

**ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND
PRECOLLEGIATE ARTS SCHOOLS**

Procedures for Accreditation

PART III

**Instructions for Visiting Evaluators:
The ACCPAS Visit and
Visitors' Report**

May 2007 Edition

Correlated to the ACCPAS *Handbook 2007* and Beyond

**Users of this document must have a current edition of
the ACCPAS *Handbook* and any supplements or appendices.**

NOTICES

1. This is **Part III** of the ACCPAS *Procedures for Accreditation*.

Part I provides an overview of the accreditation process, primarily from the institution's perspective.

Part II describes procedures and content areas for the institution's Self-Study to be used as appropriate to the size and scope of curricular offerings.

Part III provides an overview of the visit, the Visitors' Report, and the Visitors' Report format, primarily from the visitors' perspective.

The three documents give a complete picture of the approach to accreditation used by ACCPAS.

The policies and procedures outlined herein are intended to facilitate consistent review among all institutions and, at the same time, to provide maximum flexibility for tailoring the accreditation process to the needs of specific institutions.

2. This text is available on diskette. For information concerning price and computer hardware/software compatibility, please contact the ACCPAS National Office.
3. Information contained herein concerning programs, procedures, requirements, standards, and fees is subject to change without notice by the appropriate body of ACCPAS.
4. Permission is hereby granted to copy this document for use in the accreditation process.

National Office:

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND PRECOLLEGIATE ARTS SCHOOLS

11250 Roger Bacon Drive, Suite 21
Reston, Virginia 20190

Telephone: 703-437-0700 Facsimile: 703-437-6312

E-mail: info@arts-accredit.org

Web Site: <http://www.accpas.arts-accredit.org/>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part III. Instructions for Visiting Evaluators

Instructions for Visiting Evaluators to Institutions Seeking Accreditation or Renewal of Accreditation	III-1
Orientation	III-1
▪ Responsibility of the Visiting Evaluators	III-1
▪ Concerns of the Visiting Evaluators	III-1
▪ Protocols	III-2
Procedures	III-2
▪ Invitation and Response	III-2
▪ Combined Visits	III-2
Concurrent Visits	III-2
Joint Visits	III-2
▪ ACCPAS Evaluators Serving Multiple Purposes at the Institutions	III-3
▪ ACCPAS Evaluators Serving Other Agencies	III-3
▪ Special Instructions for Visitors to Degree-Granting Institutions that Operate Community Education Programs or Precollegiate Arts Schools	III-3
▪ Preliminary Arrangements	III-3
▪ The Visit	III-5
▪ Expense Reimbursement	III-7
▪ Completing and Filing the Visitors' Report	III-7
Format of the Visitors' Report	III-8
▪ For Institutions Seeking Accreditation for the First Time	III-9
▪ For Institutions Seeking Renewal of Accreditation	III-9
▪ Definitions of Curricular Status	III-9
Content of the Visitors' Report	III-10
Required Disclaimer	III-10
Outline for Part One	III-10
▪ Operations and Purposes	III-12
▪ Size and Scope	III-12
▪ Finances	III-12

Table of Contents (continued)

- Governance and Administration III-12
- Faculty and Staff..... III-13
- Facilities, Equipment, Health, and Safety III-13
- Learning and Information Resources..... III-13
- Recruitment, Enrollment, Financial Aid, Retention, Record Keeping, and Advisement..... III-14
- Published Materials and Web Sites III-14
- Relationship with Parents/Guardians III-14
- Branch Campuses, External Programs, Use of the Institution’s Name for Educational
Activities Operated Apart from the Main Campus or the Primary Educational Program III-14
- Community Involvement and Relationships with Other Schools..... III-14
- Standards for (1) Independent Schools Without Regional or Other Institutional
Accreditation and/or (2) Proprietary Institutions (if applicable)..... III-14
- Programs and Curricula III-15
- School Evaluation, Planning, and Projections..... III-17
- Standards Summary III-17
- Overview, Summary Assessment, and Recommendations for the Program..... III-17

Instructions for Visiting Evaluators to Institutions Seeking Accreditation or Renewal of Accreditation

ORIENTATION

The following instructions are intended to serve as guidelines for ACCPAS visiting evaluators. Although the instructions are detailed, three points of paramount importance are emphasized.

