

Chapter Fifteen

The Accreditation Revisit

Introduction

The initial site visit team is required to come to standard findings for each Common Standard and Program Standard and to recommend an accreditation status to the COA. 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 for 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 Table 2 in Chapter Eight of the Accreditation Handbook 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, and/or a revisit are appropriate. If there are significant standard findings that prevent the COA from granting full accreditation to the institution, the actions that must be taken by the institution are identified as stipulations. Stipulations describe the specific actions an institution must take to remove a finding that prevents the institution from gaining full accreditation.

A *revisit* is an accreditation visit that is conducted as a result of action taken by the COA to ensure that the institution has fully addressed the stipulations placed upon it by the COA. The purpose of a revisit is to allow an approved institution receiving stipulations following an accreditation site visit the opportunity to demonstrate to a review team that it has modified its practices or corrected its deficiencies such that the revisit team can find the Common or Program Standard or Standards applicable to the stipulations that were less than fully met to now be met. As a result, the revisit team would recommend to the COA the removal of those stipulations. An institution revisit must occur during the year following the initial accreditation site visit.

Who Participates in the Revisit?

If the COA has taken action that includes stipulations and determined that a revisit should take place within one year of its action, generally, at a minimum, the team lead from the initial visit and the Commission consultant will comprise the revisit team. However, the size and composition of the team will depend 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 than simply the team lead and consultant. 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 who may consult with the team lead and then make that determination based on the number and nature of the stipulations to be addressed. The Administrator of Accreditation may determine that a different team lead and/or consultant should serve as the team lead and/or consultant for the revisit. Unlike during initial site visits when the Commission consultant plays

only a facilitative role, during revisits the consultant may participate in interviews, the review of documents, and discussions that lead to standards findings and to an accreditation recommendation. If additional reviewers are used beyond the team lead, these individuals should be Board of Institutional Review (BIR) trained. For joint national/state revisits, the national accrediting body typically sends new reviewers, while the Commission team lead and consultants are usually from among those who were part of the initial visit.

Who Makes Preparations for the Revisit?

As with the initial site visit, the Commission consultant is responsible for working with the institution on the logistics of the revisit. The institution is responsible for logistics for the visit such as identifying the hotel, ensuring transportation for the team, arranging for meals, obtaining a team meeting room, and developing an interview schedule. However, unlike initial site visits, typically 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. The institution is also required to pay a Cost Recovery Fee.

What Preparations Are Required?

Unlike the initial accreditation site visit, there are no program review documents to guide the revisit team. Rather, the revisit is focused on the accreditation determination, stipulations placed on the institution by the COA, documentation noting what actions the institution has taken to address the stipulations, any appropriate and relevant data available, and the accreditation decision letter sent to the institution.

During the year between the COA's original decision and the revisit, the institution takes action to address the concerns raised in the report and by the COA. On occasion, the institution may also be required to prepare quarterly progress reports that are submitted to the consultant and the COA. In preparing for the revisit, the institution is guided by the consultant in focusing on the documentation and evidence which address the issues identified by the initial site visit team. 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 address the findings and stipulations.

The COA's decision defines the scope of the visit and who should be interviewed by the revisit team. As 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 clarify how the institution has addressed the stipulations are reviewed during the revisit. The institution prepares documents and provides evidence, including interviews with various staff/faculty and constituents, that address specifically each stipulation the COA placed on the institution and the standards aligned with those stipulations. Consequently, a revisit is shorter than the initial site visit usually lasting only 1 to 2 days.

What is the Focus of the Revisit?

The intent of a revisit is to focus on the stipulations placed on the institution. This includes the standard elements (Common or Program Standards) found to be less than fully met during the initial accreditation site visit that are *related to the stipulations*. Stipulations generally describe the activity or activities the institution must complete in order to meet the standard(s) that prevented the institution from gaining full accreditation. The stipulations guide the institution in its remediation efforts 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. BIR members are trained to recognize evidence sufficient to document that an institution is meeting a standard.

What is the Relationship Between Stipulations and Standards Decisions in Revisits?

It is important to emphasize that the focus of the revisit 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 team lead and consultant should clarify this with the institution prior to the site revisit. Institutions may choose to address all standards less than fully met regardless of whether they are related to the stipulations. The institution may request that evidence on all standards are submitted and reviewed during the revisit.

What is the Outcome of a Revisit?

At multiple times during the revisit, team members will share their observations and concerns with the institution. During the revisit, team members will assess the progress made by the institution to address the stipulation and make findings (met, met with concern, or not met) for all standards applicable to the specific stipulation(s) placed upon the institution. Finally, the revisit team will agree on an accreditation recommendation to present to the COA. At times, the team may find that not all issues from the initial visit have been sufficiently addressed. In those cases, the team can recommend maintaining stipulations, identify another set of draft stipulations for the COA's consideration, or recommend the institution be given more time. Additional time is only recommended if the institution had made significant progress toward addressing the stipulations but the team determines that more time is necessary to fully address the concerns of the original site visit team and the COA.

If the revisit team finds that the situation has either deteriorated or that the institution has made little to no progress, it may recommend a more serious accreditation recommendation, including Denial of Accreditation. The revisit team will report their findings to the COA.

What Further Action can be Taken Beyond Removal of Stipulations?

If the COA determines that stipulations should be removed, it may also determine whether there is any specific follow up necessary after removal of stipulations. For instance, the COA may require that the institution report on the progress of addressing one or more of the areas identified in the stipulations in their next regularly scheduled accreditation activity to ensure

the corrective action or improvements are maintained over time. Additionally, the COA may determine that the institution be placed on a shortened cycle for site visits. For example, the COA could require a site visit for an institution at a 2 or 3 year interval after the revisit, as opposed to waiting 6 years. This could necessitate a change in accreditation cohort to facilitate a change in the institution's accreditation cycle.