



Inspire

**Inspiring Schools to Flourish
Through Accreditation**

**School Coordinator
Handbook**

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School Coordinator Handbook

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Letter of Introduction

[Accreditation](#) is primarily focused on school improvement. Throughout the process, the school demonstrates the effectiveness with which it meets established educational standards of quality, establishes goals for improvement, and creates a plan to fulfill those goals. In Christian schools, these standards genuinely align with the school's [mission](#) and [philosophy](#). Accreditation and school improvement help schools continuously challenge themselves and manage growth in an orderly, systematic way. This brings a vigorous dynamic into the school by engaging every constituent in a process of organizational review and goal setting. Being involved in an ongoing cycle of accreditation fosters a growth mindset and helps a school examine how it is remaining true to its own foundational statements. This provides [accountability](#) and validation to its community. As the leader of that process, you will leave a lasting mark on your school and provide a strong foundation for students well into the future.

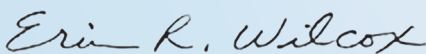
This handbook has been provided to assist you in the process as you:

- plan and prepare for completing the [self-study](#),
- make assignments for [faculty](#), [staff](#), and the [governing body](#),
- make arrangements for a [team visit](#), and
- manage the process and paperwork to keep everything on track.

The information that follows, and various support documents found on ACSI's website, have been developed by many experienced educators as a result of their experiences over the years. These self-study coordinators have served in both large and small schools in the United States and around the world. They have found, as you will, that not everything applies exactly the same way in every situation. As you become more familiar with the *Inspire* protocol, you will gain an appreciation of the required elements, and you will also figure out that some things, like schedules, are a little more flexible and may have to be adjusted based on your situation. Please feel free to reach out to your divisional accreditation director for advice or help when an unusual situation arises.

We have provided a **Timeline for School Coordinators** to help you through the process.

Congratulations and best wishes to you as you begin your accreditation journey with ACSI! May the Lord bless you and your entire school family as you work together toward this goal.



Erin Wilcox, Ed.D.

Assistant Vice President, ACSI, Retired



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Accreditation Process Overview

The [accreditation](#) process begins with a careful review of ACSI’s [standards](#) and processes. For an overview, download the *ACSI Inspire Standards Manual* from ACSI’s website. Meeting the [standards](#) requires a strong commitment by the [governing body](#), [school leadership](#), [faculty](#), [staff](#), and school community.

Follow the steps outlined in the process for a school new the ACSI accreditation:

1. Application (available from the divisional accreditation office)

The completed application should be submitted along with a copy of the [governing body](#) minutes indicating approval for the school to pursue accreditation with ACSI. Some schools may wish to undergo a joint accreditation with ACSI and another accrediting agency. ACSI does have cooperative accreditation agreements with various U.S. regional agencies. Application must be made separately to each accreditation agency involved. If you want more information on the advantages of joint accreditation, contact your divisional accreditation office.

It should be noted that a joint accreditation may involve some adjustments to the processes described in this document. Your divisional accreditation director will work through those with you.

2. Site Visit

Once the accreditation application has been received, the school will be contacted to review basic eligibility for ACSI accreditation and to establish a date for an on-site visit. The purpose of the visit is to assess a school’s readiness for the accreditation process and to assist the school in preparing for the next step in the accreditation process.

- To accomplish this objective, your school must submit specific documentation as requested by the divisional office. Then a divisional office representative will make a

one-day visit to determine if your school has the elements in place to enter into ACSI accreditation as a candidate school or to begin the Foundational Accreditation process:

Foundational Accreditation Entry Requirements

PURPOSE Domain Foundations

- o Completion of “The Flourishing Board: Foundational Practices” board training with ACSI (or other approved board training)
- o Statement of Faith
- o Mission
- o Articles of Incorporation (verifying operation as a legal entity)
- o Governing body structure and bylaws
- o Organizational chart
- o Non-discrimination Statement (IRS compliant)
- o Basic family/student policies addressing admissions criteria

RELATIONSHIPS Domain Foundations

- o Policy addressing conflict resolution

TEACHING & LEARNING Domain Foundations

- o Philosophy of Education
- o Length of school year and instructional hours
- o School-selected resources (textbooks, etc.)
- o Selection of standardized assessment

EXPERTISE Domain Foundations

- o Background checks
- o Plan for student records
- o Basic faculty/staff HR policies addressing employee qualifications and expectations

RESOURCES Domain Foundations

- o Plan for funding and viability
- o Building occupancy approvals/ inspections (as an educational institution)
- o Safe and secure facility

WELL-BEING Domain Foundations

- o Safety/crisis management plan
- o Child safety and harassment policies and procedures (in accordance with state and local laws)
- To assist the school for the next step in the process, the representative will:
 - o Review the entire [self-study](#) process with your [school leadership](#) and other appropriate constituents ([faculty](#), [school governing body](#)) to ensure everyone understands expectations.
 - o Establish a proposed timeline to accomplish all the steps in the process.
 - o Inform your school of any areas of operation that do not meet accreditation [standards](#) and suggest improvements.

The divisional office representative will submit a report from the site visit to the divisional office. There are two possible results of this initial site visit:

- If the school meets the basic criteria, the divisional commission will grant Foundational Accreditation, which is valid for up to three years. Your school will use the three-year period to complete a self-study and will host a visiting team near the end of the Foundational Accreditation term.
- If your school does not meet the basic criteria, the school will be granted Candidate status and may work toward improving your identified areas in order to successfully complete a self-study and host a visiting team.

