Discussion of the Guidance Provided by Staff to Institutions Preparing for an Accreditation Site Visit

May 2018

Overview of this Report

This agenda item provides the Committee on Accreditation (COA) with information on the guidance that Commission consultants share with institutions when planning accreditation site visits regarding the number of interviews that need to be scheduled to take place during the site visit. In addition, this item continues the discussion of how many program completers need to be interviewed at a site visit if the Completer Survey for a given program has a robust response rate and does not identify any concerns.

Staff Recommendation

This item is for information only. No action is required.

Background

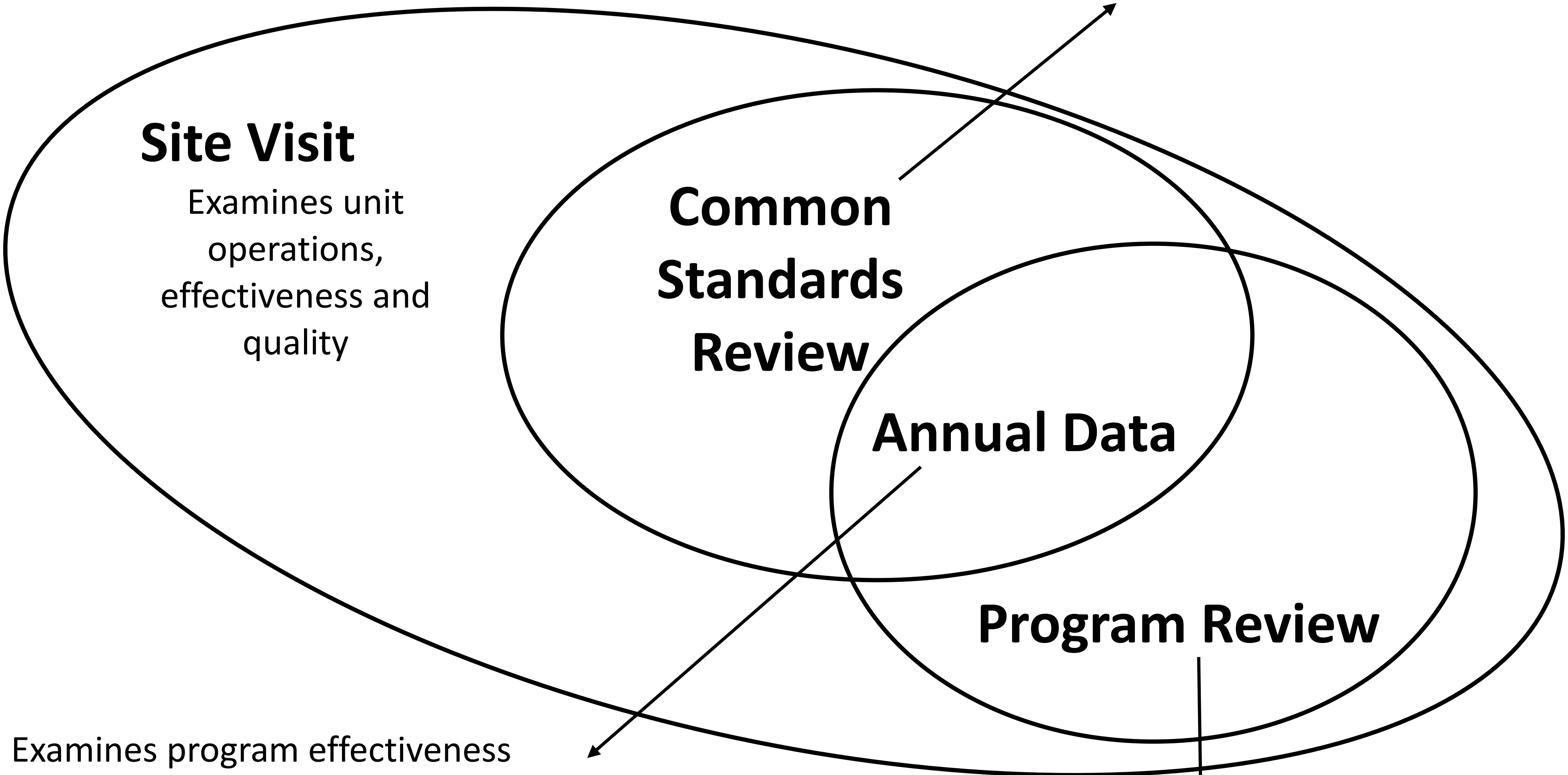
The accreditation site visit is the time when a review team made up of members of the Board of Institutional Reviewers (BIR) conduct interviews and make decisions on how well the institution and its Commission approved educator preparation programs are meeting the Commission's adopted standards. Most of the site visits take place at the site of the institution, while a few visits for very small institutions take place through technology.

