



# **ATMAE ACCREDITATION GUIDE**

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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	4
<b>Section 1 - General Information .....</b>	<b>5-7</b>
About ATMAE Accreditation .....	5
The History of ATMAE Accreditation .....	5-6
CHEA Recognition .....	6
About Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA).....	7
Basic Steps in ATMAE Accreditation .....	7
<b>Section 2 - ATMAE Accreditation Personnel .....</b>	<b>8-12</b>
Team Member Responsibilities .....	8
Team chair Responsibilities .....	9
Consultants .....	10
Team Member Appointment Period.....	10
Time Commitment .....	10
Special Circumstances.....	10
Personal and Professional Conduct .....	11
Confidentiality.....	11
Conflicts of Interest.....	11
Impartiality.....	12
Dress Code.....	12
Travel Profiles .....	12
Travel Expenses.....	12
Travel Procedures .....	12
Extended Visits.....	12
<b>Section 3 - Preparing for the Site Visit .....</b>	<b>14-17</b>
Organizing the Activities of the Visiting Team .....	14
Responsibilities of the Host Institution.....	15
Final Preparation.....	15-16
Timeframes .....	17
<b>Section 4 - The Site Visit .....</b>	<b>18-21</b>
On-Site Evaluation .....	18
Sample Site Visit Schedule .....	19
Evaluation within the Standards .....	19

ATMAE Outcomes Assessment Model.....	20
The Exit Interview .....	20-21
<b>Section 5 - Guide to ATMAE Outcomes Assessment .....</b>	<b>22-29</b>
Standard 1 – Preparation of Self-Study .....	22
Standard 2 – Program Definition .....	22
Standard 3 - Program Title, Mission, and General Outcomes .....	23
Standard 4 - Competency Identification & Validation.....	23
Standard 5 - Program Structure & Course Sequencing .....	23-24
Standard 6 - Student Admission & Retention Standards.....	25
Standard 7 - Transfer Course Work .....	25
Standard 8 - Student Enrollment.....	25
Standard 9 - Administrative Support & Faculty Qualifications.....	25-26
Standard 10 - Facilities, Equipment & Technical Support .....	26
Standard 11 - Program Goals.....	26
Standard 12 - Program/Option Operation .....	27
Standard 13 - Graduate Satisfaction with Program/Option .....	27
Standard 14 - Employment of Graduates .....	28
Standard 15 - Job Advancement of Graduates.....	28
Standard 16 - Employer Satisfaction with Job Performance .....	28
Standard 17 - Graduate Success in Advanced Program .....	28
Standard 18 - Student Success in Passing Certification Exams.....	29
Standard 19 - Advisory Committee Approval of Overall Program .....	29
Standard 20 - Outcome Measures Used to Improve Program .....	29
Standard 21 - Outcome Measures Used to Improve Program .....	29
<b>Section 6 - Post-Visit Activities .....</b>	<b>30-31</b>
Writing the Team Report .....	30
Evaluating the Visit .....	30
Board of Accreditation Hearings .....	30-31
<b>Section 7 - Forms and Letters .....</b>	<b>32</b>
Letter Templates .....	32
ATMAE Accreditation Forms .....	32
<b>Section 8 - Glossary .....</b>	<b>33-35</b>

# Introduction

The Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering (ATMAE) has been accrediting academic programs in colleges and universities since 1974. ATMAE as an organization serves many purposes and constituencies; however, accreditation is one of its most important functions. The information in this manual is provided as an aid for institutions and ATMAE Accreditation visiting teams to carry out their essential role in the accreditation process. For experienced Team chairs and team members, it serves as a reference for processes and activities that are likely familiar but that are carried out infrequently. For newer team members, it attempts to provide the complete sequence of ATMAE on-site peer review activities.

The Board of Accreditation reviews ATMAE's ongoing capacity to serve its expanding base of accredited programs and has established a requirement to formalize the training program of team chairs and team members, and to deliver this training with increased frequency through various media. We have also taken into consideration the feedback that was provided in recent surveys and have begun to address those needs here as well. Along with matters of procedure, we also emphasize ethics and process integrity.

Peer review is an assessment by people who are experts in the subject under review. It is successful because of the knowledge, commitment and integrity of the professionals who conduct reviews in their field of expertise.