3. Chairperson

The chairperson assigned to your school has been trained in the many components of the ACSI accreditation protocol. The chairperson will serve as a resource throughout the self-study process. All expenses incurred by the chairperson in serving your school, including an on-campus pre-visit and/or the visit readiness

check, will be paid by your school.

4. [Team Visit](#)

Upon completion of the self-study, a team of Christian school educators will be scheduled to visit your school. The number of team members will depend on the size of your school, the number of grades, and the number of campuses involved. The chairperson of the team or the divisional office will notify the school with the names of the team members and their schools. Your length of the visit will be approximately three to four days. The school will be responsible for all the expenses of travel and of hosting the visiting team members.

5. [Divisional Accreditation Commission](#)

At the conclusion of the visit, the team's report will be reviewed by the ACSI divisional office. The report will be reviewed at the next meeting of the ACSI divisional accreditation commission. Your school will then be notified of the commission's decision.

6. [Annual Reports](#)

After becoming accredited, your school will be responsible for submitting an annual report to the divisional office. Your school will also be responsible for submitting the name(s) of a school leader and a faculty member whom you deem would be effective accreditation team members. This is an important part of the accreditation process and is a way for your faculty and school leadership to participate in professional development through the accreditation process.

Timeline for the School Coordinator

1. Application for Accreditation

- Review the standards and indicators for ACSI accreditation and contact your accreditation office to discuss your school’s application process.

Note: The application cannot be submitted without the following:

- A copy of the resolution appearing in the school board minutes that approves of the school seeking accreditation with the Association of Christian Schools International.
- An initial rating of the ACSI Standards/ Indicators Checklist (schools new to ACSI accreditation are not required to meet all standards and indicators at the time of application).
- If this is a joint accreditation, a copy of any correspondence relating to accreditation with the other accrediting agency or agencies with which the school is seeking accreditation.
- The completed ACSI Indemnification Agreement for Accreditation.
- For EE programs — schools will need to identify their licensure and exemption status.

Schools will be invoiced for their application fee.

2. Foundational Accreditation or Candidacy Period Approximately Three Years Prior to an Accreditation Visit:

YEAR 1: After the application has been accepted, the divisional office will review basic eligibility requirements with your school.

YEAR 2: Approximately 12-18 months before a team visit, a chairperson will be assigned to the school. The chairperson may schedule an on-site visit with your school to review the Standards/

Indicators Checklist, see how you have been progressing, and determine a date for the team visit. You are responsible to pay for all visit expenses. You will need to communicate with the divisional office to ensure a team visit can occur at the desired time before a final date is set.

This is a good time to review the faculty qualifications requirement (Indicator 12.2 provides several options) to ensure requirements will be able to be met by the time of the visit. For schools outside the US, certification requirements are different and should be discussed with the chairperson or international/[global](#) accreditation office.

YEAR 3: Your school and the chairperson should have regular conversations. The need for an additional pre-visit will vary depending on whether your school is seeking initial accreditation or reaccreditation. The chair will need to schedule an in-person or virtual meeting to verify that the school is ready to move forward with the visit.

3. Preparing for Accreditation—the Work of the Self-Study. 18–24 Months Prior to the Accreditation Visit:

- Appoint a school coordinator. As is explained in the *Standards Manual*, this is usually the [steering committee](#) chairperson. If the school coordinator and the steering committee chairperson will be different people at your school, clearly define how the two people will share the responsibilities.

The [head of school](#) may desire to be the school coordinator or may prefer to appoint another school leader or teacher to that role. This person needs to be detail oriented and able to organize people to complete tasks.

The steering committee should consist of various school leaders and all [subcommittee](#) chairs (if different from school leaders).

The steering committee will evaluate responses submitted for each domain, as well as the overall reflections and goals for improvement. These individuals generally serve as the editorial committee for the self-study; however, the chairperson of each [subcommittee](#) for the self-study sections should be the first line of quality control in this process.

The steering committee should schedule regular meetings to evaluate the responses of the [subcommittees](#) and ensure things are progressing in a timely manner.

- Develop a timeline with the steering committee chair. The timeline should include the following components:
 - o Beginning date of the [self-study](#)
 - o Dates by which surveys are designed/ chosen and administered and results are distributed to subcommittees for their use
 - o Meeting dates of steering and subcommittees
 - o Deadline for preliminary data and documentation gathering
 - o Dates for initial subcommittee reports due to steering committee
 - o Final date for revisions of committee reports by steering committee
 - o Date for evidence to be finalized and organized by standard and indicator
 - o Final date for completion of self-study report
 - o Date for review of self-study by faculty and governing body
- Appoint [subcommittees](#) with at least 3–4 people serving on each committee. Involve governing body members, faculty, support staff, and parents where appropriate:
 - o One subcommittee for each domain of the protocol (1–6) (small schools may need to combine subcommittees).

- o Logistics of the visit (travel, housing, meals, hospitality, workroom, technology, other logistics)
- o Student [assessment](#) data analysis and interpretation
- o Survey administration, collection of results, analysis, and interpretation

- If the school is involved in a joint accreditation process, review with the divisional accreditation director any special considerations that might apply.
- At least every other year, your school will be expected to conduct surveys. The types of surveys, target audiences, required response rates, and expectations for reporting are all detailed in the Survey Administration Appendix in the Standards Manual. It is important to read through those requirements early in the accreditation process in order to administer the surveys appropriately.

