

# Visiting Committee Chairperson Checklist

## Previsit Preparation

- \_\_\_1. Attend WASC chair training.
- \_\_\_2. Study the school description, the *WASC Focus on Learning* manual, the reference cards, and the accreditation status worksheet.
- \_\_\_3. Review the five outcomes to be accomplished through the self-study:
  1. The involvement and collaboration of all staff and other stakeholders to support student achievement
  2. The clarification and measurement of what all students should know, understand, and be able to do through schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards
  3. The analysis of data about students and student achievement
  4. The assessment of the entire school program and its impact on student learning in relation to the schoolwide learner outcomes, academic standards, and WASC criteria
  5. The alignment of a long-range action plan to the school's areas of need; the capacity to implement and monitor the accomplishment of the plan.
- \_\_\_4. Review the WASC criteria, the criteria indicators, the prompts, the evidence to examine, appropriate academic standards, and educational references.
- \_\_\_5. Work with the school and maintain regular communication with the principal and self-study coordinator (SC) to answer questions or give assistance.
- \_\_\_6. Understand the school's culture, vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes and review past reports, action plans, etc. Obtain current schoolwide action plan, prior pertinent reports, view website, etc. (Examples of reports include prior self-study and mid-cycle reports, revisit report, and corresponding visiting committee reports.)
- \_\_\_7. Discuss expense reimbursement procedures with the school and ask if there is any specific reimbursement expense form to be used. Schools are responsible for reimbursing visit expenses directly to members.
- \_\_\_8. Arrange a preliminary one-day visit. During the visit, plan to meet with the principal, SC, Leadership Team, and other staff members (possibly speak briefly to entire staff or observe the process, if Home or Focus Groups are meeting.) Discuss the logistics of the visit.
- \_\_\_9. Communicate with the school about the following issues:
 

➔ **Note:** Begin critiquing draft sections of the self-study, e.g., the profile and the summary, schoolwide learner outcomes, identified critical learner needs, and progress report, one or more Focus Group summaries, and draft of the updated schoolwide action plan. Ensure that the critical learner needs are addressed throughout the analysis of the

school's program based on the criteria areas and found in the schoolwide action. Provide timely feedback.

- a. The calendar/timeline for the self-study process
  - Has the timeline been developed so that the self-study will be ready to mail to the visiting committee four to six weeks prior to the visit?
  - How has maximum time for Home and Focus Group meetings been allotted? Are the meetings well-spaced out throughout the self-study process?
- b. Committee organization and membership
  - ➔ **Note:** As long as the school adheres to the *outcomes*, there is flexibility in the self-study process. If the school modifies the suggested self-study process, it should explain how the *outcomes* have been met.
  - How is the Leadership Team taking an active role in facilitating the entire self-study process?
  - How is there active involvement of all certificated staff members, including administration, and strong representation of other stakeholder groups?
  - Are all certificated staff serving on two groups — a Home Group and a Focus Group?
  - Has the school reflected upon the type of committee organization that will be most effective in the implementation of the schoolwide action plan? For example, has the school considered maintaining the Focus Groups after the visit to oversee the action plan sections?
- c. Refinement and use of the student/community profile data
  - Has the Leadership Team gathered and analyzed all required and other pertinent data to identify the characteristics and trends of achievement of ALL the students?
  - How has the Leadership Team facilitated the discussion of the profile by all certificated staff members and other stakeholders?
  - How are the stakeholders using the profile to guide the inquiry into the school programs, especially the identified critical learner needs and the related important questions noted in the profile summary?
- d. Understanding the vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes
  - Has the Leadership Team involved the stakeholders in a review of the current vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes in relation to the current learner needs and future challenges for the students in order to be globally competent?
  - To what extent is there commitment to accomplishing the schoolwide learner outcomes from all certificated staff, all students, and other stakeholder groups?
  - To what extent has the school developed measurable indicators of the schoolwide learner outcomes and defined their quality accomplishment?
  - Do the stakeholders understand how to use the profile data, including the vision, mission, the critical learner needs, and schoolwide learner outcomes, to guide further inquiry about student achievement and the school programs?

