

Special Visit (SV) Institutional Report Guide

This Guide is designed for use by an institution's Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) in the preparation of a Special Visit institutional report. It supplements the information found in the WSCUC Handbook of Accreditation.

Contact the WSCUC staff liaison assigned to the institution if there are any questions about the content of the report.

Report Format and Submission

Under the Handbook, when taking accreditation action, the Commission may request additional reports and site visits focused on identified issues of concern. In preparation for such a site visit, the institution is asked to prepare and submit a Special Visit report.

The Special Visit report is submitted to WSCUC ten weeks prior to the scheduled visit via box.com (a cloud storage service). WSCUC staff will provide ALOs with information about how and where to upload before the report due date. Once uploaded, WSCUC will share the report electronically with the visiting team members.

Based on information from the report and the site visit, the team prepares a report of its findings and makes a recommendation to the Commission. In many cases, the Commission accepts the report and sets or affirms the date of the next comprehensive review. However, the Commission may also act to schedule further reports or special visits, change the date of the next comprehensive review, or impose a sanction.

Special Visit reports are intended to be limited in scope, not comprehensive evaluations of the institution. The report helps the team understand the progress made by the institution in addressing the issues identified by the Commission.

Report Contents

1. **Cover sheet:** The cover sheet specifies that the document is a Special Visit report. It includes the date of submission, the name and address of the institution, and the name of the person submitting the report.
2. **Table of contents**
3. **Nature of the institutional context and major changes since the last WSCUC visit:** This section describes the nature of the institution so that the team can understand the issues in context. It includes the institution's background, mission, and history, including the founding date, year first accredited, geographic location(s), etc. In addition, it briefly identifies any major changes at the institution in personnel, programs, enrollment, resources, etc., that would affect the team's

understanding of the current situation at the institution.

4. **Statement on report preparation:** In this section, the process of report preparation is described, including the titles and positions of the personnel who were involved. Because of the focused nature of a Special Visit report, the widespread and comprehensive involvement of various institutional constituencies is not required. Faculty, administrative staff, and others are involved as appropriate to the topics addressed in the preparation of the report. Campus constituencies, such as faculty leadership and, where appropriate, the governing board should review the report before it is submitted to WSCUC, and such reviews are described in this section.
5. **Response to issues identified by the commission and the last visiting team:** This main section of the report addresses the special issues highlighted by the Commission as topics for the Special Visit. The primary focus of the report is on these issues. For each issue, provide a full description, the action taken by the institution, a self-reflective analysis of the effectiveness of the action, and the next step(s). It is important that this section of the report include not only a description of the responses undertaken by the institution, but equally important, an assessment of the impact of these changes. Have they been successful in resolving the issue? What is the evidence supporting progress? What further concerns or issues remain? How will such issues be addressed, by whom, and under what timetable?
6. **Identification of other changes or issues the institution is facing:** This section briefly identifies any other significant issues or changes that are likely to occur at the institution (e.g., changes in key personnel, major new programs, modifications in the governance structure, or significant financial results) that are not described or identified in the preceding section. This information will help the team gain a clearer picture of the current status of the institution and understand the context in which the responses discussed under item 5 above have taken place.
7. **Concluding statement:** This section provides the institution with an opportunity to reflect on how its actions in response to the issues raised by the Commission has impacted the institution, and includes proposed recommendations and follow-up steps.
8. **Other documents to be made available:** The WSCUC staff liaison will identify supplementary materials to be submitted as part of the institutional report. The team may request that additional materials be provided before the visit or onsite during the visit.

Tips for Report Preparation

1. Begin taking action in response to the concerns raised by the Commission and the team soon after receiving the Commission action letter. The Special Visit team will be looking to the institution to demonstrate that substantive action and analysis have occurred; promises of future action are not sufficient.
2. Start early with a pre-planning process to decide how the report will be prepared and what data and exhibits need to be collected. Beginning early ensures that the relevant data can be available to be included in the Special Visit report.

3. Support all assertions in the report with clear evidence. Evidence, such as assessment data, financial information, planning documents, etc., should be selected to show how an institution has responded to the Commission's concerns. Evidence can be described in the narrative and/or placed in an appendix, as appropriate.
4. Provide major recommendations and set clear priorities and next steps in the concluding statement.
5. State differences of opinion where such differences exist. The Commission does not expect that all constituents will agree on every issue or recommendation in the report.
6. Build in enough time for appropriate constituent groups within the institution to review the entire report before it is sent to the Commission.
7. Seek assistance from the WSCUC staff liaison as needed.

Considerations for Institutions on Sanction

Under federal law, whenever the Commission finds that an institution fails to meet any of the Commission Standards, WSCUC is required to give the institution a specific period of time from the date of the action to institute corrective measures. If the institution fails to do so, the Commission is required to take an 'adverse action,' defined as the withdrawal of accreditation. Thus, whenever the Commission imposes a sanction, which is by definition a finding of noncompliance with one or more the Standards, the institution is expected to address the issues identified by the Commission and to demonstrate they have been resolved within a specific period of time. Special Visits to institutions under sanction are conducted to assess whether the institution has addressed the cited issues satisfactorily and has come into compliance with the Standards. Promises of future performance are not sufficient.

In this context, institutions on sanction (Warning, Probation, Show Cause) should follow the guidelines outlined in this document with particular emphasis on how the institution has come into compliance with the Standards since the last Commission action. The institution should be prepared to provide evidence that demonstrates that it has satisfactorily responded to the specific concerns outlined in the Commission action letter and that at the time of the visit it is now in compliance with the Standards.

Based on information from the report and the site visit, the team prepares a report of its findings and makes a recommendation to the Commission at its next meeting. The Commission accepts the report and takes action on the sanction. If the sanction is removed, the Commission will set or affirm the date of the next comprehensive review. However, the Commission may also act to schedule further reports or Special Visits. In exceptional cases, the Commission may extend the sanction upon presentation of evidence that there is good cause to provide further time for corrective measures.

For more information about sanctions, see the WSCUC Handbook, Commission Decisions on Institutions.

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