4. Preparing for the Visit

- **Twelve months prior to the visit**, work with the chairperson and the divisional office to finalize the dates of the team visit.
- **Six to twelve months prior to the visit**, work with the chairperson to schedule his/ her pre-visit. (This can vary by school.) This pre-visit will determine if your school is indeed on schedule to host a visiting team.
- **During the four to six months prior to the visit:**
 - o Review the *Standards/Indicators Checklist*, making sure to note any item that is marked below *Effective*. Communicate that to the chairperson if it looks like that will be the final rating. There may be time to resolve the issue, or it may result in a recommendation.
 - o Request any needed assistance from your chairperson while conducting your school’s self-study, organizing evidence, etc.

- o Your chairperson will have access to your self-study in the electronic platform.
- **Twelve weeks prior to the visit**, be prepared to confirm with the chairperson that the steering committee and the subcommittees will be ready for the team visit:
 - o Provide assurance that the self-study will be completed and evidence entered into the digital platform on time.
 - o Ask any necessary questions prior to the team’s arrival (special needs, allergies, etc.).
 - o Confirm travel/accommodation arrangements.
- **Eight weeks prior to the visit:**
 - o Work with the chairperson as he/she verifies the school is ready for the visit and to complete review of the *Standard 11 Checklist*. If the chairperson has not previously visited campus, he/she should visit the campus at this time. If the chairperson has previously visited, these checklists may be completed virtually. These determine whether the visit is a “GO” or not! (This visit may take place earlier for international/global schools.)
 - o Finalize hotel, transportation, and meal arrangements with the chair and team.
 - o Prepare maps of your campus, bell schedules, rosters, etc.
 - o Confirm the location of the workroom for the team, including technology setup.
 - o Finalize the schedule with details for interviews, meetings, room assignments, etc.
- **Six weeks prior to the visit**, submit the completed self-study as directed in the digital platform.

5. The Visit

- Plan to host the team as your coworkers and colleagues. See the page on Logistics and Hospitality.
- Prepare your faculty and staff for the team’s visit. See the page on Preparing Your Faculty and Staff for the Team’s Visit.
- The school coordinator should be readily available while the team is on campus, to schedule ad hoc meetings, locate additional evidence, and make any necessary adjustments that need to be made last minute.
- The collaborative goals meeting is a time for the visiting team chairperson and selected team members to meet with the head of school and other members of school leadership to collaborate on the prioritized goals from the school’s self-study in conjunction with the general findings of the accreditation team. The team chair and the school leadership should be mindful of the size of the group for this meeting in order to optimize discussion—too large of a group may not be beneficial for focused collaboration. The discussion should center around the school’s prioritized goals and how the school arrived at those goals, as well as any additional items that the team believes may belong on the school’s [Accreditation Action Plan](#).
- A few hours before the end of the visit, the team chair (and assistant chair, if applicable) will meet with the head of school, school coordinator, and school leadership (as determined by your school) to **review the draft** of the team’s Major Commendations and Accreditation Action Items to clarify what will be in the final report.
- Depending on what your school would like, the team is usually able to give an exit report of their findings to a larger group as part of an exit meeting. Your school can choose to limit the exit report to just school leadership or invite other [stakeholders](#) as desired.

Typically, the team will:

- o Briefly review major commendations and Accreditation Action Items (to be developed by your school in its [Accreditation Action Plan](#)).
- o Remind your school that the commission will make the final decision on accreditation.
- o Congratulate your school on a job well done!
- **Final details prior to the team's departure:**
 - o Distribute reimbursements to the team if documents have been submitted.
 - o Thank the team for their service.

6. Follow Up

- A final draft of the [visiting team report](#) will be available to your school approximately thirty days after the visit.
- Your school's [self-study](#) report and the [visiting team report](#) will be submitted to the appropriate ACSI [divisional commission](#) for its upcoming meeting. Most occur semi-annually. Following the meeting of the commission, your school will be notified regarding its accreditation status and any changes the commission may have made to the report.
- If your school receives accreditation, you will have access to an ACSI accreditation certificate.
- If a [midterm visit or report](#) is required, that will be communicated by the divisional commission. A mid-term visit may be virtual or in person. Some regional accreditation partners' requirements vary.
- Your school will be required to submit an [annual report](#). The requirements of the report may vary by year and will be communicated to your school by the divisional office.

Schedule Considerations

The school coordinator and the visiting team chairperson will work together to finalize the schedule for the team visit with details for interviews and meetings, including times and room assignments.

1. When the team first arrives, they will need some time to meet, most likely at the hotel.
2. Plan an initial meeting with the governing body and key staff on the first evening the team arrives on the campus. If this is a meeting with the governing body, sometimes the large group meeting starts with a meal and then school leaders leave while the team has a time of dialog with the board.
3. Arrange for a tour of the [facilities](#) the day the team arrives.
4. Some schools provide a very brief get-acquainted time with the faculty before school the first morning. The team chairperson may address the faculty briefly and introduce team members.
5. On the first morning, it is essential that the team settle, into the workroom, connects with the technology, and acclimates to the layout of the school as quickly as possible. Classroom observation time is limited, and the team must make use of every hour students are in class.
6. The team will need opportunities to interview students, parents, governing body members, school leaders, and other key people. When a group of students, parents, or teachers is interviewed, the group should contain a good sampling of individuals (including male/female, new/established, and younger/older). It is best to have a cross section who will share open and honest feedback about your school and avoid having family members of board members, school leaders, or faculty in those meetings.

Note: Your school may not be able to do all of these things at the same time. You will need to work out a schedule that makes sense in your context.

