

TEAM EVALUATOR MANUAL

For use with the Accreditation Standards

*A Publication of the
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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 (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, academics, including 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 is 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 ERs and 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. 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 is based 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 ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies 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 plans for improvement as well as the team recommendations identified in the external evaluation processes;
 - possible follow-up visits by Commission representatives; and
 - further review and decision by the Commission.

The External Evaluation Team, made up of professional peers who volunteer their services, conducts a careful analysis of the Self Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness (Institutional Self Evaluation Report), the evidence provided by the institution, and an on-site evaluation. The team:

- evaluates the institution using the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies;
- verifies that the institution has addressed recommendations of previous visiting teams, resolved the deficiencies, complies with accreditation requirements, and has sustained the efforts to improve;
- finds evidence to determine whether or not the assertions in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report (that Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies are met) are accurate;
- notes problem areas inadequately recognized by the college itself;
- finds evidence that the institution has developed and adheres to sound evaluation and planning procedures to foster improvement of student achievement and student learning;
- verifies 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 the college's commitment to educational quality and institutional effectiveness; and
- recommends to the Commission the action on the accredited status of the institution (candidacy, initial accreditation, reaffirmation of accreditation, follow-up, sanction, etc.).

The importance of these judgments in maintaining the quality of education in all institutions requires the team's best efforts as it develops the External Evaluation Report to the institution and to the Commission. Team members have a 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, Accreditation Standards, and policies;
- the institution's distance education and correspondence education 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;
- data on the institution's fiscal condition including increases or decreases in revenues and enrollments;
- records of formal student complaints;
- all student and public information the college releases 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 President selects team chairs of external evaluation teams for their expertise and accreditation experience. The Team Chair generally has experience as a chief executive officer of an institution; others with senior level executive leadership experience may also chair.

2.3 Team Selection

Commission staff develops the peer evaluation teams from a roster of experienced educators who have exhibited leadership and balanced judgment. Comprehensive Evaluation teams are formed by the Vice President for Team Operations and are generally composed of eight to twelve individuals. In compliance with federal regulations, teams are comprised of both academics and administrators.

Teams consist of academic and administrative representatives. Academics include individuals with responsibility for instruction and/or instructional support. Academics may include faculty, deans, division/department chairs, directors, provosts, vice presidents whose primary professional responsibilities are in instruction or instructional support. Administrators include individuals who have primary responsibility to provide general oversight across an institution or district/system and those responsible for an administrative unit. Administrators may include chief executive officers, business officers, administrative vice presidents, directors, and others in a college or multi-college district/system. As appropriate, the Commission may appoint other representatives based on the characteristics of the institution being visited. These may include a governing board member, foundation director, or other relevant professional experts. Teams may also include Commissioners or Commission staff.

Teams consist of individuals with expertise and/or experience in learning outcomes and resources, career/technical education, distance/correspondence education, planning, research, and evaluation. 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 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 the team. The Team Chair also receives the most recent Annual Report, Annual Fiscal 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 the Commission eight weeks before the visit. Colleges may include additional materials that could inform the team and the Commission 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 encourage continuous improvement of institutional performance. The role of the peer evaluator is to determine if the college meets the ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies.

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
- 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);
- understand that peer review is the basis 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 does not exercise the regulatory control of state and federal governments, nor apply their mandates regarding collective bargaining, affirmative action, health and safety regulations, etc. 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, openness, and an attitude of 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. Sources of information that should remain confidential include 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 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 balanced judgment, 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 summary, the evaluator must be analytical, impartial, and able to make recommendations to the institution where it fails to meet ERs, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies.

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. (See Appendix G)

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. The team should carefully examine recommendations that required the institution to correct deficiencies in order to meet the Standards. The college was required to respond to every recommendation made by the previous external evaluation team. 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.

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*.

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 is equitable regardless of how they are organized, the individual colleges are held responsible for meeting the ERs, Standards, and Commission policies. Nonetheless, the Commission recognizes that the district/system plays a substantial role in the institution’s ability to meet the requirements 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*.

The college will supply evaluators to these institutions 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.)

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 team's time is used effectively. At the conclusion of the visit, the Team Chair conducts a final open meeting with members of the college community. At this meeting the Team Chair summarizes the major findings of the team.

4.1 Before the Visit

The Team Chair makes a visit to the campus prior to 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. This pre-visit to the college gives the Team Chair the opportunity to establish contacts 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 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 ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies.