A graphic on the next page shows how the different components of the Commission's accreditation system interact and build on one another to create a comprehensive system of continuous improvement for both institutions and the educator preparation programs the institution offers. As the Commission consultant begins working with an institution to prepare to host an accreditation site visit, the consultant reviews this graphic with leadership at the institution.

During Common Standards review and Program Review – both of which occur during Year 5 of the accreditation cycle - the readers begin to formulate questions about the unit and its programs and identify areas where the Common Standards and/or Program Review submissions do not fully address the standards. In formulating the site visit schedule, feedback from these reviews is used by the state consultant and the Team Lead to determine whether additional interviews may need to be scheduled to address any areas identified as not aligned to the standards or otherwise concerning to the reviewers. During the site visit, if the information collected through interviews varies significantly across stakeholder groups or programs, the team will need to talk with additional individuals. Conversely, if the information collected is consistent across

The Accreditation Cycle

Examines institution alignment to Common Standards



Examines program effectiveness through the lens of program-selected measures of candidate competence and feedback from completers and employers

Examines program alignment to Program Standards individuals and programs the team could need to talk to fewer individuals. The guidance discussed in this item is for the planning phase for an accreditation site visit.

Continuing to have members of the BIR review team interview faculty, institutional leaders, candidates, completers, and employers was a priority when the Commission's accreditation system was recently updated. By reviewing all of the information available for an institution and its programs and conducting a range of interviews across key stakeholder groups, the members of the BIR review team are able to come to conclusions about the Commission's standards and an accreditation recommendation for the institution. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Institutional personnel
- Program personnel
- Faculty/Instructional personnel
- Credential Analysts
- Current Candidates
- Any relevant stakeholders
- Program Completers
- K-12 and IHE partners
- Employers and Administrators
- Mentors/Master Teachers and others involved in supporting candidates

The complexities of accreditation site visits are many and historically staff has not shared specific percentages for interviews because of the many variables that impact the number of interviews that need to take place to provide an accurate snapshot of the program under review. However, there is a basic underlying assumption that the team needs sufficient information from all sources including interviews to feel confidence in its findings for the institution. That means that there needs to be sufficient representation from different constituencies, based on the specifics of the institution, during the interview schedule.

Among the complexities are: whether an institution sponsors educator preparation programs at both the undergraduate and graduate level, the number and type of pathways offered (student teaching, intern, residency, co-teaching), local delivery models (online, hybrid, or face-to-face), and number of locations. BIR review teams are advised to ensure that, for each program, the team collects sufficient information from each local delivery model, pathway, and location to ensure consistency in quality for all candidates.

During the site visit, BIR review team members triangulate data across stakeholder groups to come to conclusions about the institution and its programs. Staff has been reluctant to prescribe specific interview numbers or percentages because the number of interviews vary significantly depending on the complexity of the delivery models for the Commission-approved programs. In general, staff advises that fewer than 10 individuals interviewed in a key stakeholder group (candidates, completers, and employers) is not sufficient and that the smaller the program, the higher percentage of stakeholders that need to be interviewed.