See the Sample Schedule in the *Chair and Team Member Handbook*

Steering Committee Guide

The [steering committee](#) is the management team for the accreditation process at your school. They provide the organization and inspiration for staff members as they tackle the complex process of accreditation. Each member should view accreditation as integral to the ongoing process of school improvement and count it a privilege to serve their school in this way. Since service on this committee takes extra time and energy, it is important that committee members understand the significance of their task. It is imperative that they commit to regular attendance, meeting deadlines, and praying for the school throughout the process.

It is hoped that this description of duties will provide a framework of the who, what, and how of the accreditation process.

Your schools may use artificial intelligence (AI) tools to assist with grammar, punctuation, and tone refinement for small portions of reports. The intended use of AI should be for improving school-created ideas and writing. Your school should avoid using AI to summarize large sections of your school’s report. It is best practice to remove any proprietary, sensitive, personal, or identifying information before submitting text to an AI platform, and always verify AI-generated or adjusted content for accuracy before using it.

Committees

1. Steering Committee

The steering committee is usually made up of

- Selected [school leaders](#)
- Each subcommittee chairperson

2. School Coordinator or Steering Committee Chair

This position may be filled by the same person or two people. The school coordinator needs to be someone who is respected by the school community, is able to manage a multi-stage project, and has a good grasp of how to lead many people toward a single

goal. His or her most important skills may be that of a project manager. The chair of the steering committee needs a slightly different set of skills. He or she will lead the meetings in which all the reports come in. The steering committee usually has several school leaders and the chairs of the various subcommittees. The chair of the steering committee needs to be skilled in running meetings, bringing people to consensus, summarizing, and then consolidating and editing the overall report. These two roles work closely with one another and can certainly be the same person in some cases.

For the purposes of this handbook, we will refer to the school coordinator for the most part. If your school chooses two different people for these roles, divide up the responsibilities as the skills/personalities would suggest.

3. Domain [Subcommittees](#)

A subcommittee for each of the six domains should be established with at least 3–4 members and one of those assigned as the subcommittee chairperson. These subcommittees will lead the efforts of their assigned domain; however, they will often recruit assistance and input from appropriate [stakeholders](#) within the school community. For example, all faculty will be involved in developing the [curriculum documentation](#) required for Domain 3: Teaching and Learning, whereas only a few would need to serve on the committee.

In small schools, [subcommittees](#) may be combined as necessary.

4. Logistics and Hospitality Committee

This committee will oversee making the arrangements for the visiting team. (See the section on Logistics and Hospitality.)

5. [Student Assessment](#) and Survey Administration Committees

Many schools find it helpful to have one or two committees dedicated to these two areas to collect and analyze data from both student

[assessments](#) and [stakeholder](#) surveys (see the *Student Assessment* Appendix and the *Survey Administration* Appendix in the *Standards Manual*).

6. Work Assignments for the Self-Study Subcommittees

The most beneficial part of the accreditation process is what your school will learn about itself through the self-study, which is conducted by subcommittees that will review, analyze, and evaluate every area of the school’s program. The *Standards Manual* provides the standards and indicators with which your school will assess itself, as well as various appendices that outline the requirements of the self-study process. Because there is great value in the self-study process, it is crucial that all your faculty and school leaders have a role in the self-study, and it is expected that every staff member will feel ownership in the process. Involvement produces a staff that is invested in accomplishing the goals they help develop.

The steering committee begins by:

- Developing a timeline for the self-study process. (Project management software or a spreadsheet works well.) The timeline should establish deadlines for subcommittee work.
- Setting regular meeting dates. (Most schools find that monthly meeting dates are helpful, though some schools set meetings more frequently.)

7. Guide for the Subcommittees

- Read through the standards and indicators contained in the *Standards Manual*.
- Review the documentation listed in the *Evidence Guide*. Determine for each area what additional evidence (if any) is necessary to provide a concise yet complete and accurate response, as well as verify that information provided is accurate and in current use. Important note: sensitive or confidential information

should not be uploaded into the platform.

- Based on its determination of “what is,” the subcommittee will take into consideration its findings along with the school’s Christian approach to education, [mission](#), learning expectations, and schoolwide [expected student outcomes](#). The subcommittee will determine “what should be” by comparing each area to the standards and indicators, using the [universal rubric](#) as a guide. The subcommittee will seek to reach consensus on what rating is most appropriate for each indicator. If agreement is not reached, the subcommittee will determine what additional evidence is needed and seek to obtain consensus.
- The final portion of each self-study section asks the domain subcommittee to identify areas of strengths and areas in which improvements are most needed. Then, based on an analysis of indicator ratings, strengths, and areas for improvement, each domain subcommittee will be asked to reflect on your school’s distinctives and challenges in that domain area. A narrative response focused on providing this context is required for each domain. The process should be managed by the subcommittee chairperson so that there is a variety of input, discussion, and suggestions before the report is finalized and submitted.
- The subcommittee’s report, including the ratings, strengths, areas for improvement, and corresponding narrative, will be submitted to the steering committee for its review. The steering committee should come to consensus on the ratings.
- The steering committee evaluate the narrative reports for accuracy, completeness, consistency, and thoroughness and determines 3–5 overall prioritized goals for improvement.
- Once approved by the steering committee, the report will be made available to the faculty and governing body for review.

- The steering committee will then finalize the report and the evidence that is to be submitted with the report.
- The report and the attached evidence will be submitted at least six weeks prior to the visit.

Feel free to request help from the chairperson at any time during the self-study process. He/she is your school’s best resource on how to complete the self-study, organize evidence, and respond to situations that are not covered in the *Standards Manual*. If there are features unique to a region or global setting, the chairperson will help with those, as well.