Responsibility of the Visiting Evaluators

The primary functions of the visiting evaluators are (a) to verify the Self-Study, (b) to gather and assess information in a comprehensive manner, and (c) to prepare a factually based evaluative report that enables thorough Commission review of the total community or precollegiate arts program. The written observations of visitors are particularly critical in areas such as performance and reviews of student work. In carrying out these functions, visitors are expected to reflect the service-oriented accreditation philosophy of ACCPAS and thus to produce an appropriate context for the institution's receipt of Commission action. In all phases of the process, evaluators work together as a team. Fulfilling specific responsibilities does not preclude common effort and shared decision-making.

The visiting evaluators do not accredit, make definitive accreditation judgments, or make official recommendations to the institution on behalf of ACCPAS. These functions are served by the Commission. In their contacts at the visited institution, visiting evaluators may be able to serve as consultants to a limited extent, but this is definitely a secondary role and should not interfere with their primary function. It should be made clear, however, that any advisory comments are made as individuals, and not as expressions of an official position of ACCPAS.

Concerns of the Visiting Evaluators

The visiting evaluators concern themselves primarily with the larger issues, such as the effectiveness of teaching, artistic goals and quality, competence of students and graduates, administration, validity of information and conclusions reached through Self-Study, and crucial futures issues. The Visitors' Report reflects careful attention to these significant factors. It presents an objective analysis that summarizes (a) the state of the school, (b) the extent to which standards appear to be met, (c) strengths and areas for improvement, (d) major futures issues for the school and its arts programs, and (e) constructive suggestions for future development.

Protocols

Evaluators shall base their reviews on ACCPAS standards, guidelines, and procedures in the context of the visited institution rather than on personal opinions, favored methodologies, or practices at their home institutions. In accordance with ACCPAS policies on institutional autonomy, evaluators shall not enter into local debates on the merits of specific approaches to particular issues or concerns.

ACCPAS visiting evaluators are to comport themselves with dignity, courtesy, and professionalism and should exhibit an attitude of encouragement. Contentiousness, antagonism, condescension, or personal promotion are unacceptable. Visitors are to show respect for all individuals and to refrain without question from any appearance of harassment, substance abuse, or any other behavior that would raise questions about the integrity or objectivity of the process, or otherwise shift focus from evaluation and improvement of the school.

PROCEDURES

Invitation and Response

Invitations to serve at specific institutions come from the ACCPAS Executive Director. The invitation letter describes the specifics of the visit. Each visiting evaluator responds as requested in the invitation letter as quickly as possible after considering (a) the proposed time frame; (b) whether their service would be, or could be, construed as a conflict of interest; and (c) whether their schedule permits requisite attention to the Self-Study, the on-site visit, and timely preparation of the Visitors' Report.

Combined Visits

ACCPAS visiting evaluators may be involved with other accrediting agencies in one of the following ways.

1. **Concurrent Visits.** In this case, the ACCPAS evaluators conduct a regular ACCPAS visit at the same time as that of another accrediting agency, but are not members of the other agency's team. Although impressions may be shared with the other team, the ACCPAS evaluators devote their full time to ACCPAS accreditation procedures. Their reporting responsibilities are solely to ACCPAS.
2. **Joint Visits.** Here, the ACCPAS evaluators conduct a regular ACCPAS visit at the same time as that of another accrediting agency. They serve both as evaluators for ACCPAS and as team members for the other agency. A minimum of two full days must be devoted to the ACCPAS visit. Joint visits may take more than two days in order that ACCPAS evaluators may fulfill their separate responsibilities to ACCPAS and to the other agency. A joint Visitors' Report shall be prepared for the ACCPAS Commission; this report may also be used by the other agency at its discretion.

ACCPAS Evaluators Serving Multiple Purposes at the Institution

In this case, ACCPAS evaluators conduct a regular ACCPAS evaluation but, at the same time or with additional time, they serve another review purpose for the institution. Protocols for each such visit must be approved in advance by the ACCPAS Executive Director. Reporting responsibilities are to ACCPAS and to the institution. Planning for these visits will include specific decisions about reporting timetables and formats and specific attention to avoid conflicts of interest. For example, ACCPAS visitors may not receive compensation from institutions for work done jointly, concurrently, or in sequence with the ACCPAS on-site review.