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, the institution should have incorporated them 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 ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies 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 institutions and external evaluation teams will use to evaluate an institution. Colleges and evaluation teams need to carefully consider the different kinds of evidence required during an accreditation review - evidence of structure, resources, process and practice, student achievement, student learning, program review and integrated planning, etc. Evaluators should 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 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 positive way.

External evaluation teams have the responsibility of determining whether the institution meets or exceeds the ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies and 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 ALO, 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 team discusses the general plan of the visit 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. The institution should provide class schedules and staff contacts for the team. Schedules of faculty office hours and telephone directories are helpful. The team should schedule one or more open sessions where administrators, faculty, staff, and students of the college may meet with team members on aspects of the self evaluation. 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 against 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. The college will provide some members of the team access to the formal file of student complaints to ascertain if the institution reasonably addressed the issues. Occasionally, someone at the institution challenges the accreditation process, self evaluation, or visit. Information concerning these situations should be brought to the attention of the Team Chair and the team as a whole.

6.4 Team Meetings during the Visit

The External Evaluation Team holds meetings 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

Team members must submit written statements on their assignments prior to the end of the visit. The team will finalize its recommendations for institutional improvement or for resolution of deficiencies at the end of the visit. The Team Chair will share the subject of these recommendations with the institution's CEO in a private meeting, but neither the Chair nor members of the team should share the exact wording of the team recommendations with the institution or anyone else.

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 (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 The institution substantially meets or exceeds ERs, Standards, and Commission policies.
(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 The institution substantially meets or exceeds the ERs, Standards, and Commission policies, but has recommendations on a small number of issues of some urgency which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet Accreditation requirements.
 - c. Reaffirm Accreditation with a Follow-Up Report and Visit The institution substantially meets or exceeds the ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies but has recommendations on a small number of issues which, if not addressed immediately, may threaten the ability of the institution to continue to meet Accreditation requirements. A visit is required to verify the institution's compliance.
 - d. Defer Action on Accreditation A Commission decision on accredited status should be postponed pending receipt of specified additional information from the institution or to allow the institution to correct a serious deficiency within six months or less. A visit may be required following the institution's response.
 - e. Issue a Warning The institution has deviated from the ERs, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies to an extent that would give concern to the Commission.
 - f. Impose Probation The institution has deviated significantly from the ERs, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies.
 - g. Order Show Cause The institution is in substantial non-compliance with ERs, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies and should be required to Show Cause why its accreditation should not be withdrawn.
 - h. Terminate Accreditation The institution has failed to correct matters of which it has been given notice or is significantly out of compliance with the ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies and can no longer 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 Chair does not discuss the team's confidential recommendation to the Commission, but the Team Chair reviews the subject of 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 but does not read team recommendations word for word. 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 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. Team members must attach receipts for public transportation and for lodging and meals to the expense form. Team members must secure approval in advance from the Commission staff for rental cars. All expenses claimed by the team must be submitted with original receipts within 30 days of the visit.

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, Eligibility Requirement, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies;
- make favorable comments when commendation is due;
- provide evidence to support conclusions and 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 recommendations 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. Appendix D provides a sample template for the team members' evaluation report. 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 format 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. Also, refer to the Formatting and Style Sheet for External Evaluation Reports (Appendix E).

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. The team will make general observations about the

institution and about the visit in the introduction. If the team is making commendations, 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 team reveal the content of this recommendation to the institution or anyone else. 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. Each team member must sign the Confidential Recommendation Form.

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 balance of generality/specificity that best serves the college's needs. Recommendations should be confined to those matters that involve the ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies.

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 ER(s), Standard(s), and Commission policies are 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, Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education).

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. The team should carefully check Standard references 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.

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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 usefulness 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 ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies.**
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 meet the Standards or improve.

10 Special Issues

10.1 Distance Education and Correspondence Education (Addressed in Standards II.A, II.B, II.C and the Policy on Distance Education and on 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) 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 **(Addressed in Standard II.B and Policy on Student and Public Complaints against Institutions)**

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 **(Addressed in Standards II.A, II.B, II.C, and III.B)**

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 participated in 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 Institution-Set Standards **(Addressed in Standard I.B)**

As mentioned previously 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 **(Addressed in Standard II.A, II.B, II.C and Policy on Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals)**

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.