8. Special Instructions for Domain 3: Teaching and Learning

Domain 3: Teaching and Learning contains two standards that will require additional input from school leaders and faculty:

- Standard 8 describes what is expected regarding the school’s curriculum documentation, which requires the involvement of all faculty members in its creation and ongoing development. See the *Curriculum Documentation Requirements Appendix* in the *ACSI Inspire Standards Manual* for specific requirements.
- Standard 9 details the expectations for your school to collect various forms of student [assessment](#) data, analyze the data, and utilize the data for program improvement. The self-study will contain specific questions that must be addressed. It is recommended that the steering committee create a separate subcommittee dedicated to student [assessments](#). See the *Student Assessment Appendix* in the *Standards Manual* for specific expectations.
- As a whole, Domain 3 may have more evidence than the other domains. It is appropriate for your school to show examples of how you are effectively meeting the Domain 3 standards and indicators in several subject areas and

at several levels (elementary, middle school, and high school). However, it is not necessary to upload all curriculum documents into a digital platform. Schools often provide a separate link to curriculum documentation or create a guest login for the team if the school uses a platform for its curriculum documentation.

Suggested resources for each subcommittee (electronic access is suggested so that links to additional resources and the glossary are active):

1. Steering Committee Guide pages
2. The *Standards Manual* so each subcommittee can access it’s domain standards/indicators, the [universal rubric](#), and glossary terms as needed
3. *Evidence Guide* pages appropriate for it’s domain

Logistics and Hospitality

Hosting an Accreditation Team—Hospitality and Logistics

For schools seeking accreditation, the climactic experience is the [team visit](#). The team arrives on site with the desire to serve the host school well, collaborate with the school over goals, and accomplish a credible job that will ultimately lead to school improvement. To facilitate the work of the team, your school should create a positive environment for the team members. While these matters may appear trivial, it is appropriate to show appreciation since visiting team members are volunteers, completed “homework” for the visit ahead of time, made arrangements to leave their own school, and will be working long hours while they assist your school in this way. Doing everything possible to facilitate their work will help the visit go more smoothly.

It is not expected that the school spend beyond what is financially reasonable. However, it is crucial that you allocate sufficient funds to accomplish the process of accreditation in a professional and welcoming manner.

Hosting the team includes pre-visit contact, on-site logistics, and post-visit communication. The following is a suggested guide:

1. Pre-visit contact: prior to the visit, can begin to orient the team and establish rapport to prepare the way for a successful on-site visit.
 - Inform each team member of lodging and travel arrangements, including the name, address, and phone number for the hotel. Provide information for a primary school contact. Include a cell phone number for emergencies while traveling.
 - Provide a private room for each team member when making lodging arrangements.
 - Designate one person at your school to communicate with team members about travel and lodging information and any special needs they may have.
2. On-site logistics
 - Review the nature and purpose of the visit with the school’s governing body, faculty, staff, students, and parents at the outset of the visit.
 - Provide name tags for team members.
 - Provide a map/site plan of the [facilities](#), bell schedule, and faculty roster for team members when they first arrive. These will allow them to adequately plan their classroom visitation schedule. Arrange for team members to have access to classrooms and hallways if they are normally kept locked.
 - Make sure that student work is prominently on display so that evidence of student learning is visible throughout the school.
 - Provide a private workroom for the team at the school. The workroom should have Internet access, multiple electrical outlets, and basic office supplies. Schedule the school’s tech person to be available to connect laptops to the network when the team first comes on site.
 - The team chairperson should work with the school coordinator ahead of time to approve the size and location of the workspace.
 - Drinks and snacks are much appreciated by the team members and should be made available in the meeting room. This is an inexpensive way to show appreciation for the long hours of work the team will accomplish over these days. This is also an excellent way for parent volunteers to be involved.
 - While most evidence should be available to teams electronically prior to the visit, some items, such as student work, may need to be viewed onsite. Those can be displayed in the team workroom or nearby. Confidential items, such as personnel or financial files, may be left

where they are normally housed and the team member responsible will go to that location to view them.

- If breakfast is not available at the hotel, a continental breakfast can be arranged for the team at the hotel or host school. Provide lunches at the school since it is too time consuming for the team to leave. For evening meals, work with the team chairperson to determine if the team would prefer to dine out or have food brought to the hotel. Time is a very important factor.
 - Make sure the team has transportation to and from the hotel. If team members drive during the visit, their mileage should be included in the reimbursement.
 - If possible, arrange for reimbursement for the expenses of the visiting team before they leave the campus. Some team members may not submit their receipts until they return home if they have parking, tolls, a meal, or other unknown costs to include.
 - Before the team leaves your school, an exit report may be shared with the school staff and invited guests. Be sure to clarify who your school wants invited to that meeting. It can be a small group such as the leadership team or it can be a larger group at the school's discretion. The actual accreditation decision will be made by the [divisional accreditation commission](#) at a later date.
3. Post-visit communication: if your school desires, about a week after the on-site visit has been completed, it is appropriate for your head of school or school coordinator to communicate a word of thanks to each team member. An expression of gratitude is always welcome and will serve as a reminder that you appreciated their sacrifice of time and energy on your behalf.