ACCPAS Evaluators Serving Other Agencies

In this case, the ACCPAS evaluators are not acting in any capacity for ACCPAS. At the request of either the institution or another agency, the Executive Director of ACCPAS nominates ACCPAS evaluators to serve solely as representatives of the other agency. In this case, the other agency shall be responsible for all arrangements and shall provide all appropriate instructions and guidelines to the visiting evaluators.

Special Instructions for Visitors to Degree-Granting Institutions that Operate Community Education Programs or Precollegiate Arts Schools

If the visit is to a school that is part of a degree granting institution, visitors must receive a briefing in some form from the National Office staff of ACCPAS. The briefing may include requirements for the conduct of the visit and the outline of the Visitors' Report.

Preliminary Arrangements

The visiting evaluators should make the following arrangements before arriving at the school:

- o Contact the executive of the school to be visited, arrange mutually convenient dates for the visit, and consult with the school executive concerning the agenda for the visit. (See *Procedures for Accreditation – Part I: The ACCPAS Accreditation Process*, “Application for Accreditation or Renewal of Accreditation.”) The institution shall provide the visiting evaluators with the opportunity to visit every arts program and to review student work in every arts program.
- o Require that the school executive send a copy of the Self-Study and one copy of all supportive data to each evaluator. These materials must be received by the visiting evaluators at least four weeks before the visit.
- o Check to ensure that arrangements have been made to provide (a) efficient access to student records or transcripts; lists of students and graduates; projects; appointment, promotion, and tenure guidelines; course syllabi, and compilations of performance and exhibition programs; and (b) opportunities to audition student performers and see student work in every arts discipline offered.
- o Check to ensure that the Self-Study includes all required parts.

- o Complete plans and reservations for travel to the institution and inform the institution of arrival and departure times. Team members travel as inexpensively as possible, and when feasible, schedule travel on days that allow the greatest savings. Saturday night stay-overs are permissible if discussed with and approved in advance by the school executive.

The institution informs the ACCPAS National Office of the dates for the visit.

Please Note:

**The latest date for the visit is May 1
for consideration at a January Commission meeting.**

As soon as the Self-Study is received, the visiting evaluators analyze it thoroughly, noting issues to be covered during the visit. The team chair confers with members of the team about arrangements and preliminary impressions of the Self-Study.

In fulfilling these functions, the visiting evaluators determine:

- o The extent to which the Self-Study contains all information required for review by ACCPAS, **including curricular information** and evidence of a program to document artistic and educational results.
- o The extent to which the Self-Study is sufficiently evaluative and projective.
- o The extent to which there is consistency among information in various parts of the Self-Study, and among the Self-Study and supporting materials such as the institutional catalog.
- o The extent to which ACCPAS operational and curricular standards appear to be met.
- o Issues that need further information or clarification.
- o Functions, operations, or program areas that seem to require special attention either to preserve their strengths or to address the need for improvement.
- o Strategies for addressing areas of concern.
- o Key persons to interview.

Although the Self-Study document carries great weight in the accreditation process, visiting evaluators should not confuse evaluation of the Self-Study document with an evaluation of the school as a whole, or at its arts programs specifically. An insufficient or ineffective Self-Study document does not necessarily indicate weakness. The reverse is also true.

If the visiting team concludes that further documentation or clarification is needed before the visit, the National Office staff must be contacted before a request is made to the institution.

The Visit

The visiting evaluators do the following, all in relationship to the mission, goals, and objectives and to the size and scope of the institution, and with a view to producing a comprehensive and effective Visitors' Report addressing issues contained in ACCPAS standards:

Please Note:

All arts programs must be reviewed as applicable in each of the areas outlined below.

- o Undertake a thorough review of all program elements in a manner that causes as little disruption as possible to artistic and educational routine.
- o Make clear to all individuals and groups the function of the visit in the total accreditation process, and the service-oriented posture of ACCPAS.
- o Meet with the school executive to discuss visit plans, share issues, and gain perspective.
- o Meet with the chief executive (or a designee) to whom the school executive reports. This provides an opportunity to gain insight into his/her views of (a) the school's role in the larger contexts (institutional, community, etc.) (b) general philosophy, goals, objectives, and resource issues regarding the school (c) future plans. Visitors to independent schools meet with the chairman of the board to review these matters.
- o Observe classes, lessons, studios, and rehearsals. The evaluators should select at random certain classes, studios, and lessons to visit. As applicable, all levels of instruction must be reviewed.
- o Review recordings, videos, documents, art work, papers, and other materials demonstrating the quality of student work, including any supporting final project documents for specific credentials.
- o As necessary, consider documentation concerning appointment, promotion, and tenure; governance; course syllabi; compilations of recital and event programs, etc.
- o Audition a sampling of student performers, or (preferably) attend a performance by several representative students at various levels, and/or review samples of studio work at various levels.
- o Consider the total performance and/or exhibition program (student, faculty, guest) and its quality and comprehensiveness in relationship to the goals and objectives of (a) the school, (b) specific curricular programs in the arts disciplines.
- o If a high school, verify transcripts. Transcript copies should be arranged or identified, so that the visitors can select at random.

