

**Preparing for Successful On-Site
Committee Visits**

LMU Lincoln Memorial University
HARROGATE, TENNESSEE

Clayton Hess

Introduction

- About Lincoln Memorial University (LMU)
 - Private regional liberal arts and professional studies University
- About the Presenter
 - President of Lincoln Memorial University
 - SACSCOC Committee Experience

Five Types of Committee Visits

1. Substantive Change
2. Reaffirmation
3. Fifth-Year Review
4. Special Committee
5. Candidacy Committee

Substantive Change Committee

- Purpose is to evaluate compliance with specific accreditation standards related to the change.
- Focus depends on the nature of the change.
- Length of visit is tailored to the specific institution— usually two to three days.
- Report provides analysis of findings and any recommendations.
- Report is forwarded to the institution for response and to a Compliance & Reports (C&R) Committee.

On-Site Reaffirmation Committee

- Evaluates compliance with standards cited by the Off-Site Committee and the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). This is the purpose of the visit.
- Evaluates compliance with standards identified by the Department of Education (DOE).
- Reviews off-campus sites where the institution delivers instruction or has recently undergone a substantive change (other than offering degrees at a different level).
- Provides analysis of findings, including any recommendations.
- Forwards report to the institution for response and to a C&R Committee.

Fifth-Year Review Committee

- For some institutions, a committee is required to examine off-campus sites as part of the Fifth-Year Interim Report process.
 - Examines an off-campus site when (1) the site opened after the last reaffirmation and (2) was not determined to be a substantive change.
 - May review at least one new off-campus site as part of the Fifth-Year Interim Report process.

Special Committee

- Purpose is to conduct a focused review addressing accreditation issues identified by SACSCOC.
- Special Committees are authorized by the SACSCOC President or a C&R Committee.
- Special Committees review institutions when continuing membership with SACSCOC is perceived to be in jeopardy.
- Special Committees provide written analysis of Committee judgments to a C&R Committee and to the institution for review and consideration.

Candidacy Committees

- When an institution completes an Application for Membership with SACSCOC and presents a strong case for compliance with applicable standards, a Candidacy Committee is authorized.
- The Candidacy Committee conducts an on-site review to help determine if the institution is ready for a full review by an On-Site Committee Accreditation Committee.

Planning Strategically





Overview of Planning Strategically

- Timeline and process for preparing documents for submission prior to visit.
- Review of the strengths and weaknesses of the report submitted to SACSCOC.
- Accommodations for the Visiting Team.
- Agendas for the On-Site Visit.
- Preparing institutional constituents to participate in the visit.

Considerations in Developing the Timeline for Preparing Documents

- Determine process for submitting and reviewing drafts for each standard.
- Determine who has the information to address each standard.
- Assign responsibility for developing electronic and paper drafts of reports.
- Allow time for reflection on completed drafts of narrative responses and all supporting documentation.
- Schedule a review for consistency of information presented throughout the documents.



Review of Report Submitted by the Institution

- Provides opportunity to conduct internal/external analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the submitted report.
- Develop strategies to strengthen the case for compliance with selected standards.
- Develop any necessary additional documentation and determine most appropriate methods for introducing improvements made prior to the visit.
- Plan to communicate evidence of improvements to the on-site committee.



Accommodations: Hotel

- Hotel with conference/meeting room and restaurant near the institution.
- The institution typically makes reservations and communicates accommodations to the Committee on the Information Outline for a Committee Visit Form.
- Environment—consider Committee members' comfort and safety.
- Plan for technical support.



**Accommodations:
Meeting/Resource Room at the Hotel**

- Provide hotel meeting/resource room available for committee on 24-hour hold during the visit.
- Set up meeting/resource room based on the Committee Chair's directions.
- Include the following in the room: at least one copy of reports and materials, computers for Visiting Committee Members, printer, internet access, shredder, copy machine, pens, pencils, highlighters, sticky notes, stapler, etc.



**Accommodations:
On-Site Meeting/Resource Room**

- The Committee needs a meeting/resource room on campus (or at the teaching site) to conduct its work.
- The on-campus meeting/resource room should include copies of reports and documentation.
- The on-campus meeting/resource room should include the same technology and office supplies as the hotel meeting/resource room.