Preparing the Faculty and Staff for the Team Visit

The more your [school leadership](#) has done to prepare the school staff, faculty, and governing body members for the accreditation visit, the more effective the visit will be. Following are a few suggestions:

1. From the very beginning of the process, everyone should be informed of the purposes as well as the procedures for achieving accreditation. The visiting team's purpose is to validate the school's self-study and to collaborate with school leadership around the school's goals for improvement. Be sure your staff knows that the quality and completeness of the self-study is key to the visit. The team will also evaluate whether school policies, procedures, and programs are in accordance with the school's mission and meet the standards for an accredited school.
2. A competent, experienced team of teachers and school leaders are invited to the campus as the visiting team. It is good to remind the staff that team members are their peers who are volunteering their time and that they desire to be helpful. They are brothers and sisters in Christ and are professional colleagues with similar interests and goals.
3. Challenge the staff to pray for the team members leading up to the campus visit. It is good to tell the staff in advance who the team members are and what schools they represent.
4. Encourage the faculty to get to know the team members whenever possible. This will greatly help to lessen the tension as staff members perceives the genuine, sincere interest of the team members. Also, encourage staff to share freely and honestly with the team since this free and open dialogue is what will make the accreditation process work. Let staff know that all discussions are confidential and no names will appear in the report.
5. Faculty should be actively engaged with students in typical classroom instruction when the visiting team is present. There should be no scheduled tests, extended videos, field trips, or any special programs other than chapel. No special "accreditation visit" lessons are to be developed for the ACSI visitors. Classroom visits make up a significant part of the on-campus portion of the visit. It is very important for the teachers to adhere to the teaching schedule given to the team.
6. The goal for the team is to briefly observe as many classrooms as possible. The purpose is not to evaluate individual teachers but to get an impression of the learning environment, student engagement, and conditions that support learning. Ask faculty to leave a chair by the door with lesson plans on the chair to minimize disruption. Faculty should not stop instruction to introduce team members.
7. Request that teachers explain the visit to students so they, too, will know why visitors are on campus. School leaders may want to explain the process and timing of the accreditation visit to parents so that they are informed and encouraged by this initiative.
8. The [faculty](#) and non-instructional [staff](#) may expect to be briefly interviewed individually and/or collectively.
9. School leaders must not attend the meetings with the team members when they are talking with the governing body, parents, students, and teachers. These meetings are meant to be times when the constituent groups can openly share their views of what is happening at the school. These meetings are not conducted in such a way as to encourage complaining. Specific questions will be asked to verify the school's report and gain further evidence that what the team sees on paper is what really happens for students, parents, and faculty.
10. The visit will result in a written report in which the team, collectively, will make commendations and recommendations on

each section of the self-study and provide Accreditation Action Items your school will use to build your Accreditation Action Plan.

11. Staff should know that the school leaders will hear the summary of the team's findings before the team leaves during the exit report. It is up to the school leadership who is invited to the exit meeting they may schedule.

The School's Self-Study

The school's self-study provides the opportunity to do an important self-assessment in preparation for targeted growth. The self-study examines all aspects of school foundations, operations, programs, and conditions that support student learning. Information is gained through objective evidence, such as scores and other metrics, and more subjective evidence, such as surveys. Each subcommittee compares actual performance in its area against the criteria or benchmarks that apply. When subcommittees are formed and given specific indicators to rate, they provide a well-balanced look at the domain and potential areas of needed growth. There is wisdom in a team approach. The combined group asks questions from a variety of angles, enhancing capacity for a more holistic view of the area and seeing a wider range of possible solutions.

The school uses the analysis from the various subcommittees to create prioritized goals for improvement that are specific to your needs. (If your school is completing any of the Inspire addendums, the steering committee should also consider the analysis and goals from the specific addendum subcommittee(s) to be included within the school's overall list of prioritized goals.) After the visit, your school should incorporate the Accreditation Action Items into your Accreditation Action Plan and develop those with comprehensive plan information. If your school receives accreditation, you should update the plan annually and report on those updates at the mid-term report. The following is a brief description of the self-study. More detail is provided in the digital platform as each textbox has a prompt that helps the steering committee

know specifically how to respond.

Outline of Self-Study

1. Introduction to the Self-Study

- Introduction/profile: This section will be imported into the [visiting team report](#). It contains basic school information, demographics, history and mission, significant changes, response to previous recommendations, and survey information.

2. Standards and Indicators Assessment

- Indicator effectiveness ratings
- Strengths
- Areas for improvement
- Narrative reflections by domain. (Each domain has a textbox for explanation or context.)

3. Conclusion – reflective summary which could include:

- Themes
- Overall distinctives or challenges
- General direction of the school
- Indication of how the accreditation process assisted your school with school improvement

4. Prioritized Goals for Improvement

- Prioritized goals based on the school's accreditation process that align with indicators and standards within the Inspire protocol

Travel and Expenditure Guidelines

Role responsibilities for travel and expenses

	Host School	Team Chair	Team Members
Lodging	Book single occupancy hotel rooms and arrange payment. No form of shared housing is acceptable.	Agree to the hotel and arrangements selected by the school.	
Food	Arrange and pay for meals and refreshments for the duration of the visit, considering team members' dietary needs.	Verify that any team members dietary needs are communicated to the school.	Communicate dietary needs to the chair and the school.
Flights		Communicate with the school regarding team members who need to fly	Communicate with the chair if a flight is required. Wait for approval from the chair before booking any flights. If a flight is approved, follow the flight purchasing requirements.
Reimbursement	Prepare to reimburse team members before the end of the visit. Failure to reimburse team members promptly could result in divisional commission action. If a specific reimbursement form is required, provide it to team members at the beginning of the visit.	Verify all expenses and receipts before submission of expense reports.	Complete an appropriate reimbursement form and provide receipts.

Visiting Team Expense Policy

The ACSI Board of Directors has established the following practice regarding reimbursement of travel expenses.

