institutional Self Evaluation Report as requested by the Team Chair
8. Prepare lists of individuals/groups for interviews to give to the Team Chair
9. Prepare analytical questions regarding the Institutional Self Evaluation Report
10. Make appropriate travel arrangements

II. During the Visit

A. The First Team Meeting

1. Arrive on time
2. Bring appropriate reports or analyses, according to Team Chair instructions
3. Discuss initial team reactions to the Self Evaluation Report, identify common concerns or themes, and determine team approach to institutional issues

B. The First Day

1. Attend opening meetings, campus tours as scheduled
2. Become familiar with documents presented electronically and in the team room; examine those documents relevant to the areas of primary and secondary responsibility
3. Schedule and conduct meetings and appointments, including evening and off-campus locations
4. Participate in team meetings as scheduled
5. Confer with other team members as needed

-
6. Determine validity of institutional response to previous recommendations
 7. Visit classes/centers/DE courses as appropriate
 8. Begin team discussion of core institutional themes
 9. Organize findings of first day activity and identify issues/questions for second day focus
 10. Continue writing first draft of report to Team Chair

C. The Second Day

1. Continuation of first day activities with special focus to:
 - a. Complete validation of areas not addressed the previous day
 - b. Pursue any issues delegated by the Team Chair
 - c. Conduct cross-validation of evidence for which conflicting information is provided
 - d. Conduct careful evaluation of institutional evidence to support assertions made in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report
 - e. Coordinate findings with other team members
2. Team meetings and discussion of core themes
 - a. Identify key team recommendations
 - b. Confirm that all Standards are being addressed by the team
 - c. Develop framework for the External Evaluation Report
 - d. Submit assigned Standard Team Member External Evaluation Report draft
 - e. Complete assigned Standard team member report
 - f. Develop formal recommendations

D. The Third Day

1. Complete gathering final information or evaluation of evidence
2. The final team meeting
 - a. Review team member findings, reports, and recommendations
 - b. Agree on team recommendations
 - c. Submit final assigned Standard team member report to Team Chair
 - d. Agree on confidential team recommendation to the Commission concerning accreditation status
 - e. Sign Confidential Recommendation Form
3. Attend final open meeting and leave campus promptly

III. After the Visit

- A. Send Expense Form to Commission office
- B. Review Team Chair's draft of the final External Evaluation Report
- C. Complete the Appraisal of the Team Chair and Evaluation Visit Form

Appendices

Appendix A

Confidential Recommendation Categories

For external evaluation visits in Application for Reaffirmation of Accreditation

The yellow Confidential Recommendation Form is provided to the Team Chair via a *Team Chair Manual* and should be signed by each team member before leaving the institution. The signatures indicate the team's confidential recommendation for accredited status of the institution and, verify that the team recommendation was discussed with every team member and approved by a majority of the team members.

The Team Chair sends the final External Evaluation Report and the team's Confidential Recommendation Form to the Commission office, including cover letters as appropriate. The Confidential Recommendation Form must not be retained or duplicated.

THE TEAM WILL SELECT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES:

ACTIONS ON ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS¹

Reaffirm Accreditation

No Follow-Up Report needed; or

Reaffirm accreditation with a Follow-Up Report in _____ months; or

Reaffirm accreditation with a Follow-Up Report and Evaluation Visit in _____ months

Defer action on accreditation for _____ months pending receipt of _____

Issue Warning with a Follow-Up Report in _____ months; or

Issue Warning with a Follow-Up Report and Evaluation Visit in _____ months

Impose Probation with a Follow-Up Report in _____ months; or

Impose Probation with a Follow-Up Report and Evaluation Visit in _____ months

Order Show Cause with a Show Cause Report and Visit in _____ months

Terminate Accreditation

¹ The team recommendation should be supported by the findings, analyses, and conclusions in the External Evaluation Report. If the recommendation is for any action other than "Reaffirm Accreditation," the Team Chair is asked to write a confidential letter summarizing reasons for the team recommendation, drawing from the External Evaluation Report.

