

# Visiting Committee Chairperson Checklist

## Previsit Preparation

- \_\_\_ 1. Attend WASC chair training.
- \_\_\_ 2. Study the school description, the *Focus on Learning* manual, and the reference cards. (Sections of *Focus on Learning* to emphasize: The Big Picture; the Self-Study: Background Information; The Self-Study; The Tools; The Visit; The Follow-up; Expected Schoolwide Learning Results; Gathering Evidence.)
- \_\_\_ 3. Review the parameters to be accomplished through the self-study:
  - The involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in the self-study
  - The clarification of the school's purpose and expected schoolwide learning results
  - The assessment of the actual student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the criteria
  - The development of a schoolwide action plan and integrated subject area/support program action steps to address identified growth needs
  - The development and implementation of an accountability system for monitoring the accomplishment of the schoolwide action plan
- \_\_\_ 4. Review the WASC criteria, suggested evidence, and appropriate curricular and educational references.
- \_\_\_ 5. Begin regular communication with the chief administrator and self-study coordinator (SC) to answer questions or give assistance.
- \_\_\_ 6. Arrange a one-day preliminary visit. During the visit, plan to meet with the chief administrator or head of school, self-study coordinator, leadership team, and other staff members (possibly speak briefly to entire staff). Discuss the logistics of the visit.
- \_\_\_ 7. Communicate with school about the following issues (many of these issues can be discussed at the preliminary visit):
  - a. The calendar and timeline for the self-study process
  - b. Orientation of staff: overview of accreditation process
  - c. Committee organization/membership/designated criteria

**Note:** As long as the school adheres to the parameters, there is flexibility in the self-study process. If the school modifies the suggested self-study process, an explanation of how the parameters have been met should be included.

  - Is there active involvement of all staff members, including the school's administration, and strong representation of other school community groups, i.e., members of Home Groups and Schoolwide Focus Groups?
  - How is the Leadership Team taking an active role in facilitating the entire self-study process?

- d. Development of student/community profile
  - How is the Leadership Team ensuring that the school is considering ALL student characteristics/subpopulations in the self-study process?
- e. Clarification of expected schoolwide learning results
  - How is the school using the student profile information in the process of developing/refining its expected schoolwide learning results? How is the school defining quality accomplishments of the expected schoolwide learning results for all students through all its programs?
  - Are the expected schoolwide learning results driving the work of the school? To what degree are they measurable?  
**Note:** It is expected that there will be a range/continuum in the development of these results.
  - Is the school examining student success in meeting the expected schoolwide learning results as an integral part of its comparison to the criteria?
- f. Progress since previous full self-study
  - Is the school prioritizing and responding to each recommendation from the previous full self-study?
- g. Analysis of student program, both discipline-specific and support areas
  - How has evidence been gathered and analyzed with respect to curricular references, the expected schoolwide learning results, and the criteria?
- h. Use of WASC criteria and expected schoolwide learning results, collection and analysis of evidence, synthesis of findings, and the writing of the focus group summaries.
  - Are all certified staff members/or other representative stakeholders using the criteria and expected schoolwide learning results as the basis for determining “what exists,” “how effective is it,” and “where do we want to be”?
  - Is the information from the student/community profile being used to ensure that the comparison to the criteria is being conducted with respect to all students?
  - How are all staff members and other school community members taking an in-depth look at the program for all students?
  - How is this evidence being organized and used in the schoolwide focus group discussions?
  - How is additional evidence needed by the respective schoolwide focus groups being gathered and analyzed?
- i. Review of school report’s table of contents, a sample of schoolwide focus group summary, and an action plan section
  - Does each schoolwide focus group summary provide the critical findings and evidence that supports the identified growth needs and suggested “next steps”?

- Are the action plan sections supported by the subject area/support committees? Are they realistic, specific and meaningful? Will the action plan sections effectively guide the work of the school and ensure quality learning for students? Can the action plan sections be implemented immediately within existing resources? Action plan sections include:
  - a statement of the areas of improvement
  - brief statement of the rationale for identifying this area
  - expected schoolwide learning results addressed
  - ways of assessing progress
  - specific steps, including professional development
  - timeline (month, year)
  - person(s) responsible (indicate with asterisk) and involved
  - resources
  - means to report progress to all members of the school community
- j. School's follow-up process (including school board/district understanding and support of accreditation process)
  - Have the administrators, SC, Leadership team and district representatives begun discussion of a sound follow-up process that includes:
    - ways of monitoring progress
    - accountability of all stakeholders
    - individual commitment
    - benchmarks/celebration of progress
- k. Exhibit of representative evidence for the Visiting Committee
  - How will exhibit materials that reflect the evidence analyzed in the self-study be organized for the visiting committee?
  - Will the evidence reflect:
    - a linkage to expected schoolwide learning results and criteria?
    - a linkage to identified "growth needs" and action plan sections?
    - all students?
- l. The visit schedule
  - How can the schedule maximize time for dialogue with the schoolwide focus groups, the gathering of evidence (class/program observations, interviews, examination of student work, and possible meetings with Home Groups)?
  - Does the schedule for the visit permit regular (i.e., daily) dialogue with the Leadership Team regarding preliminary findings, thereby building the trust and rapport for ongoing communication and collaboration?
- m. Visiting Committee work room and exhibit area at the school site
- n. Meeting room at school committee meetings (school to provide LCD projector and other technological equipment as needed)
- o. Computer access and compatibility with the system the chair will be using for the draft report
- p. Clerical support throughout process
- q. Housing and visit arrangements
- r. Copies of previous self-study, midterm report, and /or revisit committee reports, current action plan, as well as other pertinent background materials