- Is there understanding of the complementary relationship of schoolwide learner outcomes to academic standards?
- e. Progress since the previous full self-study
  - Did the school show how all schoolwide critical areas of follow-up identified by visiting committees since the last full self-study were integrated into the action plan?
  - Did the school address each section of the action plan?
  - Did the progress report include data that indicates whether school staff and students met established growth targets?
  - Does the report show how each section impacted student accomplishment of the critical learner needs and one or more schoolwide learner outcomes?
  - Did the school show how other critical areas for follow-up were addressed that were not part of the action plan?
- f. Analysis and synthesis of the quality of the school program in relation to the schoolwide learner outcomes, academic standards, and the WASC criteria
  - How are the Home and Schoolwide Focus Groups analyzing the school program in relation to the concepts of the criteria and the accomplishment of the schoolwide learner outcomes?
  - What strategies are being used by the groups to ensure accuracy of the findings discussed?
  - To what extent is discussion occurring about how the findings relate to supporting the learning needs of all students?
- g. Development of the schoolwide action plan and monitoring process. Action plan sections include:
  - Statement of the area for improvement
  - Rationale for area based on self-study findings
  - Impact on student learning of academic standards and schoolwide learner outcomes
  - Who is responsible and involved
  - Specific steps
  - Timeline
  - Resources
  - Ways of assessing progress, including student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards
  - Means to report progress to all stakeholders.
  - Is the schoolwide action plan organized around growth targets and benchmarks for all appropriate student subgroups?
  - Do the schoolwide action plan sections address the learning needs of all students as identified in the student/community profile?
  - Has the school integrated other initiatives to create one single comprehensive schoolwide action plan?
  - Are resources dedicated to each growth target?

- Is there an effective process in place to integrate the visiting committee suggestions into the schoolwide action plan after the visit?
  - Is there a sound follow-up process that will be used to monitor the accomplishment of the schoolwide action plan and modify as needed?
  - h. Exhibit of representative evidence for the visiting committee
    - How will exhibit materials that reflect the evidence analyzed in the self-study be organized for the visiting committee, i.e., in classrooms and the visiting committee workroom, electronically?
    - Will the evidence reflect:
      - A linkage to schoolwide learner outcomes, academic standards, and WASC criteria
      - A linkage to identified critical learner needs, “identified growth areas,” and action plan sections
      - All students.
    - Will the visiting committee be provided a general list of available evidence?
    - What evidence will be available prior to the visit?
  - i. The visit schedule
    - How can the schedule maximize time for dialogue with the Focus Groups, the gathering and review of evidence (class and program observations, interviews, examination of student work), and meetings with subject area/support/other groups and individuals? (Focus Groups meet for 1 ½ to 2 hours and include two members of the visiting committee after observation of the school program.)
    - Does the schedule for the visit permit daily dialogue with the Leadership Team and principal/head of school regarding preliminary findings, thereby building trust and rapport for ongoing communication and collaboration?
    - What would be effective strategies to use during the Leadership Team, Focus Group, and other meetings?
  - j. Visiting committee work space at the school site
  - k. Meeting room at school for visiting committee meetings (school to provide LCD projector and other technological equipment, as needed)
  - l. Computer access and compatibility with the system that the chair will be using for draft report
  - m. Housing and visit arrangements.
- \_\_\_10. Receive roster of visiting committee members; begin communication, i.e., phone calls, emails, or faxes.
- a. Send the initial letter, including the school description, to the members electronically; WASC will send the WASC *Focus on Learning* manual and reference cards directly to the visiting committee members; confirm the members’ desired email address, phone number, and mailing address for mailing of the completed self-study

- b. Ask members for their preferred areas of expertise and coverage during the visit
  - c. Remind members that they are **expected** to participate in visiting committee training through site-based workshops or webinars.
- \_\_\_ 11. Continue to maintain contact with the school to determine:
- a. If the school needs further direct assistance
  - d. Progress on the report
  - e. Progress on housing and other physical arrangements
  - ➔ **Note:** Continue the critique of each section of the report, i.e., table of contents, student/community profile, schoolwide learner outcomes, progress report, the draft Focus Group summaries, and the action plan.
  - f. Appropriate technical and clerical support.
- \_\_\_ 12. Send the second letter to visiting committee members electronically:
- a. Provide writing assignments
  - b. Ask the members to review the criteria as the **entire self-study report is analyzed**
  - c. Ask for the comparison of the school's self-study findings to the concepts of the criteria, the critical learner needs, and the mission, vision, and schoolwide learner outcomes
  - d. *Prior to the visit, require* the completion of the previsit preparation worksheets (Suggestion: use the Google Drive template)
  - e. Use the comments and questions to complete the drafts of Chapters I, II, III, and V
  - f. *Prior to the visit, require* written tentative narrative statements for assigned sections of the visiting committee report; ensure all work on the criteria sections include analytical comments about all related indicators; assign two people to write to each criteria category
  - ➔ **Note:** The questions and tentative narrative statements should be sent to the visiting committee chair prior to the visit. The chair will create a tentative report that will be used at the initial team meeting. Many chairs will use shared documents using Google Drive.
  - g. Assign members to write preliminary statements for specified accreditation factors prior to the determination of the accreditation status ratings to ensure correlation with the findings in the visiting committee report
  - h. Provide the schedule for the visit.
- \_\_\_ 13. Maintain regular contact with school to check the following:
- a. Progress of the report, continuing to critique sample report sections and action plan sections
  - b. Date the school completes and sends the self-study report
  - c. Preparation of reference/evidence materials for visit
  - d. Receipt of list of reference/evidence
  - e. Availability and knowledge of clerical and technical support.