Despite the challenges with setting specific percentages, the information in the table below could be used as guidance for consultants as the institution builds the interview schedule. For a very small program, it is likely that most of the candidates or completers would need to be interviewed, while for very large programs significantly fewer than 10% of the candidates might be interviewed. The team gathers information from the range of stakeholders and if differing information has been collected, additional interviews often need to be scheduled so that the team can come to conclusions about the standards. The institution could be advised to schedule interviews according to the percentages in the table below.

THIS TABLE IS FOR GUIDANCE AND DISCUSSION ONLY AT THIS TIME

Total Number of Candidates/Completers	Staff Guidance for Institutions to Prepare for Candidates, Completers, and Employer Interviews		
	Candidates	Completers	Employers
Fewer than 10	70 % - 90 %	50 % - 70 %	30 % - 60 %
10-25	60 % - 80 %	40 % - 60 %	20 % - 40 %
26-50	30 % - 50 %	20 % - 40 %	10 % - 20 %
51-100	20 % - 30 %	10 % - 20 %	5 % - 10 %
101-250	10 % - 20 %	5 % - 10 %	2 % - 5 %
250+	2 % - 10 %	2 % - 5 %	1 % - 5 %

The complexities of any given institution such as those listed earlier in this agenda item often means that the number of interviews might be higher than the percentages identified in the table above to ensure that information has been collected from individuals representing all ways the program is offered.

The table above applies only to program candidates, completers, and employers and is for guidance only. It should not be used as a definitive hard line. If all indications lead to the same conclusion and an institution is a few people shy of the numbers above, it should not prohibit the team from making a decision. In addition, the goal is for the review team to interview all full time faculty members and instructional personnel. A representative sample of part time or adjunct faculty should also be interviewed. With institutional leadership, the team needs to speak with all leaders of the educational unit during the site visit. Given these general guidelines, it is not practical to develop percentages for faculty, other instructional personnel and institutional leadership.

In addition, there can be individuals who share information during an accreditation site visit that that is significantly different from what others are sharing about the institution and its programs. In this case, the team needs to determine whether the issues raised are reflective of the program or an "outlier". If only a small number of individuals (one or two typically) identify this information and the team is not able to corroborate that information from others in the same stakeholder group or across other stakeholder groups, then the BIR review team could classify this as ‘outlier information’ and not give it equal weight to the other information that has been collected. When ‘outlier information’ is collected during the site visit, additional interviews may need to be scheduled to understand if it is accurate information about the program.

Accreditation teams always reserve the right to request from the institution additional interviews be added during the site visit. This would generally occur when those who were scheduled to be interviewed failed to attend the interviews and the team had insufficient number of interviewees to base its decisions or other information has come to light and the team needs additional information.

The Role of Program Completer Surveys in Scheduling Interviews

At its November 2017 meeting the Committee discussed the Program Completer surveys and agreed that if an institution has a robust response rate on the Commission program completer survey and no issues are raised by the survey data, the institution would not be required to bring in completers for interviews. At the March 2018 meeting, the Committee asked that this be discussed at a future meeting.

Clearly for the accreditation site visits held in 2017-18, only one year of completer data was available. After this year, multiple years of completer data will be available for the site visit team to review. Staff has been asked to work with team members to cite the Completer Survey Reports in the site visit team report when the team members are using data from the surveys in lieu of interviewing program completers. Including completer data in the accreditation reports will be an aspect of training for consultants, team leads, and team members in the future.

Committee Discussion

Staff requests that the Committee discuss the information in this agenda item about the number of interviews that institutions are advised to schedule and if appropriate, provide direction to staff. Further, staff requests that the Committee discuss completers and their inclusion in the site visit process for 2018-19, and provide direction to staff, if appropriate.

Next Steps

Based on the Committee’s discussion, staff will update its guidance on interviews for the 2018-19 site visits.