- \_\_\_ 8. Receive roster of Visiting Committee members by January; begin communication, i.e., letters, calls, fax, or email.
  - \_\_\_ a. Send initial letter, including the school description to the members; WASC will send *Focus on Learning* manual and reference cards directly to Visiting Committee members
  - \_\_\_ b. Ask for preferred areas of coverage during the visit
  - \_\_\_ c. Remind members that they are required to participate in Visiting Committee training

- \_\_\_ 9. Maintain contact with school to determine:
  - \_\_\_ a. If school needs further direct assistance
  - \_\_\_ b. Progress on report, including actual critique of a sample focus group summary and action plan section

Self-check for self-study committees

- ✓ Do the summaries address all the important concepts of the criteria found within the category?
- ✓ Is there an indication that appropriate evidence was collected to verify findings?
- ✓ Was the comparison done with respect to evidence of student learning and success?
- ✓ Was the comparison done with respect to the achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results?
- ✓ Will the action plan section realistically impact quality learning for students?

- \_\_\_ c. Progress on housing and visit arrangements for Visiting Committee team.
- \_\_\_ d. Appropriate clerical support

- \_\_\_ 10. Send second letter to Visiting Committee members:
  - a. Provide writing assignments of areas to be covered
  - b. Ask the members to review the criteria as the entire self-study report is being analyzed
  - c. Compare the school's self-study to the concepts of the criteria and the expected schoolwide learning results
  - d. Prior to the visit, require written questions about issues, concerns, clarifications and evidence that should be pursued during the visit
  - e. Prior to the visit, require written tentative narrative statements for assigned sections of Visiting Committee report.

**Note:** The questions and tentative narrative statements should be sent to the Visiting Committee chair prior to the visit. The chair will create a tentative report that will be used at the initial team meeting. The members will receive a sample Visiting Committee report and worksheet at the training.

- f. Provide the schedule for the visit

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- \_\_\_ 11. Maintain regular contact with the school to double check the following:
    - a. Progress of the report by actual critique of sample report sections and/or action plan sections
    - b. Date the school mailed the self-study report
    - c. Preparation of reference and evidence materials for visit
    - d. Receipt of list of reference and evidence
    - e. Availability and knowledge of clerical support
  
  - \_\_\_ 12. If two or more schools are being evaluated, work with a WASC-appointed “coordinator” (one of the chairpersons) to schedule meeting(s) with district office representatives.
  
  - \_\_\_ 13. Make final contact with Visiting Committee members:
    - a. Confirm the receipt of the self-study
    - b. Offer assistance with understanding of assigned tasks and pre-writing assignments
    - c. Remind members to send questions and tentative writing
    - d. Offer additional assistance to special Visiting Committee members
    - e. Confirm the initial meeting time
    - f. Remind members to take cash/credit card for any expenses that will be reimbursed
  
  - \_\_\_ 14. Develop a basic Visiting Committee Report format correlated to Self-Study Report chapters. Ahead of time, begin writing the following: additional comments about pertinent items not included in the profile summary (Chapter I); response to school’s Progress Report (Chapter III); comments on the self-study process with respect to accuracy and the degree to which the parameters have been met (Chapter III). Include all writing from the visiting committee members. Have the tentative report ready for the initial orientation Visiting Committee meeting (i.e., Sunday or Monday afternoon).
  
