



GUIDE FOR HOSTING AN ON-SITE VISIT FOR ACCREDITATION

2024

OVERVIEW

The On-Site Visit for Accreditation provides an opportunity for peer review, and an evaluation of the school's work to reflect its practices in the Self-Study. Compliance to Standards is validated by the observations of the On-Site Visiting Team, and the resulting commendations, suggestions, and recommendations in the *Report of the On-Site Visiting Team* become a guide for growth and improvement.

Early Planning

A successful On-Site Visit calls for advance planning by the school with coordination and communication with the Visiting Team Leader and the Director of Accreditation. Training and individualized instruction are available through SAES for details of hosting an on-site visit.

Scheduling the Visit

In the fall of the academic year preceding the year of the On-Site Visit, schools are surveyed for dates that are preferred for hosting the on-site visit. The Director of Accreditation coordinates the scheduling and notification is sent to the school.

Team Leader, Team Member, and Selection and Size of the Visiting Team

The Director of Accreditation assigns a Team Leader early in the process so that both the Team Leader and the Head of the hosting school may coordinate throughout the process. Enrollment, grade range, and special programs for which expertise should be recruited (based on information requested from each host school) determine the composition and size of each team. Visiting team members are recruited annually in the spring, and are chosen from faculty and staff of SAES schools, and others who have served in the association and on visiting teams in the past.

COMMUNICATIONS

In late spring or early summer, a roster of Team members and their writing assignments is sent to the Head of School and to the Team Leader. A welcome email from the Head is appropriate over the course of the summer, and should include an introduction to the Logistics Coordinator for the visit.

At least three months before the On-Site Visit (and with the welcome email if the visit is early in the fall), the Head or the Logistics Coordinator sends Team members an email containing :

- *The Team Contact Form*, with school and hotel information filled in
- Instructions for making travel arrangements including which airport to use, the time it takes to collect baggage, and for transport from the airport to the hotel on Sunday and from the school to the airport on Wednesday.

ARRANGEMENTS

Team Leader Pre-Visit

The Head of School contacts the Team Leader early in the process to schedule and coordinate the pre-visit to the school. The pre-visit takes place well in advance of the OSV (the preceding spring for an early fall visit) to confirm preparation and finalize plans. The Team Leader should be given the opportunity to become familiar with the school's history and mission, the campus, the local community, enrollment trends, the school's financial condition, and current issues. Meetings with the Head of School, President of the Board of Trustees, the Business Officer, Division Heads, and the Logistics Coordinator are helpful in this introduction.

Transportation

Visiting Team Members are responsible for making their own travel arrangements. The school collects information from members on flight arrival and departure times and arranges for transportation to and from the airport, to and from the hotel and school, and to and from meals that are off-campus. Should a Team member need to arrive on Saturday or depart after Wednesday because of flight schedules that necessitate an extra night on either side of the on-site visit, the school bears the cost. Personal expenses and costs of extending one's visit for personal reasons are the responsibility of the Team member. Directions to the hotel should be provided to Team members who choose to drive.

Hotel Accommodations

The Head of School and Logistics Coordinator begin to plan for the on-site visit long before the visit itself. One of the most important planning aspects is the lodging for Team members at a nearby hotel. It is a good idea to make a visit to the hotel to inspect the rooms and hotel layout prior to booking the rooms. **Arrangements should be made for each member's account to be transferred to the school master account. This arrangement cannot be accomplished through the front desk and must be facilitated through the hotel's credit office.** All room costs are borne by the school. Team members are responsible for incidental items, special services, and room service and will be asked to supply a personal credit card upon check-in to cover those costs. The following are necessary for room selection:

- Each person must have a separate room with reliable WiFi.
- The Team will need a hotel meeting room Sunday afternoon and each evening. This space should provide an opportunity for all Team members to meet, discuss, and work on the report after school hours. The meeting room must have reliable WiFi. Water, coffee and snacks are appreciated.
- For small teams, the Team Leader's room could be a suite with a worktable in lieu of a separate workroom for the Team. Discuss this with the Director of Accreditation and with the Team Leader during the Pre-Visit.