Section 438(b)(1)(G) of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 stipulates that institutions may release, without threat of loss of federal funding, student records to "accrediting organizations in order to carry out their accrediting functions."

The institution should provide assistance in comparing transcripts with ACCPAS Standards as set forth in the ACCPAS *Handbook*.

- o Inspect applicable libraries and information resources and access, (books, periodicals, scores, recordings, slides, information technologies, scripts music, etc.), and consider collection and access development in relation to the size, scope, and objectives of the school and its arts programs.
- o Consider financial support for the school and its arts programs.
- o Inspect physical plant and equipment and consider repair, maintenance, and replacement policies and plans.
- o Interview faculty members, professional staff, and students/parents, individually and in groups, in prearranged meetings and, if requested, in appointments arranged on site. In large programs where it may be impossible to meet with all faculty, visitors ensure contact with a representative cross-section.
- o Review policies and procedures for evaluation, planning, and making projections, and review the extent to which they influence thoughtful change. Particular emphasis should be given to institutional policies and procedures for ensuring that student competencies are met.
- o Consider the extent to which various operational, educational, and programmatic components (a) have an interrelationship sufficiently viable to achieve and to continue to achieve the school's purposes; (b) meet ACCPAS standards; and (c) can continue to meet ACCPAS standards during the projected accreditation period.
- o Hold concluding conferences with the school executive and preferably also with other executives with overall responsibility, such as the Chair of the Board. (The conference may be held jointly if requested, or if deemed appropriate.) In these conferences, the visiting evaluators ask any final questions, report general observations, review the findings of the team that will be in the Visitors' Report, and describe next steps in the accreditation process, including the institution's opportunity to provide an optional response to the Visitors' Report. The visitors must not attempt to predict the action of ACCPAS. The visitors may entertain questions from institutional representatives.

Please Note:

During exit interviews, as well as in previous discussions, the visiting evaluators must make clear distinctions between (a) assessments concerning threshold operational and curricular standards for accreditation and (b) analytical results in other categories such as strengths and areas for improvement, short- and long-term futures issues, and, if requested, consultative advice that are beyond threshold accreditation standards (see items Q. and R., page III-17, for further guidance).

The visiting evaluators also remind the institution's representatives that ACCPAS visitors do not suggest a final accreditation action to the Commission.

Expense Reimbursement

All evaluators send their expense forms with all receipts to the National Office of ACCPAS. Only one expense form is accepted for each visiting evaluator. ACCPAS reimburses the visiting evaluators directly and bills the institution for visiting evaluators' expenses. Separate, non-dormitory overnight accommodations should be made available for each evaluator. Accommodations shall be commensurate with the professional character of the accreditation process.

The following expenses are usual:

- ◆ Public transportation by air or surface, or by private automobile at the ACCPAS mileage rate specified on the expense reimbursement form. Air travel is expected to be at minimum fare class unless this is unavailable. If minimum fare class is not available, high travel costs should be discussed with the school's executive before tickets are purchased. Mileage claimed may not exceed the cost of coach air travel between the same two points. Typically, it is unnecessary for evaluators to rent automobiles. Automobiles are to be rented only upon receiving permission from the institution.
- ◆ Food and lodging
- ◆ Taxi or bus fares
- ◆ Telephone related to visit
- ◆ Cost of typing and duplicating the report
- ◆ Tips

Among expenses not covered are extra days not associated with the visit—for example, laundry, movies and other extra activities, home/child sitting, and substitute teachers.

