

# Peer Evaluator Team Training



2013 Annual TRACS Conference  
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[www.tracs.org](http://www.tracs.org)

# Purposes of the Accreditation Process

- To provide / ensure quality educational program(s)
- To assist the institution in the improvement of its entire operation by assessing both strengths and weaknesses

# The Meaning of Accreditation

- The institution has demonstrated an acceptable level of compliance with the standards and criteria and has the prospects of addressing any identifiable weaknesses within a reasonable time.
- The institution has demonstrated that its educational program(s) possess a satisfactory level of quality.

# The Meaning of Accreditation

- The institution has demonstrated that it has the adequate resources to support the program.
- The institution has committed itself to self-improvement and self-enhancement.

- It is voluntary and non-governmental in nature.
- It is a system of institutional self-regulation.
  - *Institutional* means the institution as a whole is considered rather than individual programs within the institution.
- It is based on peer review.

## Overview of Accreditation

TRACS provides accreditation for

- Bible Colleges / Institutes
- Christian Liberal Arts Colleges/ Universities
- Graduate Schools
- Seminaries

**Scope of TRACS Accreditation**

# Accreditation for Institutions Offering...

- Certificates
- Diplomas
- Associate degrees
- Bachelor's degrees
- Master's degrees
- Doctoral degrees

## Levels of Compliance

- **Basic** – (Candidate) - The IERs serve as the threshold for determining eligibility for candidate status. The institution is reviewed on the level of compliance with all TRACS standards.
- **Substantive** – (Accredited or Reaffirmation)– Substantive compliance with all TRACS standards serves as the threshold. The institution is reviewed on the level of compliance with all TRACS standards.



- Self-Study Process and Self-Study Report
- On-Site Evaluation Team Visit and Report
- Accreditation Commission Action
- Follow-up

## **Four Major Steps in the Accreditation Process**

- The institution conducts a Self-Study and prepares a Self-Study Report.
- The Self-Study Report addresses the institution's analysis concerning the level of compliance with each standard.
- The Self-Study Report is supported with verifying documentation.
- The Self-Study Report becomes the basis for the review conducted by the On-site Evaluation Team.

## **Self-Study and Self-Study Report**

- Team members are selected by TRACS staff from a list of trained individuals and are chosen with care.
- The teams will vary in size depending on the institution and the type of visit.
- Most teams consist of 5 members.
- One of the team members is designated as the Team Chair and will work closely with TRACS staff in preparation for the on-site visit.

## **Evaluation Team**

# Evaluation Team

- A TRACS Staff Representative always accompanies the team and serves as a resource for the team.
- An attempt is made to match the experiences and credentials of the team members with the needs / specific situations of the institution.

- To determine if the institution is in compliance with the standards and criteria
- To identify areas that need improvement
- To validate the Self-Study Report
- To make recommendation to the Accreditation Commission concerning the accreditation status sought by the institution

## **Basic Purposes of the Evaluation Team**

## Team Members should read / be familiar with relevant TRACS Manuals / Documents

(These will be provided to team members and/or are available on the TRACS website)

- *Policies and Procedures Manual*
- *Accreditation Manual*
- *Benchmarks for Excellence*
- *Visiting Team Manual*
- *Visiting Team Workbook*
- *Visiting Team Evaluation Instruments*

## Team Preparation

Additionally, team members should...

- Read the entire Self-Study Report, along with all supporting documents / material submitted by the institution.
- Analyze their particular area of assignment in detail.
- Formulate questions, determine interviews that are necessary and / or additional documentation that may need to be reviewed on-site.

## Team Preparation

# Team Preparation

- Team members should prepare a draft copy of their section of the Visiting Team Report prior to the visit including preliminary Recommendations and / or Suggestions.
- Team members should be prepared to discuss their initial thoughts / findings with the team during team meetings.



- The Team Chair establishes and maintains contact with the team members and the institution in preparation for the visit.
- The Team Chair, in conjunction with TRACS staff, coordinates the various aspects of the visit and provides support for the team members.
- The Team Chair leads team meetings.

## The Team Chair

- The team evaluates...
  - The institution according to its mission
  - The Self-Study Report
- The Site Visit or Evaluation Team Visit is a major and required component of the overall institutional review process.
- A typical visit usually lasts four days.
  - Monday – Thursday
  - Tuesday - Friday

## The Site Visit

# The Site Visit

- The team members arrive on the first day in time to participate in a team orientation in the late afternoon.
- Team members provide a list of individuals to be interviewed and / or additional documents to be reviewed to the Team Chair at the team orientation.
- A dinner or reception is held on the first evening with the key administrators / leaders of the institution.

# The Site Visit

- The second and third days are dedicated to interviews, meetings, review of documentation and report writing.
- On the afternoon / evening of the third day, a draft copy of the complete Visiting Team Report is compiled by the team, and required evaluation instruments are completed.
- An exit interview is held in the morning on the fourth day.

