

SAIS Accreditation

Role of the Visiting Team



SAIS accreditation is based on a peer-review model that derives its greatest benefit from peer educators reviewing the school's self-study and responses to standards/indicators and evaluating them in light of the school's mission and evidence gathered during the team visit. The following information will help in preparation to serve as a team member.

The Guidebook

The SAIS Guidebook provides an outline for the entire accreditation process. A copy is available on the SAIS website at www.sais.org/ACCguidebook. It is extremely important that each team member be familiar with the standards/indicators and the four critical questions.

Responsibilities of Visiting Team Members

Tasks for individual team members will be assigned by the chair, usually during the orientation period at the beginning of the visit. Though there are many ways that members of visiting teams can be useful in the process, the primary duties assigned to all team members as part of this collaborative effort are:

- Review and evaluate the school's report about itself. The school report should be thorough and accurate, and effectively communicate the school's "story" as it relates to the accreditation standards and process and its commitment to its growth mindset. The self-study will be sent to the team members for review at least four weeks prior to the visit.
- Check for compliance with all indicators, which validates that a standard has been met. The school's written responses to the indicators will accompany the school report. Note that the chair of the visiting team has done most of the checking of compliance before the visit occurs.
- Help write the visit report. The visit report is the responsibility of the chair, but is written in a collaborative fashion with each team member contributing to the final document. The report serves as the feedback to the school and includes commendations and recommendations based on the school report, responses to standards/indicators, and the team visit. The report is also the document that recommends the school's accreditation status to the SAIS Accreditation Review Committee.

The Visit Report – Timeline & Process

The SAIS timeline for the visit report process is as follows:

- The chair will work with the visiting team members to draft and finalize the report.
- Team members review draft(s) and reply to the chair with recommended changes or corrections. If a team member does not reply within a timely manner, an acceptance of the draft version is assumed.
- The chair will finalize the report within 21 days of the conclusion of the visit.
- SAIS will send the report to the Head of School and to the school's accreditation coordinator for review and comment before sending it to the SAIS Accreditation Committee.
- The Accreditation Review Committee votes on the recommendation of the visiting team and

makes the final decision regarding a school's accreditation status.

- SAIS will send the final report and the results of the actions of the Accreditation Review Committee to the Head of School, accreditation coordinator, and school Board Chair.

Team Member Prerequisites

In order to serve as a team member for SAIS and SAIS-SACS visits, one must:

- Be from a school that is accredited by SAIS, a partner accrediting agency, or an agency approved by the NAIS Commission on Accreditation.
- Attend the SAIS team-training workshop which is led by the team chair and takes place at the beginning of each accreditation visit.
- Agree not to accept team member assignments at schools where a conflict of interest exists. Examples of conflicts of interest might include previous work experience as head or a senior administrator at the school to be visited; a sense of personal obligation to the head of school related to career advancement; any current or expected consulting or financial relationship with the school to be visited; and any special interest in having the school become accredited or disaccredited. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis if there are extenuating circumstances.

Other Important Notes for Team Members

Confidentiality – Please remember that all matters involving the accreditation process of a school are **confidential** and should not be discussed with anyone other than team members, the visit chair, and SAIS staff, board and accreditation committee.

Expenses – Team member expenses will be paid by the school and managed according to the school's reimbursement policy. There is not an honorarium for participation. By serving on an accreditation visiting team, team members enable independent schools to remain strong and vibrant. We hope that the hospitality of the school, the camaraderie of your colleagues, and the learning component of the process make this a worthwhile and beneficial experience for all who participate.