- \_\_\_14. Make final contact with visiting committee members:
  - a. Confirm receipt of the self-study
  - b. Offer assistance with the understanding of assigned tasks and prewriting
  - c. Remind members to send questions and tentative writing
  - d. Offer additional assistance to special visiting committee members
  - e. Confirm the initial meeting time
  - f. Remind members to take cash/credit card for expenses that will be reimbursed after visit and to keep receipts of any such expenditures.
  
- \_\_\_15. Prepare the first draft of the visiting committee report correlated to the self-study report chapters. Ahead of time begin writing the following: Chapter I, summary of key information from the student/community profile; Chapter II, response to the school's progress report; Chapter III, brief comments on the self-study outcomes and Chapter V, ongoing school improvement based on the action plan; include all thoughts from the visiting committee members for these sections and their drafts for Chapter IV, the school program based on the WASC criteria and indicators; have the tentative report ready for the initial orientation visiting committee meeting (i.e., Sunday or Monday afternoon). **Note:** Using Google Drive will facilitate all members being aware of the draft visiting committee report.
  
- \_\_\_16. Plan the orientation meeting for visiting committee members prior to initial meeting at school (e.g., Sunday afternoon). The meeting should cover:
  - a. The purpose of visit
  - b. Conducting the visit in an atmosphere of collaborative and open communication
  - c. Emphasis upon WASC criteria, , the school's critical learner needs and the schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards as the basis for the self-study and visit
  - d. Discussion of school direction(s) and where school is with respect to the refinement of schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards
  - e. Discussion of the self-study report: trends and perceptions based on the schoolwide learner outcomes, academic standards, and WASC criteria (questions, concerns, and tentative written comments); type of verification needed
  - f. Discussion of ways to gather and review evidence with emphasis upon important areas to observe, ask about, or examine based on the self-study perceptions
  - g. Review of the initial meeting with the school staff and the overall schedule, including important strategies to use during the meetings
  - h. Modeling the collaborative development of questions for the leadership team meeting to ensure consensus of all visiting committee members.
  - i. Review of the accreditation status determination and the summary for the Commission
  - j. Reminder to the members to keep expenses to a minimum.

**The Visit: How Do We Know Students Are Learning?  
What is the Actual Program for Students?**

- \_\_\_1. Conduct the orientation meeting for the visiting committee members.  
➔ **Note:** See the suggested agenda in number 16 above.
- \_\_\_2. Conduct an initial meeting with the school’s Leadership Team that includes a reflective discussion on the general perceptions gleaned from the self-study report (planned jointly with the principal and SC prior to visit).
- \_\_\_3. Facilitate the visit; keep in mind the following:
  - a. Maintain a positive atmosphere
  - b. Keep to the task
  - c. Maintain open communication and collaboration at all times
  - d. Ensure that all visiting committee members are active participants in the school committee meetings
  - e. Ensure that the gathering and review of evidence occurs throughout the school; this includes class/program observations, interviews, examination of student work and other data, subject area/support group meetings
  - f. Ensure that no area is overlooked
  - g. Assist the visiting committee members
  - h. Ensure consensus on the critical questions for all groups based on overall visiting committee findings
  - i. Avoid issues related to school policies or negotiations
  - j. Stress with the visiting committee to avoid prescription and “how we do it at our school” discussion
  - k. Lead all visiting committee discussions on the findings, relating them to the accomplishment of the schoolwide learner outcomes and the WASC criteria
  - l. Coordinate the preparation of the visiting committee report.
- \_\_\_4. At all visiting committee meetings during the three and one-half days, facilitate the dialogue about the school’s program and its impact on student learning in relation to the schoolwide learner outcomes, academic standards, and the WASC criteria.
- \_\_\_5. Regularly communicate with the school leaders, including the Leadership Team, about the visiting committee findings and their implications for refinement of the schoolwide action plan.
- \_\_\_6. At the final meeting with the Leadership Team, facilitate a thorough dialogue about the schoolwide action plan based upon the school and visiting committee findings in relation to the schoolwide learner outcomes, academic standards, and the WASC criteria.
  - a. Ensure the Leadership Team has an opportunity to ask questions and clarify areas of the report
  - b. Ensure that the critical areas for follow-up include a “who,” “what,” and “why” in terms of impact on student learning. Distinguish the different types of critical areas