The visiting team members are among a very select group of volunteers and we sincerely appreciate their dedication and service to ATMAE. On behalf of the Board of Accreditation, the Standards and Accreditation Committee, and the Accreditation Personnel and Policy Committee, thank them for their attention to detail and their volunteer service.

If you have any additional questions or need additional information, please let contact the ATMAE Director of Accreditation.

# Section 1 - General Information

## **About ATMAE Accreditation**

Accreditation in general is the primary means of assuring and improving the quality of higher education institutions and programs in the United States. Active for the past 100 years, this private, voluntary system of self-examination and peer review has been central to the creation of a U.S. higher education enterprise that is outstanding in many respects.

ATMAE Accreditation is the public recognition awarded to academic programs that meet established criteria and educational standards. Accreditation decisions are based on evaluations whose purpose is to provide a professional judgment about the quality of an academic program and to promote institutional improvement. The main goal is to assure and enhance quality.

ATMAE accredits a wide array of technology, management and applied engineering degree programs in colleges and universities in the United States in areas such as Aviation Technology, Computer and Network Support Technology, Construction Management, Environmental Technology Management, Graphic Information Technology, Industrial Technology Management, Robotics and Manufacturing Systems, Safety Management, Visual Communication Technology, Architectural Engineering Technology, Mechanical Engineering Technology, and many others.

ATMAE's accreditation periods are four (4) years for initial accreditation and six (6) years for reaccreditation. Accredited programs are required to comply with published accreditation policies and have the responsibility to provide student performance and achievements to the public.

## **The History of ATMAE Accreditation**

The "First Annual Conference on Industrial Technology in American Higher Education" was held at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio on October 29-30, 1965. The letter of invitation to this first conference listed, as one of four objectives, exploring the possibility for accreditation of industrial technology programs. The conference was attended by representatives from 28 institutions from 20 states and ten industry representatives. There was considerable interest in accreditation at this first conference and this interest resulted in the scheduling of a second conference at Kent State University on November 4-5, 1966.

The theme of the second conference was "Curriculum Standards and Accreditation" and the keynote speaker was Dr. Frank Dickey, Executive Director of the National Commission on Accreditation (NCA). Interest at the second conference resulted in the formal organization of the National Association of Industrial Technology (NAIT) and the establishment of several task forces to study, among other things, curriculum standards and guides.

NAIT applied to the National Commission on Accreditation (NCA), later replaced by the Council of Post-Secondary Accreditation (COPA) and, on March 9, 1973 received approval to accredit four-year baccalaureate degree programs in industrial technology. The approval was for two years with the stipulation that NAIT would give attention to "...improving the appeals process and broadening the membership in the accrediting agency."

During the 1974-1975 year NAIT accredited industrial technology programs at California Polytechnic State University, Indiana State University, San Jose State University, and the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. NAIT was recognized by NCA and then COPA until February 2, 1982. At that time NAIT withdrew its request to be recognized by COPA because of the increasing emphasis by COPA for a national office with a full-time executive, and NAIT did not have the finances to meet this requirement.

NAIT began to investigate alternatives other than COPA for national recognition and eventually applied to the United States Department of Education (USDE). USDE recognition was awarded to NAIT in 1989 and this recognition continued until Congress limited the authority of USDE to recognize specialized accrediting agencies unless the recognition was required for the Federal funding of programs. On January 27, 2002, NAIT was recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA).

In 2009, NAIT changed its name to the Association of Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering (ATMAE). The number of accredited programs has steadily increased since 1974. On its fortieth anniversary, we commend the leaders whose vision started NAIT accreditation and cultivated it to become what is now known as ATMAE accreditation.

## **CHEA Recognition**

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) is a national private, nonprofit, institutional membership organization that coordinates institutional and programmatic accreditation in the United States. CHEA is a national advocate and institutional voice for self-regulation and academic quality through accreditation. CHEA represents the interests of its members to the federal government on matters of accreditation and academic quality, reviews and affirms ("recognizes") the quality of accrediting organizations and provides a range of membership and other services. Founded in 1996, approximately 3,000 degree-granting colleges and universities are now members of CHEA.

ATMAE has been recognized as a programmatic accrediting agency by CHEA since 2002.