Completing and Filing the Visitors' Report

Team members may divide the responsibilities in advance in the way they think best. The Visitors' Report must be submitted to ACCPAS as a single joint report. Visiting evaluators are encouraged to complete as much of the joint report as possible during the visit. The team chair is responsible for submitting one copy of the final report to the National Office of ACCPAS. The ACCPAS staff will review the report, contact the team chair as necessary, secure a final report that meets ACCPAS requirements, and make copies for the institution and the Commission.

Visitors' Reports must be received within six weeks of the on-site visit.

Please Note:

Once the Visitors' Report is forwarded to the institution for comment, the visitors' work is completed, and further communication about the process is between the institution and the Commission through the ACCPAS National Office.

FORMAT OF THE VISITORS' REPORT

The Visitors' Report is a presentation of facts, observations, and evaluations. The Visitors' Report will be sent to the school by the National Office of ACCPAS.

Only standard letter-size (8½ x 11-inch) paper should be used. The Visitors' Report should be photocopied and punched to fit in a standard three-ring binder.

One copy of the Visitors' Report should be submitted.

The first page of the Visitors' Report must include the following information:

- Name of school
- Location
- Name of school executive
- Date of visit
- Names of the visiting evaluators
- Programs

Please check the Self-Study and the institution's published materials and recent curricular changes and be precise about program titles and options. If there are discrepancies among these listings, please provide an explanation. Program listings should not be copied verbatim from the Self-Study title page if the visitors have found discrepancies in the listing. However, any such discrepancies should be explained.

Please Note:

For definitions of "Final Approval for Listing" and "Plan Approval," please refer to the box on the following page under the heading *Definitions of Curricular Status*.

Programs must be listed under the appropriate headings and subheadings as follows:

For Institutions Seeking Accreditation for the First Time

- a. Programs for which Final Approval for Listing is sought.
- b. Programs for which Plan Approval is sought.

For Institutions Seeking Renewal of Accreditation

- a. Programs currently listed in the CAAA/ACCPAS *Directory* for which renewal of Final Approval is sought.
- b. Programs not currently listed in the CAAA/ACCPAS *Directory* for which Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing are sought at the same time.
- c. Programs not currently listed in the CAAA/ACCPAS *Directory* for which Plan Approval is sought.
- d. Programs that have been previously granted Plan Approval for which Final Approval for Listing is sought.
- e. Programs that have been previously granted Plan Approval for which the appropriate number of transcripts or other evidence of completion are not yet available, and for which renewal of Plan Approval is sought.

Definitions of Curricular Status

ACCPAS uses the following terms to assign review status to all certificates, diplomas, and programs:

- ***Plan Approval*** – The procedure for official ACCPAS review of a new curriculum that is under development at a member or an applicant institution. ACCPAS rules require that Plan Approval be sought before students are admitted into the program.
- ***Plan Approved*** – The status of curricular programs that have successfully completed the Plan Approval process. Such programs are listed in italics in the CAAA/ACCPAS *Directory*. In reviews for continuation of accreditation, Plan Approved programs are submitted either for ***Renewal of Plan Approval*** or for ***Final Approval for Listing*** if the requisite number of transcripts or other completion evidence are available.
- ***Final Approval for Listing*** – The procedure for official ACCPAS review of transcript evidence that validates the granting of Plan Approval. At least three transcripts or other completion evidence are required for every program. These may be reviewed during the ACCPAS visit.
- ***Final Approval*** – The status of curricular programs that have successfully completed the Final Approval for Listing process. Such programs are listed in regular type in the CAAA/ACCPAS *Directory*. In reviews for continuation of accreditation, programs with Final Approval are normally submitted for ***Renewal of Final Approval***.

CONTENT OF THE VISITORS' REPORT

Required Disclaimer

THE FOLLOWING NOTICE MUST PRECEDE THE MAIN TEXT OF THE VISITORS' REPORT:

“The following report and any statements therein regarding compliance with ACCPAS accreditation standards represent only the considered opinion of the visitors at the time of the visit. Definitive evaluation of compliance and the accreditation decision will be made by ACCPAS following a complete review of the application, including the Self-Study, the Visitors Report, and any Optional Response to the Visitors' Report submitted by the institution.”

Outline

The Visitors' Report is a presentation of facts, observations, and evaluations.

Since the institution will receive a copy of the Visitors' Report both before and after Commission review, it must be so written that it can be transmitted without change, editing, or deletion to the school executive and other appropriate officials of the institution; it must reflect and enhance the high standards of the profession.

