



# The Team Report and Recommendation

Following the visit, the evaluation team writes a report, which becomes the official document of record. The team report provides information suitable for the public, information related to the accreditation decision, and consultation for ongoing institutional improvement.

The team report is written for a variety of audiences. The most obvious are the organization's chief executive officer, governing board, and others; the Commission's Accreditation Review Council and the Institutional Actions Council, which participate in the review process; the Commission's Board of Trustees; and members of subsequent evaluation teams. Central to the report is its relevance to the decision on an organization's affiliation status with the Commission.

Team reports balance evaluation and consultation. As experienced educators, team members can offer valuable counsel to an institution. As outsiders they can be objective about a difficulty that the institution has not been able to clarify for itself. Teams offer this counsel and perspective whenever they can and keep this purpose of the report in mind during their meetings on campus.

## Overview of the Team Report

The team report has two main sections: the Assurance section and the Advancement section.

- The **Assurance section** presents the team's evaluation, providing the record of the visit, the evidence, and the rationale for the accrediting relationship. In this section, the team documents its judgment about an organization's fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation, evaluating the extent to which the organization fulfills each of the Criteria, and indicating that the organization: meets the Criterion; meets the Criterion but would benefit by initiating improvements; or meets the Criterion but Commission follow-up is necessary. The team also provides its recommendation regarding the status of the organization. If the evaluation process reveals that the organization's fulfillment of a Criterion is in jeopardy or that the organization does not meet a Criterion, the team recommends a sanction or an adverse action. *In addition, the Assurance section introduces topics that might be more fully addressed in the Advancement section.*

The Assurance section is pivotal in the Commission's decision-making processes. In addition to the organization and Commission staff, the audiences for the Assurance section include Readers Panels, Review Committees, the Institutional Actions Council, future evaluation teams, and in some circumstances the Commission's Board of Trustees.

- The **Advancement section** emerges from the Assurance section and speaks directly to the organization. It provides the team's observations and consultation focused on the organization's future improvement, on issues that were raised in the Assurance section, on areas deserving or requiring organizational attention raised in the Assurance section, on areas of accomplishment, and on other areas as defined by either the team or the organization.

► See Section 9.3  
for a sample timeline  
for the visit

► See Section 2.3  
for information on the SAS  
and Section 8.3  
for information on disclosure  
of the team report  
and recommendation

### The Draft Team Report

Several weeks after the visit, the team chair sends the draft team report to the Commission staff liaison and team members. The team members and staff liaison review the report and discuss it with the team chair. Infrequently, the discussion between the staff liaison and the team chair may result in modification of the preliminary recommendation shared at the Exit Session. If that should occur, the chair immediately notifies the organization and the team. Following this review, the team chair sends the draft team report to the organization for review and correction of errors of fact.

In the letter that accompanies the draft report, the team chair sets firm deadlines for response. Unless notified by one of the parties, once the deadline arrives the chair assumes that the final report can be produced and submitted to the Commission.

### The Final Team Report

When the final report is complete, the team chair sends it to the Commission staff liaison. The final team report, with the proposed new wording for the Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) included, becomes the official document of reference. The Commission office duplicates the final report and mails it to the organization's chief executive officer. The CEO distributes copies of the report to its board chair and others. The Commission office also distributes copies of the report to each team member and, at the appropriate time, to those involved in the Commission's review process.

## Response to the Team Report and Recommendation

After reviewing the team report and the evaluation team's recommendation, the organization's CEO sends a formal written response to the Commission, with copies to the team chair and each team member. This response is the organization's commentary on the team's findings. It becomes part of the official record of the evaluation and an integral part of subsequent review processes, including the next evaluation. It also identifies the organization's choice of review process for evaluations for continued candidacy, continued accreditation, and focused visits.

The organization must send its response to the Commission and team members within the time specified in the cover letter sent with the final report. The organization is asked to notify its staff liaison if it expects any delay in submitting the response. However, the Commission does not postpone its regularly scheduled processes and moves forward with the appropriate process if the organization fails to submit a response within a reasonable period.

## Review Processes and Commission Action

The team visit is one phase of the evaluation process. The Commission process is multilayered to ensure the appropriateness of its actions. The review and decision-making processes are discussed in detail in other sections of the *Handbook*. Briefly summarized, they include

- Review of documents relating to the visit by a Readers Panel or a Review Committee. The review process is chosen in the organization's official response to the team report
- Action by the Institutional Actions Council or the Review Committee
- Validation of IAC or Review Committee actions by the Board of Trustees