*ATMAE's scope of recognition is "Associate, baccalaureate, and master's degree programs in technology, applied technology, engineering technology, and technology-related disciplines delivered at national or regional accredited institutions in the United States (2011)".*

## **About Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA)**

ATMAE is a proud member of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA), a national non-profit organization providing a collaborative forum and collective voice for U.S. accreditation agencies that assess the quality of specialized and professional higher education programs and schools. ASPA represents its members on issues of education quality facing institutions of higher education, government, students, and the public. ASPA also advances the knowledge, skills, good practices, and ethical commitments of accreditors and communicates the values of accreditation as a means of enhancing educational quality.

## **Basic Steps in ATMAE Accreditation**

1. An institution applies for an initial accreditation visit for the review of a program or programs/options that meet the approved definition of technology, management, and applied engineering. Applications are due by October 1 for visits between March 1 and May 1 the following year.
2. The program formally assesses its strengths and challenges based on the ATMAE standards and describes its plans for improvement in a one-time or continuously updated document called a Self-Study. The institution may engage the services of an ATMAE recognized accreditation consultant when preparing for the Self-Study.
3. ATMAE Personnel & Policy Committee assigns a team to review the Self-Study documentation and to conduct an on-site visit. Team assignments are made in the January-February timeframe. The Team chair and the institution representative plan the site visit.
4. At the completion of the on-site review, the team's findings are presented in a written report which is shared with the institution. Comments about factual errors are accepted by ATMAE prior to the hearings.
5. Hearings are conducted adjacent to the annual ATMAE conference in the fall. The Board of Accreditation reviews the reports and meets with program representatives and Team chairs. The team's recommendation is accepted or modified and the Board of Accreditation determines the terms of accreditation.
6. Formal notice of accreditation status is given to the institution. The program representatives implement the recommendations as specified by the terms of the accreditation.

## Section 2 - ATMAE Accreditation Personnel

### Team Member Responsibilities

Team members are expected to have attended formal ATMAE accreditation training that is delivered by the Accreditation Personnel & Policy Committee. Refresher training is required every three years. Industry representatives assigned to visiting teams may not have had the opportunity to attend formal training, so additional guidance from the team chair may be required.

Prior to the site visit, each team member should become familiar with ATMAE Accreditation Standards, Policies and Procedures. These items serve as the framework from which to perform the evaluation. Members of the Standards & Accreditation Committee and the Accreditation Personnel & Policy Committee, along with the Director of Accreditation, are available to assist with questions about the interpretation of policies and standards.

Team members are required to become acquainted with the Self-Study report which is the record of the institution's progress and is a planning document that is the foundation of the site visit. The Self-Study development process typically begins one year before the site visit. It should:

- Describe and analyze the program
- Present findings and conclusions
- Appraise strengths and weaknesses
- Outline improvement plans
- Provide qualitative and quantitative information on student and faculty achievements
- Provide information about outcomes which demonstrate the program's success in attaining its objectives
- Be available to the team at least thirty (30) days before the scheduled visit

Team members should also become acquainted with the mission, goals, and objectives in order to provide the proper context. Reviewing all of the material in advance will help with the overall evaluation. For example, a team member assigned to conduct faculty interviews should review the CVs and develop relevant questions. The Self-Study appendices may be voluminous and could appear overwhelming, but they support the main messages in the Self-Study.

It is helpful to review the Self-Study material several times to:

- Get a sense of the main themes and identify the areas requiring closer scrutiny
- Review content and details
- Make notes and highlight/bookmark important information
- Note strengths, weaknesses, and inconsistencies
- Identify warning flags that require on-site investigation
- Develop remarks and questions

ATMAE does not invoke the assistance of a separate team of Self-Study reviewers; the assigned visiting team is dedicated to each accreditation visit from start to finish.



## **Team Chair Responsibilities**

As the name implies, Team chairs are in charge of the site visit team. To be eligible to serve as a team chair, it is required to have provided exceptional service on at least two site visits, to have attended team chair training within the most recent three year period, and to be formally approved by the Board of Accreditation.

The team chair must have knowledge of ATMAE's policies and procedures to ensure that they are followed before, during and after the visit. The Team chair is involved in coordinating activities and facilitators for sessions with the institution's representatives. Team chairs are not, however, expected to participate in the selection of other members of the visiting team.