The Visitors' Report should be as succinct as possible, but it must contain sufficient substantive information to enable the Commission to take action.

Please Note:

- In each section of the Visitors' Report, the text should reflect thorough consideration of all standards contained in the most recent ACCPAS *Handbook*. Concerns about deviations from those standards should be clearly identified, explained, and referenced to the appropriate sections of the ACCPAS *Handbook*. The questions asked in items A. through Q. below provide a starting point.
- If the visited institution offers programs in more than one arts discipline, each discipline must be covered thoroughly in the visitation and in the Visitors' Report. Please follow the outline in this regard.
- Material presented in the Self-Study should not be repeated; however, Self-Study material may be referenced, citing specific page, section, and item numbers.
- Although the Visitors' Report considers separate operational and curricular issues, all parts of the report should show a focused relationship to the educational and artistic purposes of the school. **The primary focus is student competency development. What students are learning is more important than what the school has or does.**

Please Note:

- **The overarching question to be addressed in sections A. through Q. of the Visitors' Report is the extent to which the school appears to meet ACCPAS operational and curricular standards published in the *Handbook*. Therefore, the *Handbook* standards text has priority over questions and issues posed in the outline below that reflect but do not replicate the *Handbook*.**
- All references in the Visitors' Report regarding standards compliance shall use language such as, "it appears that the institution" Such citations should be referenced to the *Handbook*; please cite specific page, section, item, paragraph (i.e., ACCPAS *Handbook* [date], page 99, item XI.A., ¶ 3).
- There are many ways to develop the text of a Visitors' Report. However, no matter which approach or style is used, readers at the institution and on the Commission must be able to **distinguish between** the following **two different types of items** in every section of the Visitors' Report.

TYPE 1. Issues raised about threshold compliance—the presence of conditions and efforts essential to meeting fundamental requirements of applicable ACCPAS standards now or during the projected accreditation period.

Language such as the following may be used:

- The institution appears/does not appear to meet
- The institution appears/does not appear to meet ... with the (possible) exception of ...
- The institution appears/does not appear to meet ... now, but may/may not by [a specific time period] due to ...
- More information/explanation/documentation is needed [and may be provided in the Optional Response].

Explanations and *Handbook* references are always given in the text of the Visitors' Report when standards questions are raised. It is important to connect both operational and curricular concerns to the development of student competencies.

TYPE 2. Issues discussed for other purposes, for example:

- Status reports, background information, strengths, areas for improvement beyond threshold compliance, recommendations helping the institution reach its aspirations, futures issues, matters critical to maintaining or enhancing the quality or reputation of the program, etc.

A. Operations and Purposes

B. Size and Scope

C. Finances

How compatible and effective are relationships among (a) purposes; (b) size and scope; (c) financial resources? (Purposes statements normally indicate purposes and aspirations for student learning.)

1. The visiting evaluators should note any inappropriate purposes or any discrepancies between the stated purposes and the evaluators' impression of what the purposes are.
2. Does the institution ensure: (a) sufficient enrollment to cover the size and scope of the arts discipline programs offered; (b) an appropriate number of faculty and other resources to cover the size and scope of programs offered; and (c) sufficient educational offerings to support the various programs?
3. If the information in the Self-Study does not cover the enrollment breakdown for the academic year in which the visit is made, please obtain it and include it in the Visitors' Report.
4. The visiting evaluators should note the extent to which the annual budget is adequate to support the school's purposes and the size and scope of its curricular and other programs. The visitors should also comment on (a) long-range financial planning; (b) prospects for sustaining the programs of the school during the projected term of accreditation; (c) development of the budget development process; and (d) if applicable, the fund-raising and development program for the school.

D. Governance and Administration

1. **Overall Effectiveness.** How effective is the governance structure (a) in serving applicable purposes, and (b) in relation to the size and scope of the school? How effective is the administration? Discuss such issues as continuity, stability, and long-range planning.
2. **Policy-Making.** How are curricular and educational policies established? To what extent is the faculty involved? By what means are salary and promotion decisions made? Is the present policy-making structure understood by the faculty? Is it effective?
3. **Executive Loads and Responsibilities.** What is the school executive's and each arts department executive's total load during the current term? Does each executive have time, energy, and staff to execute effectively his or her administrative duties and teaching responsibilities, if any? Are responsibilities clearly delineated and understood, and is authority commensurate with responsibility?
4. **Communication.** How effective is communication among various components of the school and, if applicable, between the school and any larger governance authority?

