



PLANNING FOR THE ON-SITE COMMITTEE VISIT

Timeline

- Sheila Featherston emails Information Outline form to Accreditation Liaison and requests institution to complete relevant sections approximately 2-3 months prior to visit
- Sheila Featherston emails Committee Roster to Accreditation Liaison approximately 6 weeks before start of the visit
- Institution sends copies of Focused Report and QEP document to Committee members as soon after receiving the Roster as possible; may be hard copy or electronic media; two hard copies (and one copy of electronic media, if applicable) should be sent to my office
- Sheila Featherston emails relevant documents (Report template, Committee Roster, Information Outline, etc.) and mails reviewer packet to Committee members approximately 4-6 weeks before the visit
- Institution emails Committee members and asks about any dietary needs/preferences, travel arrangements, and computing needs no later than 4 weeks before the visit

Travel Arrangements

- Committee members are responsible for making their own travel arrangements to the airport identified on the Outline of Information form; the institution should make arrangements to transport them from the airport to the hotel, as well as during the visit; Committee members who live within a reasonable driving distance of the institution may choose to drive their personal vehicles, but we strongly discourage Committee members from renting vehicles to travel from the airport to the visit; except in rare instances, the institution should not ask the Committee members to use a taxi, airport shuttle, or public transportation
- The institution should make every effort to schedule transportation from the airport in a timely fashion, but asking Committee members to wait for a few minutes at the airport in order to minimize the number of trips is not out of the question; this is especially true when the institution is at some distance from the airport
- Institutions should plan to transport Committee members back to the airport immediately following the exit conference; most exit conferences will be scheduled no later than 8:30 am on the final day of the visit, and they will usually conclude by 9:30 am at the latest; when possible, the exit conference can be held at the Committee's hotel, and Committee members will be encouraged to check out of the hotel before the meeting; institutions should not feel bound to entertain or accommodate Committee members whose flights leave later in the afternoon, although the institution may feel free to do so if such does not place an undue burden on the institution

Hotel and Meeting Rooms

- Most visiting committees consist of 8-10 reviewers, including staff; the institution should reserve rooms well in advance of the visit and plan to pay for those rooms in a master bill, if possible; some committees will include an observer, whose expenses are being paid by his or her own institution, and the institution will need to make arrangements to allow the observer to pay for the room outside of the other billing arrangements



- The Committee will need a meeting/conference room at the hotel to conduct executive sessions before and during the visit; the visit Itinerary developed by staff and the Committee Chair will identify those meeting times and assist the institution in its preparation of that room before the initial meeting of the Committee
- This room should be large enough for the Committee to work as well as conduct meetings; the institution should provide easy (and after hours) access to a copier; the institution should also provide at least one laser printer hard-wired to either a laptop or desktop computer to allow Committee members to print drafts of the document; this room should also contain a shredder; this room should be reserved for the duration of the visit, and providing keys for the Committee Chair and staff member would be very helpful; if such keys are not available, the hotel staff will need to know that the room is to remain secured when the Committee is not using it, and that Committee members will need access to the room after hours
- The Committee will also need a workroom on campus; this room should be set up similarly to the hotel workroom, with printing, copying, and shredder access; Committee members will rarely need access to this room outside of normal working hours
- The Committee may need access to an interview room; if so, these interviews should not take place in the Committee's campus workroom; Committee members will be meeting with their campus counterparts individually and in groups, but the meeting room will be fairly consistently in use during the entire visit

Transportation during the Visit

- The Committee's safety, timely arrival, and relative comfort are primary concerns
- Assume that the Committee will always travel as a group; any exceptions to this will be few
- Institutionally owned vehicles often offer acceptable means to transport Committee members from the airport to the hotel, back and forth to campus and dinner; they need to be clean and in good shape if they are to be used
- Please do not plan to transport a Committee of 8-10 people using one 15 passenger van, unless it is one of the newer "step" vans that offers easy access and plenty of room; institutions need to take Committee members' "luggage" into account, as most Committee members will take laptop computer bags from the hotel to campus and back
- Institutions that do plan to use 15 passenger vans should use at least two to transport the Committee; since these vans are difficult to get into, each van should be equipped with a stepping stool to aid Committee members in getting in and out of the van
- The institution should always provide a driver for each vehicle; Committee members should not be asked to drive once they arrive on site

