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**Report Writing Guidelines and Tips**

**Excerpt from *8th Edition Accreditation Manual – Process and Procedures***

**Introduction to Report Writing**

In writing the sections of the Site Visit Committee report, Committee members should be mindful that there are two different audiences for whom the report is written. The school will use the report to guide future decisions aimed at improving its programs, services, and procedures. In addition, within the school community, the report will be viewed by faculty, administration, boards, and various committees that may include students and parents or other stakeholders. Since the school will have just completed its own in-depth self-study, it is not necessary to write a lengthy explication of the study’s contents. Recommendations, while tactful, should be clear and concise.

There is also a second audience, the ICAA Commission for Accreditation. The Site Visit Committee report will be reviewed by members of the ICAA Commission for Accreditation. However, the Commission will not have thoroughly analyzed the school’s self-study nor been on site at the school. Therefore, the Site Visit Committee report serves as the most important document upon which the determination of the school’s accreditation status will be based. Consequently, it is of utmost importance that the Site Visit Committee report is thorough, comprehensive, and accurate with regard to the state of the school. The samples below provide a snapshot of a Site Visit Committee report. The first report reflects a typical Committee member report on a standard element met with commendations, the second reflects a typical report on a standard element met with recommendations, and the third reflects a typical report on a standard element that is at the unacceptable level and is reported as an area for improvement.

**Writing the Report**

The Chairman of the Site Visit Committee will require each Committee member to submit a written report by noon of the final day of the visit (Tuesday). The Chairman will prepare an oral report to be given to the school at the conclusion of the visit. One or more Committee members may be asked to give an oral report as well. Each Committee member’s report should relate to his/her specific area and should be brief (3-5 minutes).

Each Committee member will be given a report templatefrom which to write his/her report. The Chairman will instruct the Site Visit Committee in how to use this template and compile the reports. Following are guidelines that help standardize individual Committee member reports:

* Each Committee member reports on the level of the school’s compliance with each standard element in the standard area to which he/she was assigned as demonstrated by the indicators described in the rubric specific to each element.
* If the school’s compliance with a specific standard element is at the Unacceptable level, the element will be reported as an Area for Improvement delineating specifically what was unacceptable and a rationale explaining what the school must do to comply with and demonstrate that compliance to the standard element. Area for Improvement is used only when the school’s compliance is at the Unacceptable level.
* If the school’s compliance with a specific standard element is at the Acceptable, Target, or Exemplary level, that element may be reported as a commendation or recommendation. The rubric specific to a respective element will be used to determine whether a commendation or recommendation is reported for that element, and the specific wording from the rubric will be used in the report.
* A report on a standard element can only be in the category of a commendation, recommendation, or area for improvement but not in both or all three categories. For example, a report on a specific standard element cannot contain both a commendation and a recommendation.
* Not every element has to be reported on with an area for improvement, commendation, or recommendation.

Some additional notes on report writing are as follows:

* The site team’s task is to evaluate the school and its program not the school and its teachers. Do not use names in reports. Say instead, teacher, department head, and so on. Do not single out individuals for either praise or criticism. Remember, individuals are not being evaluated.
* Avoid statements that cannot be substantiated, i.e., “the school is clearly one of the finest ICAA schools in the country.”
* Make sure statements of fact are based on fact.
* Write in present tense and third person.
* It is appropriate to refer to the school as the school. It is not necessary to identify the school by name in the body of the report.
* Use complete sentences.
* Avoid constant use of the word should as in “the school should.” Occasionally say, “The school may want to consider. . . .”
* Some tips on style based on often-repeated mistakes are as follows:
	+ Datum is . . .; data are. . . .
	+ A variety of [items] is. . . .
	+ Media are. . . .
	+ The staff is . . .; the staff members are. . . .
	+ The faculty is . . .; faculty members are. . . .
	+ The team is . . . ; team members are . . . .
	+ Between [these two]
	+ Among [several, more than two]
	+ The effect [result] will be greater if. . . .
	+ The change will affect [influence] the students. . . .
	+ Fewer than ten members of the faculty [a countable quantity]. . . .
	+ Less dedication was in evidence [a noncountable amount]. . . .
	+ The department staff is composed of three full-time and two part-time teachers who. . . .
	+ The advisory council [a group of people] provides support. . . .
	+ People are served; things are serviced.
	+ Each student brought his/her own book to class.