The school should prepare financially to cover the travel costs of team members. ACSI is expected to build the best team for the school's accreditation experience. If the school utilizes addendums requiring unique expertise, team members may come from various divisions.

Self-driving: The most common form of travel. Mileage will be reimbursed according to the current IRS mileage rate. Gasoline will not be refunded in addition to mileage.

Rental Car: A rental car may be used for travel. However, the school is only responsible for reimbursing the lowest cost between the rental car (plus fuel) and personal vehicle mileage.

Flights: Some visits require a team member to fly. Before booking, the team chair must approve all flights. If a flight is approved, the following policies must be followed:

- Purchased flights should be the most reasonably priced option for the appropriate times.
- Flights should be purchased approximately 2–3 months ahead of time.
- Only standard/coach tickets will be reimbursed. Individuals must pay for any seat or category upgrades.
- Flight insurance is encouraged.
- Flight changes due to the individual's errors in booking or personal travel schedule are the responsibility of the person booking the travel.

General Expense Policies

- Original receipts are required unless digital receipts are approved.
- If an individual requires additional travel arrangements, such as a flight, rental car, or other transportation service, ACSI will work with the individual to ensure that the cost is reasonable and within ACSI's travel guidelines.
- Expenses that will not be reimbursed include items unrelated to ACSI business, such as telephone calls, meals for family members and guests, entertainment, etc. Individuals should ask the hotel to separate those expenses from the final bill, and are the individuals personally responsible for these unrelated expenses.

Glossary

Academic Counseling: Service to parents and students who are in need of advice or assistance with course selection, graduation requirements, college entrance examinations, college acceptance requirements, and general readiness for the next academic level.

Accountability: Any number of ways the school ensures continued fulfillment of its own mission and other stated objectives. Through open communication and transparency, regular feedback from stakeholders can help the school identify ways to improve in meeting its own mission, policies, goals, and/or objectives.

Accreditation: The status granted to a school after standards have been met, a self-study has been written, a team has completed a peer-review process, and the commission has approved the school for accreditation. Accreditation is granted for six years or a period commensurate with that of another agency in a joint accreditation.

Accreditation Action Plan (AAP): A school's annualized plan for improvement created as a result of the areas for improvement identified through the accreditation self-study and visit process. Creation of the AAP is a multi-step process: the school establishes goals as part of the self-study, the school and the visiting team collaborate on those goals and the team's findings, and the school formalizes the written plan after the conclusion of the visit. The completed plan includes instructional, operational, and/or programmatic goals; strategies and timelines for reaching these goals; and assessment, personnel, resources, analysis, and reporting procedures to determine whether the goals have been achieved.

Administration: See School Leadership.

Advisory Board: In church-sponsored schools that are governed by a church board, or in proprietary schools that may be led by an individual or team of founders/owners, an advisory board would function as an expert team of outside voices that lend experience and qualified input into various governance-related issues at the school. Though perhaps non-voting members of the governance structure, this group would serve as a sounding board for school leadership and as a liaison between school leadership and the church governing body or founder/owner of the institution.

Annual Report: A report submitted by the school to the appropriate divisional or global office wherein the school provides an update on demographics, gives notice of any substantive changes, and affirms ongoing progress on the Accreditation Action Plan.

Assessment (elementary/secondary): Methods of evaluating student performance and achievement – the process of documenting, usually in measurable terms, knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs. Schools should implement assessment *of* learning, as well as assessment *for* learning (formative, summative, objective, subjective, formal, informal, etc.).

- **Authentic Assessment:** A form of assessment that requires students to complete projects or perform skills which are tied to real-world tasks. Typically, students are graded with rubrics for the evaluation of these tasks rather than pencil-and-paper assessments.
- **Range of Assessments (also Varied Assessments):** Used to indicate that schools should implement several different forms and methods of assessment. Assessments utilized to meet the requirements could include standardized (multiple types), authentic, teacher-created, objective, subjective, formal, informal, summative, formative, and/or measures that utilize a combination of any of the above, as well as differentiated assessments based on learners' needs and interests.

Biblical Integration (or Biblical Worldview Integration): Intentional planning to target and uncover specific biblical truths undergirding subject content, identify conflicting worldviews, and rebuild with biblical truth (what we learn about God, humanity, ourselves, and creation).

Biblical Worldview: Recognizing the authority of Scripture as the source of truth and using it as the lens through which we attempt to understand and respond to our world.

Board: See Governing Body.

Candidate Status: The status of a school when it is deemed able to complete the accreditation process in a three-year maximum time frame. Candidate status requires an application, candidacy visit, and approval. Candidate status is effective up to three full school years.

Certification: The status granted to teachers and administrators who meet specified academic requirements for an ACSI teacher/administrator credential.

Code of Ethics: An identified set of guidelines that each individual commits to upholding in his/her role. This may be a formal document or a less formal list of expectations.

Continuous Improvement: A consistent effort to improve the school's processes, procedures, and practices that focus on teaching, learning, and student achievement. Ongoing efforts may also be warranted in other areas that contribute to the overall student experience.

Curriculum: The planned instructional program to be delivered to the students. Though a school's choice in textbooks and resources for any given grade level and subject area is an important consideration, the school's curriculum is much broader than a textbook series.

Curriculum Documentation: A written description of what is taught throughout the school that 1) describes the school's instructional program, 2) helps ensure continuity between grade levels and subject areas, and 3) provides a basis for evaluation of the school's instructional program.

Curriculum Guides/Maps: See Curriculum Documentation.