Team chairs should provide the host with a good understanding of how to plan the site visit. A general site visit principle is that the program's routine should be interrupted as little as possible. The schedule should be agreed to early enough to enable the host to make the necessary arrangements well in advance. Additional responsibilities include:

- Contacting team members prior to the visit
- Coordinating the on-site schedule before and during the visit
- Serving as the primary liaison between the institution and ATMAE
- Chairing preparatory and on-site meetings
- Setting ground rules and keeping time on-site
- Facilitating team discussions
- Achieving team consensus
- Preparing the draft and final site visit report
- Responding to reports of factual errors in the draft report
- Mentoring newer team members
- Assigning roles and duties to other visiting team members
- Attending the accreditation hearings
- Providing post-visit evaluations of visiting team members
- Supporting institutions with year two progress reports

The team chair is responsible for the development of the written report and presenting the team's recommendation on the accreditation of the institution's programs and/or options. Given these responsibilities, the team chair should have:

- Detailed knowledge of ATMAE Accreditation Standards
- The ability to plan, organize and direct the site visit
- The ability to ask insightful questions and gather necessary information
- The confidence to deliver the exit report in a professional manner
- The writing skills required to draft a well-written team report that clearly conveys the findings and recommendations of the team to the Board of Accreditation

## **Consultants**

ATMAE maintains a list of members who are available to assist programs with the accreditation process and Self-Study preparation. Request for Consultant Visit forms are available on the ATMAE website. ATMAE consultants are thoroughly familiar with accreditation standards and have served as a team chair on at least two visiting teams. Recommendations made by the consultants are a result of their significant experience and do not represent an official ATMAE position. The recommendations of a consultant do not guarantee ATMAE accreditation. Nonetheless, programs find the assistance of a knowledgeable accreditation consultant to be very beneficial.

## **Team Member Appointment Period**

ATMAE maintains a trained and active team member list of approximately 180 faculty, administrators, and industry representatives in the United States. Visiting team members play an important role in all stages of the accreditation process and are responsible for reviewing evidence of a program's compliance with accreditation criteria. All team members are appointed for a three-year period and are required to attend free refresher training at least every three years for updates on changes in ATMAE accreditation policies, procedures and standards. To be assigned to a visiting team, members must be in good standing with ATMAE.

## **Time Commitment**

Service as a team member represents a significant time commitment. Team members are expected to accept and follow through on accreditation review assignments, and are also expected to be prepared for the visit and familiar with the materials to allow for effective interaction with fellow team members and the host institution. Individuals should accept the appointment only if they are able to accept at least one assignment during the March 1 through May 1 on-site review period.

Members of a visiting team can expect to spend twenty (20) hours preparing for a site visit by reviewing the Self-Study and exhibits, participating in pre-visit teleconferences, and writing and revising parts of the team report. Each visit is at least three (3) full days of work including travel time. The objectives are to demonstrate respect for the host institution and its mission, to base judgments on the evidence, and to serve as the "eyes and ears" of the ATMAE Board of Accreditation.

## **Special Circumstances**

On occasion, weather, illness, or other unavoidable circumstances could make it impossible for a member to attend the site visit to fulfill their duties. The team chair and the Director of Accreditation will work together to inform the host and decide whether to continue with or postpone the visit. If sufficient notice is received prior to the visit, there may be time to identify a replacement or reschedule in a way that is acceptable to the program. Should a team member become unavailable on short notice, the team chair and Director of Accreditation will work with the host to rearrange the on-site schedule as necessary.

## **Personal and Professional Conduct**

Members of visiting teams are expected to have certain competencies including effective interviewing, facilitation, and listening skills; effective evaluative and writing skills; effective team participation skills; consensus decision-making skills; and time management skills. In addition, the strength of any accreditation program is based on fairness, ethical conduct, and impartiality. Visiting team members are very visible representatives of the ATMAE accreditation process and, therefore, must avoid situations that could give rise to the appearance of misconduct.

## **Confidentiality**

Visiting team members learn from site visits and are often exposed to useful ideas and tactics to improve their own organizations. Discretion should be used to keep information resulting from the accreditation visit confidential. This includes the contents of documents; information from meetings and tours; deliberations of the visiting team; information contained in team reports; and anticipated accreditation actions. Documentation, when in use, should be secured. Once the review is completed, documents should be returned to the preparer of the Self-Study or sent to the ATMAE office when the team's work is completed. After a visit is completed, requests for clarification or interpretation of information in the report should be referred jointly to the Director of Accreditation and the team chair.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

Visiting team members are in a position of trust that requires them to exercise good judgment. Any other interests or obligations that might interfere must be avoided or openly declared. Team members must be careful to avoid the appearance of a conflict and should declare any past, present, or potential situations to ATMAE that could positively or negatively influence decisions. These situations include, but are not limited to:

- Being a graduate, employee or consultant of the institution under review.
- Having immediate relatives or close working colleagues at the institution.
- Having the inability to set aside positive or negative biases about an institution.
- Being in a situation where one can gain financially or professionally as a result of specific accreditation decisions.
- Being in a situation to put an institution at a disadvantage for the purpose of benefitting competitors.

