

ACS WASC Mid-Cycle Virtual Visit School Guidelines, 2020-2021 (California, Hawaii, and Pacific Islands Schools)

School Expectations for a Virtual Mid-Cycle Visit

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenging times, the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC), will be conducting virtual mid-cycle visits during the fall months (September – December); this may need to be extended.

The expectations for all virtual visits are the following:

- Every care must be taken to ensure that the process and result will be as rigorous and thorough as an on-site visit.
- The virtual visit focuses on continuous school improvement and the progress related to high-quality learning and well-being for all students
- Video, audio and connectivity quality must be sufficient to allow for good communication – both recorded and live.

Schools that receive six-year accreditation status with a required one- or two-day mid-cycle visit prepare a progress report to submit to the mid-cycle visiting committee prior to the scheduled visit following the WASC normal mid-cycle procedures. The school should ensure the progress report and all supporting evidence is available for the visiting committee prior to the visit.

Although the postponed schools are not required to update their progress report if it has already been submitted, the school will be expected to share what has been done since the report was completed with supporting information; this would include the impact of online learning for the students and other issues as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

After review of the school's student/community profile and supporting documentation, the visiting committee chair may request additional information related to student wellness and safety standards due to the virtual visit and the original critical areas for follow-up.

In addition the school will be expected to ensure all stakeholders understand that the WASC mid-cycle visit is occurring and ensures the visiting committee chair understands the parameters for contractual requirements as the schedule is established. The expectation is that all staff members serving on the various committees will participate in the meetings; this may mean key leadership and other committee members would meet at separate times. The school should arrange for a staff member to join any meeting with students and the chair will ensure there are two visiting committee members at these.

A virtual previsit with the visiting committee chair should take place before the scheduled virtual mid-cycle visit. The chair will contact the school to schedule a virtual visit. In addition to the chair's discussion about the mid-cycle report expectations and the progress on the implementation of the action plan, the chair will provide guidance on the logistics of a virtual visit and develop a workable schedule collaboratively with the school. The chair and the Leadership Team will discuss which classrooms to visit based on the action plan priorities and other considerations. The visiting committee chair will make the final determination.

Visiting Committee Size, Visit Schedule, Visiting Committee Report

The size of the team will follow the normal WASC guidelines but may be adjusted as needed.

Enrollment 6-1499:	2 visiting committee members
Enrollment 1500-2499:	3 visiting committee members
Enrollment 2500 or more	4 visiting committee members

Initially, the school and chair will use the suggested in-person schedule as a reference but this will be adapted based on the context of the school as they develop this collaboratively. For example, some meetings may occur prior to the actual visit dates or potentially be combined. The required meetings and observations will still occur with the emphasis upon transparency.

During the virtual mid-cycle visit, the visiting committee (VC) will:

- Meet with site administration/Leadership Team
- Meet with representative teachers, students, parents, student support staff, and other stakeholders
- Observe or visit a stratified random sample of classrooms: As the school provides the master schedule of classes (virtual and/or on-site), based on the school's program and courses and the school's growth areas and critical areas for follow-up, the visiting committee chair and the school will establish a schedule for the visiting committee to observe a stratified random sample of students engaged in learning either online or in person
- Hold visiting committee private meetings to review and discuss findings based on the schoolwide action plan, the student needs, school needs, and the school's critical areas for follow-up
- Meet with the Leadership Team at the end of the virtual visit to share and dialogue about findings.

The visiting committee will share the report with the Leadership Team on the final day of the visit orally. The complete succinct report will be sent to the school and the WASC Commission within ten working days. The WASC Commission will review and take action on the mid-cycle visit.

Important Technology Requirements and Virtual Mid-Cycle Visit Support

The school will provide technology and technical support, including the following:

- Online conferencing facilities to allow small groups to participate in meetings (e.g., Zoom, Google Meetings, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, and/or Skype); individual stations (laptops) tend to work better than large groups in a room
- Reliable Internet access to support the online meetings
- Video recording, camera, tablet/iPad/Smartphone devices for recording devices to record video and images of the school prior to the virtual accreditation visit;
- Video recording devices and the wireless support necessary to live stream the school in action if the school is in session and/or the ability to observe virtual classes in session during the virtual visit.

(NOTE: The visiting committee chair/members should conduct a test of the technology requirements with the school before the virtual accreditation visit.)

Observation of the School in Action, *during* the virtual team accreditation visit

During the virtual visit, the following can assist in conducting classroom visits:

- Tablet/ (Tablet/iPad gives a wider angle of classroom)
- Tripod to anchor iPad/Smartphone and move around classroom
- Staff member to accompany the visiting committee on virtual classroom visits
- Staff member to facilitate technology use during classroom observations (A suggested time frame has been 15-20 minutes per class but this may vary with the type of class and school. The school and the visiting chair will work together on what video device will be used and how it is positioned to permit observation of students engaged in the learning along with the teacher.)

Suggested Videos Provided Prior to the Visit, if needed

The school may be asked to provide videos related to the critical areas for follow-up or to ensure the visiting committee understands the current health and safety, child protection and safeguarding for all students. Some of the observations could be done live while on the visit. If the visiting committee has not been at the school before, the school may provide a brief video about the school and learning environment. This video should replicate the normal tour of a school and be accompanied by narration and a plan/map. The school may also provide a sampling of recorded lessons that may be helpful to the visiting committee.