

Discussion of Draft *Accreditation Handbook* Language Regarding Revisits March 2012

Overview of this Report

This item begins the process of discussing and developing a chapter for the *Accreditation Handbook* that provides direction to approved institutions, team lead and team members, and staff consultants for preparing and completing a revisit visit. The new chapter will also provide information from the Committee on Accreditation that clarifies the procedures for a revisit.

Staff Recommendation

This is an information item and staff recommends the COA discuss the topic of revisits and provide guidance as to what should be included in the *Accreditation Handbook* related to revisits.

Background

The purpose of a revisit is to allow each approved institution with significant adverse findings following its initial accreditation site visit the opportunity to demonstrate to a review team that it has modified its practices enough that the revisit team can find the standard or standards that were less than fully met to now be met. Usually, an institution is revisited during the year following the initial accreditation site visit, but only if COA has found the combination of standard findings to require an accreditation decision that includes stipulations and the COA has required a revisit.

The initial site visit team was required to come to standard findings for each of the Common Standards and all applicable program standards and to recommend to the COA an accreditation status. Sometimes, the team identifies one or more elements of a standard that are not met while the rest of the standard is met. Depending on the centrality of that element to providing strong preparation to educators, the standard can be found to be Met, Met with Concerns, or Not Met. Once the standards findings are decided, the team is guided by the table in Accreditation Handbook Chapter Nine (pages 54 and 55) to develop an accreditation recommendation and, if appropriate, draft stipulations. The stipulations might include the recommendation that quarterly progress reports, a report after one year, or a revisit is appropriate. If there are significant standard findings that prevent the COA from granting accreditation to the institution, the actions that must be taken by the institution are identified as stipulations. Stipulations describe the specific actions that will remove a finding that prevents the institution from gaining full accreditation.

Who Participates in the Revisit

If the COA has taken action that includes stipulations and that a revisit take place within one year of its action, generally, the team lead from the initial visit and the CTC consultant will be the team members who return for the revisit although it depends upon the number of findings and

breadth of programs impacted. If appropriate, the size of the team that returns to the institution may be larger. If not explicit in the COA action, the determination of the number of reviewers for any given site visit will be made by the Administrator of Accreditation. The Administrator of Accreditation may consult with the team lead and will make that determination based on the number and nature of the stipulations to be addressed. Unlike during initial site visits when the CTC consultant plays a facilitative role, during revisits the consultant usually/may participate(s) in interviews, document reviews, and discussions that lead to standards findings and to an accreditation recommendation.

Who Makes Preparations for the Revisit?

As with the initial site visit, the CTC consultant is responsible for working with the institution on the logistics of the revisit. The institution is responsible for determining the logistics for the visit such as identifying the hotel, ensuring transportation for the team, and arranging for meals. However, unlike initial site visits, there is no contract developed for the hotel and meals costs which means that revisit team members pay out of pocket for meals and lodging, and then request that those costs be reimbursed.

What Preparations Are Required?

Unlike the initial accreditation site visit, there are no program assessment findings, biennial reports, or program summaries to guide the revisit team. Rather, the revisit is focused on the accreditation determination, stipulations placed on the institution by the COA and the accreditation decision letter sent to the institution.

During the year between the COA's original decision and the revisit, the institution is guided by the consultant to focus its responses on addressing the issues identified by the initial site visit team. On occasion, the institution may be required to prepare quarterly progress reports that are submitted to the consultant and the COA. In addition, when a revisit is required, the institution must prepare a document that describes, issue by issue, the steps the institution has taken to ameliorate concerns identified by the initial team's findings that it believes will be sufficient to address the findings and stipulations. The COA's actions define the scope of the visit and who should be interviewed by the revisit team. For all site visits, the interview schedule forms the backbone of the visit. For revisits, only individuals who can specifically address changes the institution has made in response to the stipulations are included in the interview schedule. Similarly, only documentation and evidence that clarifies how the institution has addressed the stipulations is reviewed during the visit. Consequently, a revisit is shorter than the initial site visit and sometimes lasts only 1 ½ to 2 days.

What is the focus of the Revisit

It cannot be overstated that the intent of a revisit is to focus exclusively on the stipulations placed on the institution which includes the standard elements found to be less than fully met during the initial accreditation site visit. Stipulations generally describe the activity or activities the institution must complete in order to meet the standard(s) that had prevented the institution from gaining full accreditation. The stipulations guide the institution in its remediations and the team in examining and weighing the evidence. The standard of evidence for a revisit is the same as

that for an initial site visit. Board of Institutional Reviewers (BIR) are trained to recognize the evidence sufficient to document that an institution is meeting a standard.

The relationship between Stipulations and Standards Decisions in Revisits

It is important to emphasize that the focus of the visit is to ensure that all stipulations have been addressed. In doing so, standards decisions related to the stipulations should be determined by the revisit team. However, standards not related to the stipulations do not necessarily need to be addressed at the time of the revisit. The institution may choose to address them if indeed it believes that significant progress has been made in addressing those standards, but it is not a requirement for removal of stipulations. The team lead and consultant should clarify this with the institution prior to the site visit.

What is the Outcome of a Revisit?

At multiple times during the revisit, the team members will share their observations and concerns with the institution. During the revisit, the team members develop a consensus document of findings on the stipulations and the standards applicable to the stipulations which were not fully met in the initial site visit. Finally, the revisit team will agree on an accreditation recommendation to present to the COA. At times, the team finds that not all issues from the initial visit have been sufficiently addressed. In those cases, the team can recommend a decision of Accreditation with Stipulations and identify another set of draft stipulations for the COA's consideration.

Next Steps

Based on the COA's discussion, staff will prepare an item for the April 2012 COA meeting.