10.6 Commission Policies (Addressed in a separate section immediately preceding Standard I)

Colleges must address, and teams must verify, how well they comply with Commission policies, specifically the following:

- Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education
- Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV
- Policy on Representation of Accredited Status
- Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits
- Policy on Institutional Integrity and Ethics
- Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations
- Policy on Student and Public Complaints against Institutions

10.7 Evaluation Team Responsibilities for Compliance with United States Department of Education Regulations (Appendix F)

10.8 Clock-to-Credit-Hour Conversion Requirements (Appendix G)

Checklist for Compliance with Federal Regulations and Commission Policies (Appendix H)

A Checklist for teams to use to when evaluating institutional compliance with Federal Regulations and Commission policies, in addition to what is specifically evaluated within the language of the Accreditation Standards, is provided for use during the external evaluation visit. For each category, team members are asked to evaluate the specifics of federal regulations or Commission policies, reach a conclusion regarding the institution's compliance, and provide appropriate narrative. **NOTE: This checklist will become part of the External Evaluation Team Report.**

11 Frequently Asked Questions

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

The institution has the responsibility to demonstrate that it meets or exceeds the ERs, Accreditation Standards, and Commission policies; 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, the institution will have directly addressed these differences 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 position or 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* (Appendix D). 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 institution may have printed the Self Evaluation Report 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 clearly-written 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 the college community and/or researchers; job applicants at the institution may request copies; and government agencies or the courts may subpoena them.

12 Outline of the 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(s)
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 overview of the 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 and distance education programs and services
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 and DE/CE 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 (*with receipts*) to Commission office within 30 days
- 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 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. Eligibility Requirements

Team members will ascertain whether the institution continues to meet each Eligibility Requirements through an examination of appropriate evidence.

III. Compliance with Commission Policies

The team will ascertain whether the institution is in compliance with the Commission policies noted in Section 10.6 of this *Manual*.

IV. Accreditation Standards

The members of the evaluation team assigned to specific Standards will ensure that each Standard is covered in the following fashion:

A. General Observations

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

B. 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 requires 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
 - 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 to support conclusions.

C. 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 the team wants to make on this Standard.

D. 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.

Appendix E: Suggested Formatting and Style Sheet for External Evaluation Reports

In Document	Formatting and Style
Titles	Times New Roman, 14 pt., bold
Subheadings	Times New Roman, 12 pt., bold
Body text	Times New Roman, 12 pt., Left Justified
Page numbers	Place in footer, either in bottom right or center
Margins	1.25" left; 1" right; 1" top; 1" bottom
• Bullets	Circle bullet, Times New Roman, 12 pt
<u>Underline</u>	Use single line only. Do not use excessively.
<i>Italics</i>	Use italic font to emphasize, not bold font.
Acronyms	Spell out the names of groups on the first reference, followed by the acronym, e.g., the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). The acronym for U.S. Department of Education is USDE (not U.S.D.E.) The acronym may be used alone on second reference.
Numbers	Spell out numbers one through and including ten; use numbers for larger numbers. A number that begins a sentence should be spelled out. Credit hours should be expressed as numerals.
Abbreviations	Spell out state names in text; abbreviate them only in addresses, lists, etc. Spell out "and" instead of the symbol "&" unless it is part of an official company name.
Commas	When a conjunction joins the last two elements in a series, use a comma before the conjunction (e.g., board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students). Commas always go inside quotation marks. Do not use excessively.
Colons	Colons go outside quotation marks unless they are part of the quotation itself.
Percentages	Spell out "percent." Use the symbol (%) only in scientific, technical, or statistical copy.
Latin terms	Do not underline or italicize.
a.m./p.m.	Express as "a.m." and "p.m." with periods and lowercase.

In Document	Formatting and Style
Hyphens	<p>No spacing before or after hyphens.</p> <p>Hyphenate two-word adjectives used with a compound modifier (e.g., high-unit program).</p> <p>Do not hyphenate words beginning with “non,” except those containing a proper noun (e.g., nonresident; non-German; non-degree-seeking) or when the second element consists of more than one word (e.g., a full-time student; attending school full time).</p> <p>Do not hyphenate words with the suffix “wide” (e.g., District wide; College wide).</p>
Capitalization	<p>Capitalize the following words or phrases when referencing the Commission and/or the ACCJC Accreditation Standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Commission” • “Accreditation Standards” • “Standards” (e.g., “In order to meet Commission Standards...”) <p>Capitalize “College” and “District” when referencing a specific college or district (i.e., capitalize when you can replace “College” with a college name and when you can replace “District” with a district name).</p> <p>Capitalize the first word following a colon when the word begins a complete sentence.</p> <p>Capitalize titles preceding names (e.g., Bay College President Chris Smith).</p> <p><i>Do not</i> capitalize the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “federal” or “state,” unless it is capitalized in an official name. • “fall” or “spring” (e.g., fall semester enrollment). • Titles following names or standing alone (e.g., Chris Smith, president of Bay College; Marcia S. Jones became president in 2001).