**Accommodations:
Meeting/Resource Rooms at the Hotel and On
Campus**



When in doubt,
ask the Chair.

Accommodations: Food

- The institution usually makes arrangements to provide meals for the Committee.
- The meeting/resource room(s) should have snacks and beverages.
- Where meals are served depends on the specific lodging and institution. Work with Committee Chair.
- The institution should provide snacks at locations where interviews are scheduled.



Accommodations: Transportation

- The institution is responsible for getting Committee members to the hotel at the beginning of the visit.
- The institution is responsible for transportation from the hotel to the institution and back during the visit.
- The institution is usually responsible for transportation of Committee members to the airport at the conclusion of the visit.
- Talk to your Committee Chair!



Agendas for the Visit

Typical activities during the visit:

1. Campus/Building Tour
2. Document Review
3. Class/Office Visits (optional)
4. Extended Site Visits
5. Individual and Group Interviews
6. Allow time for Committee members to write their report



Agendas: Scheduling Interviews

Depends on the interviewer's direction and/or the number of interviewees.

For example--

- Program Coordinators/Deans/Administrators: 1 to 1
- Faculty: 1 to 1 or group
- Current students in a class, individually, and/or in groups

Interviews are usually scheduled for 30-60 minutes depending on the number of people being interviewed and the standard(s) involved.

Preparing Institutional Constituencies

1. Board of Trustees/Directors
2. President
3. Provost/CAO
4. CFO
5. Deans
6. Faculty
7. Staff
8. Students

General Interview Tips

- Be honest
- Do not volunteer information on matters about which you are not fully informed
- Exhibit respect/collegiality
- Avoid criticizing others
- Anticipate questions
- Friendly demeanor



**Preparing Institutional Constituencies:
Strategies for Working with Small Groups**

- Explain the accreditation process.
- Review narrative and documentation related to standards serving as basis for interview.
- Review potential questions for standards in SACSCOC Resource Manual.
- Review developments related to compliance since submission of the most recent report (Focused Report/ Documentation Template).

**Preparing Institutional Constituencies:
Strategies for Working with Large Groups**

- Faculty/Staff Conference Presentations
- Convocations
- Town Hall Meetings
- Presentations to Faculty during Academic School Meetings
- Presentation to Trustees
- Reaffirmation Website (QEP, Compliance Certification, Off-Site Committee Report, and Focus Report)
- Student/Faculty/Staff Email Campaigns
- QEP Logo Contest
- T-shirts
- Posters

**Preparing All Institutional Constituencies:
Things to Review/Know *before* the Team Comes**

- Report content and expectations embedded in the standards—do not address issues unrelated to the review.
- Anticipate what faculty, staff, administrators, and students will say.



An “Institutional Summary Form Prepared for Commission Reviews” is submitted for all types of Committee Visits.

Faculty, staff and administrators should be familiar with the content of the form. The form provides a list of educational programs and degrees offered, type of governance control, a brief history, institutional characteristics, a list of off-campus sites and distance learning modalities, accreditation status with other agencies, and the institution’s relationship with the U.S. Department of Education.

Mock Visit

- Provides opportunity to utilize internal and/or external experts to prepare individuals/groups for interviews.
- Allows institutional constituents to become familiar with the interview format.
- Helps to identify key points for communicating compliance with standards.
- Helps individuals/groups plan strategies for presenting the most accurate and focused responses to potential questions.

Before the Visit

- Prepare individual schedules for each Committee member.
- Arrange for each Committee member to be assisted by an institutional representative (excellent opportunity to involve students).
- Practice demonstrations/presentations.

During the Visit

- Track schedule for each On-Site Committee member.
- Have staff available to contact institutional personnel when new interviews are requested.
- Determine method for delivering additional material requested for Committee review.

During the Visit (cont.)

- Brief and debrief individuals/groups interviewed.
- Be flexible and adjust schedules as necessary.
- Be prepared to work late if necessary to address issues that arise.
- Have institutional leadership, clerical, and technology staff accessible at all times.

Essential Resources

- Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation
- Handbook for Institutions Seeking Reaffirmation
- Handbook for Review Committees

**Questions
or
Comments?**

Contact Information

Clayton Hess
eugene.hess@LMU.net.edu
Office: 423-869-6391
