Manual for Follow-Up and Special Visits
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Introduction

This manual provides directions to team chairs and team members assigned by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) to conduct Follow-Up or Special Visits to member institutions. Such visits occur between the comprehensive peer review team visits that are scheduled for each institution; they may also occur for an institution that is a candidate for accreditation. ACCJC schedules Follow-Up and Special Visits to institutions as designated below:

- **Follow-Up Visit:** The institution has been found to be out of compliance with the Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, or Commission policies (together Commission’s Standards) during a previous Accrediting Commission review. The Commission action letter will specify the Commission requirements that are to be examined in a Follow-Up Visit. Prior to a Follow-Up Visit, the institution writes a Follow-Up Report to provide information about the actions it has taken to resolve the deficiencies and meet Standards. The Follow-Up Visit is used to validate the institution’s report and work, and to determine whether the institution has fully addressed requirements in order to come into compliance with the Commission’s Standards.

- **Special Visit:** ACCJC has received information that compels it to verify information about the institution’s conditions or compliance with the Commission’s Standards or has received a request from an institution to review a specific topic. The reasons for the visit are identified by ACCJC and communicated in writing to the institution’s president or chancellor, as well as to the Special Visit Team.

Follow-Up and Special Visits are typically one- or two- day events, which occur on-site or in a virtual format with ACCJC staff liaison approval. The peer review team will be composed of individuals with the background and expertise to examine specific concerns identified through a previous Commission action letter, and may include Commissioners or Commission staff. A team chair will be assigned by ACCJC.

The Follow-Up or Special Visit peer review team will write a report that examines the institution’s compliance with the Commission’s Standards and specifically addresses the issues identified by the Commission as the purpose of the visit.

The team chair will send a draft of the Follow-Up Visit Team Report or Special Visit Team Report to the institution’s Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for correction of errors of fact before the completed Report is submitted to the Commission.
General Principles

A Follow-Up or Special Visit is conducted in accordance with the principles that guide comprehensive peer review team visits. The principles are listed below:

- Team members must disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest prior to acceptance of an assignment to a visit or as soon as it is discovered.
- Team members review carefully any Follow-Up Report provided by the institution as well as all relevant information provided by ACCJC.
- Team members maintain complete confidentiality about the visit, including the visit’s outcomes.
- Team members objectively apply Commission’s Standards to the institution while conducting their review.
- Team members seek and analyze the evidence of the institution’s compliance or non-compliance with the Commission’s Standards.
- The team’s recommendations (if any) to the institution should be crafted to be clear and to assist the institution, in the context of its own mission and institutional culture, in meeting accreditation requirements.
- The team chair is responsible for crafting a report on the team’s findings, with assistance and input from the team members.
- The team chair will also be responsible for organizing and guiding the team’s work.

Notification of the Institution

Before the visit, ACCJC staff inform the institution’s CEO of the composition of the team and the institution reviews the list to identify any potential conflict of interest. ACCJC staff also confer with the CEO about potential dates for the visit. Once selected, the team chair is expected to contact the institution to discuss the team schedule for interviews and meetings during the visit, hotel arrangements if applicable, and any other necessary logistics for the team visit. On a schedule determined by ACCJC, the institution sends one electronic copy of its institutional Follow-Up or Special Visit Report with evidence to the Commission. Reports and evidence are submitted to the Commission on a flash drive. The Commission will provide the report and evidence to the team through its cloud service.
Conduct of the Visits

In a **Follow-Up Visit**, the team determines whether the institution has addressed issues identified as deficiencies by the Commission (i.e., Commission requirements) in order to meet the Commission’s Standards. If the team finds that the institution has not sufficiently addressed the Commission requirements, it may develop additional clarifying recommendations to assist the institution in resolving the deficiencies and/or note in the Team Report that the requirements have not been adequately addressed. Based upon the college’s Follow-Up Report and the Team Report, as well as other relevant evidence, the Commission will determine whether deficiencies were addressed and requirements met.

In a **Special Visit**, the team determines whether the institutional conditions identified by the Commission as reason for the visit, or that have placed the institution out of compliance with the Commission’s Standards, have been addressed. If the team finds that the institution is not in compliance, it will develop recommendations to assist the institution in resolving the deficiencies. Based upon the college’s Special Report and the Team Report, as well as other relevant evidence, the Commission will determine whether deficiencies were addressed and requirements met.

During the visit, the team will meet with appropriate personnel who have knowledge of the issues or can best provide information about the issues that gave rise to the Commission’s requirement for the visit, to validate the information in the college’s report and clarify if there are remaining questions.

The team chair will assign tasks and responsibilities to individual team members. Team assignments may include conducting interviews and meetings, making observations of college events, reviewing evidence, and preparing sections of a draft team report. The team chair will communicate with the institution and its CEO regarding the team’s scheduling, documentation, and logistical needs.

Follow-Up and Special Visits are brief, and the team’s work is highly focused on evidentiary materials and key institutional staff members. Unlike a comprehensive evaluation visit, team members are not collecting general knowledge about the institution nor seeking broad institutional participation. Follow-Up and Special Visit teams are **not required** to hold open meetings with the college community.

Additionally, Follow-Up and Special Visit teams are **not required** to hold an “exit report” with the assembled college staff. At the conclusion of the visit, the team chair will hold a meeting to debrief with the institution’s CEO.
Preparation of the Team Report

Although each team member may have responsibility for preparing a draft of sections of a team report, the team chair is responsible for crafting the team report and for sending a draft to the institution for correction of errors of fact, and a completed team report to the Commission.