WRITING STYLE

Be accurate. Nothing else matters if facts are not correct.

Do not write in the first person; use third person.

Use the active voice. The active voice is more direct and vigorous than the passive voice.

Passive example: Commencement was attended by hundreds of people.

Active example: Hundreds of people attended commencement.

Be concise. Avoid jargon in text. Keep it as simple as possible.

Be specific, definite, clear, and concrete. Explicit writing holds the attention of readers.

Appendix F:

Selected Evaluation Team Responsibilities for Compliance with U.S. Department of Education (USDE) Regulations

PARAGRAPH OF 34 C.F.R.	USDE REGULATION AND USDE GUIDELINES FOR 34 C.F.R. § 602, JANUARY 2012	EVALUATION TEAM TASK
602.16(a)(1)(i)	<p>Standards effectively address “success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution’s mission,... including as appropriate consideration of course completion, State licensing examinations, and job placement rates.”</p> <p>Whether institutionally-developed standards to demonstrate student success are being used by the accreditor in the accreditation assessment, and the institution's performance with respect to student achievement is assessed.</p>	<p>Address in Standard I.B.</p> <p>The institution must set standards for satisfactory performance of student success (student achievement and student learning).</p> <p>The evaluation teams examine the institution-set standards for student success and achievement and assess their appropriateness. Evaluation teams examine institution summary data on course completion rates, licensure pass rates where available, and job placement rates where available. The team also examines program/certificate completion data, and graduation data provided by the college. These data are examined in the context of the institution-set standards of satisfactory performance and goals for improvement of student success (student achievement and student learning). The evaluation team cites this information as evidence of the institution’s accomplishment of mission. The evaluation team report cites the use of this evidence in describing its evaluation of how well the institution fulfills its mission.</p> <p><i>(Standards I.B; I.B.1-6; II.A; II.A.1.c; II.A.2.a,b, f, g, h, I; II.A.5; II.A.6; ER 10-Student Learning and Achievement)</i></p>
<p>602.16(a)(1)(viii)</p> <p>602.24(e)</p> <p>602.24(f)</p> <p>As pertains to:</p> <p>600.2 (Credit Hour)</p> <p>668.8(k),(l)</p>	<p>Standards effectively address the quality of the institution or program in: “ensuring that any awarded academic credits/degrees/credentials conform to commonly accepted practice including time invested and content mastered.”</p> <p>If the institution converts clock hours to credit hours for purposes of federal financial aid, the institution adheres to the Department of Education’s 2011 conversion formula</p>	<p>Address in Standard II.A.</p> <p>The evaluation team will examine and evaluate the reliability and accuracy of the institution’s assignment of credit hours by reviewing the institution’s related policies and procedures and application of those policies and procedures to programs and courses. The evaluation team samples at least five course outlines and corresponding syllabi, and examines the class schedule, to determine that the institution has assigned an appropriate amount of work to conform to the Carnegie Unit, and this sampling must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one distance education course • At least one classroom based course with a laboratory • At least one course that provides for clinical practice, if applicable to the institution • At least one class that converts clock hours to credit hours for purposes of awarding credit, if the institution does so.