When team assignments are made, ATMAE works with the institution to screen individuals who may have a real or perceived conflict of interest. ATMAE will not knowingly allow anyone to participate in a review that cannot remain impartial and objective.

## **Impartiality**

When a program is being considered for accreditation, all aspects of the process must be fair and objective regardless of any personal opinions about the institution or the context in which it operates. Because team members often come from a variety of backgrounds, it can be tempting to compare the program or institution to others. During discussions, team members should refrain from drawing comparisons with other programs or schools. The discussion should be about the program and school in its own context and within the framework of the ATMAE Standards for Accreditation. The standards provide the basis for all evaluations and decisions. Any information without relevance to the standards should not be considered.

## **Dress Code**

Business casual dress is required during site visits. Business casual is commonly defined as shirts or blouses with collars and sleeves; trousers and slacks; sport jackets and blazers; and dresses and skirts. While ATMAE visiting team members should be comfortable, the dress code excludes jeans, shorts, leggings, any form of athletic wear, and clothing with offensive graphics, words and/or logos.

## **Travel Profiles**

Team members are asked to complete a traveler profile so that travel arrangements can be accommodated by the ATMAE business office.

## **Travel Expenses**

Team members are reimbursed for reasonable and actual travel expenses incurred during each site visit. Expenses incurred while teams are conducting site visits are reimbursable if they are:

- Appropriate to the occasion
- Reasonable in amount
- Verifiable
- Allowed by ATMAE accreditation policy

Programs may offer to provide hospitality to the team through transportation, discounted lodging rates, and group meals. Gifts are not allowed. Because the work of the visiting teams is not considered “work for hire”, expense reimbursement is not contingent on the submission of post-visit documentation such as evaluation forms. To comply with Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requirements and to expedite reimbursement, ATMAE does require *a completed and signed expense report that is accompanied by receipts*. Expense report forms are available on the ATMAE website and from the ATMAE office.

## **Travel Procedures**

Once the institution approves the team assignments, travel planning will be coordinated with the Team chair to determine:

- The date and latest time of on-site arrival of team members
- The date and earliest time of departure of team members
- On-site requirements such as ground transportation
- Lodging

Team chair travel arrangements will be made first. ATMAE will endeavor to complete all travel planning thirty (30) days before the scheduled visit and issue airline tickets fourteen (14) days before scheduled travel. Some ATMAE team members qualify for a government rate at hotels. Please let the travel coordinator know so that the inquiry can be made of the hotel. All visiting team members will pay out of pocket for meals and ground transportation, and will be reimbursed.

## **Extended Visits**

There may be instances where a longer site visit is needed due to the number of programs/options under review. The Team chair will modify the sample schedule as needed to accommodate a longer visit.

## **Section 3 - Preparing for the Site Visit**

### **Organizing the Activities of the Visiting Team**

The team chair's most important task, to assure the success of the campus visit, is to help all team members understand the goal of the visit and how to function as a unit to accomplish that goal. Therefore, team member orientation is an important preparatory activity. On-site plans are typically arranged between the team chairs and a designated contact at the host institution. The contact will arrange for a resource room for the visiting team and will establish a schedule of interviews.

Communication to the assigned team members should begin as soon as formal notification of assignment of the team chair and team members has been made. Team member communications should include acknowledgment of team assignment, team member travel arrangements, the Team chair expectations of the team member including knowledge of the accreditation standards, and report writing assignments. It will be apparent that the host institution put significant effort into developing a comprehensive Self-Study report, and the team must review it closely in order to determine that standards have been addressed thoroughly and accurately. In order to do this, the team member must begin the Self-Study review process as soon as it is received.