The team report should have the following format and contents:

1. **Cover Sheet** (See Appendix A, Sample Cover Sheet)
2. **List of Team Members, Including Titles and Institutional Affiliations**
3. **Introduction and Overview**
   This section of the team report should be a brief overview of the nature of the institution and any significant changes since the last visit, the background and purpose of the Follow-Up Visit or Special Visit, and general observations about the institution.
4. **Discussion of the Institution’s Responses to the Commission Action Letter or Results of the Special Visit**
   This is the major section of the report, and should identify separately each Commission Requirement (Follow-Up Visit Report) or issue (Special Visit Report) that was considered by the team. Each requirement or issue should be listed and followed by a narrative team statement that includes the following:

   **Follow-Up Visit Report**
   a. The Institution’s response to the requirement or statement about the issue.
   b. The evidence that the team reviewed to reach its conclusions.
   c. The Follow-Up Team’s findings about whether the institution has addressed the requirements, corrected the deficiencies, and meets Commission’s Standards. This may be stated in language such as:
      i. The institution has addressed the requirement, corrected the deficiencies, and now meets the Commission’s Standards.
      ii. The institution has not corrected the deficiencies, and is not in compliance with the Commission’s Standards.
      iii. If the team finds that the institution is not in compliance, it may develop additional clarifying recommendations to assist the institution in resolving the deficiencies.

   **Special Visit Report**
   If the Special Visit Team finds that an institution is out of compliance with Commission’s Standards, the Special Visit Report must include a list of the
specific Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, and/or Commission policies that the institution does not meet. The Report will include the findings and evidence that led to the team’s conclusions and specific recommendations to bring the college into compliance.

The Completed Peer Review Team Report to the Commission

The team chair will prepare a draft Team Report and ask the team members to review the report for accuracy. The team chair will make revisions as necessary, and forward the report to the assigned ACCJC staff liaison for review and editing. Following discussion with the ACCJC staff liaison, the team chair will send the draft team report to the institution’s CEO for correction of errors of fact. Generally, three business days should be sufficient for the CEO’s review and correction of factual errors. The team chair is advised to correct only errors of fact but is not obliged to change team findings or recommendations.

(See Appendix A, Sample Letter to CEO for Correction of Errors of Fact)

The team chair will send the completed Team Report to the Commission by the deadline conveyed by the ACCJC staff liaison.

(See Appendix B, Template for Follow-Up or Special Peer Review Team Report)

Commission Action on the Institution

The ACCJC will send a confidential copy of the completed Follow-Up Visit Team Report or the Special Visit Team Report to the institution’s chief executive officer (CEO) with information about the institution’s options for responding to the Report or addressing the Commission. If the institution’s CEO chooses to address the Commission when the Report is considered, the ACCJC staff liaison will also invite the team chair to attend the Commission meeting (in person or by video/tele conference) and be present when the institutional CEO addresses the Commission. Following the CEO’s presentation and departure, the team chair will respond to the CEO’s comments and to Commissioners’ questions. The Commission will make its decision in Closed Session.

The Commission will take action on the accredited status of the institution, using the institutional Report and Team Report, as well as any related supporting materials, at its next scheduled Commission meeting.
Appendix A

Sample Letter to the Chief Executive Officer for Correction of Errors of Fact

Date:

Dear President:

The peer review team has completed the Follow-Up Peer Review Team Report [or Special Visit Peer Review Team Report] of its recent visit to your institution. Enclosed/Attached is a draft copy of that report. Following the ACCJC Policy on Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions, I am sharing this draft with you to provide you the opportunity to correct any errors of fact contained in the report. This draft report is confidential.

Please provide me with any corrections within three working days so that I can submit the completed report to the Commission in a timely manner. If I do not hear from you in this time period, I will assume there are no factual errors in the report and will forward it to the Commission.

Thank you again for your assistance and hospitality to the review team during the visit.

Sincerely,

Team Chair
Appendix B

FOLLOW-UP [or SPECIAL] VISIT PEER REVIEW TEAM REPORT

<College Name>
<College Address>
<City, State, Zip>

This Report remains in draft form until the Commission takes action on the accredited status of the institution.

The draft report submitted to the Commission represents the findings of the [Follow-Up or Special] Visit Peer Review Team that conducted a [virtual if applicable] visit to <College Name> from <Date> to <Date>.

<Chair Name>
Team Chair
Introduction:
A [Follow-Up or Special] peer review team visit was conducted at [College Name] on [Date]. The purpose of the visit was to determine whether the College/District has addressed the requirements of the Commission as stipulated in the Commission Action Letter of [Month Day, Year].

The team was comprised of the following members:

List Name of Team Member
List Title of Team Member

In general, the team found that the College had prepared well for the visit by arranging for meetings with the individuals and groups agreed upon earlier with the team chair. Over the course of the day, the team met with [List titles and groups].

The Follow-Up [or Special] Report and visit were expected to document resolution of the following:

[List each requirement]

Team Analysis of College Responses to the [Date of Commission Action Letter] Commission’s Requirements

Requirement
[List each requirement separately, along with the team’s findings/evidence and conclusion]

Findings and Evidence:
[Provide specifics on team’s findings regarding the above requirements]

Conclusion:
[Provide declarative statement on whether the institution’s report and evidence addresses the Commission’s requirements, per the requirements above; if the institution has not met the requirements, include team recommendations]