		<p>The evaluation team will examine institutional policies and procedures for measuring the program length and intended outcomes of degrees and certificates offered.</p> <p>The evaluation team will confirm the institution has transfer of credit policies that are publicly disclosed and that include a statement of the criteria regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education.</p> <p>Since USDE regulations establish a <i>minimum</i> standard, and institutions may choose to include more work for their credit hours than the minimum amount, credit hours at one institution will not necessarily equate to credit hours at another institution for a similar program.</p> <p>The evaluation team will, in the External Evaluation Report narrative of its findings, cite the institution’s policy, procedure, class and program evidence examined.</p> <p><i>(Standards I.B; I.B.1-6; II.A; II.A.1; II.A.2; II.A.2.h; II.A.6.a-c; ER 9-Academic Credit; Policy on Award of Credit; Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits; Policy on Transfer of Credit)</i></p>
<p>602.16(a)(1)(ix)</p> <p>And related</p> <p>668.43</p>	<p>The standards effectively address the quality of the institution in addressing: “the Record of student complaints received by, or available to, the agency.”</p> <p>The institution “must make readily available to enrolled and prospective students... (a)(6) the names of associations, agencies or governmental bodies that accredit, approve or license the institution and its programs and the procedures by which documents describing that activity may be reviewed under paragraph (b).” (b) “the institution must make available for review to any student or prospective student upon request a copy of the documents describing an institutions</p>	<p>Address in Standard II.B.</p> <p>The evaluation team will be sent a copy of any complaints that have been filed with the ACCJC in accordance with the criteria for filing such complaints. The evaluation team will examine the institution’s procedures which define student grievances/complaints and the manner in which they are received and will examine the institution’s files containing student complaints/grievances for the five years preceding a comprehensive evaluation. The evaluation team will examine any patterns observed in the complaints to determine whether they constitute evidence that indicates the institution has failed to comply with Accreditation Standards, ERs and policies. Any deficiencies will be identified in the team report as such.</p> <p><i>(Standards II.B; II.B.2.c; II.B.3 a; II.B.4; ER 20-Public Information; Policy on Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions)</i></p> <p>The evaluation team will examine the institution’s means of providing to any student or prospective student information about its accrediting bodies and governmental (usually state) licensing or approval bodies, copies of documents describing an institution’s accreditation or governmental approval, as well as contact information for filing complaints with such bodies. The team report will describe the institution’s compliance with this new requirement.</p>

	<p>accreditation and its State, Federal or tribal approval or licensing. The institution must also provide (those persons) with contact information for filing complaints with its accreditor and with its State approval or licensing entity and any other relevant State official or agency that would appropriately handle a student’s complaint.”</p>	<p><i>(ER 20 – Public Information)</i></p> <p>The evaluation team will examine whether institutions make available to students located in states other than the institution’s home state, and receiving instruction from the institution (via distance education or correspondence education, or by other means) the contact information for filing complaints with the relevant governmental or approval body in that state in which the student is located.</p>
<p>602.17(f)</p>	<p>The agency provides a detailed written report that assesses the institution’s compliance with the agency’s standards, including areas needing improvement AND the institution’s performance with respect to student achievement.</p>	<p>Address in Standard I.B.</p> <p>The evaluation team will examine student achievement data at the programmatic and institutional levels. The institution must set standards of satisfactory performance for student achievement, and evaluate itself against those standards, at the programmatic and institutional levels. The evaluation teams must examine the institution’s own analyses, and also determine whether the institution’s standards for student achievement are reasonable.</p> <p>The examination will assess the institution’s performance with respect to the institution-set standards. The examination will be based upon data, and it will reference data cited above re 602.16, as well as other factors used by the institution. The External Evaluation Report will detail the institution’s performance, noting both effective performance and areas in which improvement is needed.</p> <p><i>(Standard I.B.; Standard II.A.; Standard II.B.)</i></p>
<p>602.17(g)</p>	<p>Distance and Correspondence Education: During institutional reviews, the agency applies the definitions of "distance education" and "correspondence education" found in §602.3 to determine which mode of delivery is being employed.</p> <p>The agency requires institutions that offer distance education or correspondence education to have processes in place through which</p>	<p>Address in Standard II.A.</p> <p>The evaluation team will review the manner in which the institution determines if a course is offered by distance education or correspondence education. The team will examine the delivery mode of a sampling of courses where students are separated from the instructors. The team must assess whether the courses are distance education (with regular and substantive interaction with the instructor, initiated by the instructor, and online activities are included as part of a student’s grade) or correspondence education (online activities are primarily “paperwork related,” including reading posted materials, posting homework and completing exams, and interaction with the instructor is initiated by the student as needed). Use of a learning management system alone will not determine whether the mode is distance education; course syllabi, grading policy, and actual instructional delivery determine how the mode is characterized for USDE purposes. The team will describe its</p>