Discipleship: To train another, through instruction and modeling, to follow Christ and practice spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading, prayer, and faithful living.

Digital Citizenship: Using technology in safe, effective, discerning, and responsible ways that affect student learning and the community at large.

Divisional Accreditation Commission: The commission made up of representatives from ACSI-accredited schools in each division or subset of the division. The commission meets, usually twice a year, to review and monitor accreditation activity in the division and to make decisions on school accreditation.

Early Education (EE): The care and education of children before kindergarten. Kindergarten may be included if the program is a standalone early education program.

Equitable Compensation: Impartially determined salary ranges based on objective criteria such as years of service, credentials, experience, and/or performance. Compensation information should be available to employees for review.

Expected Student Outcomes: What the school intentionally targets for all students to know, believe, understand, and/or be able to do in academic and non-academic areas after their tenure in the school. Outcomes are based on the mission and philosophy of the school.

Executive Leadership: See School Leadership.

Facilities: All buildings and grounds on school property or utilized by the school.

Faculty: Generally referring to the instructional staff of the school, especially in instances where it is pertinent to make a distinction between instructional staff and non-instructional staff.

Fidelity: The manner in which assessments are conducted in accordance with their original intent and with the same degree of accuracy every time.

Global Commission on Accreditation: The commission established by the ACSI Board of Directors to establish policy, create structure, and provide oversight for all accreditation activities of the association.

Governing Body: A group of elected or appointed individuals who come together to act as one for the purpose of establishing policies that will enable the school to achieve its established desirable ends and to avoid results it considers unacceptable. These individuals are “trustees” who have authority when sitting as members of the governing body.

Head of School: The chief administrator/officer of the school. Titles for this role vary significantly from school to school (e.g., principal, administrator, headmaster, head of school, director, president, superintendent).

Indicators: Descriptions of essential practices, processes, and procedures that elaborate and explain how schools can effectively meet the standards of accreditation.

Instructional Methods: The techniques that a teacher uses (e.g., hands-on activities, peer tutoring, discussion, experimentation, learning centers, debates, role-play, drill, and practice) and adapts to the learning styles of the students.

Instructional Objectives: Statements that describe the skills or concepts the student will have attained when instruction in a particular subject, grade, unit, or lesson is completed.

Instructional Resources: The physical and digital resources that are available to support the instructional program. Instructional resources could also include supplemental materials that are used in the instructional program and are identified in the curriculum documentation.

Leadership: See School Leadership.

Mentoring: To intentionally train another through relationship, instruction, and modeling.

Mid-term Report: A report provided by the school to the appropriate divisional or global office at or near the midpoint of a school’s accreditation term, wherein the school provides more detailed updates on the AAP, faculty qualifications, and other applicable accreditation expectations. The divisional or global office will notify the school if a mid-term visit is required.

Mission: A brief statement of why the school exists and what it seeks to accomplish.

Outreach: The action or activity of seeking to serve or otherwise connect with individuals or organizations outside of one’s own school in order to provide opportunities for students to develop Christian character.

Philosophy of Education: The philosophy that articulates the program’s beliefs about how children learn and how they should be instructed and assessed. The statement guides the instructional methods and classroom practices deemed appropriate considering the program’s view of the nature and needs of children. A Christian school’s philosophy of education would also articulate the place of

faith in Christian education as well as how to integrate biblical truth into the overall curriculum planning and daily instruction.

Referral: A procedure by which a teacher, counselor, or other school personnel suggests school or community resources to assist a student who has learning, emotional, physical, or other needs.

School Leadership: The on-site, day-to-day leader(s) of the school, often referring to the administrative or leadership team that may include directors, principals, assistant principals, curriculum directors, deans, non-instructional leaders, etc. Leadership may include department heads or lead teachers.

Scope and Sequence: Included as part of the curriculum documentation, a scope and sequence indicates the breadth of the content and the order in which it will be taught within and across grades.

Self-Study: The document produced by the steering committee and the various subcommittees of the school as they respond to the standards, indicators, and other prompts of the accreditation protocol. This document is a collaborative effort of school groups and must represent the combined input, analysis, and consensus of all those involved, with sufficient evidence to demonstrate the school's effectiveness, regarding standards and indicators.

Spiritual Formation: The Holy Spirit's ongoing work of shaping individuals in the image of Christ for the glory of God and for the sake of others.

Staff: All personnel employed by the school unless otherwise designated (e.g., "instructional staff," "non-instructional staff," etc.).

Stakeholder(s): A person or group with direct interest, involvement, or investment in the realization of the mission of the school (e.g., staff, students, parents, governing body, community, and donors).

Standards: The 20 established qualitative criteria for school accreditation.

Steering Committee: A group of individuals at the school that is responsible for the development and completion of the self-study. The steering committee works with each of the subcommittees to train, advise, and hold them accountable for completing tasks.

Subcommittee: A group of stakeholders at the school that is responsible for a section of the self-study. Subcommittees report to the steering committee.

Team Visit: A visit to the school by peer educators wherein they validate the accuracy and thoroughness of the self-study. The team engages in observations and interviews, collaborates with the school around future goals, and constructs a team report. This visit is generally three to four days long.

Universal Rubric: The chart that defines or describes four levels of effectiveness as applied to all indicators in the *Inspire* protocol. Schools and visiting teams should use the universal rubric with the overall standard in mind as they review each indicator and provide evidence.

Visiting Team Report: A report written by the visiting team, in accordance with ACSI accreditation standards and policies, wherein the visiting team articulates its findings in the form of indicator ratings, commendations, recommendations, accreditation action items, and overall analyses.



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