## The Site Visit

- A draft copy of the Visiting Team Report (containing Commendations, Suggestions, and Recommendations) is left with the institution for review and follow-up.
- The team makes a confidential recommendation to the Accreditation Commission concerning the accreditation status sought by the institution.

- Ask questions
- Visit classes / chapel
- Review documents and conduct Interviews
- Conduct open meetings
- Take extensive notes
- Share findings with other team members
- Make Recommendations and Suggestions for institutional compliance or improvement.
- Participate in the writing and compilation of a comprehensive and cohesive Visiting Team Report

## **General Duties of the Team**

# Typical Team Assignment Roster – Team Member # 1 (usually the Team Chair)

## I. Foundational Standards

- a. Biblical Foundations
- b. Purpose and Objectives
- c. Philosophy of Education
- d. Ethical Values and Standards

## II. Operational Standards

- a. Operational Authority
- b. Organizational Structure
  1. The Board
  2. The Administration
  3. The Support Staff

# Typical Team Assignment Roster – Team Member # 2

## II. Operational Standards

### c. Publications and Policies

1. Publications
2. Policies

### j. Library and Learning Resources



# Typical Team Assignment Roster – Team Member # 3

## II. Operational Standards

### d. Educational Programs

1. Undergraduate and Graduate Programs
2. Alternative Delivery Methods
  1. Home Campus Based Multi-Modal Delivery
  2. Distance Education
  3. Correspondence Education
3. Branch Campus
4. Teaching Sites
5. Non-Degree Granting Programs

### e. Faculty

# Typical Team Assignment Roster – Team Member # 4

## II. Operational Standards

- f. Student Services
  - 1. Student Service Programs
  - 2. Intercollegiate Sports
  
- h. Institutional Assessment
  
- i. Institutional Research and Planning

# Typical Team Assignment Roster – Team Member # 5

## II. Operational Standards

- g. Financial Operations
  - 1. General
  - 2. Federal Title IV Compliance
  
- k. Facilities and Equipment
  
- l. Health and Security

# The Institution Responds

- Following the Team Visit, the institution is given a set period of time to report “Errors of Fact” contained in the draft of the Visiting Team Report.
- The Visiting Team Report is finalized by TRACS staff and a copy of the final report, along with a response matrix, is provided to the institution.
- The institution responds to Recommendations and Suggestions from the Visiting Team Report on the matrix provided according to the timeline set forth in the Visiting Team Report.

# Accreditation Commission Action

- The Accreditation Commission reviews:
  - The Self-Study Report
  - The Evaluation Team Report and recommendation
  - TRACS Staff recommendation
  - The responses submitted by the institution to the team report
  - The Commission Readers' recommendation
- The institution is invited to have representative(s) present for the Accreditation Commission's decision-making meeting
- The Accreditation Commission makes the final decision on the accreditation status of the institution

## Follow-Up

- The institution will be notified of the action / decision of the Accreditation Commission.
- The institution follows-up on remaining Recommendations and Suggestions from the Visiting Team Report and/or Accreditation Commission conditions. - A Progress Report (matrix) is prepared and presented to the TRACS Office according to the timeline established by the Accreditation Commission.

- The institution, in conjunction with TRACS staff, arranges for airport and on-site transportation, lodging, and meals.
- The institution provides a separate hotel/motel room for each team member.
- A team work room is provided at the hotel and at the institution.

**Things You Might Want to Know**

# Things You Might Want to Know

- A computer and printer is provided by the institution in the team work room on the campus.
- You may wish to bring your own computer.



- Make the team assignments
- Provide a roster and team itinerary to all parties involved
- Make the team travel arrangements
- Provide a packet of information to the team that contains forms, etc.

## **TRACS Staff Responsibilities**

- All Recommendations and Suggestions must be supported in the narrative preceding the Recommendation(s) / Suggestions(s).
- No individuals names are to be used – Use titles instead.
- Combine Recommendations where possible.
- Use the wording of the Benchmarks when writing the narratives.
- Use the wording of the Standards and/or Benchmarks when writing Recommendations

## **Reminders – Writing the Visiting Team Report**

- Collaborate with other team members prior to “finalizing” your portion of the Report.
- Begin each Recommendation, Suggestion, and/or Commendation with “The Visiting Team.....”
- Recommendations should be based solely on non-compliance with TRACS Standards. Cite the particular Standard in non-compliance at the end of the Recommendation statement.

**Reminders continued...**

## In Conclusion...

- The Visiting Team Report should represent an accurate “snap shot” of the institution at the time of the visit.
- Don't deal with future promises.
- The Visiting Team Report should validate / refute the Self-Study Report.
- The findings contained in the Visiting Team Report should be supported by document review and interviews with key individuals within the institution.

## One Final Thought...

- The Visiting Team Report should represent the team's overall assessment of the institution's compliance / non-compliance with TRACS Standards and criteria.