- for follow-up with an introductory stem: e.g., the visiting committee concurs with the areas already identified by the school
- c. Point out that after the visit the Leadership Team needs to integrate the visiting committee's key issues and critical areas for follow-up into the schoolwide action plan
  - d. Work with visiting committee members to discuss and investigate any issues or questions raised in the dialogue with the Leadership Team.
- \_\_\_7. Facilitate necessary visiting committee report modifications as the visiting committee report is finalized.
- \_\_\_8. Have visiting committee members individually complete the accreditation status worksheets based on the findings noted in the visiting committee report. Have them review each WASC criterion and supporting indicators within the four categories. Have them individually make decisions regarding the quality of the school's educational program with respect to these and the other accreditation factors.
- \_\_\_9. Facilitate the visiting committee discussion of the accreditation status worksheet ratings and come to consensus regarding the ratings. Have the members complete the "Documentation and Justification Statement" that includes the ratings and aligned comments that reflect the visiting committee report.
- \_\_\_10. Facilitate the discussion of the accreditation status recommendation and complete the final page of the "Documentation and Justification Statement" with compelling evidence that supports the visiting committee's recommendation. Complete this final page or rationale for the recommended status.
- \_\_\_11. Coordinate the completion of the "Accreditation Status Recommendation" and the "Documentation and Justification Statement" for the Commission.
- Ensure:
- a. Alignment between the visiting committee report and the recommended accreditation status
  - b. Member signatures are on the status recommendation sheet
  - c. Brief description of the discussion and status options considered by the visiting committee
  - d. A clearly stated rationale based upon factors impacting the accreditation status.
- \_\_\_12. Edit the final visiting committee report with the assistance of the visiting committee members. Ensure that all key topics of chapters are addressed.
- \_\_\_13. Facilitate the presentation of the visiting committee findings to the entire staff at the close of the visit. Use the PowerPoint presentation regarding the overall findings. Do not imply the recommended accreditation status. Leave a draft copy of the visiting committee report with the principal.
- \_\_\_14. Continually stress the importance of immediate follow-up to integrate the visiting committee narrative suggestions and critical areas for follow-up into the school's schoolwide action plan for yearly implementation and assessment.
- \_\_\_15. Have the visiting committee complete the evaluation of chairperson form (optional).



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- \_\_\_16. Review the visiting committee expense forms and submit them to school for reimbursement. Be sure to keep copies of the forms and receipts for your records.

**After the Visit**

- \_\_\_1. Finalize the necessary WASC forms: the “Accreditation Status Recommendation” and the “Documentation and Justification Statement” for the Commission.
- \_\_\_2. Complete the final editing on the visiting committee report within ten (10) working days. Ensure that the school has a final copy of the visiting committee report and send WASC a copy of the report, the Documentation and Justification Statement, and the ballot.
- \_\_\_3. Keep copies of all WASC forms and visiting committee report.
- \_\_\_4. Send the completed member evaluation forms to the Burlingame WASC Office.
- \_\_\_5. Send the appropriate letters of appreciation.
- \_\_\_6. Follow up on any outstanding reimbursement payment yet to be received. Contact Lisa Blaylock at the WASC Office if payment has not been received from the school/district within four weeks after the visit.
- \_\_\_7. Communicate to the visiting committee members the decision of the Commission on the final accreditation status awarded to the school. This decision is reached either at the January, April, or June WASC Commission meeting. (A copy of the official letter will be sent to the chair.)