Team Chair and Vice Chair Manual
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Introduction

On behalf of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), thank you for accepting the invitation to serve as team chair for a comprehensive peer review visit for reaffirmation. In doing so, you have expressed your commitment to improving educational quality and continuous improvement in the region and your willingness to assume responsibility for fostering that improvement. While chairing a comprehensive peer review team represents a major investment of time and energy, we hope you will find this experience to be valuable and rewarding. As team chair, you will find yourself playing many different roles:

- **Representative of ACCJC and Peer Review Advocate.** Peer review is acknowledged as the most appropriate and desirable approach to evaluating the complex environment of higher education. It serves as a rich and diverse resource for quality improvement for colleges. As team chair and a representative of ACCJC, you are called upon to develop a supportive and nurturing relationship with your assigned college and its staff, as well as with members of your peer review team.

Please be familiar with Commission Policies and Accreditation Standards and with ACCJC operating procedures. In addition, you and the team will receive information about special emphases in the peer review process that are required by U.S. Department of Education (ED) regulations concerning both accrediting bodies and institutions. There is much to keep track of, and the ACCJC staff liaison assigned to the institution is available to address questions at any time during the processes of preparing for and conducting the Team ISER Review, development of Core Inquiries, the Focused Site Visit, and completing the Peer Review Team Report. The assigned staff liaison to the college will be available to support you and the college throughout the process.

- **Team Leader, Manager, and Spokesperson.** Teams are composed of outstanding professionals, but they arrive as a collection of individuals. The team chair is the team builder, mentor, orchestrator of the review visit, coach, and spokesperson for the team in all of its dealings with the institution.

- **Author of the Peer Review Team Report.** The Peer Review Team Report is the most lasting outcome of the team visit, and it is the document that forms the basis for the Commission’s decision on the accredited status of the institution. It also provides the framework for the institution's continued improvement. Each team member will contribute to that report, and the assigned ACCJC staff liaison will assist you in editing the draft Peer Review Team Report. As team chair, you are the author of the report and responsible for the report’s quality and content.

- **Mentor to Vice Chairs.** The Commission calls on experienced team chairs to mentor those serving as vice chair. The vice chair will work collaboratively and closely under the leadership of the team chair to learn best practices leading a team, be ready to chair teams in future accreditation visits, and step into the chair role if the team chair is unable to fulfill their duties. One of the best ways to contribute to the peer review process is to share your insights, experiences, and resources with the vice chair.

This *Team Chair and Vice Chair Manual* will assist you in assuming the chair responsibilities and will provide templates for each of the major component stages of a comprehensive peer review visit, including the Team ISER Review and Focused Site Visit.

Around the time of the Team Chair Training, you will receive a link to ACCJC’s collaborative team workspace, which contains this manual, sample forms and letters, assignments, the college ISER and evidence, and other resources you will need to lead the review. This material will expedite your communications with the peer review team and the institution being evaluated.
Each team chair puts his/her individual stamp on a visit. The Commission encourages you to make improvements in the process, and to feel free to adjust the materials to fit your leadership style and the needs of the college you are reviewing. You are also encouraged to make suggestions to improve this Team Chair Manual and the conduct of site visits. Please communicate your suggestions and feedback to your assigned ACCJC staff liaison.
Overview of the Comprehensive Peer Review

The comprehensive peer review for reaffirmation is divided into two components: the (formative) Team ISER Review and the (summative) Focused Site Visit. The Team ISER Review will occur approximately six (6) months prior to the Focused Site Visit. The team will specify where the college meets Standards and where the team has validated no concerns remain. The team will narrow the focus of the site visit by providing Core Inquiries of Standards that the team will pursue to validate compliance, improvement, or areas of excellence. The team will communicate the Core Inquiries to college leadership so that additional information can be provided or improvements can be made prior to the Focused Site Visit.

The semester following the Team ISER Review, the college will prepare for the Focused Site Visit. At the time of the visit, the college will have produced additional supporting evidence, as specified by the Core Inquiries, and will have documented the continued maturation of its structures or processes in order to demonstrate alignment and compliance with ACCJC Standards and policies. The team’s interviews while on campus are guided by the Core Inquiries, and the visit serves as an opportunity for the team to validate all Standards and policies are met. The team report to the Commission is based on the status of the institution at the time of the Focused Site Visit, confirming and validating the team’s review of all Standards, addressing any issues which may have arisen since the Team ISER review, and reflecting any progress achieved in the interval following the Team ISER Review.

The completed team report is forwarded to the Commission to inform its decision about the college’s alignment and compliance with the Standards, as well as Commission policies, recommendations for improvement, and commendations. All of these elements lead to the Commission’s final action on the college’s accredited status.

Comprehensive Peer Review Goals

1. To eliminate any element of fear or surprise on the part of the college that often accompanies a comprehensive peer review.
2. To underscore the importance of the comprehensive peer review as an occasion to foster and guide institutional improvement.
3. To concentrate the Focused Site Visit on core accreditation issues and validation of already-confirmed alignment and compliance on operational matters demonstrated in the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER).
4. To more fully utilize the wisdom of the peer review team by providing time for an institution to consider and adopt the team’s advice as an integral part of the comprehensive peer review – and while the issues are current and advice is relevant.
Visual Representation of the Comprehensive Peer Review Process

Glossary of Terms

TEAM ISER REVIEW
The Team ISER Review is a one-day, off-site preliminary analysis of an institution’s self-evaluation report. The team develops a series of Core Inquiries based on the provided narrative and evidence.

CORE INQUIRIES
Core Inquiries are a means for communicating questions and potential areas of institutional improvement that arise during the Team ISER Review. Core Inquiries fall into two categories: Additional Information Requests or Interview/Observation Requests.

- Additional Information Requests can be addressed immediately or during the Focused Site Visit.
- Interview/Observation Requests are intended to be addressed at the Focused Site Visit.

Core Inquiries highlight areas in the ISER that require clarification or expansion and are used to develop both recommendations and commendations.

FOCUSED SITE VISIT
During the Focused Site Visit, the team will gather additional information via interviews, data requests, and observation sessions to confirm progress made on the Core Inquiries and validate overall compliance with the Standards and policies. The Focused Site Visit is guided by those issues directly related to the Core Inquiries as previously communicated to the institution – thus, the team is reduced in size as only those team members assigned to the specific Core Inquiries will attend the Focused Site Visit.

DRAFT TEAM REPORT
Teams develop an initial report based on the findings of the Team ISER Review and update it during the Focused Site Visit to reflect the status of the institution at the time of the Focused Site Visit, confirming and validating the team’s review of all standards, addressing any issues which may have arisen since the Team ISER review, and reflecting any progress achieved in the interval following the Team ISER Review. This draft report is then presented to the institution.
ERRORS OF FACT
The institution has the opportunity to review the Draft Team Report and identify any errors of fact.

COMPLETED TEAM REPORT
The Completed Team Report identifies commendations, compliance issues, and recommendations for improvement.

COMMISSION ACTION
The ACCJC Commission meets to decide on the institution’s accredited status. The decision is based upon the ISER, evidence, and Final Team Report.
1. Preparing for the Comprehensive Peer Review

Communication with the Institution
About two and a half years before the anticipated date of the Team ISER Review, the ACCJC staff liaison advises the institution of the upcoming comprehensive peer review process and provides training to the college on its Institutional Self-Evaluation Report. This training is ongoing and frequent. The college and Commission staff work together to select dates for the Team ISER Review and Focused Site Visit.

Team Chair Selection
The staff liaison begins inviting team chairs with the goal of selecting persons appropriate for the institution’s needs. Persons invited to serve as team chairs are experienced peer reviewers and represent the best professional practice. In order to keep replenishing ACCJC’s pool of team leaders, team chairs are asked to mentor vice chairs, who will participate alongside the team chair through the entire process including the Team ISER Review and Focused Site Visit.

Team Selection
The staff liaison develops the teams from a database of experienced educators who have exhibited leadership, a commitment to peer-based accreditation, and balanced judgment. In compliance with federal regulations, teams comprise academics and administrators. An average team has three academics; instructional and student services administrators, a chief executive officer, a financial services administrator, and a researcher. Teams consist of individuals with expertise and/or experience in curriculum and instruction, learning outcomes and learning resources, distance and correspondence education, planning, research, and evaluation. Diversity is a priority in the selection of peer review team members, along with professionalism, expertise, integrity, and demonstrated ability to function well as an accreditation team member.

Team Chair/Vice Chair Orientation
All team chairs and vice chairs must attend a Team Chair Training prior to the Peer Review Team Training. This training provides the framework for the review, resources for the chairs, and an opportunity to discuss best practice among the team chairs. The training also builds the foundation for norming the comprehensive peer review process and its tenets across the teams.

Peer Review Team Training
All chairs, vice chairs, and team members must attend a Peer Review Team Training on using the Accreditation Standards and the Guide to Institutional Self-Evaluation, Peer Review, and Improvement prior to the visit. Peer Review Team Training helps all peer reviewers understand how to conduct the review in the context of the institution’s mission and provides time for the chair to work with the team. Training topics also include interpreting the Standards, writing effective recommendations and commendations, and Commission policies and federal regulations.
1.1 Team Chair Preparation

Overview
The Team Chair Training, the materials provided in the collaborative team workspace, and this manual are designed to facilitate your preparation for the Team ISER Review, development of Core Inquiries, and the Focused Site Visit. As team chair you will organize the team for the most effective use of time and resources and set a positive tone for both the team and the institution. ACCJC provides samples of correspondence with teams and institutions, a Team Chair Timeline and Checklist, and templates for the Core Inquiries and Peer Review Team Report in the collaborative team workspace.

Vice Chair
The vice chair collaborates and partners with the chair to plan and facilitate the peer review process, including the Team ISER Review and the Focused Site Visit. The vice chair must attend Team Chair Training, Peer Review Team Training, and participate in the Pre-Visit, Team ISER Review, and Focused Site Visit in accordance with peer review protocols. Working alongside the team chair, the vice chair is expected to build and nurture a collegial relationship with the college CEO and ALO throughout the process in accordance with ACCJC values.

Materials from ACCJC
The Commission provides resources for the team chair in the collaborative team workspace. The team chair will also receive any applicable third party comments that have been received regarding the institution.

As soon as the team composition is complete, the team chair receives a team roster from the Commission office. This signals that the team chair can begin making arrangements for the components of the comprehensive peer review process, including communications with the team. Additional changes in the team composition may occur if persons drop off for various reasons. Commission staff will update the team roster if changes occur; however team members cannot be added once Peer Review Team Training has occurred since attendance is mandatory and the teams begin their collective work.

Various templates, including the Core Inquiries report and the Peer Review Team Report, are included in ACCJC’s collaborative team workspace for the team chair, along with sample correspondences.

Materials from the College
Sixty days before the Team ISER Review, the college sends electronic copies of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, college catalog, most recent class schedule, and institutional data in support of its petition for reaffirmation of accreditation. The Commission will upload this information to the collaborative team workspace for the team chair and team members.

Pre-Team ISER Review and Pre-Focused Site Visit Meetings with College
In preparing for Team ISER Review, the team chair and vice chair are expected to conduct a pre-Team ISER Review conversation (either via phone or videoconference) with the college CEO and ALO. The purpose of this conversation is to help the team chair (and vice chair) and college CEO and ALO to develop a collegial relationship, built upon the common goal of assisting the college within the context of the comprehensive peer review visit.

The pre-review meeting will give the team chair the opportunity to establish communication with the college CEO and ALO, and to receive any requests from the CEO or ALO for special team attention or assistance to specific areas of institutional quality related to the Standards. The pre-review
conversation also allows the CEO and ALO an opportunity to notify the team chair of major changes that may have occurred since the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report was completed and that may materially affect the course of the team’s ISER review.

During this pre-Team ISER Review meeting, the dates/times for the Meet and Greet and Open Forum should be identified and calendared. The team chair is encouraged to be open with the college CEO on areas where the team will need to focus, so that the college may be accurately reviewed.

In preparation for the Focused Site Visit, the team chair and vice chair will conduct a pre-visit conversation to discuss any changes since the Team ISER Review and in response to the Core Inquiries. This meeting will also help to establish the logistical requirements of the Focused Site Visit—hotel accommodations, transportation to/from the hotel and college, the availability of food, logistics for visiting off-campus sites, and access to electronic data and files that the institution may have compiled in support of its application for reaffirmation of accreditation.

**Correspondence with the Team/Institution/ACCJC**

The team chair corresponds with the team members to welcome them to the team; make assignments to cover ERs, Accreditation Standards, off campus sites or campuses, DE programs and services, and other elements required by federal regulations; provide information about travel and lodging for the Focused Site Visit; establish the team schedule; and generally set the tone of the entire visit. Early communication (via email or video conferencing) is vital to forging a strong, connected, and focused team.

As noted above, contact with the institution begins with the Pre-Team ISER Review meeting, a discussion which should occur following the Team Chair Training. The Pre-Team ISER Review meeting provides opportunity for the team chair and vice chair to develop a collegial relationship with the institution’s CEO and ALO and to gather pertinent information and updates since submission of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, and identify the dates/times for the Meet and Greet and Open Forum.

Please copy your assigned ACCJC staff liaison on all correspondence with the team and with the institution so that they can provide you with effective assistance.

**Initial Institutional Self-Evaluation Report Review**

Please review the college Institutional Self-Evaluation Report upon receipt to determine if it is complete and provides an adequate basis for an accreditation site visit. If you feel there is a substantive issue with the report, please contact the assigned staff liaison. In these instances, Commission staff will consult with the team chair and the leadership of the college to determine a course of action.

**Multi-College Districts**

The Commission schedules the comprehensive peer review for the colleges in multi-college districts/systems simultaneously. This includes the process for the Team ISER Review, and the Focused Site Visit. The Commission requires that a description of the college and district/system delineation of responsibility and authority in multi-college district/system (sometimes called a “Functional Map”) be provided with the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report. Its purpose is to provide teams with a clear description of roles and responsibilities in areas which are addressed by the Accreditation Standards, and to provide the Commission with a consistent picture of this delineation so that it can understand how an institution meets Accreditation Standards as well as make appropriate recommendations for improvement.
In order to facilitate peer review team evaluation of multi-college districts or systems, a “chair of chairs” will be identified to lead the district review team. Team members may be selected from amongst the members of the college teams, or a separate (from the college chairs and teams) district team with a district team chair may be assigned. The size and structure of the district/system review depends on the needs and size of the district/system.

In either case, the chair-of-chairs is asked to consult with the other team chairs early in the preparation for Team ISER Review and the Focused Site Visit, and to develop a strategy for coordinating meetings and interviews with district/system representatives and Board members such that unnecessary redundancies are eliminated. Accreditation Standards cover many aspects of administrative operations, finance, and governance as well as academic matters and in multi-college districts, the district’s adherence to Standards is necessary for the colleges to meet Standards. In addition, Standard IV directly addresses district or system/college relationships.

The Commission has a policy and procedure for team visits to multi-college districts/systems. This policy can be found on the ACCJC website at: https://accjc.org/wp-content/uploads/Policy-on-Evaluation-of-Institutions-in-Multi-College-Multi-Unit-Districts-or-Systems.pdf.
1.2 **Materials Given to Peer Review Team Chairs and Vice Chairs**

The following resources from ACCJC and materials from the institution will be available in ACCJC’s Collaborative Team Workspace

**From the Accrediting Commission**

1. ACCJC Publications
   a. *Team Chair and Vice Chair Manual* (including supplementary material)
   c. *Guide for Peer Review Team Members* and team materials

2. Team roster including titles, addresses, telephone, and e-mail addresses

3. ACCJC Information on the Institution:
   a. Summary of applicable complaints against the institution (chair only, if any received)
   b. Applicable Third-Party comments (chair only, if any received)

4. Electronic copy of expense form to be submitted separately as applicable for each event: Team Chair Training, Pre-visits, Peer Review Team Training, Focused Site Visit.

1.3 **Materials from the Institution**

1. The Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, including evidence

2. Most recent catalog and class schedule

1.4 **Role of the Vice Chair**

ACCJC expects that the vice chair will work collaboratively and closely under the leadership of the team chair to learn best practices for leading a team in order to be ready to chair teams in future accreditation visits. The following outlines specific expectations for the vice chair of the peer review team.

**Before Team ISER Review**

A. The vice chair collaborates and partners with the chair to plan and facilitate the peer review process, including the Team ISER Review and the Focused Site Visit.

B. The vice chair must attend Team Chair Training, Peer Review Team Training, and participate in the Pre-Visit, Team ISER Review, and Focused Site Visit in accordance with peer review protocols.

C. Working alongside the team chair, the vice chair is expected to build and nurture a collegial relationship with the college CEO and ALO throughout the process in accordance with ACCJC values and practices per the *Team Chair Manual*.

D. Be willing and able to step into the team chair role if necessary.
During Team ISER Review and the Focused Site Visit

E. The vice chair will assist with facilitating team conversations during Team ISER Review and the Focused Site Visit.

F. The vice chair will be assigned portions of the ISER to review and will contribute to development of the Core Inquiries and writing/editing portions of Peer Review Team Report.

G. The vice chair will help compile the draft Peer Review Team Report.

H. The vice chair will provide some assistance with team coordination and logistics, including setting meeting dates as needed prior to Team ISER Review, and following up with team members.

I. The vice chair will collaborate with the Accreditation Liaison Officer to facilitate gathering of additional evidence and scheduling meetings during the Focused Site Visit.

J. The vice chair will help edit the final draft of the Team Report for clarity and consistency among findings.

After the Focused Site Visit

K. The vice chair will assist the team chair with a final review of the draft Peer Review Team Report.

L. The vice chair will participate in the evaluation of the comprehensive peer review process.

1.5 Pre-Meetings by the Team Chair and Vice Chair

Pre-Team ISER Review Meeting by the Team Chair & Vice Chair

A. Develop relationship and open communication with the college CEO and his or her staff. Achieve a sense of institutional climate and dynamics, receive updates on new developments since the writing of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, and identify key issues facing the institution.

B. Communicate expectations for the Team ISER Review process per ACCJC Team Chair Training.

C. If the institution has distance education, work with the CEO and ALO to gain access for team members on the review of DE courses (see DE review protocol in the Guide for Peer Review Team Members). The review must occur prior to the Team ISER Review date.

D. Discuss the process and timeline for obtaining additional evidence and information requests by the team prior to the Team ISER Review date.

E. Schedule the date/time for the Meet and Greet and Open Forum. The open forum shall be widely communicated to the college community noting that this is the opportunity for members of the college community to share their perspectives with the team on the college’s efforts to meet Accreditation Standards. The college president, senior staff such as vice presidents, and board members must not attend in order to foster a more open environment for comments from those who may not have had prior opportunity to meet with the visiting team.

F. Schedule the meeting date/time for the team chair and vice chair to brief the CEO and ALO on the Core Inquiries. This meeting should occur within 48 hours of the conclusion of the Team ISER Review.
Pre-Focused Site Visit (FSV) Meeting by the Team Chair & Vice Chair

A. Discuss developments since the Team ISER Review and Core Inquiries in preparation for the Focused Site Visit.

B. Discuss travel, housing, and other logistical arrangements for the Focused Site Visit team. The college should identify appropriate lodging and work with hotels to secure advantageous rates. ACCJC asks that the team members pay for their expenses and submit reimbursement request to ACCJC.

C. Arrange meetings per the Core Inquiries, such as:
   - Governing Board, administrative staff, committees that prepared the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, Academic Senate, support staff organization(s), student body organization.
   - Open Forum for input to team (timed to encourage participation, well publicized by college). The open forum shall be widely communicated to the college community noting that this is the opportunity for members of the college community to share their perspectives with the team on the college’s efforts to meet Accreditation Standards. The college president, senior staff such as vice presidents, and board members must not attend in order to foster a more open environment for comments from those who may not have had prior opportunity to meet with the visiting team.

D. Arrange visits to any site where 50% or more of a program may be completed.

E. Arrange access to DE per the protocol if applicable to the Core Inquiries.

F. Clarify Commission expectations:
   - Communicate the need to minimize social events, and discourage gifts to the team. The Commission wants to avoid all appearances of a college’s having undue influence on the team.
   - Communicate the team’s expectation that all key staff will be on campus and available to the team during the accreditation visit.

G. Arrange team logistics:
   - Team room organization, including campus maps, telephone directories, computer support, and paper shredder.
   - Access for the team to any electronically-mediated services that might be reviewed prior to the team visit to the campus.
   - Campus contact person for team members.
   - Hotel, meals, arrival/departure, and transportation to and from campus and to sites.
   - Maps and directions.
   - Computer hardware and software, printers, availability and locations.
   - Lunches for team meetings on campus during visit.
   - Meeting room at hotel with technology available.
   - Special schedule/time for examination of district or system level services in a multi-institution system if applicable.
   - Schedule for visit to off-campus sites.

H. Schedule team member and college staff meetings in advance if possible.
1.6  **Team Communications, Team Assignments, and Schedule**

Once the team roster is received, it is appropriate to write to the team members, welcoming them to the team, and briefly introducing them to your expectations, method of team organization, and any other matters you wish to call to their attention. It’s also important to remind the team of important dates (i.e., Peer Review Team Training, Team ISER Review). Time will be provided at the beginning of Peer Review Team Training for team member introductions.

The Team Member General Information Form contains information needed to assign team member responsibilities to ensure coverage of all the Standards. Team members should be given a short amount of time to respond because completion of the assignments and schedule depends on that information.

The Commission is recommending that each chair **assign team members with a range of expertise** to each Standard. The Accreditation Standards have asked institutions to take a holistic approach to their own self-evaluation and to institutional dialogue. **It is therefore appropriate that the peer review teams also develop a systems-approach to conducting the site visit.** Team chairs should avoid reinforcing silos of expertise on the team and should encourage the team to develop a holistic Peer Review Team Report. Suggested team member assignments are included in this manual, on page 15. Each comprehensive peer review will be unique in terms of the physical and time demands on the members of the team. The team chair and vice chair should develop a working schedule leading up to the Team ISER Review and **communicate it to the team members soon after the Team Chair Training.**

A. **Leading to the Team ISER Review** - Considerations in developing a working schedule:

- Ensure completion of Assignments 1 (prior to Peer Review Team Training), Assignment 2, and Assignment 3 **prior** to the Team ISER Review. The Peer Review Team Training will have embedded time for the chair to lead a discussion about preliminary findings and emerging thinking emanating from the completion of Assignment 1.

- Following the Peer Review Team Training, the chair should schedule a de-briefing of Assignment 2 and 3 via video conferencing before the Team ISER Review.

- Request any additional evidence from the college as a results of Assignment 2 synthesis.

- Decide when team written assignments will be due to you, and reiterate how they will be used by the team at each juncture leading to Team ISER Review.

- Conduct Meet and Greet with college and Open Forum.

- If the college offers Distance Education (DE) classes and services, determine who will examine their quality and compliance with Standards and policies. Determine also how information on DE courses and programs will be shared with the team (see DE review protocol in the *Guide for Peer Review Team Members*).

- Assign a team member to examine any correspondence education programs that the college offers to assure their quality and compliance with Standards and policies.

- If the college offers a baccalaureate degree, Commission staff will provide specific instructions on the review of a baccalaureate degree and a team member will be assigned to the team with appropriate expertise to examine the program in accordance with ACCJC policies.
• Assign team member(s) to review components of the Federal Regulations Checklist found in the Peer Review Team Report template. The federal regulations overlap with Standards and making these assignments early will assist in the review process to ascertain compliance or determine if there are areas of improvement.

B. **Leading to the Focused Site Visit** - Considerations in developing a working schedule:

• Determine when the assigned team members participating on the Focused Site Visit are expected to arrive and depart. Generally, a Focused Site Visit will occur over one or two days depending upon the breadth and depth of the Core Inquiries. The team chair will communicate in advance with the institution on the anticipated time necessary to conduct the required meetings and finalize the team findings pertaining to the Core Inquiries.

• Create a schedule that fits the college; take into consideration if the college has a large evening program, many large off-campus sites or centers, an extensive DE program, or scheduled events such as Board meetings.

• Determine whether the college provides off-campus sites where 50% or more of a degree may be obtained, and if so, decide who will visit them, and how the information will be shared with the Focused Site Visit team.

• Decide when and where the team will have its first organizational meeting. The Commission recommends this occurs on the afternoon of the arrival day, and allow sufficient time for team discussion of the Core Inquiries, reviewing of additional evidence in response to the Core Inquiries, and preparation for the visit. **Set the Focused Site Visit’s tone as a helpful, peer review that is focused solely on the Standards and Commission policies.**

• Build in several team meetings at regular points during the visit to triangulate information gathered during the Focused Site Visit. Meetings can always be canceled, but they are troublesome to add to the schedule.

• Schedule an introductory welcome meeting with key staff early in the Focused Site Visit.

• Determine the hours and staffing of the open forum when the college constituencies can meet with the team.

• Schedule a daily “check in” with the institution’s CEO to hear any input on the college experience with the team visit.

• Set deadlines for the Focused Site Visit team members to complete the remaining portions of the draft Peer Review Team Report; set sufficient time to finalize the team’s Recommendations and/or Commendations.

• Establish the time and location of the Exit Report by the team chair.

• Multi-college districts/systems. If applicable, coordinate team contacts with Board, district officers, and counterpart team chair(s) through the lead team chair (see later section on visiting multi-college districts/systems.)
**SUGGESTED TEAM MEMBER ASSIGNMENTS***
*(Based on the expertise or job assignments of a typical team)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD I</th>
<th>STANDARD II</th>
<th>STANDARD III</th>
<th>STANDARD IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>CIO or Dean</td>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Vice Chair or Trustee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Instructional faculty</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chair or Trustee</td>
<td>CSSO or Counseling Faculty</td>
<td>Deans or administrators</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Team Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Team chair may select individuals to serve as Standard leads.

**Suggested Team Assignments for Addressing Eligibility Requirements 1-5**
*(ERs 6-21 are evaluated within the Standards)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014 ER</th>
<th>2014 Standard</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Authority</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>The institution must demonstrate it is authorized to operate as a degree granting institution by the State (government).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Operational Status</td>
<td>I.B</td>
<td>Assign to the team member evaluating the institution’s demographic information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Degrees</td>
<td>II.A</td>
<td>Assign to the team member evaluating the institution’s instructional programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>IV.B and/or IV.C</td>
<td>Assign to the team member evaluating the Standards related to the chief executive officer and/or the governing board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Financial Accountability</td>
<td>III.D</td>
<td>Assign to the team member who is evaluating finance and ED Title IV compliance. This individual should also evaluate the institution’s Annual Fiscal Reports (with audits) and the ACCJC Policy on Institutional Compliance with Title IV (including program audits) on the Checklist.</td>
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**NOTE:** Eligibility Requirements 1-5 have requirements that are not contained within the Accreditation Standards. Team members must evaluate each element of these ERs and report on them separately from the Accreditation Standards’ narrative.
1.7  Planning for Multi-College Districts/Systems Review

The Commission has scheduled simultaneous visits for all colleges in multi-college district/systems. This facilitates a single comprehensive examination of the quality of district/system services and the degree to which they support institutional abilities to meet or exceed Accreditation Standards. This consistent review avoids multiple and conflicting messages about the efficacy of district/system administrative and other functions. The Commission’s Policy and Procedures for the Peer Review of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems details the principles and procedures that guide this review of district/system functions.

A district/system team chair will be chosen, usually from among the chairs of all the teams visiting colleges in a district/system or separately by the ACCJC. This chair will have responsibility for coordinating review of district/system functions and for writing recommendations to meet Accreditation Standards or for improvement of the district/system. Each college team should identify issues it believes bear investigation at the district or system level. The district/system team chair will ask for limited members of each team to participate in the district/system component of Team ISER Review.

**Team ISER Review**

The district/system team will conduct a half-day Team ISER Review to discuss district issues, identify Standards met, and discuss potential Core Inquiries as pertains to the district/system. This review is conducted a day in advance of the colleges’ Team ISER Review. The district/system team chair will develop, in consultation with the other chairs and teams, language for the Core Inquiries if applicable.

**Focused Site Visit**

If district issues are examined during the Focused Site Visit, the district/system team chair will develop, in consultation with the other chairs and focused site visiting team members, language for any recommendations or commendations given to the district/system.

The identical language should appear in each Peer Review Team Report written for individual colleges so that the message given about improving district/system functions is consistent.

See the Commission’s Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems, which can be accessed on the ACCJC’s website at: www.accjc.org.

1.8  Analysis of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report

The peer review team is expected to read, understand, and analyze the college Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER) prior to its Team ISER Review. To facilitate the Team ISER Review, the team chair should give team members Assignments 1, 2, and 3, written assignments (“homework”) that must be completed per the chair’s due dates prior to the Team ISER Review. These assignments help the team prepare for the Team ISER Review meeting and to develop the Core Inquiries. The team chair will use the written assignments the team members have produced to frame discussions during the Peer Review Team Training and Team ISER Review, develop Core Inquiries, and produce the first draft of the Peer Review Team Report.

Team chairs will find the following Assignments in ACCJC’s collaborative team workspace in preparation for the Team Chair Training.
• Assignment 1: General Observations and Initial Assessment
• Assignment 2: Initial Findings and Evidence of Assigned Standard
• Assignment 3: Formative Discussion Tool for Team ISER Review

Institutions are expected to send the ISER and supporting documents eight weeks before the visit to the Commission. Additionally, the institution should provide links to the college catalog and class schedule. Upon receipt, the Commission will provide the ISER and accompanying documents for the team’s review in ACCJC’s collaborative team workspace. The team chair should remind team members about the assignments so they can begin completing their assigned homework assignments according to the set schedule.

Assignment 1

The first team assignment should help the team acquire an overview of the ISER and develop a broad, holistic understanding of the ISER. This assignment will require the team members to read the entire Report and any supporting evidence supplied by the college in advance of the visit, keep a high-level, holistic perspective of the institution and its mission, and focus on their preliminary observations and impressions. At this point, it is not necessary to evaluate the evidence for alignment with Standards; instead, team members will consider the evidence to enhance their understanding of the institution and the ISER narrative. Assignment 1 will be the basis for a team discussion during the Peer Review Team Training to norm observations and support team dialogue and deliberations.

Assignment 2

The second team assignment should help the team member go more deeply into the ISER by working directly with the Standard(s) he or she has been assigned. The assignment is intended to:

a) assist team members to write the first draft of their assigned Standards of the Peer Review Team Report;

b) to document assessment of whether the college meets Standards based on the narrative and evidence team members reviewed in their assigned area; and

c) to identify areas where further clarification is required or additional evidence is needed in order to obtain information that team members were unable to gain from a desk review of the ISER and evidence, in order to confirm the college meets the standard.

Assignment 2 will aid the team chair and vice chair to request reasonable additional data or evidence from the institution prior to the Team ISER Review. These are not Core Inquiries.

Assignment 3

The third team assignment will aid the chair in facilitating deliberations during the Team ISER Review and will help develop the Core Inquiries. This assignment is grounded in the work of Assignment 2 and each team member is asked to identify those Standards that were met based on the desk review, as well as clearly identify potential Core Inquiries for the Focused Site Visit. Namely, the form requires team members to identify areas of strength (potential commendations), areas in which they are seeking clarification, and areas in need of improvement based on their preliminary analysis (potential recommendations). Team members will identify additional information or interviews which they believe will help advance their understanding and analysis to determine whether the college meets or exceeds Standards.
Team chairs are asked to ensure that the team completes appropriate analysis and written work according to the team chair’s set deadlines, to collect that work, and to share and discuss it with the team as you lead the group in developing a collective perspective on the institution’s quality and the extent to which it meets Accreditation Standards. Team members should cross-check their findings across Standards, and sharing the team member’s draft analyses and conclusions is a good means of providing for the triangulation needed to assure accurate conclusions and consistency in the completed Peer Review Team Report.
2. Work Schedule for the Team ISER Review and Focused Site Visit

2.1 General Considerations

A. Monitoring the Process

A successful Team ISER Review and Focused Site Visit often depends on the care with which the team chair monitors and assesses the team’s progress and performance. The discussion which follows outlines areas and activities which may need attention throughout the process, including the time leading up to the Team ISER Review, during the Team ISER Review, and Focused Site Visit. Team chairs and vice chairs will receive in their collaborative work space detailed timelines and suggested deadlines for assignments in order to meet the expected outcomes for the Team ISER review and Focused Site Visit.

1. Consult with team members early and often
   - Help the team focus on the Standards and the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report.
   - Check with team members, especially first-time team members, individually, not just through team communications or meetings.
   - Monitor team “tone” – is everyone committed to celebrating, supporting, and helping the college?
   - Encourage the team early on to set aside time for their work, adhere to the set deadlines, and begin writing early.
   - Look for signs of weak writing skills and provide assistance.
   - Build team responsibility over areas of concern.
   - Help the team with consistency across and within Standards and clarity when writing the report.

2. Consult with counterpart teams (for simultaneous multi-college visits)
   - Determine what coordination or team consultation will occur prior to the Team ISER Review, and if applicable leading to the Focused Site Visit.
   - Identify people and mechanisms for team consultation.
   - Compare relevant findings with counterpart chairs.
   - Verify and cross-check differences.
   - Share drafts of district/system findings across teams, especially for IV.C and IV.D.
   - Prepare unified findings, recommendations, and commendations if directed at the district/system.

3. Consult the President and/or ALO early and often
   - Prior to the Team ISER Review, try to determine how the process is going from their point of view based on the requests for information and evidence.
   - During the Focused Site Visit, ask to see how the process is going from their point of view. Are there any concerns or problems that college personnel are reporting to the president or ALO regarding the team or the process?
B. General Considerations and Advice to the Team Chair

1. Focus the team’s attention on determining whether the institution meets or exceeds the Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Commission policies. One method of doing this is to verify the assertions made in the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report based upon the evaluation of evidence that is found prior to the Team ISER Review. Make sure team members have examined evidence supplied in advance of the Team ISER Review, and when applicable in advance of the Focused Site Visit, and have sufficient time to examine all evidence to evaluate the institution. Make sure the team members have triangulated their findings so that one does not write findings and conclusions for a standard that inadvertently contradict another section within the Peer Review Team Report. Make sure the total Peer Review Team Report is internally consistent in its narrative and findings.

2. Urge team members to share critical issues and problems with the whole team. No member can be allowed to bear the burden of a major issue alone.

3. Urge team members to share commendations—those areas where the college exceeds the Standards.

4. Focus on the team dynamics. When there is conflict, ensure the conflict is productive.

5. Provide corrective direction to members who become too closely involved with all or part of the institution or who pursue individual, organizational, or ideological agendas. Team members should not impose their own college’s way of doing things on the institution they are evaluating. Team members should not impose State regulations or prescribe specific solutions on the peer review process.

6. During the Focused Site Visit, the institution should be aware of the presence of the team and have opportunities to communicate with team members via the open forum held by the team. The forum shall be widely communicated to the college community noting that this is the opportunity for members of the college community to share their perspectives with the team on the college’s efforts to meet Accreditation Standards. The college president, senior staff such as vice presidents, and board members must not attend in order to foster a more open environment for comments from those who may not have had prior opportunity to meet with the visiting team.

7. If applicable, during the Focused Site Visit, district/system office locations, board meetings or access to board members, evening and off-campus sites may pose logistical challenges, and you may use delegations of team members to ensure coverage.

8. During the Focused Site Visit, the team may receive information from individuals or groups that identify concerns about adherence to Standards; cross-validate such information investigating multiple sources.

C. Special Issues and Considerations

1. Confidentiality: The team chair should remind team members of the Commission policy on the confidentiality of institutional information throughout the evaluation process, leading to the Team ISER Review and continuing through the Focused Site Visit and thereafter. The Policy on Public Disclosure and Confidentiality in the Accreditation Process includes the following explanation:

   In order to assure the accuracy and appropriateness of institutional information which is made public, the Commission expects team members to keep confidential all institutional information read or heard before, during, and after the team visit. Except in the context of Commission work, team members are expected to refrain from discussing information obtained in the course of service as a peer reviewer.
2. **Compliance with External Regulations, Statutes, or Expectations of other Organizations:** Although some institutions may focus significant portions of their Institutional Self-Evaluation Reports on external compliance issues, it is **not** the team’s job to enforce or even address those requirements. The team’s only authority is the Commission Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, policies, and other requirements and federal regulations on accreditation that are part of Peer Review Team Training.

3. **Matters under Litigation:** The Commission does not become directly involved in matters which are under litigation. A policy discussing the responsibilities of the institution is found in the **Policy Regarding Matters Under Litigation**.

4. **Student Complaints:** The assigned staff liaison will inform the chair if the college has any complaints that the team must investigate. The team is expected to review the institution’s own student complaint policies and files. The Commission does not adjudicate individual grievances; however, a pattern of complaints may indicate an institutional deficiency in meeting Accreditation Standards. The Commission’s **Policy on Student and Public Complaints Against Institutions** is found on the ACCJC website.

5. **International Programs:** Colleges offering international programs for non-U.S. nationals include an addendum to the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report which demonstrates how the program conforms to the **Policy on Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education**. Other relevant policies are **Policy on Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations** and **Policy on Distance Education and on Correspondence Education**. Federal regulatory requirements ask institutions to submit evidence that their campus-based programs for international students, including English language programs, are reviewed as part of the institution’s accreditation and are found to meet quality standards.

### 2.2 Team ISER Review Schedule

The one-day in-person Team ISER Review is broken into primary blocks of time to ensure meaningful discussions, to identify Standards that are met based on the evaluation of the ISER, and to identify the Core Inquiries that form the basis for the Focused Site Visit.

**Morning**

The chair will set the tone for the day by reminding the team about the purpose and goals for the day, and will engage team members in an initial discussion on thematic findings based on the draft Team Report. Team members will refer to Assignment 3 and discuss for each main standard the potential areas of improvement and commendation. During the Team ISER Review, the team will also review and complete the Federal Regulations and ACCJC Policies Checklist.

**Afternoon**

The chair will gain team consensus on the areas that form the basis for the draft Core Inquiries Report, and related requests for additional information and interviews/observations. The team will have nominal working time to polish the draft report sections where Standards were identified as met. The team chair will conclude the meeting noting the timeline and next steps for the team members.

**After Team ISER Review**

Within 48 hours of Team ISER Review, the team chair and vice chair will meet with the institution’s CEO and ALO to brief them on the content of the Core Inquiries Report. The team chair will finalize the Core Inquiries Report, send it to the assigned ACCJC staff liaison for review and comment, and
thereafter send it to the institution. Within one month of Team ISER Review, the team chair and ACCJC
staff liaison will confirm the team members who will participate on the Focused Site Visit, which occurs
the following semester.

2.3 Focused Site Visit Schedule

The Focused Site Visit will occur the semester following Team ISER Review during a one or two-day
visit to the college. The length of the Focused Site Visit will depend upon the nature of the Core
Inquiries. Core Inquiries will describe the areas of emphasis for the Focused Site Visit to determine
whether Accreditation Standards and Policies are met and to further explore areas of commendation
or recommendation. During the Focused Site Visit, the team will gather additional information via
interviews, data requests, and observation sessions to conclude the team’s findings and complete the
draft Peer Review Team Report. The following outlines the components of the Focused Site Visit
schedule.

The Team Meeting Prior to the Focused Site Visit

The team will meet in advance of the visit to the college. The team chair sets the time for the meeting,
and team members are expected to arrange their travel in order to be present for this meeting. Team
chairs and vice chairs will provide leadership during this meeting in the following ways:

1. Provide an overview of the purpose of the Focused Site Visit and reinforce the team member role.

2. Ensure the team understands the role of the ACCJC staff liaison.

3. Revisit the Core Inquiries Report themes and questions that the team will address.

4. Share information about issues and events that have occurred at the college since the Team ISER
review. If there are controversial issues, develop a team strategy for dealing with them.

5. Discuss the status of team member reports for Standard(s) that required additional clarification.

6. Review the team schedule, meetings, interviews, assignments, schedules for visits to centers or
campuses or a district or system office; and plans for review of DE programs and services.

7. Develop a sense of team cohesiveness and purpose and an open, supportive atmosphere in which
thoughtful observation, analysis, and dialogue are encouraged.

8. Recognize the great work the college is doing by actively looking for areas where the college
exceeds the Standards (commendations). Remind the team to distinguish between
recommendations which address deficiencies in meeting Accreditation Standards and those
which are recommendations for improvement.

During the Focused Site Visit: Schedule Components

Each Focused Site Visit takes on its own characteristics, and each will proceed in its own way in
accordance with the schedule. The activities and elements which follow are typical, but the team chair
should feel free to modify the sequence to fit institutional and team needs.

1. Meet with president and key staff for introductions and informal contacts.

2. Take a campus tour (depends on size, complexity of campus), confirm that facilities meet all
Standards and policies, and verify the secure storage of student records and complaints.
3. Ensure team members meet with key people/groups per the Core Inquiries, **review evidence,** and utilize these inputs to iteratively refine their initial findings and thinking to complete the **Peer Review Team Report.**
   a. Team members come prepared with key individuals/groups to interview identified. Interview appointments should be made in advance.
   b. Visibility on campus is important, although not everyone will be interviewed.
   c. Pay attention to evening and off-campus programs and DE if applicable.

4. Conduct the open forum.
   a. The forum should be highly publicized by the college.
   b. The forum should be held at a time which will encourage participation.
   c. All Focused Site Visit team members, if possible, should attend the forum.
   d. The forum is an opportunity for individuals to come forward, not a presentation by the team.
   e. The college president, senior staff such as vice presidents, and board members must **not attend** in order to foster a more open environment for comments from those who may not have had prior opportunity to meet with the visiting team.

5. Hold team meetings.
   a. Schedule several throughout the day(s); cancel if not needed.
   b. Seek cross validation. Don't accept testimony from a single source; encourage sharing of issues—no single team member "owns" a problem; be on the lookout for factions or individuals who would plead a special cause.
   c. Triangulate findings to help the team frame possible commendations and/or recommendations.
   d. Establish means for team members, especially those with more than one Standard assignment, to share their findings.

6. Visit any off-campus sites where 50% or more of a degree, program, or certificate is offered.

7. If applicable, communicate with district/system leadership and counterpart team (multi-college districts/systems).
   a. Hold in-person or telephone meetings with other chair(s).
   b. Implement strategies for team members to coordinate activities, e.g., Board of Trustees, district/system officers and departments.
   c. Decide role of district officials in site visit.
   d. Develop strategies for recommendations that are district/system in nature.

8. Check with college president and others for feedback on college reaction to the team. Chair should let the CEO know of his/her intent to check-in regularly for feedback during the visit.

9. Have dinner as a team to continue discussions and sharing of observations. Please be aware of your location and the confidentiality of discussions, and the financial impact on the college.
10. Keep editing the report.
   a. Remind team of role to analyze the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and review the college in terms of the Accreditation Standards and the mission of the institution, not other state regulations, statutes, or other perspectives.
   b. Make sure there is balance of evidentiary and explanatory detail in the findings sections and to cite each Standard as it is covered.
   c. Assure that critical statements are firmly tied and referenced to something in the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and/or the Standards and policies.
   d. Develop references to the college’s evidence (or lack thereof) in the evidence sections of the report.

11. Hold final team meeting and wrap up Peer Review Team Report findings.
   a. Review team member reports and achieve agreement on recommendations and commendations.
   b. Consolidate recommendations where appropriate; avoid multiple recommendations on the same issue, e.g., half a dozen separate recommendations on “communication.” (See “Writing Effective Recommendations” section in this Team Chair and Vice Chair Manual for examples). If you consolidate recommendations, please ensure the appropriate Standards are referenced accurately. Use the team’s prior discussions of the holistic or systemic quality of the institution to identify key areas in which consolidated recommendations are needed.
   c. Agree on which recommendations deal with matters of not meeting Standards and which are matters of institutional improvement where Standards are clearly being met. Identify same in the “Conclusions” sections of the Peer Review Team Report. Make sure recommendations are clearly connected to observations and findings.
   d. Be absolutely sure to reference Standards (and/or Eligibility Requirements, Commission policies) on each recommendation.
   e. Collect team members’ written reports.


13. Clean out team room.

IN THE INTEREST OF MAINTAINING STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY, PLEASE:
   • Be sure to delete all team files from hard drives and desktops of college computers in the team room and at the hotel.
   • Remove all USB flash drives from the college computers in the team room and at the hotel.

14. Conduct an exit discussion with institution’s CEO. (If the visit is part of a district/system, the district/system chair will meet with the district/system chief executive and provide an overview of district/system issues if any).

15. Conclude the visit by delivering the Exit Report. The Exit Report given at the end of the Focused Site Visit is the first public statement by the team concerning its major findings and a broad description of its recommendations and commendations. It also helps the college by providing closure to their comprehensive peer review process. This session should not be filmed or recorded.
The team chair **should NOT read team recommendations or commendations** during the Exit Report as they are subject to future editing. One suggestion from experienced team chairs is to provide the areas of improvement first, and then provide the commendations. This way the team leaves the college on a positive note (see sample Exit Report outline in the collaborative team workspace).

16. Team leaves campus following the delivery of the Exit Report.
3. **Peer Review Team Outcomes**

This section of the manual provides guidance for the team chair in overseeing the Peer Review Team’s work outcomes. In the comprehensive peer review process, the team will develop the following written work during the formative and summative components of review:

**Team ISER Review (Formative)**

1) Preliminary draft of the Peer Review Team Report (based on Assignment 1 and 2)
2) Core Inquiries Report (based on Assignment 3)

**Focused Site Visit (Summative)**

3) Completed Peer Review Team Report, including recommendations and commendations.

In crafting the Peer Review Team Report, the chair is best served if the assignments and drafts submitted by the team are well written and contain adequate reference to Accreditation Standards, *federal regulatory requirements of accreditation in the appropriate standards chapter, adherence to ACCJC policies*, and to evidentiary materials that led to the team’s findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Thus chairs are advised to guide their team carefully as it prepares its Assignments and portions of the draft Peer Review Team Report.

It is important to bear in mind that the chair’s completed Peer Review Team Report at the end of the Focused Site Visit should not merely be an edited compilation of individual reports by the peer review team, but must be a coherent and internally consistent document that can serve those using it after it is completed: the institution, the Commission, future peer review teams, and the public.

Team members need to understand that the completed Peer Review Team Report is written by the team chair, and that their drafts will undergo review and editing by the chair and vice chair.

3.1 **Developing the Preliminary Draft of the Peer Review Team Report**

Each standard team will contribute a draft report to the chair in preparation for the Team ISER Review. Chairs can make the task much smoother by providing clear guidance to team members regarding organization, content, style, and tone of the reports. Assignment 2 facilitates writing sections of the preliminary draft of the Peer Review Team Report.

**Guidelines for the Peer Review Team Report**

1. Evaluate the institution in light of its own stated mission, its objectives, and the Accreditation Standards. Wide variations in the capabilities, interests, needs, and circumstances of students require corresponding responses by institutions. Not every institution has to respond to these variations in exactly the same way, but institutions should address each Standard within their own framework. Describe how well the institution is achieving its mission, using the institution’s presentation and analysis of student achievement data.

2. Make favorable comments when praise is due. Praise in the form of a commendation is appropriate when a college clearly exceeds accreditation expectations. It is appropriate to encourage a college in its efforts and progress toward meeting a Standard, but commendations should be reserved for truly excellent achievements.
3. Remember that the purpose of the Peer Review Team Report is to provide evidence for the Commission’s decision on the institution’s accreditation status, a fair and meaningful estimate of the effectiveness of the institution, and an assessment as to the degree to which it is meeting the Standards of accreditation. Just as the Commission asks institutions to provide evidence for their assertions of quality and effectiveness, teams are expected to provide evidence, through their findings, to support their recommendations and/or commendations.

4. In this era of increased accountability and public disclosure, teams need to regard the report as a document that belongs to the many institutional stakeholders and internal and external publics. The Commission requires institutions to make the report available to the public, by posting it on the institutional website. The report is valid and public until the next accreditation review.

**Organization of the Standard Areas within the Peer Review Team Report**

Each Standard in the Peer Review Team Report should include a section of general observations. It is in this section of the Peer Review Team Report that an overview narrative is provided which summarizes the degree to which the institution is aligned with the standard, the manner in which it achieves alignment, areas of exceptional quality as related to the standard, and areas in need of improvement as related to the standard. A reader should be able to read the General Observations section and gain a sense of the overarching assessment of the institution relative to the particular standard. This section should serve as an introductory narrative to the findings and evidence section and must be consistent in that regard.

1. Each Standard Area of the Peer Review Team Report should include a section discussing the team members’ findings (specific observations and analyses) about the degree to which the institution’s practices and policies align with each Standard and the evidence the team used to reach that finding. The narrative should cite the Standards discussed at the end of each paragraph, in parentheses. Team members should take care to ensure that each Standard is discussed in the findings and evidence section. This section should include a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the college, including areas where the institution does not meet the Accreditation Standards. This is the section that provides the rational for the team’s findings, including recommendations and commendations. All findings must be supported within the narrative of this section.

2. Each Standard Area of the Peer Review Team Report should include a brief conclusions section that states whether the institution meets the Standard, falls below in some areas, exceeds the Standard, etc. This section might also include some of the general observations, and should include any commendations the team wants to make on this Standard.

3. Each Standard Area of the Peer Review Team Report should include a section of recommendations, if any, for the Standard. During the Focused Site Visit, 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 or a majority of the team accepts, not just the perspective or interests of one person.

**Elements Which Should Not Be Part of the Standard Areas of the Peer Review Team Reports**

1. Individuals should not be named, either in praise or blame. Comment, if necessary, on the office or position, not the officeholder.

2. Avoid advocating individual educational or governance theories.
3. Neither advocate for, nor advise against, specialized accreditation. Program specific accreditation is an institutional matter. The results of specialized accreditation should be given due regard, and may be used effectively by the institution as part of the supporting evidence included in the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report.

4. Do not cite the formulas or requirements of legislative statutes, specific organizations or associations, governmental departments or other agencies. If an institution has adopted such standards/benchmarks as its own measures of quality or effectiveness, it is appropriate to cite them as evidence presented by the institution in forming a judgment about overall institutional quality and adherence to Accreditation Standards.

3.2 Developing the Core Inquiries Report

During the Team ISER Review, and based on Assignment 3, the team will identify Core Inquiries that highlight areas in the ISER that require clarification or expansion, additional information requests, and/or observation and interview requests. The Core Inquiries Report is a summary of the areas that will be further evaluated during the Focused Site Visit. A template of the Core Inquiries Report is available in ACCJC’s collaborative workspace and the team chair and vice chair bear the responsibility of completing it. The following provides general principles and guidance to teams for developing the Core Inquiries Report, in accordance with the Core Inquiries template and timeline and checklist for the Team ISER Review and Focused Site Visit.

General Principles

A. Team ISER Review will culminate in the development of Core Inquiries, which highlight areas in the ISER that require clarification or expansion, additional information requests, and/or observation and interview requests.

B. Core Inquiries will describe the areas of emphasis for the Focused Site Visit to determine whether Accreditation Standards and Policies are met and to further explore areas of commendation or recommendation.

C. Core Inquiries will serve as a planning tool for the college in preparation for the Focused Site Visit. In the course of the Focused Site Visit, if new or emerging issues arise out of the discussions on Core Inquiries, the team chair will consult with the ACCJC staff liaison.

D. At the conclusion of Team ISER Review, the team chair will conduct a conference call with the college CEO and ACCJC staff liaison to summarize the Core Inquiries. This is an informal briefing. The CEO should refrain from discussing their interpretations of the findings during the Core Inquiries briefing, which is part of the Formative component of the peer review process.

E. The team chair will send a formal Core Inquiries Report to the CEO within two weeks of Team ISER Review.

F. Two weeks prior to the Focused Site Visit, the college will provide an update on the Core Inquiries using the ACCJC template and append available requested evidence. The college is not to prepare an immediate formal response to the Core Inquiries. Per the Core Inquiries, the college will use the time to prepare for the visit.

G. The Core Inquiries Report will be appended to the Draft Peer Review Team Report submitted to the Commission for its deliberation. Before final submission to the Commission, the team chair will provide an opportunity for the CEO to review errors of fact in the draft Peer Review Team Report.
Instructions for Teams

A. Review the Core Inquiries template at the start of Team ISER Review as reminder of the expected outcome for the day.

B. Complete the Core Inquiries template based on information and discussions emanating from Assignment 3: Formative Discussion Tool for Team ISER Review.

C. Follow the steps below to complete each section for each Core Inquiry:
   1) **Summarize** in 1-2 sentences the area which needs clarification or further development based on the review of the ISER and evidence – key words will be needed to frame areas of exploration (e.g. is it a process concern, policy issue, policy implementation, issue of exercising appropriate roles, frequency of implementation, etc.)
   2) **List relevant Standards and/or Policies** under review that relate to the Core Inquiry (this itemization should be limited to the most relevant Standards, not all Standards that are remotely related to the issue)
   3) **Describe the Core Inquiry** in further detail:
      i. Cite evidence the team reviewed and relevant observations leading to the core inquiry
      ii. Identify the issue that requires clarification or expansion based on the team’s initial analysis of the ISER narrative and evidence, explain gaps or exemplary practice(s) exceeding standard
   4) **List topics of discussion for interviews** during the Focused Site Visit which will help the college clarify the Core Inquiry (e.g. use of disaggregated assessment data; status of improvement plan on employee evaluations; facilities planning and total cost of ownership).
   5) **Identify additional information/evidence** the team will need to review for the Core Inquiry
   6) **Identify observations/interviews** the team will need to conduct for the Core Inquiry

D. In describing the Core Inquiries, be sure to reflect on the evidence you already reviewed.

E. Be sure topics are directly related to Accreditation Standards and Policies.

F. Be clear and direct in the requests for evidence and topics of discussion you identify.

G. Engage the appreciative inquiry approach to peer review in your discussions and documentation per ACCJC’s Peer Review Team Training.

Instructions to be Given to Colleges

The ACCJC staff liaison and team chair will provide the following instructions to colleges to clarify expectations for the Focused Site Visit.

A. Do not send an immediate narrative response or evidence to the Team or ACCJC upon receipt of the Core Inquiries.

B. Carefully review the Core Inquiries to plan for the Focused Site Visit. Core Inquiries describe the areas of emphasis for the Focused Site Visit to determine whether Accreditation Standards and Policies are met and to further explore those areas of inquiry for commendation or recommendation.
C. Remember that during the Team ISER Review, the team validates the good work of the college and identifies those Standards that were met per the college’s ISER and evidence, discusses areas of potential concern and areas for potential commendation; and develops Core Inquiries which provide formative feedback to the college and are the areas which the team will follow up with the college during their Focused Site Visit.

D. The college should use the Core Inquiries and time leading to the Focused Site Visit as an opportunity to gather needed evidence, collate information, and to strengthen or develop processes in the continuous improvement cycle.

E. Prior to the Focused Site Visit, institutions should use the ACCJC template to provide a college update describing any institutional improvements, strengthening of processes, documented outcomes, discussions or reflections which have occurred pertaining to each core inquiry. This document and all additional evidence should be submitted to ACCJC no later than two weeks before the date of the Focused Site Visit. ACCJC will distribute this information to the team for review.

F. The team chair, vice chair, staff liaison, and CEO and ALO will hold a pre-visit conversation no later than two weeks in advance of the Focused Site Visit to discuss updates and set expectations to prepare for the Focused Site Visit.

3.3 Completing the Peer Review Team Report: Writing Effective Recommendations and Commendations

During the Focused Site Visit, the team will complete the Peer Review Team Report, having gained clarity on remaining Accreditation Standards that were not confirmed during the Team ISER Review. During the Focused Site Visit, the team will also finalize its findings and conclusions, including commendations and recommendations.

A main purpose of the Peer Review Team Report is to help an institution and the Commission determine how effectively the college is meeting the Accreditation Standards. To achieve this purpose, the Peer Review Team Report should be clear and focused, and the sources of evidence for each recommendation should be noted. This report should identify deficiencies in meeting Accreditation Standards, and offer constructive recommendations for improvement. Additionally, the report should identify commendations, where the college exceeds the Standards. The findings contained in the Peer Review Team Report represent the observations of the team at the time of the visit.

Ultimately, the team chair is responsible for collectively drafting a clear, concise, well-organized, and coherent Peer Review Team Report that will endure under the careful scrutiny of a wide variety of readers. The report should honestly reflect the views of the team and indicate any significant differences within the team. The report should set forth the limitations and difficulties the institution is experiencing and the plans and potential it has for overcoming them.

**Writing Effective Recommendations and Commendations**

One of the most difficult parts of the peer review team visit is drafting recommendations and commendations to the college. Recommendations are based on the team’s evaluation and identify areas where the college does not meet the standard and/or areas for improvement, but a team cannot prescribe solutions the college must take to address those areas. Commendations should only be identified when the college exceeds the standard(s) demonstrated by exemplary practices, policies, processes, and/or outcomes. Other notable achievements which do not rise to a commendation may
be included in the narrative of the report in the appropriate standard section as noteworthy processes, practices, outcomes. E.g. “the team was impressed by...” or “the team lauds...”

Generally, the principles outlined below for effective recommendations also apply to writing effective commendations. In writing recommendations and commendations, be thoughtful about the institution’s need for specific language or more general language. A brief diagnostic statement of the problem, linked to the appropriate accreditation Standard is sufficient, leaving the specific remedy to be worked out by the institution. In rare cases, an institution may seek very specific advice on how to remedy deficiencies. In that case, the college’s assigned ACCJC staff liaison should work with the college for clarification.

The content of the findings and conclusions sections of the Peer Review Team Report should logically and clearly set the stage for any recommendation or commendation that the team wishes to make. All recommendations and commendations should be followed by a citation of the Standard(s) in question, assuring that the institution will understand what is being recommended or commended and what Standard(s) are related. Narrative of those citations must support the team’s findings. The peer review team should review all draft recommendations and commendations as a group during and at the conclusion of the team visit but the chair is required to consider editing them later to improve clarity and eliminate inconsistencies that may exist.

Principles of Writing Effective Recommendations and Commendations

1. 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.

Recommendations that 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.

2. Recommendations and Commendations should reference the Standards.

Both the college and the Commission should be able to tell at a glance which Standard(s) are being addressed. This can be accomplished by a reference to the Standard at the end of the recommendation. An example of a recommendation with appropriate Standards cited follows.

“...should establish clear written policies and procedures delineating the roles and responsibilities of the various campus constituencies that participate in institutional governance.” [Standards IV.A.2, IV.A.3]

3. Recommendations and Commendations should flow logically and clearly from the findings and conclusions in the Peer Review Team Report.

The college will have difficulty responding to and understanding the rationale for a recommendation that has no prior reference in the report. The team should cite evidence it uses to conclude non-compliance with accreditation requirements.

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 the Standards, the team recommends that the College ...”) or whether they are designed to strengthen a condition that already meets the standard.

The content of the findings and conclusions sections of the report should include a comment on whether or not the institution meets the Standard.
5. **Recommendations and Commendations which relate to several Standards should be combined into overarching recommendations or commendations.**

   This will help to avoid repeating recommendations over and over for each relevant standard. Standard references should be rechecked when recommendations are combined since sometimes in the consolidation process the links to specific Standards are weakened or lost. This SAMPLE combined recommendation has been carefully linked to Standards.

   **Sample Recommendation #1:**
   
   “In order to meet the Standards the College must complete a full review of its processes related to the assessment and review cycle of student learning outcomes for all instructional courses/programs to ensure that all courses, programs, and directly related student services are improved (II.A.2, II.A.16).

6. **The report should be consistent in its stance on key issues.**

   Complimenting a college and making a recommendation on the same issue elsewhere in the report leads to confusion, and such inconsistencies will only serve to weaken the impact of the report. Recommendations and Commendations should be consistent with the findings and evidence, and conclusions sections of the Peer Review Team Report.

7. **Clarity and Directness.**

   Colleges benefit most from clear and direct team statements that do not “beat around the bush” and that do not leave room for a good deal of debate about the team’s intent or meaning. It is challenging, but necessary, to be as direct as possible.

**Recommendations and Commendations Should Not:**

1. **Contain references that are not part of the ERs, Standards, and Commission policies.**

   Terms like “Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA),” “shared governance,” “matriculation” and “collegial consultation” have specific meaning in some of the districts/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.

   The following examples of poorly written recommendations use terms that derive their meaning from sources other than the Standards.

   “The team recommends that the College review and validate instruments for cultural bias, meeting matriculation guidelines, and regulating cutoff scores.” (Standards xxx)

   “The College should complete its Minimum Qualifications equivalency review of faculty.” (Standard xxx)

2. **Be based on the standards/regulations of governmental agencies, the legislature, or other organizations.**

   The relevant Standards for the team are those of the Commission. Team member concerns about compliance with external laws or regulations can creep into a team’s recommendations, as in the following example of an inappropriate recommendation:

   “The College president should ensure the full implementation of the new College quantitative program review model and ensure implementation of the Accountability Model derived from Assembly Bill 1725.”
3. **Be vague.**

   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. Some examples of what **not to write** are:
   - “The Physical Science building has some safety problems.”
   - “The College needs to do planning.”
   - “Cultural diversity needs to be clarified and communicated to the College community.”

4. **Contain a “Standards dump” of every loosely related Standard imaginable.**

   Recommendations are intended to give clear direction on the areas where the college needs improvement. Such “Standards dumps” may confuse or overwhelm the college. Cite only those Standards that will be directly impacted by the recommended action, not those that will be indirectly impacted.

5. **Be prescriptive.**

   Describing how a problem should be solved should be left up to the institution. Note how these recommendations are written; they are **not** to be emulated.

   "The ventilation fan in the Central Duplicating area should be replaced with a heavy duty model."

   “The College should have a Diversity/Affirmative Action Officer on campus in order to coordinate training for faculty screening committees and to provide multi-cultural awareness training for all staff.”
4. **Team Chair Reports**

The team chair is responsible for three major reports: Core Inquiries Report, Exit Report to the college, which is delivered orally at the end of the Focused Site Visit, and a Peer Review Team Report which is submitted to the Commission and the institution. Although the efforts of the peer review team contribute to each report, the team chair bears primary responsibility for them.

4.1 **Core Inquiries Report**

A template of the Core Inquiries Report is available in ACCJC’s collaborative workspace. The Team ISER Review will culminate in the development of Core Inquiries, which highlight areas in the ISER that require clarification or expansion, additional information requests, and/or observation and interview requests. Core Inquiries will describe the areas of emphasis for the Focused Site Visit to determine whether Accreditation Standards and Policies are met and to further explore areas of commendation or recommendation.

It is important that each core inquiry include:

- a summary statement describing the area which needs clarification or further development based on the review of the ISER and evidence;
- list the relevant Standards or policies that relate to the Core Inquiry (this itemization should be limited to the most relevant Standards, not all Standards that are remotely related to the issue);
- describe the inquiry by citing evidence the team reviewed and relevant observations leading to the core inquiry,
- identifying the issue that requires clarification or expansion based on the team’s initial analysis of the ISER narrative and evidence, explaining potential gaps or exemplary practice(s) exceeding standard;
- listing topics of discussion for the Focused Site Visit which will help the college clarify the Core Inquiry; and
- identifying additional information/evidence the team will need to review for the Core Inquiry or identifying observations/interviews the team will need to conduct.

4.2 **Exit Report at Conclusion of the Focused Site Visit**

The Exit Report given at the end of the Focused Site Visit is the first public statement by the team concerning its major findings and a broad description of its recommendations and commendations. It also helps the college by providing closure to their comprehensive peer review process. Depending on the issues that are prominent on the campus, concerns which were identified in the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report or during the course of the visit, and the general atmosphere of the institution, the Exit Report is an opportunity to commend the college, to note major findings, and to underscore the general nature of key recommendations. The team chair speaks for the team and conveys the essence of the team's message to the college. An effective Exit Report can do much to bring a positive closure to the entire effort and to prepare the college for the Peer Review Team Report and ultimately the Commission action.
• Diplomacy is in order, but so is candor. Although the Exit Report is generally one that outlines findings and broad recommendations that need attention, commendations for excellence are appropriate and encouraged.

• Operate on the principle of "no surprises." If the team has identified an issue that should be addressed quickly, this should be communicated to the college. No college should be led to believe that all is well if the team has found serious issues at the college.

• Refrain from generalizing the findings to other institutions. For example, suggesting that every institution has deficiencies, such as “everybody gets a recommendation on planning...,” in a particular area is not appropriate or helpful.

• Recognize the effort made by the college to produce the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and to prepare for the comprehensive peer review visit. If appropriate, asking those who participated to stand as a group is one more way to validate the process and to reinforce the institution's ownership of the enterprise.

• All members of the team should be present at the Exit Report. Only the team chair speaks, and no questions are taken. The team chair should not permit the Exit Report to be filmed or recorded—the final Peer Review Team Report will contain all the important information.

• Describe (in general terms) the college personnel that were interviewed, the number of attendees at the open forums, etc.

Outline for Exit Report at Conclusion of the Focused Site Visit

A. Introductions/Acknowledgments

1. Introduce team and comment on their background and experience. Acknowledge team members who participated in the Team ISER Review leading to the Core Inquiries.

2. Thank college for its cooperation and acknowledge any whose contributions were especially helpful such as the individuals who participated in writing the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and key support staff.

B. Review Purposes of the Exit Report

1. Provide some closure for the Focused Site Visit.

2. Provide summary of preliminary substantive findings and recommendations to the institution.

3. Remind the college that only the final, written, Commission-approved report is official.

C. Review Major Purposes of the Team Visit

1. Evaluate the college as a whole using the Accreditation Standards.

2. Evaluate how well the college is achieving its stated purposes (mission) by assessing the college as it carries out its activities.

3. Determine whether the institution meets Accreditation Standards.

4. Provide recommendations for quality assurance and institutional improvement.

5. Provide information to the Commission and the public about the institution’s quality.
D. Review the Team's Approach to Completing Its Task
   1. Study of the college’s Institutional Self-Evaluation Report and supporting documents through the Team ISER Review.
   2. Focused Site Visit on-campus meetings with individuals and groups, interviews, examination of documents, observation of facilities, visits to off-campus sites and review of DE courses and services where appropriate.
   3. Open sessions in which any member of the college community could meet with the team.

E. Summarize the Team's Assessment of the College
   1. Broadly describe the team’s observations, areas of improvement, and areas of excellence.
   2. Do not read the recommendations or commendations word for word.
   3. Provide any team comment on the Quality Focus Essay and advice for the institution on its improvement projects.

F. Review Steps Which Occur After the Team Leaves
   1. The team chair completes the Peer Review Team Report.
   2. The team chair sends the draft to the Commission office, and staff communicates with the team chair regarding the draft.
   3. The team chair sends the report to the team for any suggested corrections.
   4. The team chair sends the draft Peer Review Team Report to the institutional CEO for correction of errors of fact, and makes corrections as appropriate.
   5. The team chair sends the completed Peer Review Team Report to the Commission office.
   6. The Commission sends a copy of the Peer Review Team Report to the college with instructions for the upcoming Commission meeting.
   7. The Commission reviews the report at the next (January or June) meeting and takes action regarding the institution's accredited status.
   8. The Commission office sends the action letter to the college, with the final Peer Review Team Report, normally 30 days after the Commission meeting.

4.3 Completed Peer Review Team Report

The Comprehensive Peer Review Team Report is completed by the team chair after the Focused Site Visit is concluded. The format for the report and samples of a title page, summary, and letter to accompany the draft of the report are included in ACCJC’s collaborative workspace of material provided during the Team Chair Training. The primary focus of the report should be on the ways in which the institution does, or does not, demonstrate that it meets or exceeds Accreditation Standards and on the findings and recommendations of the peer review team.

The report of the team chair has multiple audiences and has a life of its own long after the conclusion of the visit. The institution will use the report to assess its own self-evaluation effort and to take appropriate actions on the recommendations. It would be naive to ignore the possibility that internal or external special interest groups or individuals may use the report to further their own agendas.
The Commission relies on the report as a primary source in its deliberations concerning the accredited status of the institution, the thoroughness of the team’s peer review of the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report, and the cogency of the team’s recommendations to the college.

**Review of Drafts:** A draft of the Peer Review Team Report should first be e-mailed to the Commission office, normally **within ten days of the visit**. The ACCJC staff liaison assigned to that particular college will carefully review the draft, make suggested edits and email them to the team chair, and discuss it with the chair by telephone within a day or two. The team chair will send the draft report to the team members for their suggestions. The chair will then send the draft report to the institutional CEO for correction of errors of fact. Copies of all correspondence should be sent to the ACCJC assigned staff liaison.

Suggestions to expedite completing the Peer Review Team Report:

- Team chairs should review and fill in the template in the introductory material in advance of the Team ISER Review, and update it in advance of the Focused Site Visit.
- Spend enough time and effort on the draft so it looks and reads like a finished product; you should consider the draft report to be a public document.
- Review the draft carefully to avoid terminology specific to one system or group of colleges.
- Review the draft to make sure the commendations and recommendations are specifically tied to the Standards.
- Review the draft to make sure that the Standards cited are the ones that are applicable to each recommendation.
- Check for and correct any contradictory statements or conclusions about compliance with Standards that appear in the team’s written work.

**Role of the ACCJC liaison:** The ACCJC liaison is there to be a supportive resource to the team chair and college. They will review the report for clarity, consistency, completeness, and the strength of the connections between the findings; the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations; and the Accreditation Standards.

**Role of the Peer Review Team:** Team members should review the draft to validate that the report accurately reflects the observations and findings of the team and to make suggestions regarding style and tone.

**Role of the College:** The college may correct errors of fact in the report, but it may not alter the findings or the recommendations. Although the draft of the report is confidential in terms of general release at this time, the president may share its contents with key members of the institutional staff who would have the ability to identify potential errors of fact. The college should be given about a week to complete its review.

**Characteristics of the Completed Peer Review Team Report**

The Peer Review Team Report is an important document in that it is the vehicle by which critical judgments about institutional performance and quality are expressed by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, and through which formal advice about improvement is given.

- The document is analyzed in detail by the Commissioners of the Accrediting Commission in reaching decisions about the accredited status of the subject institution.
• The report is read by faculty, administrators, and trustees of the subject institution; and it is used by the institution to develop improvement plans.

• The report is permanently filed at the college and the Accrediting Commission's office. The institution must post the report on its website, along with the Commission action letter and the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report. It may be examined by the press, researchers, job applicants, other accrediting bodies, government agencies, or the courts.

• The name of the team chair and team members as author is inevitably connected with the report.

The Commission asks that the Peer Review Team Report be prepared with great care!

Internal consistency: Is the report consistent with no mixed or conflicting messages? Are contradictions among elements of the report avoided, e.g., between observations and summaries and between commendations and recommendations? Does the information in the “findings and evidence” support and lead to the conclusions and recommendations? Have redundancies been consolidated? Are observations, conclusions, and recommendations handled consistently from Standard to Standard?

Clarity: Does the report say exactly what is intended, so that there can be no accidental or deliberate misinterpretation?

Perspective: Does the report clearly represent the observations, conclusions, and recommendations as coming from the team as a whole, not just one member or point of view?

Institutional focus: Does the report deal fairly with the entire institution without advocating selectively for constituency groups or other special interests?

Comprehensiveness: Did the team affirm that the institution meets or exceeds the Accreditation Standards? Did the team examine the institution’s compliance with Eligibility Requirements and ACCJC policies? Did it examine all of the elements covered by federal regulations and the Checklist? Has the team commented on the Quality Focus Essay, and made suggestions to support the institution’s improvement projects?

Documentation: Does the text of the report support the recommendations? Do the findings and analyses and conclusions sections clearly state the evidence or context on which the statements are based?

(Example: "From discussions with college committees, observation of meetings and review of minutes, the team concludes that...")

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

Economy: Have redundancies been consolidated, where possible, in the report?

Audience: Consider who may read the report and with what purposes in mind? It is an academic document addressed to the college. It may also be read by reporters, government agencies, legislators, or students; they all want clarity and conciseness.
4.4 Peer Review Team Report Transmittal to ACCJC for Commission Review

After the college has responded on any errors of fact, the team chair should make appropriate revisions and send an electronic copy of the Comprehensive Peer Review Team Report to the assigned ACCJC staff liaison via e-mail in Microsoft Word format. Normally, this should be completed within a month after the visit. The team chair should also submit all Focused Site Visit related expense forms to the Commission office.

The ACCJC office will send final copies of the Peer Review Team Report to the college prior to the Commission meeting, and allow the CEO to comment on the report. The CEO may also elect to come to the Commission meeting and address the Commissioners; in such cases the Commission will also invite the team chair to attend in person or by phone.