E. Faculty and Staff

Summarize your impressions of (a) faculty training, experience, and competence; (b) the number of faculty and distribution of faculty expertise in relation to purposes and to size and scope; and (c) the effect of the full-time/part-time faculty ratio on the education of students and fulfillment of academic functions such as counseling and project guidance. What is your impression of faculty morale? Describe the extent to which the following policies are working effectively: (a) appointment, evaluation, and advancement; (b) teaching assignments; (c) student/faculty ratio; and (d) faculty development. Comment on the effectiveness of contributions by support/technical staff and teaching assistants, if applicable.

F. Facilities, Equipment, Health, and Safety

Are facilities and equipment adequate for arts discipline programs offered in terms of floor space, lighting, temperature and humidity control, equipment, sound control, technological currency, etc.? Are the facilities and equipment sufficient to support all activities offered, including lectures, laboratories, studio instruction, individual practice, rehearsals, exhibitions, and performance? Are facilities and equipment safe and secure? Are there adequate plans and provisions for the maintenance, repair, and replacement of technology and equipment? Does the school have an emergency response plan?

G. Learning and Information Resources

Evaluate the school's library and information resources situation and policies in relation to its purposes or mission.

Evaluate holdings (in the institution's library and/or other libraries used by faculty and students) and electronic or other access in relation to (a) what is normally needed for the composite programs and curricula offered, (b) the goals and objectives of the school and its component programs, and (c) the size and scope of the school. To what extent are the annual appropriations for the library and information resources adequate? To what extent are the collections centralized and readily available? To what extent do faculty members and students use the library? To what extent is library equipment such as computers, projectors, microfilm or microcard readers, etc., accessible and adequate? Especially in large schools, to what extent is use of the library integrated into curricular requirements, course work, and final projects?

Comment on the effectiveness of the acquisition, preservation, and replacement program, including interactions on these questions between faculty and library staff.

H. Recruitment, Enrollment, Financial Aid, Retention, Record Keeping, and Advisement

- 1. Recruitment, Enrollment, Admission, Retention.** Evaluate recruitment and enrollment admission policies and procedures for the school. Also, evaluate retention policies and procedures. To what extent are these (a) appropriate to goals and objectives of curricular programs, (b) clearly defined, (c) published for students and faculty, and (d) applied with rigor and fairness?
- 2.** Comment on the school's policies and procedures for awarding and administering financial aid.
- 3. Record Keeping.** What is the quality of record keeping? If necessary, clarify what student records are maintained in the school.
- 4. Advisement.** How effective is the advisement and counseling system?

I. Published Materials and Web Sites

Summarize your observations about the clarity, accuracy, comprehensiveness, and effectiveness of the catalogue and other published materials.

J. Relationship with Parents/Guardians

Summarize your findings about policies and procedures for communication with parents/guardians, including reports of student progress.

K. Branch Campuses, External Programs, Use of the Institution's Name for Educational Activities Operated Apart from the Main Campus or the Primary Educational Program

To what extent does the institution meet all applicable standards for institutions with programs in these categories as set forth in the ACCPAS *Handbook*?

L. Community Involvement and Relationships With Other Schools

The visiting evaluators should note the institution's efforts to be a cultural resource for its surrounding community and, if applicable, its efforts and procedures regarding relationships with other institutions.

M. Standards for (1) Independent Schools Without Regional or Other Institutional Accreditation and/or (2) Proprietary Institutions (*if applicable*)

To what extent does the institution meet all applicable standards for institutions with programs in these categories as set forth in the ACCPAS *Handbook*?

N. Programs and Curricula

1. Specific Programs and Curricula.

This is the most critical section of the report.

It provides:

- a. comparisons with ACCPAS criteria for similar programs and curricula as published in the ACCPAS *Handbook*,
- b. the visiting evaluators' judgment of the effectiveness of each program or curriculum in relation to its stated purposes, and
- c. an assessment of the institution's success in evaluating and ensuring the development of requisite competencies.