Feeding the Committee

- Most Committees will begin their visit with an executive session and working lunch at 11:30 am of the first day; the institution will need to provide this lunch at the hotel workroom, and a box lunch is one excellent choice
- Some visits will begin immediately after breakfast on the first day; in that case, the Committee will have a working lunch in the campus workroom; a box lunch is still a good choice



- Some Committee members may need to arrive the evening before the visit; in the case of those visits which begin early in the morning of the first day, all Committee members will be asked to arrive the evening before; the institution should offer those Committee members who are on site by dinner time (6:00 pm) an opportunity to eat together at a local restaurant, even though the rest of the Committee has yet to arrive; they may choose not to take the institution up on its offer, or the hotel may be within easy walking distance of restaurant choices; in that case, the institution can feel free to leave them to their own devices
- Committees conducting Joint ATS/COC visits will usually begin their work with a working dinner (catered) in the hotel workroom the evening before coming to campus; all Committee members will be asked to arrive the afternoon before, and institutions should remember that these visits will include ATS staff as well as COC staff
- The institution should plan to transport the entire Committee to local restaurants on both evenings of the visit. Institutional representatives (drivers and others) often remain in the restaurant while the Committee eats; they should plan to sit in another section of the restaurant, unless the Committee Chair invites them to join the Committee, in which case they should feel free to accept that invitation. Committee dinners are usually relaxing, social events, rather than working dinners, so the conversation shouldn't turn to a discussion of the institution
- The institution should offer the Committee Chair and Commission staff member a choice of restaurants, if possible; please feel free to suggest local favorite restaurants provided they have the space available for the Committee to sit together; part of the joy of participating in such visits is the opportunity to experience the community as well as the institution
- Visit itineraries usually schedule two lunch meetings on the second full day of the visit; one of these asks the Committee Chair, CEO, and Commission staff member to meet with members of the governing board. This luncheon is usually more social in nature; if the Committee needs to interview members of the governing board related to specific standards, Committee members will make that request separately. The institution should feel free to invite two or three board members who can easily work this lunch into their schedule, and the institution's CEO is welcome to join or host that luncheon
- The second lunch provides an opportunity for the rest of the Committee members to engage students, staff, and faculty in a less formal setting. The primary focus of this lunch is a discussion of the QEP, and the institution may want to schedule two groups – separating students and faculty/staff. These lunch meetings can be scheduled in the cafeteria, provided the groups can find a relatively quiet place to eat and talk
- Institutions should plan to provide a variety of snacks (including fresh fruit), hot (coffee and tea) and cold soft drinks, and bottled water in both the hotel and campus workrooms

Some important Reminders

- Sheila Featherston and I will be happy to answer any questions you have as you plan for your visit; we would rather answer them before than have something come up on-site
- Pay careful attention to the documents you receive from my office; if your accreditation liaison is going to be out of the office in the months leading up to the visit, make arrangements for someone else to watch for important emails; be sure our emails aren't going to your spam folder



- Many institutions have a technology person staying in the hotel during the Committee's visit, in case the Committee runs into a problem with the institution's equipment that needs solving
- Committee members will submit reimbursement forms to our office for expenses not previously paid by the institution; the Commission will pay those expenses and send the institution one bill for the visit
- Committee members preparing for the visit should funnel any requests for further information through the Chair or Commission staff member. They are consistently reminded to maintain confidentiality, and they will leave behind institutional information they bring with them on the visit; they will destroy any information you send them beforehand that has been left behind on their own campus. On rare occasions, a Committee member may find a policy or publication on your campus that he or she would like to take home as an example of sound educational practice; the Committee member should ask for institutional permission before doing so
- Students are often good campus guides to take Committee members from the campus workroom to interviews and other appointments on campus, and Committee members thoroughly enjoy meeting your students
- Some visit itineraries may offer an opportunity to provide a campus tour (perhaps in the morning of the first day when the visit begins at 11:30); if not, a quick driving tour on the way to or from the hotel may be a good way to orient Committee members to your campus
- A staff advisory visit is always a possibility; if you desire one, please let me or Sheila know, and we will try to schedule one; I have found that the best timing for that visit is between the time the institution receives its Off-Site Report and the On-Site visit, if possible; this allows me to address issues of non-compliant standards from the Off-Site and to look at a more finished draft of the QEP document; a sample visit schedule is available on my website (www.sacscoc.org/ssheeley.asp)
- My goal is to give the Committee the maximum opportunity to engage your campus community in substantive discussions of the QEP, so we will be working toward reaching consensus on the standards found non-compliant by the Off-Site Committee as quickly as reasonable during the visit