Team Workroom

Plan for the Team to have a private workroom at the school. This will be the Team's headquarters, and must be a lockable, dedicated space, not used by any other group during the time the Team is there. This space must be large enough to allow Team members to spread out the various materials and laptop computers that they will use to create the *Report of the On-Site Visiting Team*. The room must have reliable WiFi and ample electrical connections. **The Visiting Team workroom is reserved for Team members only.** Conversations and meetings with school faculty, staff, and administration should take place in other locations. Water, coffee, and healthy snacks are appreciated.

Meals and Hospitality for the Visiting Team

Some schools prepare a welcome bag for Team members with inexpensive local items or school souvenirs or fun snacks. If a school elects to provide a gift, the items should be consumable or easily packed.

The Sunday afternoon reception at the school may include light refreshments, as the Team will leave immediately following for dinner. Dinner on Sunday should be an event which places the school in the cultural context of its community, and wine and other alcohol may be served. Breakfast may be furnished at the hotel or at the school. Monday and Tuesday lunch are held at the school and may be in conjunction with constituent meetings. Dinner on Monday and Tuesday should be expeditious as Monday and Tuesday evenings involve extensive teamwork and discussion. Schools are strongly encouraged to make arrangements to send food to the hotel work room. Dinners are for Team members only and should not include school representatives.

Reimbursement

Reimbursement forms are provided by SAES on the Team Portal and are also available in the Team workroom at the school. Team members will be coordinated to submit reimbursement requests by Tuesday afternoon. Arrange to have reimbursement checks ready to distribute by noon on Wednesday. Team members may also choose to submit reimbursement requests after the Visit.

THE VISIT

The week preceding the visit is busy with details and final arrangements for the arrival of the visiting Team. Confirm reservations, transportation schedules, meeting times and locations, and other planned events. Set up the workroom, clean the school, check everything off your list! Remind the students and parents about the visitors and any changes to schedules that were made to accommodate the Team. Reassure the teachers and staff that the visit is not an evaluation of them, but of the school. Thank everyone for their commitment to the process and remind them all to get rest over the weekend.

A Sample On-Site Visit schedule (finalized by the Head of School and Team Leader) can be found [here](#).

The organizational meeting of the Team takes place on Sunday afternoon at 3:00 PM in the hotel meeting room. Either at this meeting, or during the tour of campus which follows, each Team member is furnished with an information packet containing a nametag, campus access badge (if applicable), the final Visit Schedule, a campus map, and a teaching schedule for each faculty member (including those who work part-time). Since Team members plan their classroom observation schedules on Sunday and, as many members have cross divisional responsibilities, it is imperative that schedules are easily understood, that times are listed for each schedule block, and that the rotation schedule is clearly indicated for each day of the visit.

After the organizational meeting, the Team travels to the campus, and school representatives (administration, faculty, or students) conduct a tour of the campus. The Head and Team Leader will need to discuss whether the school is providing transportation (vans, bus) or the team will carpool with those members who have driven to the school. A reception, with the entire faculty and the Board of Trustees, and/or Vestry, if applicable, follows the tour. The purpose of this event is for the Head to welcome the Visiting Team, for the Team Leader to introduce Team members and SAES representatives, and for Team members to meet faculty members with whom they will be interacting.

The formality and style of the reception vary depending on the culture and custom of the school. The essential element is the opportunity for interaction between Visiting Team members and the school community. Most schools choose to host a reception of light refreshments in the school dining room or hospitality area. The Team goes to dinner after the reception.

Typically, the Team is at the school from 7:30 AM until 5:00 PM on Monday and Tuesday. The Team eats, meets, and works in the evenings in the hotel meeting room. When arranging for meals at the hotel, don't forget paper products, utensils, etc. On Wednesday, the Team will need to pack and normally comes to school about an hour later than the prior two days. Team members may need to make a final classroom visit or meeting with a school staff member, but in general the morning will be spent in the work room finalizing the report.

Expectations of School Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff members should be available to Visiting Team members during classes and school activities Monday through Wednesday. Visiting Team members may request individual or departmental meetings. Faculty should be advised that they should not schedule tests or independent work during the Accreditation Visit. **While Visiting Team members will NOT evaluate individual teachers, it is essential that they have consistent opportunities to observe faculty teaching, and students engaged in learning activities.** Each teacher should have a chair or desk available for Team members situated near the classroom door. When a Team member enters a class, it is not necessary to break the tempo of the class for an introduction. The Team's goal is to that each teacher on the campus be observed at least one time, and preferably observed by more than one Team member. On Wednesday morning, Team members are writing reports and there will be very few classroom observations.