The evaluation of effectiveness focuses on student achievement in terms of arts content and/or technique. When commenting on curricular structures, visitors

- a. focus on solid evidence concerning the achievement of results set forth in applicable ACCPAS standards and in the goals and objectives of the school;
- b. discuss percentages or other issues regarding curricular distribution only in conjunction with the achievement of competencies, and never as the single indicator of quality or compliance with ACCPAS standards; and
- c. evaluate the extent to which program titles are appropriate for program content.

Discuss each major program or curriculum individually and note whether the program is continuing, new, or proposed.

If a curriculum is associated with **distance learning**, or involves **disciplines in combination**, or is in or based on **electronic media** visitors must evaluate the extent to which it meets standards set forth in the applicable operational, curricular, and appendix sections of the ACCPAS *Handbook*.

Any significant departures from standards or common practice associated with meeting standards must be noted and evaluated. Visitors should be aware that ACCPAS grants accreditation to institutions only when every program or curriculum meets ACCPAS standards.

Consider in separately marked sections as applicable:

- a. *dance programs*
- b. *music programs*
- c. *theatre programs*
- d. *visual arts programs*
- e. *creative writing*
- f. *other arts programs*

- 2. Study of the Completion Evidence Transcripts of Recent Graduates and Comparison with Catalogue Statements.** During the visit, visiting evaluators should request the school executive to obtain from the registrar's office the transcripts, or equivalent record of participation, of several students. The school officials should be asked to analyze these transcripts or equivalents, and explain any deviations from stated curricular requirements. The visiting evaluators should report findings; however, copies of the transcripts or equivalents need to be attached to the Visitors' Report only if unexplained discrepancies are found, or if a program with Plan Approval is being submitted for Final Approval for Listing and the transcripts or evidences have not been provided in the Self-Study.

Consider in separately marked sections as applicable:

- a. dance programs*
- b. music programs*
- c. theatre programs*
- d. visual arts programs*
- e. creative writing*
- f. other arts programs*

- 3. Visitors' Evaluation of Students' Work.** Summarize observations on the overall standard of work by students, and provide the rationale underlying these judgments. Comment particularly on the quality of student performance and exhibitions, written work, and final projects with reference to certificate or diploma programs being offered. Comment on student morale.

Consider in separately marked sections as applicable:

- a. dance programs*
- b. music programs*
- c. theatre programs*
- d. visual arts programs*
- e. creative writing*
- f. other arts programs*

- 4. Performance/Exhibitions.** Comment on the total performance/exhibitions program (student, faculty, guests) that evolves from or supports the work of the arts discipline programs offered. For example, how does the performance/exhibitions program support the achievement of ACCPAS standards and school objectives for (a) all students; (b) students enrolled in specific areas of specialization? Compare the unit's aspirations and achievements in performance with the level, goals, and objectives of programs focused on performance.

Consider in separately marked sections as applicable:

- a. dance programs*
- b. music programs*
- c. theatre programs*
- d. visual arts programs*
- e. creative writing*
- f. other arts programs*

O. School Evaluation, Planning, and Projections

1. Comment on evaluation, planning, and projections development regarding their (a) relationships with the achievement of mission, goals, and objectives; (b) appropriateness to the size and scope of the school; (c) development and use of student achievement indicators; and (d) overall effectiveness and efficiency.
2. Comment on the completeness and effectiveness of the Self-Study.

P. Standards Summary

(Please note: all and only issues concerning threshold compliance with accreditation standards belong or are referenced in this section.)

Provide a summary concerning apparent noncompliance with specific ACCPAS operational and curricular standards previously discussed in sections A. through P. Use the language “does not appear to comply” or “it is not clear how.” The summary should list all standards issues. Please remember to provide *Handbook* citations. If there appear to be no operational or curricular standards issues, the Visitors’ Report should so state.

Q. Overview, Summary Assessment, and Recommendations for the Program

(Please note: no issues concerning threshold compliance with accreditation standards may be included in this section.)

After careful consideration of the institution’s purposes and of the local context, visitors produce an overall analysis that provides:

1. A list outlining strengths.
2. A list of recommendations for short-term improvement beyond threshold compliance with accreditation standards.
3. An indication of the primary futures issues facing the school and its arts discipline programs, perhaps including, but always going beyond, finances.
4. Constructive suggestions for long-term development during the projected accreditation period, based on the observations contained in the Visitors’ Report.

The summaries in sections P. and Q. are usually the most important contribution the evaluators make to the visited institution.

