

Memo on Report Preparation and Confidentiality of Information

The WASC Senior College and University Commission posts Commission Action Letters and the underlying team reports on the WSCUC website. The Commission is strongly committed to making accreditation processes and decisions more transparent, to promote better understanding about the value, rigor and process of accrediting institutions and to enhance WSCUC's and our institutions' accountability to the public. The team's confidential recommendation to the Commission about the status of the institution and other reports and documents will remain confidential.

Preparation of Team Reports

The Assistant Chair and Chair complete the first draft of the report just after the visit and share it with the assigned WSCUC vice president or associate prior to sending it to the institution. Staff will check the report to ensure that it comports with the Commission's expectations as reflected in evaluator training materials and report templates. In addition, institutions are invited to request two types of corrections to the draft report:

- Correction of errors of fact. Institutions can request corrections of any errors of fact concerning such things as names, titles, dates, numbers, etc.
- Removal of proprietary information. If the report contains information that meets the definition of proprietary information, institutions can request that it be removed from the report. Proprietary information is defined as: (1) information that is not known to the general public and is considered sensitive and confidential by the institution; (2) information that has been treated as confidential and provided special protection by the institution; (3) information that has economic value to the institution because it is not generally known to the public.

Confidentiality of Information

In keeping with current WSCUC policy, team members agree to keep all information about the institution and visit confidential. This obligation continues after the visit is over. Team members contacted by anyone, including the media or people from the institution that they visited, asking questions about the visit or the posted report, are advised to decline to answer and to refer the inquiry to the institution or to the WSCUC office.

Guidelines for Writing Reports

The Commission has confidence in the quality of team reports as they are currently written and reminds team members of these general guidelines for writing reports:

- Direct the report to three audiences: a) the Commission, b) the institution, and c) the next visiting team, which will utilize the report as they evaluate progress.

- Avoid the use of the word “you” or “they” when referring to the institution and “we” when referring to the team.
- Refrain from stating that the institution is in compliance with a Standard or CFR. Only the Commission may make this judgment. The team should indicate that it reviewed the institution under a Standard or CFR and describe its findings, set forth evidence, and raise issues, commend the institution, and/or make recommendations.
- Make the team report evaluative and analytical rather than merely descriptive.
- Ensure that the report has a single voice and is coherent and consistent.
- Write clearly and concretely with a tone that is professional, constructive, and objective.
- Make certain the tone reflects the team’s findings and recommendations and parallels the content of the exit meeting. The report should not signal a more positive or negative tone than would be expected given the nature of the team’s findings and recommendations.
- Follow the applicable report template, covering themes and/or Standards as relevant to the type of visit and the institution’s report.
- Evaluate the institution in light of its own mission and proposal, if applicable, and Commission Standards.
- Refer to the institution’s report, its findings, and other evidence throughout the Team Report, linking what the team learned to what the institution presented. Team recommendations should be substantiated by evidence or the source of information.
- Limit major recommendations to the concerns and opportunities facing the institution. It is the institution’s responsibility to work out solutions; avoid being prescriptive.
- Do not reveal the Confidential Team Recommendation within the body of the report.
- Avoid using individual names of personnel and making comments and suggestions related to specific personnel, including criticism or praise.
- Avoid jargon, code words or acronyms that only people within the institution or possessing specific expertise will understand.
- Do not impose Standards or requirements of other accrediting associations or of governmental agencies.
- Cite CFRs and Standards in each section of the report and in the final findings and recommendations.
- If you have questions about the public nature of the reports, the kinds of corrections institutions can request, or these guidelines, please feel free to contact your WSCUC liaison.