

VISITING COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities Prior to the Visit

1. Attend team chair training session (dates and locations on the CAIS website).
2. Communicate immediately with team members following receipt of roster.
 - a. Send general school description; CAIS will send the accreditation manual directly to Visiting Committee members.
 - b. Download Documentation and Justification Statement template from CAIS website.
 - c. Request chapter assignments based on areas of interest/expertise.
 - d. Remind untrained members that they are required to participate in CAIS/WASC Visiting Committee training (dates and locations available at www.caisca.org).
3. Study the school description, samples and templates in Section Four in *Procedures for Appraising the Independent School*.
4. Review the parameters to be accomplished through the self-study:
 - a. The involvement of the school community in a collaborative way.
 - b. The clarification of the school's purpose and goals for students.
 - c. The assessment of all aspects of the school's operations, the student program and its impact on student personal and academic growth with respect to the criteria and standards
 - d. The development of an Action Plan, as well as an accountability system for monitoring the plan's implementation.
5. Communicate with the head of school and self-study coordinator to answer questions or give assistance.
6. Arrange an initial one-day visit (if possible) in the fall to meet with the head, self-study coordinator, Steering Committee, and others suggested by the head.
7. Make certain the school has:
 - a. Developed a calendar/timeline for the self-study process
 - b. Oriented staff and trained committee Chairs
 - c. Organized the school for the self-study process and report
 - d. Developed the Introduction
 - e. Noted progress since previous full self-study
 - f. Used CAIS/WASC standards/criteria to analyze evidence, synthesize findings, and write the report.
 - g. Developed the Action Plan
8. Preview the school report's table of contents, and an emerging Action Plan section. *Strategic Plans may not be submitted in place of an Action Plan.*

Action Plan sections include:

- Statement of areas for improvement
- Brief statement of the rationale for identifying the areas for improvement

- Impact on student personal and academic growth
- Specific steps
- Timeline
- Person(s) responsible
- Resources
- Ways of assessing progress
- Means to report progress to all members of the school community

9. Arrange for the following:

- a. Display of on-site exhibits for the Visiting Committee
- b. The final schedule
- c. An adequate, private, and secured work space for the Visiting Committee and for the various meetings with school groups.
- d. Computer access, technical and clerical support
- e. Housing arrangements for team members

10. Maintain contact with the school to determine progress on areas under #7 (above).

11. Send a second letter or email message to the Visiting Committee members:

- a. Assign areas and chapters to be covered
- b. Compare the school's self-study to the CAIS/WASC standards/criteria
- c. Require written questions about issues, concerns, clarifications and evidence that should be pursued during the visit.
- d. Require written draft narrative statements for assigned sections of the Visiting Committee report.
- e. Provide the schedule for the visit

12. Make final contact with the Visiting Committee members:

- a. Offer assistance with understanding assigned tasks and pre-writing
- b. Remind the members to send questions and draft writing
- c. Confirm the initial meeting time
- d. Remind the members to take cash/credit card for expenses that will be reimbursed after visit.

13. Download the report template. Write a draft of the following sections prior to the visit (*refer to Visiting Committee report format*):

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| I. Introduction | V. Major Commendations & Recommendations |
| II. Assessment of the Progress Report | VI. Comments on the Action Plan |
| III. Comments on the Self-Study Process | |
| IV. Assessment of the Quality of the School's Program & Operations | |

Include all writing from the Visiting Committee members. Have the draft report ready for the initial Visiting Committee orientation meeting.

14. Schedule the orientation meeting for Visiting Committee members prior to the initial meeting at the school (e.g., Sunday afternoon). Refer committee to "Tips: Gathering, Reviewing, and Analyzing Data/Information" in *Procedures for Appraising the Independent School*.

The meeting should cover:

- a. Purpose of the visit
- b. The importance of collaborative and open communication
- c. Emphasis upon standards/criteria as the basis for the self-study and the visit.
- d. Discussion of the self-study report: trends/perceptions, (questions, concerns and tentative written comments); relationship to standards/criteria; alignment of Action Plan to findings.
- e. Discussion of ways to gather evidence
- f. Review of the initial meeting with the school and overall schedule
- g. Determination of the term of accreditation and Documentation and Justification statement for the CAIS Board of Standards and the WASC Commission.

Responsibilities During the Visit

To what degree is the school meeting the CAIS/WASC standards/criteria?

1. Hold an orientation meeting for the Visiting Committee members.
2. Initial meeting on first day of the visit with school leaders that includes a discussion of the general perceptions gleaned from the self-study.
3. Facilitate the visit:
 - a. Maintain a positive atmosphere
 - b. Stay on task and keep all Visiting Committee members actively involved.
 - c. Maintain open communication and collaboration at all times.
 - d. Communicate regularly with school head, administrators, self-study coordinator, and Steering Committee. Be sure the school has the opportunity to ask questions before the final draft of the Visiting Committee report is developed.
 - e. Ensure that no evidence is overlooked and all classrooms are visited
 - f. Coordinate the preparation of the Visiting Committee report, reminding members not to be prescriptive.
 - g. Relate Visiting Committee discussions to the CAIS/WASC standards/criteria.
 - h. Coordinate the completion of the Visiting Committee report.
4. At the final meeting with the Steering Committee, facilitate and discuss 1) standards/criteria, 2) the school report, 3) student personal and academic growth, 4) the Action Plan, and 5) the Visiting Committee findings, as reflected in the draft of the Visiting Committee report.
 - a. Ensure the Steering Committee has an opportunity to ask questions and clarify areas of the report.
 - b. Work with the Visiting Committee members to discuss and investigate any issues or questions raised in the dialogue with the Steering Committee.
5. Make Visiting Committee report modifications and finalize report.
6. Visiting Committee members individually review each CAIS/WASC criterion/standard. Facilitate the discussion of the term of accreditation that will be recommended to the CAIS Board and WASC Commission.

7. Coordinate the completion of the confidential Recommended Term of Accreditation page and the Documentation/Justification Statement for the CAIS Board of Standards and the WASC Commission.

Ensure:

- a. Alignment between the Visiting Committee report and the recommended term.
 - b. Member signatures on the term sheet.
 - c. Brief description of the discussion and term option considered by the Visiting Committee.
 - d. A clearly stated rationale based upon factors impacting term of accreditation.
8. Edit the final Visiting Committee report with the assistance of the Visiting Committee members. Ensure that all key topics of the chapters are addressed.
 9. Review the final Visiting Committee report with the head of school and self-study coordinator.
Do not leave a copy of the report at the school.
 10. Present all of the recommendations and commendations to the staff at the close of the visit.
Do not imply the recommended term of accreditation or respond to questions.
 11. Stress the importance of immediate follow-up to integrate the Visiting Committee recommendations into the schoolwide Action Plan.

Responsibilities After the Visit

1. Send the team member expense vouchers to the school immediately.
2. Complete final editing on the Visiting Committee report, including the Documentation and Justification Statement and the Recommendation for Term of Accreditation.
3. Send one hard copy and an email attachment to CAIS (jmcmanus@caisca.org) and, for schools jointly accredited, 10 hard copies to WASC. Send these copies to the respective organizations within 10 days after the visit. **Do not send a copy to the school.**
4. Keep copies of ALL forms and the Visiting Committee report.
5. Send appropriate letters of appreciation.
6. Following notification from CAIS and WASC, communicate to Visiting Committee members the final accreditation term awarded to the school.