How to Write Visiting Team Evaluation Reports for Academic Departments
New England Association of School and Colleges
Committee on Technical and Career Institutions
September 2019

<u>Introduction</u>

This document was developed to assist Visiting Team members in drafting reports for Academic Departments/Programs that are being evaluated by the New England Association of Schools & Colleges. Use it as a guideline.

Because no two Schools/Centers are exactly alike and no two Academic Departments are exactly alike, your report may not address each one of the areas outlined below. If that is the case, please don't panic. We recognize that reports will vary in length, substance, and style.

Remember that the report you are being asked to write is designed to provide educators at the School/Center with solid, impartial feedback from fellow professionals. Your report must fairly and objectively state what is happening in the Academic Department, highlight program strengths, and include recommendations for program improvement.

The administrators, teachers, and staff at the School/Center have spent many hours preparing for your visit. They are looking forward to meeting with you. They want to read your report. Put simply, they are counting on you.

If you follow these guidelines, we are confident that your report will be one which provides the School/Center staff with the type of feedback they are seeking.

<u>Format of the Report</u>

Your report will consist of three things: (1) a Program Narrative, (2) Commendations, and (3) Recommendations. These are discussed separately in the coming few pages.

While you are reading the Self-Study and meeting with staff from the School/Center you are evaluating, keep all three components in mind.

<u>Length of the Report</u>

NEASC does not require you to write a report of a specific length. However, as a rule, reports for Academic Departments should be roughly three (3) pages in length.

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<u>Program Narrative</u>

Make your report clear, concise, honest, and well written.

Write short sentences. State what you observe. Support your judgments with facts.

To the best of your ability, follow the outline below. Do so in the order indicated, if possible. Respond to as many of the questions as you can.

In drafting the Self-Study Reports, please note that Schools/Centers have been directed to include evidence that relates to the Indicators in Standards 2 (Curriculum), Standard 3 (Instruction), and Standard 4 (Assessment). Some Schools/Centers may choose to respond to *each* of the Indicators in each of the Standards. Others may choose to respond to only the Indicators identified below.

While we defer to the professional judgment of the individual School/Center regarding the exact composition of the Self-Study, we expect that every School/Center will respond to *each* of the questions posed below:

1. <u>Department/Program Basics</u>. Where is the Department/Program located? What is the physical layout? How many classrooms are there? What equipment or technology is present? Are there any obvious safety or health issues? Does the area appear to be clean? Is there proper signage? Is there a clear evacuation route? What's the overall appearance to visitors? Look for evidence that teachers are using strategies to create a positive climate in their classrooms.

2. <u>Curriculum (Standard 2)</u>.

   - What is taught? By whom? To whom? Where does the curriculum come from? Is it aligned with the Core Values of the School/Center? [Standard 2, Indicator 1]
   - What is the format of the curriculum? [Standard 2, Indicator 2]
   - What are the performance expectations? Is the curriculum competency-based? [Standard 2, Indicator 3]
   - Are teachers using lesson plans that are aligned with the curriculum? [Standard 2, Indicator 4]
   - Is the curriculum aligned from grade 9 through grade 12? [Standard 2, Indicator 5]
   - How often is the curriculum reviewed? What is the review process? [Standard 2, Indicator 7]

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3. Instruction (Standard 3).

    *   How do teachers reflect upon their learning practices? [Standard 3, Indicator 1]
    *   When you observe instruction, how are students being taught?   Are lessons student-centered? Is the instruction differentiated for mixed-ability learners? Is technology integrated into the instruction? If so, to what extent? To what extent is curriculum from the Academic Department integrated into CTE programs? [Standard 3, Indicator 2]
    *   To what extent do you see evidence of differentiated instruction? To what extent do you see evidence of problem-solving and higher-order thinking by students? [Standard 3, Indicator 3]
    *   Do you see effective use of classroom management strategies? [Standard 3, Indicator 2]
    *   Does the instructor make accommodations for students on IEPs or Section 504 Plans? [Standard 3, Indicator 3]
    *   Do teachers use student achievement data or feedback from students or other professionals to improve their instructional practices? [Standard 3, Indicator 4]

4. Assessment (Standard 4).

    *   How does the program assess student progress? [Standard 4, Indicator 1]
    *   To what extent is assessment data disaggregated and used to inform instruction? [Standard 4, Indicator 2]
    *   How are assessment results communicated to students and parents? [Standard 4, Indicator 2]
    *   Are the lesson objectives clearly stated? [Standard 4, Indicator 3]
    *   Do teachers employ a range of assessment strategies, including both formative and summative assessments? [Standard 4, Indicator 4]
    *   To what extent are rubrics used to assess student achievement? [Standard 4, Indicator 4]
    *   Do teachers provide specific and timely feedback to ensure students revise and improve their work? [Standard 4, Indicator 5]
    *   Do teachers regularly use formative assessments to inform and adapt their instruction to improve student learning? [Standard 4, Indicator 6]
    *   What evidence of student learning do teachers look at to improve instructional practice? [Standard 4, Indicator 7]