	<p>the institution establishes that the student who registers in a distance education or correspondence course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. The agency meets this requirement if it:</p> <p>1. Requires institutions to verify the identity of a student who participates in a class or program by using methods such as:</p> <p>(i) A secure log in and passcode (ii) Proctored examinations (iii) New or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identity</p>	<p>findings and the team’s judgment of the appropriateness of institutional application of the USDE delivery mode definitions.</p> <p>The evaluation team will examine the efficacy of methods that the institution uses to verify the identity of students enrolled in distance education and correspondence education classes. The evaluation team will describe whether the institution uses the secure log in and password for its distance education classes. If the institution uses other methods for its distance education classes or correspondence classes, the evaluation team will describe those methods and the team’s judgment of their efficacy in preserving the integrity of the credits and grades awarded.</p> <p><i>(Standards II.A; II.A.1; II.A.2; II.A.2.c, d, e; II.A.7; II.B.1; II.B.2.c; II.A.3.a; II.C.1; Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education)</i></p>
602.19 (a-e)	<p>The agency must demonstrate that it has and effectively applies a set of monitoring and evaluation approaches that enable the agency to identify ...institutional strengths and stability. These approaches must include ... collection and analysis of key data and indicators, including fiscal information and measures of student achievement.</p>	<p>Address in Standard III.D. and I.B.</p> <p>Comprehensive evaluation teams must examine the institution’s longitudinal data on the institution’s fiscal condition, including significant increases or decreases in revenues and enrollments, and identify any team concerns about fiscal stability. Comments should be included in Standard III.D.</p> <p><i>(Standards III.D; III.D.1.b, c, d; III.D.2.b,c,g; III.D.3; ER 17-Financial Resources; ER 18-Financial Accountability)</i></p> <p>Comprehensive evaluation teams must examine the institution’s longitudinal data on student achievement (course completion, program/certificate completion, graduation, licensure, job placement data) and identify any team concerns about stability and achievement of mission, as well as any trends that identify strengthened institutional performance.</p> <p><i>(Standards I.B; I.B.1-6; II.A.1.c; II.A.2.a,b; II.A.2.f-i; II.A.5; ER 10-Student Learning and Achievement)</i></p>

Appendix G: Clock-to-Credit-Hour Conversion Requirements

General

- Are in §668.8(k) and (l), October 29, 2010 program integrity final regulations, p. 66949-66950 (preamble: pp. 66854-66857)
- Is an exception to the credit-hour definition that applies for purposes of the title IV, HEA programs
- Modified regulations—
 - The requirements for when an institution must use clock hours for undergraduate programs, and
 - The standards for clock-to-credit-hour conversions

Clock Hour Only: not eligible for conversion - §668.8(k)(2)

- Section 668.8(k)(2) applies to degree and non-degree programs.
- The program is required to be measured in clock hours for Federal or State approval except if required for only a limited component of the program.
- Completing clock hours is a requirement for licensure to practice an occupation except if required for a limited component of the program.
- The credit hours awarded are not in compliance with the definition of a credit hour.
- The institution does not provide the clock hours that are the basis for credit hours and does not require attendance in those hours in the case of a program that might otherwise qualify to do conversion to credit hours.

No Conversion required - §668.8(k)(1)

- Unless §668.8(k)(2) applies, an undergraduate program may use credit hours as defined in §600.2 without applying the conversion formula if—
 - a) The program is at least two academic years in length and provides an associate degree, a bachelor's degree, a professional degree, or an equivalent degree as determined by the Secretary, or
 - b) The program is a nondegree program with—
 - Each course in the program being fully acceptable toward a degree program at the institution; and
 - The institution able to demonstrate that students enroll in, and graduate from, that degree program.
- A program not meeting a) or b) must use the conversion formula or use clock hours.

New Conversion Ratios - §668.8(l)(1)

- One semester or trimester credit hour is equal to at least 37.5 clock hours.
- One quarter credit hour is equal to at least 25 clock hours.

New Conversion Ratios Exception - §668.8(l)(2)

- Is an exception to new ratios for programs that demonstrate that the credit hours meet new definition and there are no deficiencies identified by accreditor, or if applicable State approving agency
- Must base evaluation on individual coursework components of a program, e.g., classroom study versus practica or labs with little outside study
- Regardless, must meet these minimums:
 - One semester or trimester credit hour is equal to at least 30 clock hours.
 - One quarter credit hour is equal to at least 20 clock hours.

