

Tips for External Review Panel Members

Prepare for the Visit

- Be completely familiar with the *Standards* before you arrive on site. This is vital. The visit is for verifying evidence, not for determining what to look for.
- Read all the documentation and prepare a list of questions to pursue on site.
- Use the Excel version of the *Standards* (available at http://www.ala.org/accreditedprograms/sites/ala.org.accreditedprograms/files/content/Standards_2015_with_space_for_notes.xlsx) as a worksheet to “plug in” data or items as they are found.
- Pre-write as much of your draft chapter as possible. (See example draft chapter in folder.) While it is impossible to write a complete report before the visit, much of it can be prepared in advance, particularly charts, lists, and diagrams that require large amounts of time to construct.
- Participate in conference calls and listserv conferencing. Raise questions and concerns prior to the site visit.
- Submit requests for evidence to ERP chair, who will communicate to program, well in advance of visit.

Many of the apparently pressing questions may be easily clarified once panel members are on site. Do not get too distracted by complexities before the panel makes the visit.

Typical Visit Schedule

Visits are often scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, but the panel often arrives on Saturday or early Sunday to begin working on Sunday. It may be possible for a panel member to leave Tuesday night, but most plan to stay until Wednesday.

The logistics of the visit are negotiated by the program head and the panel chair.

What will you do on campus and with whom will you visit?

- Tour facilities
- Hold meetings with
 - Alumni and employers
 - Faculty members
 - Students
 - Each other (ERP) periodically throughout the visit

- Observe classes
- Review student records, faculty publishing
- Conduct the exit briefing

The Visit

The visit is serious business. It is not for renewing old acquaintances, shopping, or anything like that. If you aren't pulling your weight, someone is carrying you, which may create ill feelings on a panel that must function in a harmonious fashion.

The opportunities at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of each day for the panel to come together are most helpful. This is the time to share information, and identify tasks yet to be performed or questions to be answered.

Maintain a collegial relationship and professional demeanor throughout the visit. The COA (and its agent, the ERP) conducts the review at the invitation of the program.

All panel members write up the evaluation immediately. Try to do as much as possible while the visit is happening. After that, everything else will be competing for your time. Many chairs will want your draft chapter completed and turned in before you leave the site visit.

Participate in a group meeting at the beginning of the visit to review plans and again on the last morning of the visit to discuss issues or ask questions, and to review notes for the panel report and the exit briefing.

If the program cannot or will not produce the evidence you are looking for (i.e., minutes from a meeting), do not continue to press. Simply note that in your report and move on.

Be prepared to be flexible but at the same time be sure that evidence is presented that the *Standards* are met.

Your evaluation of the program must be based on the Standards. Do not compare the program with other programs. Do not allow your own subjective assumptions to factor in your assessment of how well the program has met the standards.

Keep careful notes; selective memory is often inaccurate.