Faculty have the opportunity (usually on Tuesday after school hours) for input during the accreditation visit through meetings organized by division, by department, or both, depending on the curricular organization of the school.

Administrators and staff should arrange to be available to members of the Visiting Team on both Monday and Tuesday of the visit. Team members will schedule appointments as needed.

Availability of Other School Constituents

Arrangements are made for meetings with trustees, administrators, teachers, parents, and students on Monday and Tuesday. The meeting of the Team Leader and SAES representatives with the Head of School should be scheduled for Monday morning. Trustees, parents, and students invited to meetings with the Team should represent diverse perspectives and a broad range of experience with the school. The Head of School should not attend the Team's meeting with the administrative team. Division heads should not be present at meetings of division or department faculty. It is not appropriate for the Head of School or other administrators to be present at meetings with faculty, trustees, or parents.

Exit Meetings

Wednesday morning at 10:30 AM, the Team Leader, SAES Staff Liaison, and the Head of School meet privately to review the visit and to preview the exit report to the faculty. The Board President and Rector should normally be a part of the exit meeting.

All Team members except the Team Leader and the Director of Accreditation will then depart campus. It is helpful to offer a box lunch to facilitate their travel needs.

The visit ends with a short presentation of the Overarching Commendations and Recommendations by the Team Leader to the faculty and staff, Steering Committee, and Board. **Questions or comments are not accepted.** Schools are encouraged to plan an early release on Wednesday so that everyone can attend. It is also an opportunity to gather after the Team leaves for a celebration of the School, its people, and the completion of the visit!

Technical Support

Team members are asked on the *Team Contact Form* if they will bring laptops. The school furnishes laptops to members who do not bring them. Technical support must be available for the laptops, for the Team workroom, and to members of the Visiting Team.

School Checklist for Visit Arrangements

At least six weeks before the On-Site Visit, the school sends the Self-Study to SAES for loading on the Team Portal (DO NOT SEND TO TEAM MEMBERS):

- Create a PDF of **each** of school response sections, including the introduction and the concluding letters and send to carter@swaes.org.
- Create a PDF of the entire report as one document file, with pages numbered, and email to Pat Blevins, pblevins@swaes.org and ccarter@swaes.org
- If using an embeddable list, link *Documents in Adherence to Standards* from school's Google Drive or Dropbox. It is also acceptable to use a file box and submit the DAS in paper format.

Two weeks before the On-Site Visit, the school sends to the Director of Accreditation:

- The final On-Site Visit Schedule with all information entered

Two weeks before the On-Site Visit, the school sends to the Visiting Team:

- Final arrangements and instructions on transportation from the airport to the hotel
- Any last details about the visit

Hotel and Meal Arrangements

- Confirm room reservations and direct billing arrangements.
- Arrange meeting room for Sunday afternoon and evening, Monday and Tuesday evening
- Ensure WiFi for individual rooms and meeting room, with power cords if necessary in the meeting room.
- Confirm reservations, transportation, and direct billing for restaurants
- Arrange refreshments and meals for on-campus and workrooms

Prepare the Team Materials

- Visiting Team Information Packets with name tags, access badges, teacher and class schedules, campus map, and final visit schedule (delivered to the hotel for distribution at Sunday Team meeting)
- File box containing *Documents in Adherence to Standards*, one document per folder with the letter, number, and title of document on the folder. Organization of this box should adhere to the

Self-Study sections.

Prepare the Team Workroom

- A printer with wireless capability
- Power strips
- Poster board map of the school with a picture, name, title, room number, and primary responsibility for each teacher and staff member
- A printed copy of the school's Self-Study
- One Stapler and staples
- One small box of paper clips
- Pens, pencils, highlighters
- Paper for note-taking
- Post-it notes (1 pack)
- Tissues
- Simple/healthful snacks (e.g., coffee (decaf also), water, granola/protein bars, pretzels, nuts, etc.) with napkins
- Curriculum notebook and materials (e.g. texts, workbooks, or online references) for each grade/course
- Emergency phone numbers for school business/incidents

Team Tech Support

- Laptops for Team members who do not bring personal laptops
- Technical support for laptops and workroom printer Monday morning
- Provide a shredder on Wednesday morning
- Provide a phone number for support personnel during the visit