  - \_\_\_ 15. Plan orientation meeting for Visiting Committee members prior to initial meeting at school (e.g., Sunday afternoon). The meeting should cover:
    - a. Purpose of visit
    - b. Conducting the visit in an atmosphere of collaborative and open communication
    - c. Emphasis upon criteria and school’s expected schoolwide learning results as the basis for the self-study and visit
    - d. Discussion of school direction(s) and where school is with respect to the development and refinement of the expected schoolwide learning results
    - e. Discussion of Self-Study Report: trends/perceptions, (questions, concerns and tentative written comments); relationship to concepts of criteria and expected schoolwide learning results; alignment of schoolwide action plan to findings
    - f. Discussion of ways to gather evidence
    - g. Review of initial meeting with school and overall schedule
    - h. Review of accreditation term determination and summary for the Commission
    - i. Reminder members to keep expenses to a minimum

**The Visit:      How Do We Know Students Are Learning?  
                         What Is The Actual Program For Students?**

- \_\_\_ 1. Conduct orientation meeting for Visiting Committee members. **Note:** See #15 above.
- \_\_\_ 2. Conduct initial meeting with school that includes a reflective discussion on the general perceptions gleaned from study of the School Report (planned jointly with chief administrator/self-study coordinator prior to visit) on first day of visit (i.e., Sunday).
- \_\_\_ 3. Facilitate the visit:
  - a. Maintain a positive atmosphere
  - b. Keep to the task
  - c. Maintain open communication and collaboration at all times
  - d. Ensure that all Visiting Committee members are active participants in the school committee meetings
  - e. Ensure that the gathering of evidence (class/program observations, interviews, examination of student work and other data, subject area/support group meetings) is occurring throughout the school
  - f. Ensure that no area is overlooked
  - g. Assist committee members
  - h. Avoid issues related to school policies or negotiations
  - i. Stress with Visiting Committee to avoid prescription and “how we do it at our school” discussion
  - j. Lead all visiting committee discussions on the findings, relating them to the WASC criteria in the four categories
  - k. Coordinate the preparation of the Visiting Committee Report
- \_\_\_ 4. Facilitate the thorough discussion and synthesis of the key concepts of the criteria in the four categories, the school report, and the visiting committee findings at all visiting committee meetings during the 3-½ days.
- \_\_\_ 5. Regularly communicate with the school leaders, including the Leadership Team, about Visiting Committee findings.
- \_\_\_ 6. At the final meeting with the Leadership Team, facilitate the thorough discussion of the synthesis of 1) the key concepts of the criteria, 2) the school report, 3) student learning based on the expected schoolwide learning results, 4) the schoolwide action plan, and 5) the visiting committee findings, as reflected in the draft Visiting Committee Report.
  - a. Ensure the Leadership Team has an opportunity to ask questions and clarify areas of the report.
  - b. Work with Visiting Committee members to discuss and investigate any issues or questions raised in the dialogue with the Leadership Team.
- \_\_\_ 7. Facilitate necessary Visiting Committee Report modifications as the Visiting Committee Report is finalized.
- \_\_\_ 8. Have Visiting Committee members individually review each WASC criterion within the four categories. Have them individually make decisions regarding the quality of

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the school's educational program with respect to the four categories of criteria and the other factors impacting the term.

- \_\_\_ 9. Facilitate the Visiting Committee discussion of the term of accreditation that will be recommended to the WASC Commission.
- \_\_\_ 10. Coordinate the completion of the Recommended Term of Accreditation page and the confidential Visiting Committee Summary for the Commission.  
Ensure:
  - \_\_\_ Alignment between the Visiting Committee report and the recommended term
  - \_\_\_ Member signatures on the term recommendation sheet
  - \_\_\_ Brief description of the discussion and term options considered by the Visiting Committee
  - \_\_\_ A clearly stated rationale based upon factors impacting the term of accreditation
- \_\_\_ 11. Have Visiting Committee members complete expense vouchers and give them an opportunity to complete the optional chairperson evaluation form. Review expense forms.
- \_\_\_ 12. Edit final Visiting Committee Report with the assistance of the Visiting Committee members. Ensure all key topics of chapters are addressed.
- \_\_\_ 13. Facilitate the presentation of the Visiting Committee findings to the entire staff at the close of the visit. Do not imply the recommended term of accreditation. The term recommendation is to be kept confidential.
- \_\_\_ 14. Continually stress the importance of immediate follow-up to integrate the Visiting Committee narrative suggestions and recommendations into the school's schoolwide action plan for yearly implementation and assessment.
- \_\_\_ 15. Work with the self-study coordinator to decide who will send ten (10) copies to the WASC office.

### **After the Visit**

- \_\_\_ 1. Submit the member expense vouchers to the school for reimbursement. Send the completed member evaluations to the WASC office.
- \_\_\_ 2. Finalize the WASC forms: The Recommended Term of Accreditation and the Visiting Committee Summary for the Commission. In addition, complete final editing on the Visiting Committee Report. Ensure school has final copy of the Visiting Committee Report and ten (10) copies are received by the WASC office as soon as possible after the visit.
- \_\_\_ 3. Keep copies of ALL WASC forms and Visiting Committee Report.
- \_\_\_ 4. Send appropriate letters of appreciation.
- \_\_\_ 5. Communicate to Visiting Committee members the decision of the Commission on the final accreditation term awarded to the school. This decision is reached at the January, April or June WASC Commission meeting. (A copy of the official letter will be sent to the Chair.)