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- Is there evidence of a systematic program review being conducted periodically to improve program design? [Standard4, Indicator 8]

5. <u>Student Clubs and Awards</u>. What is the level of student involvement in co-curricular activities such as Honor Society? If students take part in subject matter competitions, to what extent have they been successful? [Standard 4, Indicator 7]

6. <u>Faculty</u>. How do instructors in the Academic Department keep up-to-date in their field? Do they receive adequate professional development? How do they demonstrate professional leadership and other teacher responsibilities? [Standard 3, Indicator 5]

7. <u>Adequacy of Department/Program Resources</u>. In your professional judgment, does the department/program appear to have sufficient resources? Is there sufficient staff? Is the equipment and technology consistent with current education practice? If not, what is missing? Is all the equipment working properly? Does the program appear to receive a budget large enough to implement the curriculum? [Standard 2, Indicator 6]

   Note: Comments on safety concerns or major defects in the structure of the physical plant (i.e., condition of the roof, walls, lighting, heating, ventilation, bathrooms, signage, personal protective equipment, handicapped accessibility, etc.) should <u>also</u> be included in the Visiting Team's Report under Standard 7, Indicator 5.)

8. <u>Climate in the Department/Program</u>. What is your sense of the culture/climate/atmosphere in the Department or Program? Is there a welcoming, all-inclusive atmosphere? Is it collaborative? Is there any evidence of harassing language or behavior? Is the climate gender-neutral? [Standard 1, Indicators 1; Standard 1, Indicator 3; and Standard 3, Indicator 1]

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Commendations

Part of your work in writing the report is to identify "Commendations" for the program.

- Offer commendations for accomplishments or achievements that go "above and beyond" the norm. Commend the department for doing something "exemplary," "exceptional," "one-of-a-kind," or "truly outstanding."
- Do not commend the department for simply doing its job – or even doing its job well – only for doing its job **exceptionally** well.
- If you don't find something that you feel is worthy of a "Commendation," leave this section blank.
- Commend the "*What*" outcome (creating a new program or initiative, creation of inter-departmental collaboration, greatly expanding AP offerings), done by "*Who*" – the input (the students, the faculty, the administration, the parents, the school culture, the technology rich classrooms, etc.), and then follow with the "*Why*" – the impact of the outcome on student learning

Here are a few examples:

The Visiting Team commends …
1. The flexible summer reading program that was created and implemented by the English Department that has led to high completion rates [Standard 2, Indicator 3]
2. The use of peer coaching to provide teachers with feedback from colleagues to improve their instructional practices [Standard 3, Indicator 3]
3. The use of cumulative writing portfolios to measure student growth over time [Standard 3, Indicator 2]
4. The $75,000 state grant that was secured by the Science faulty to update lab equipment to expand training opportunities for students [Standard 5, Indicator 8]

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<u>**Recommendations**</u>

When they receive the final NEASC Visiting Team Report, many readers will jump immediately to the sections dealing with Recommendations. For this reason, your Recommendations must be clear and concise. They must be supported by facts.

- Identify recommendations to improve the quality of the program or opportunities for students.
- Identify only those recommendations that are clearly supported by what you see and hear during the visit. Do not include recommendations that appear to result from a single personal gripe, personal grudge, or personal interest.
- In drafting the Recommendation, identify the issue but do not offer a solution. Deciding how to implement the Recommendation is the job of the School/Center.
- <u>Begin the Recommendation with an action verb</u> (create and implement), <u>to do what?</u> (to address the lack of adequate storage for instructional materials in the construction cluster), <u>why?</u> (to eliminate a safety issue)
- If you cannot find something that you feel is worthy of a Recommendation, leave the Recommendations section blank.

Here are several examples of Recommendations:

1. Create and implement a plan to address the lack of adequate storage for lab chemicals in the Science Department to eliminate a potential safety issue. [Standard 7, Indicator 5]
2. Replace damaged ceiling tiles in several English Department classrooms to improve overall appearance. [Standard 7, Indicator 5]
3. Communicate grading expectations and practices to parents so they can be better informed about their child's progress. [Standard 4, Indicator 2]
4. Seek additional resources to update technology in Math Department classrooms to provide students with a stronger curriculum. [Standard 7, Indicator 1]