Appendix B

Team Chair Appraisal of Evaluation Team Members Form

Your confidential appraisal of this evaluation team member is helpful to the ACCJC

Evaluation Visit To: _____

Confidential Appraisal Of: _____

Please respond to each statement listed below by using this scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Please rate the team member on the extent to which he/she:

Circle One

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Prepared for the visit in advance by studying the Institutional Self Evaluation Report and related materials. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Performed tasks as requested, including arriving and departing on schedule and preparing requested reports prior to the visit. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Displayed a helpful yet objective attitude toward the college, particularly in the areas of his or her assigned responsibilities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Contributed to team discussions and supported the team's efforts. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Understood the purposes of accreditation and his/her role in verifying the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Prepared good quality portions of the team report. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Was an asset to the external evaluation process. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Should be invited to serve on a future evaluation team. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Please indicate the Standard(s) the team member was assigned to, and his/her level of expertise in covering the assigned Standard(s) using the following scale: 1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Good, 5 = Excellent):

Standard(s): I II III IV

Expertise Level: 1 2 3 4 5

Please identify general strengths and weaknesses of the team member:

Additional Comments:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Team Member Appraisal of Team Chair and External Evaluation Visit Form

Your confidential appraisal of the Team Chair, including the external evaluation visit, is helpful to the ACCJC

Evaluation Visit To: _____

Confidential Appraisal Of: _____

Please respond to each statement listed below by using this scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Please rate the Team Chair on the extent to which he/she

Circle One

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Provided the necessary materials and information about the external evaluation visit in a timely manner. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Organized the visit well and made team assignments that were reasonable and appropriate. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Provided capable guidance to the team before, during, and after the external evaluation visit. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Made clear and helpful suggestions to the team as a whole and to individual team members. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Maintained an unbiased and objective attitude toward the college. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Should be invited again to serve as a Team Chair. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Suggestions for Improvement of the external evaluation process:

Signature _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Team Member External Evaluation Report Template

Standard: _____

Team Member _____

I. Responses to the Previous Team's Recommendations

The accreditation Standard team should assess the quality of the institution's responses to previous team's recommendations including the following:

- Recency of the response
- Completeness
- Validated reasons for non-response or a decision to address the issue differently
- Failure to address the recommendation(s)

II. General Observations

The Standard team may make observations on the overall quality of the Standard, some recent changes in the institution that warrant notice, attitude of the staff, etc. that were observed through interviews, documentation, meetings visits, etc.

III. Findings and Evidence

Each Standard team should include discussion of the findings (observations and analyses) about the degree to which the institution meets or does not meet each Standard. This narrative should cite the Standards discussed at the end of each paragraph and ensure that *each* Standard is discussed. Institutional strengths and weaknesses, areas where the institution does not meet or exceed Accreditation Standards, ways in which the institution can use the Self Evaluation Report and process for institutional improvement, and evaluation of the Self Evaluation Report itself might also be included in this section. The Commission asks that the team comment on the following special areas:

- the institution's progress in developing student learning outcomes, measuring them, and using the results of measurement to plan and implement institutional improvements regardless of mode of delivery or location;
- the degree of institutional dialog about student learning and student achievement as well as about institutional processes for evaluation and plans for improvement; evidence of a culture and practice that supports continuous improvement;
- the institution-set standards for student success with respect to student learning and achievement in relation to the institution's mission; and

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- longitudinal data on the institution's fiscal condition, including significant increases or decreases in revenues and enrollments, and identify concerns about fiscal stability.

Each Standard team should also include a discussion of the Standard team members' evidence used to conduct the analysis and reach conclusions.

IV. Conclusions

Each Standard team's statement should include a brief conclusion section that states whether the institution meets, partially meets, or does not meet each Standard. This section might also include general observations and should include any commendations the team wants to make on this Standard.

V. Recommendations

The Standard team should include a section of recommendations, if any, for the Standard. At the final team meeting, these draft recommendations may be accepted, modified, combined with other recommendations, or deleted. It is important that all recommendations be those which the entire team accepts, not just the perspective or interests of one person.