Conversion Case Study (to semester hours)

- A program with 720 clock hours consists of—
 - 5 classroom courses with 120 clock hours each, and
 - A 120 clock-hour externship with no out-of-class student work.
- The institution determines that for—
 - The first 3 classroom courses, a student generally is required to perform 40 hours of out-of-class work for each course, and
 - The last 2 classroom courses have 8 hours of out-of-class work for each course.
- Two options
 - Default option: convert only based on clock hours and ignore any out-of-class work
 - Full formula option: take into account both clock hours and out-of-class work to determine the maximum allowable credit hours
 - Four possible outcomes depending on institutional policy for method and rounding: 19.2 or 18 using Default option and 22.026 or 21 using Full Formula option

-
- Default option: use the default 37.5 clock hours per semester hour, ignoring the out-of-class work [conversion must be course by course]

$$120 / 37.5 = 3.2 \text{ semester hours per course (3, always round down course-by-course)}$$

- Converted program = $3.2 * 6 = 19.2$ semester hours (or $3 * 6 = 18$ semester hours, if rounding)

- Full formula option

Illustrates:

- Must evaluate on individual coursework components of a program
- Total clock hours and out-of-class student work is irrelevant
- Must meet limitation for the minimum number of clock hours per credit hour in addition to out-of-class work
- Excess out-of-class student work per credit hour does not carry over between courses or educational activities in a program
- Use exact calculation including any fractions of credit hours or round down any fraction, including a fraction equal to or greater than $\frac{1}{2}$
- Rounding on individual course or educational activity, not on the total

Full Formula Option

	In-class clock hours		Allowable out-of-class prep hours	Total clock and prep hours	Semester hours	Semester hours (rounded)	Notes
Course #1 (40 hours of actual out-of-class student work)	120	+	$7.5 * 4 = 30$	150	4	4	(A), (C)
Course #2 (40 hours of actual out-of-class student work)	120	+	$7.5 * 4 = 30$	150	4	4	(A), (C)
Course #3 (40 hours of actual out-of-class student work)	120	+	$7.5 * 4 = 30$	150	4	4	(A), (C)
Course #4 (8 hours of actual out-of-class student work)	120	+	8	128	3.413	3	(B), (D)
Course #5 (8 hours of actual out-of-class student work)	120	+	8	128	3.413	3	(B), (D)
Externship (no out-of-class student work)	120	+	0	120	3.2	3	(E)
Total clock hours and out-of-class student work (amount not relevant)				826			
Total semester hours if no rounding					22.026		
Total semester hours if rounding (must round down any fractions to ensure no overawards)						21	

NOTES:

Limitation: the rules do not allow more than 7.5 hours of out-of-class prep for every 30 hours in class

(A) 120 in-class hours divided by 30 hours = 4 There are 10 hours of out-of-class prep per 30 clock hours ($40/4 = 10$), but cannot have more than 7.5 ($4 * 7.5 = 30$)

(B) 120 in-class hours divided by 30 hours = 4 There are 7.5 or fewer hours of out-of-class prep per 30 clock hours ($8/4 = 2$), so use actual hours of out-of-class prep (8)

Semester hours per course

(C) 150 total clock and prep hours divided by 37.5 = 4

(D) 128 total clock and prep hours divided by 37.5 = 3.413

(E) 120 total clock hours divided by 37.5 = 3.2

Appendix H: Checklist for Evaluating Compliance with Federal Regulations and Commission Policies

(in addition to what is specifically evaluated within the language of Accreditation Standards)

NOTE: This checklist will become part of the external evaluation team report. It is also an appendix in the team training materials.

The team should place a check mark next to each item when it has been evaluated. For each category, the team should also complete the conclusion check-off and insert appropriate narrative to alert any concerns or noncompliance areas.

Public Notification of an Evaluation Visit and Third Party Comment

- _____ The institution has made an appropriate and timely effort to solicit third party comment in advance of a comprehensive evaluation visit.
- _____ The institution cooperates with the evaluation team in any necessary follow-up related to the third party comment.
- _____ The institution demonstrates compliance with the *Commission Policy on Rights and Responsibilities of the Commission and Member Institutions* as to third party comment.

Regulation citation: 602.23(b).

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Standards and Performance with Respect to Student Achievement

- _____ The institution has defined elements of student achievement performance across the institution, and has identified the expected measure of performance within each defined element. Course completion is included as one of these elements of student achievement. Other elements of student achievement performance for measurement have been determined as appropriate to the institution's mission.
- _____ The institution has defined elements of student achievement performance within each instructional program, and has identified the expected measure of performance within each defined element. The defined elements include, but are not limited to, job placement rates for program completers, and for programs in fields where licensure is required, the licensure examination passage rates for program completers.
- _____ The institution-set standards for programs and across the institution are relevant to guide self-evaluation and institutional improvement; the defined elements and expected performance levels are appropriate within higher education; the results are reported regularly across the campus; and the definition of elements and results are used in program-level and institution-wide planning to evaluate how well the institution fulfills its mission, to determine needed changes, to allocating resources, and to make improvements.
- _____ The institution analyzes its performance as to the institution-set standards and as to student achievement, and takes appropriate measures in areas where its performance is not at the expected level.

Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(i); 602.17(f); 602.19 (a-e).

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

- Credit hour assignments and degree program lengths are within the range of good practice in higher education (in policy and procedure).
- The assignment of credit hours and degree program lengths is verified by the institution, and is reliable and accurate across classroom based courses, laboratory classes, distance education classes, and for courses that involve clinical practice (if applicable to the institution).
- Tuition is consistent across degree programs (or there is a rational basis for any program-specific tuition).
- Any clock hour conversions to credit hours adhere to the Department of Education's conversion formula, both in policy and procedure, and in practice.
- The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Institutional Degrees and Credits*.

Regulation citations: 600.2 (definition of credit hour); 602.16(a)(1)(viii); 602.24(e), (f); 668.2; 668.9.

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Transfer Policies

- Transfer policies are appropriately disclosed to students and to the public.
- Policies contain information about the criteria the institution uses to accept credits for transfer.
- The institution complies with the Commission *Policy on Transfer of Credit*.

Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(viii); 602.17(a)(3); 602.24(e); 668.43(a)(ii).

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Distance Education and Correspondence Education

- _____ The institution has policies and procedures for defining and classifying a course as offered by distance education or correspondence education, in alignment with USDE definitions.
- _____ There is an accurate and consistent application of the policies and procedures for determining if a course is offered by distance education (with regular and substantive interaction with the instructor, initiated by the instructor, and online activities are included as part of a student's grade) or correspondence education (online activities are primarily "paperwork related," including reading posted materials, posting homework and completing examinations, and interaction with the instructor is initiated by the student as needed).
- _____ The institution has appropriate means and consistently applies those means for verifying the identity of a student who participates in a distance education or correspondence education course or program, and for ensuring that student information is protected.
- _____ The technology infrastructure is sufficient to maintain and sustain the distance education and correspondence education offerings.
- _____ The institution demonstrates compliance with the *Commission Policy on Distance Education and Correspondence Education*.

Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(iv), (vi); 602.17(g); 668.38.

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Student Complaints

- _____ The institution has clear policies and procedures for handling student complaints, and the current policies and procedures are accessible to students in the college catalog and online.
- _____ The student complaint files for the previous six years (since the last comprehensive evaluation) are available; the files demonstrate accurate implementation of the complaint policies and procedures.
- _____ The team analysis of the student complaint files identifies any issues that may be indicative of the institution's noncompliance with any Accreditation Standards.
- _____ The institution posts on its website the names of associations, agencies and governmental bodies that accredit, approve, or license the institution and any of its programs, and provides contact information for filing complaints with such entities.
- _____ The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Representation of Accredited Status* and the *Policy on Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions*.

Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(ix); 668.43.

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Institutional Disclosure and Advertising and Recruitment Materials

- The institution provides accurate, timely (current), and appropriately detailed information to students and the public about its programs, locations, and policies.
- The institution complies with the *Commission Policy on Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status*.
- The institution provides required information concerning its accredited status as described above in the section on Student Complaints.

Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(vii); 668.6.

Conclusion Check-Off (mark one):

- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative:

Title IV Compliance

- _____ The institution has presented evidence on the required components of the Title IV Program, including findings from any audits and program or other review activities by the USDE.
- _____ The institution has addressed any issues raised by the USDE as to financial responsibility requirements, program record-keeping, etc. If issues were not timely addressed, the institution demonstrates it has the fiscal and administrative capacity to timely address issues in the future and to retain compliance with Title IV program requirements.
- _____ The institution's student loan default rates are within the acceptable range defined by the USDE. Remedial efforts have been undertaken when default rates near or meet a level outside the acceptable range.
- _____ Contractual relationships of the institution to offer or receive educational, library, and support services meet the Accreditation Standards and have been approved by the Commission through substantive change if required.
- _____ The institution demonstrates compliance with the Commission *Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations* and the *Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV*.

Regulation citations: 602.16(a)(1)(v); 602.16(a)(1)(x); 602.19(b); 668.5; 668.15; 668.16; 668.71 et seq.

Conclusion Check-Off:

- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements.
- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and has found the institution to meet the Commission's requirements, but that follow-up is recommended.
- _____ The team has reviewed the elements of this component and found the institution does not meet the Commission's requirements.

Narrative: