

Evaluation of the 2009-10 Accreditation Site Visits June 2010

Overview of this Report

During the work of the Accreditation Study Work Group, it was agreed that the new accreditation system would include regular opportunities for gathering feedback from team members, team leads, and the institutions being visited. This is the first report from the accreditation system's evaluation process and will provide a limited look at some of the data that has been collected from team leads and institutional representatives during the 2009-2010 year.

Staff Recommendation

This is an information item only.

Background

The evaluation system for the accreditation cycle is designed to parallel the work done by institutions to meet Common Standard 2: Unit and Program Evaluation System. That is, each activity of the accreditation system will have data collected, analyzed and used to make ongoing improvement. Results then inform the larger system. The results will be reported to the COA and some of it will be included in the Annual Report presented to the Commission. The data can also be used to provide input on policy issues and provided to researchers or other interested stakeholders.

Each part of the evaluation system is designed to answer one of the questions below:

1. How well is the activity being implemented?
2. Does the activity provide useful information for other activities in the system, and, in making accreditation decisions?
3. Is the activity serving the objectives of the accreditation system?

Team leads from every site visit team in 2009-10 were invited to complete two surveys through an electronic survey program. The first survey asked them to evaluate each of their team members. This information is useful for the Director of Accreditation to use as she develops teams for the 2010-11 year and as she considers the need for continued, or refresher, trainings for Board of Institutional Reviewers. The second survey asked team leads to evaluate the effectiveness of the Commission consultant(s) who accompanied their teams and to evaluate the strength of the teams, as a whole. Finally, the second survey asked team leads to identify practices they found to be particularly effective during their site visit and to describe any activities they plan to do when next in a team lead position.

Faculty and staff from institutions that received site visits during the 2009-2010 year were also invited to answer questions about their experience with the accreditation system and the accreditation team. Information collected through this system includes ratings on the effectiveness of the consultant and the team lead during the pre-visits and the site visit. The institution survey asked respondents how the accreditation system supported their institution in

clarifying its own mission and vision and to provide two examples of how the new accreditation system enabled the institution to make strides in achieving its own goals.

This agenda item is just the initial reporting of the evaluation date and is to provide the COA with the flavor of the information being collected. Of particular note at this time is that the mean response from the team leads was the lowest for the work of the team members in writing the report and the institutions' comments on the Biennial Reports and Program Assessment processed impacting the site visit (Q.3). Additional information will be presented at future COA meetings.

Preliminary Results of the Team Lead Reflections Survey

Team Leads from 11 site visits completed the surveys. One individual completed two surveys because she served as team lead on two visits.

1. How would you evaluate the work of the site visit team in each of the following areas (1-3 scale):

-Gathering and reporting accurate information	2.36
-Deliberating and coming to decisions on the standards	2.55
-Writing the report	2.09

2. What are some strategies that you used successfully in helping the site visit team complete their work?

- Addressed questions as they arise and provided guidance as needed. Provided time to listen to each team member and to strive for consensus. Assisted with writing/reviewing each section of the report.
- Agreeing on how to reach consensus, that is, 80% agreement and 20% can live with it.
- I communicated with the team before the meeting to welcome them and give them some details to help them plan. I kept the discussions focused and moving forward, and also made sure each person was heard. Everyone on the team knows how a good meeting runs, so I wanted to make sure that ours were well-run and respectful of people's time and perspectives. The consultant and I clarified roles and processes throughout the visit, and made sure we had plenty of time to share what we found. I stayed up late with anyone who was writing, for moral support and to help if needed. I established a positive attitude and approach for the visit, and the team coalesced very well.
- I differentiated the pre-visit assignments to team members based on whether they were CS cluster or PS cluster members. In this way, there was minimal overlap in their pre-visit assignments, but when they came together as a team they had collectively covered all the material that the team needed to discuss. I'd be happy to share what I have each cluster review prior to the visit--and why I assigned things in the way I did. I'd also be happy to share the process for keeping the site visit team apprised of the progress of a focused (re)visit and prepared for making an accreditation recommendation within hours of the focused visit being completed.

- I felt the assignment distribution worked well...except I might have not taken on as much as I did and then needed help...but that is team work. I felt we walked through the tasks clearly from the beginning. I felt clear about the progress that we needed to make by various critical points in the visit and we kept on task. I think the schedule provided us a good distribution of tasks and we shared information. After the pre-visit I was concerned because the institution was new to the process that the schedule would not be tight enough. I had time at the airport to draft some ideas and I think it helped (I hope so). I think scheduling is one on the most difficult parts of managing the visit from an institutional point of view.
- I was very fortunate to have a small, collaborative, goal-directed team that took time to enjoy meals, have fun discussions, and then go right back to work. I think that we all were active listeners and that made it very easy - especially when we wrote the report as a team. In the end, we unanimously agreed with every word of the final report because we all had participated equally in the process. I think we all went away with a sense of accomplishment and time well spent. It is equally important to note that we had fun in the process as well.
- The strategy I used was to delegate--the additional staff consultants were great to have there to help two team members gather evidence, deliberate on standards and write.
- There was a strong writer on the team that helped another writer with their draft.
- Using a display to edit the text of the mid-visit and final report, allowing everyone to contribute fully in reaching consensus and avoiding endless paper edits.
- Working through the standards and arriving at consensus.

3. What might you do differently next time?

- Arriving at consensus item by item took too much time, and we were pressed at the very end. We should be able to arrive at consensus sooner, so begin the process earlier.
- I have definitely reflected upon what I would do differently next time.
 1. Check the schedule for document room and writing times. Interviews, especially with one person, should be no more than 20-30 minutes.
 2. Bring hard copies of pertinent guidelines that would help structure the team. Also, I found the team members who brought notebooks with them seemed more prepared - they were able to underline and highlight items. I couldn't figure out how to do this on my electronic copy.
 3. Begin on Sunday with a sample report - show the team the end product so they know exactly what they are expected to write. Encourage them to use it as a template.
 4. Suggest they begin the draft on Monday evening, even if it's very sketchy.
 5. For the common standards, ask each person to select specific standards that they would write. I found I was writing on two standards that I knew very little about and hadn't interview or asked for information from the appropriate people. This overall structure might facilitate more focus with the Team trying to fill in the gaps.
- I have to find a way to help team members with their writing throughout the process and not just wait for the first draft. That sounds crazy, but maybe I should sit with each cluster to outline what they will be saying in the four categories and help them substantiate their claims with evidence in order to personalize their writing.
- I will let the consultants handle the electronic formatting of the report so that I can work more closely with team members on the writing of the report.

- I will take advantage of all that I learned from this visit. I fully appreciate the value of the Pre-visit. I never doubted that it was worthwhile but now I understand the true value in terms of:
 1. Preparing the interview schedule. Next time, I will make certain that a representative from each stakeholder group will be interviewed prior to the Mid-Term visit. On a larger visit, I clearly see where this would be a problem. The planning was terrific in terms of people to interview representing all stakeholders, places to interview that were private/quiet/comfortable, preparation of interviewees, timely short breaks for the team members, best use of each team member's time. Very efficient planning.
 2. Meals. Arrangements were made for us to eat the buffet and it worked out perfectly. We also ordered meals ahead of time so the food was ready promptly at the pre-arranged time.
 3. Work room -We discussed it with the hotel and agreed on the arrangement. When we arrived for the visit, it was not set up properly. Because we knew exactly how the room should be arranged, we called and it was dealt with very quickly. The hotel personnel followed through for the rest of the visit.
- I would be a little more explicit about the difference between NCATE and CTC and note how this might impact the decision making process. If there are interviews scheduled on Sunday night, I think it would be helpful to inform the team members prior to Sunday afternoon. If travel time further limits orientation time on Sunday afternoon, I would consider possibly attempting to cover some of the basic elements through e-mail prior to the visit.
- I would help adjust the schedule to make the days not quite so long. Classroom visits kept us on site until 6:00 both days, so evening meetings didn't even start until 7:30. I would have started the days later (i.e. 9:30, not 8:30).
- I wouldn't do anything differently. I prepared for every challenge I could anticipate, and I responded to the "surprises" [e.g., novice team members having to work outside areas of experience or comfort, insufficient evidence for program decisions, and more] with skillful improvisation.
- Modifying the schedule. We stayed on campus too late and it caused us to not have enough writing time. We didn't get any writing done at all on Monday.
- Overall this was not a complex visit and we worked well as a team. In the future, I would be much better prepared with a template of the report and written directions for the various writing assignments. We spent too much time and frustration on formatting issues. I would also be better prepared to consider a common format for the report.
- The hotel had food issues but if it had not I would have scheduled more breakfasts and dinners in the work room as I have found that takes less time than eating out.

Additional Comments

- Both CTC staff members were extremely helpful - thank you!
- Given all the difficulties of this visit, I must admit that I value each opportunity to work through the process as it is helping me design more effective policies and procedures for my own programs.
- Overall, the team was excellent. The NCATE chair was one of the best I have ever worked with.

- 1. The yearly BIR training is really paying off. Team members no longer come with their own agenda or interpretations of the standards so that evaluating the evidence and coming to a consensus is both easier and I think more consistent than the old days.
- 2. This was my first time with the Program Assessment process and the comments of the readers were very helpful in focusing the team's attention on the most important concerns about the credential programs. I see the same process working as my institution gets ready for its own visit next year. The institution has more time to respond to clearly identified issues prior to the arrival of the site visit team. Fairer and also more effective than the old method.
- A great team, thanks. Each person was so reliable and capable. I really enjoyed this visit.

Preliminary Results of the Institution Feedback Survey

Fifteen individuals from nine institutions completed the institution survey. Individuals were invited to complete this survey, either, as individuals with their own perspectives on the accreditation experience or to reflect a consensus view of the institution.

1. Do you feel that the revised accreditation process provides a fair and objective assessment of your institution and all of its credential programs? Yes/no

14 of 15 respondents said yes, the 15th said yes and no, commenting that the process was so new that the team was still learning.

2. Please cite two specific ways in which the accreditation site visit process enabled you or your unit to make strides toward meeting your mission and goals?

- Not sure if this qualifies, but the move to electronic formats of reports, data tables, other supporting evidence helped us to organize everything in a central place. Storage allowed for easy indexing. We continually strived to meet our mission and goals and this gave us an opportunity to share with others and to get feedback from a group of outside individuals.
- Caused the department to focus on future needs and reconcile our curriculum and activities with the department's mission statement.
- Provided the chair (that's me) the opportunity to see all the successes of our department and appreciate the work that the members of the department do. Engendered a sense of pride with me and members of our organization.
- It is always helpful to take a look at what you do and how you get there. It is also an opportunity to involve faculty.
- Prompt clear information as to what was needed in order to meet the goals.
- As a part of the College of Education, but a Division at another campus, preparing for the site visit helped all members of the Division engage in meaningful discussions, understand more fully the process and the importance of their individual roles in the larger context of the COE, and provided solid evidence that we all know the missions and goals, and support them in our work every day. It also helped us define our larger role in the community we serve, and identified the many partnerships that have been established within that community to serve students.

- 1) Served as a catalyst for us to make explicit across the unit the work we do that is related to the standards. Although we know what we do, putting it all together in an organized way for the visit was value-added for us.
- 2) The visit served to support our commitment to reflective practice by providing detailed feedback on the unit's work.
- It made everyone focus on the same end goals. Everyone took the time to review the mission and see how each program was working towards the mission
- Even though all standards were met and we were recommended for accreditation, some of the questions and discussion along the way sparked some changes for us that will strengthen the program and our communication.
- As is always the case with such a visit, we are better grounded in the standards because of the preparation for the visit.
- The process improved communication and renewed commitment amongst the stakeholders and the unit.
- The process confirmed that the unit provides an effective program.
- Helped us reflect on our current practices and future plans. Validated and empowered faculty and the Dean in recognizing the quality of our work.
- The team was very clear about some areas of improvement: Resources, Standard 10, and content-specific pedagogy. Having an outside team highlight these areas during conversations with them (particularly the mid-visit report with the Dean) was very helpful. And, because these are clearly delineated in the draft report, our faculty and staff will be able to carefully process this information to strengthen our program.
- Provided the unit with the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive self-study.
- Provided the unit with the opportunity to assess candidate learning in relation to candidate outcomes.
- The visit provided support for the unit to make a request for an integrated information system.
- The visit reinforced the importance of ongoing unit effectiveness data collection (Biennial Report).
- You recognized a need at the administrative level, a need that individuals are reluctant to stress.
- A site visit invites self-evaluation and monitoring of best practices.
- Unsure how this helped, it wasn't until after that I made the connection.

3. This is the first year where both Biennial Reports and Program Assessment have been completed prior to the accreditation site visit. How did the Biennial Report and the Program Assessment process impact your site visit planning?

- These reports served to lay the groundwork for the visit. We knew that by the time the team arrived, they would have reviewed everything we prepared in writing.
- Planning was okay. There seemed to be some confusion with the cross-over scheduling between the two entities, but, by the end of the days, it all seemed to work itself out.
- I think this process takes some of the strain off of the visit both for the teams and the site. Some clarifications have already taken place when really makes a difference.

- We provided as much information as possible in both reports. The feedback provided helped us greatly. We also used both reports in identifying possible gaps or lack of clarity of information and making sure we addressed these gaps by providing information in our electronic exhibit room.
- Both showed the importance of assessment, helped us to identify and define our methods and evidence of assessment, and enabled us to move forward in establishing a centrally located repository of all assessment data for future reflection, reporting, and program revision.
- These reports supported our reflections and preparation of information for the site visit.
- The reports made the visit easier because everyone knew what they focus would be. The Biennial reports made data collection simpler and this will only improve as time goes on.
- I have had little to do with the preparation of these reports and the assessment, so I feel that I cannot answer this question.
- Feedback from the Biennial Report and Program Assessment allowed the unit to be prepared to answer questions generated from the documents during the site visit. The BR and PA documents submitted in advance were helpful in allowing this unit to focus on the Common Standards document and the site visit.
- Helped plan for the documentation for the site visit (step wise approach to the self study).
- I think that the Biennial Report has been my favorite report because it really is a synthesis of the program data and curricular changes. The Biennial Report helped us choose which data to put on our accreditation website.
- As we were one of the first to participate in the new process, it would have been helpful to have received feedback on our Program Assessment in a more timely manner. It was very difficult to submit the Biennial Report a few months prior to the accreditation visit.
- They provided vehicles for the unit to have more targeted reviews of program effectiveness.
- Absolutely effective! The Biennial Reports and Program Assessment notes spurred me to complete student/employer surveys that I had been putting off. By the time of the visit, they were completed.
- The reports made the visit easier because everyone knew what they focus would be. The Biennial reports made data collection simpler and this will only improve as time goes on