Communication to the institution should begin as soon as formal assignment of the team chair has been made. Local personnel will want to know what the team chair expects in terms of arrangements for the resource room, the team work area, and interview schedule, as well as the involvement of administration, faculty, students and advisory committees during the visit. Adequate communication is essential for an efficient, thorough and successful accreditation visit.

The coordination of on-site activities determines the ultimate success of the campus visit. Team members must understand that their mission is to gather and review information that will validate the accreditation standards. To accomplish that, the Team chair must organize activities and assign responsibility for interviews, material review, and report writing in a manner that best utilized the strengths of individual team members. Completion of the accreditation report is the responsibility of the team chair; therefore writing assignments are determined by the team chair. The writing assignment to team members must include instruction on how the ATMAE Standards should be addressed in the report and should include statements to document the review of information received that determines compliance with the requirements of the Standards.

Some team chairs seek to have the draft report completed while on-site others make assignments, with a timeframe, for the return of assigned sections of the report to the team chair after the visit is completed. The team chair must determine what the situation dictates. Regardless of how the team chair chooses to complete the report, their major responsibility is to assemble a final draft report in the approved ATMAE standard for, which is able to be read and understood by the institution and the Board of Accreditation.

## **Responsibilities of the Host Institution**

The host will have undertaken a great deal of preparatory work before the visit. The Self-Study is the major result of this effort. As team chairs guide the institution contact through the process, some additional guidelines will assure a smooth visit.

- Everyone expected to participate in the site visit should be given enough advance notice so that the visit can be completed on schedule. The Program Head should provide the team chair with a detailed draft schedule of the names of those to be interviewed, their roles and office locations, and any other places to be visited.
- Those in charge of the site visit at the host institution should brief all participating administrators, faculty and students on what to expect. It will be useful to hold meetings to discuss some of the questions the visiting team is likely to ask.
- Materials that were gathered and used in the preparation of the Self-Study report should be assembled in a central location and readily available for review (the resource room).
- Every effort should be made to ensure that the visit is productive and collegial.
- Motivated by a normal sense of hospitality, hosts may want to plan social activities.
- Extensive social activities are not appropriate and the schedule does not allow it.

## **Final Preparation**

Each visiting team member must understand their role and be prepared to gather and analyze information that will allow the team to validate the institution's response to the accreditation standards when they arrive on campus. The team should arrange their schedules to allow time to meet the day before the on-site review commences. Suggested activities include:

- A. Before the dinner meeting with the host:
  1. Become acquainted with one another.
  2. Become acclimated to the local area.
  3. Reinforce the role of being the "eyes and ears of the Board of Accreditation".
  4. Discuss methods to deal with possible reactions and confrontation.
- B. During dinner with the host:
  1. Make introductions.
  2. Describe the visiting team's mission.
  3. Encourage a productive discussion about the strengths of the program(s), department, faculty, students, facilities, and administration.
  4. Identify any changes to the on-site schedule.

C. After dinner team work session:

1. Review the interview and activity schedule for the duration of the visit.
2. Make any changes in team member assignments that may better serve the mission of the visiting team.
3. Discuss report-writing responsibilities and make assignments.
4. Discuss how to conduct interviews to gather information that will help to validate the information presented in the Self-Study report.
5. Make assignments for team members to visit or contact industry advisory committee members. Determine if a breakfast or luncheon is scheduled for advisory committee members and the team.
6. Make assignments for the review of resource materials.
7. If Program Structure & Course Sequencing (Standard 5) has not been reviewed in preparation for the campus visit, assign responsibility.
8. Review possible areas of concern in the Self-Study report.
9. Review the Consultant Report if available. It will have been provided to the team chair for pre-visit review.
10. Allow team members the opportunity to question anything that still may be of concern to them.
11. Determine how and when the team will travel to and from the campus.
12. Review what will take place during the first hour of the campus visit.



## Timeframes

<b>Who</b>	<b>Pre-Visit Activity</b>	<b>When</b>
ATMAE APC	Assigns visiting teams	January and February
Institution	Approves visiting teams	January and February
Team Chair	Welcome team members	On receipt of formal
Team Chair	Begin travel planning	On receipt of team
Team Chair	Contact the institution by letter or email	On receipt of team
Institution	Submit Self-Study report to Team chairs	At least 30 days before visit
Team Members	Flight arrangements made; lodging is confirmed	At least 30 days before visit
Team Chair	Acknowledge receipt of the Self-Study	On receipt
Team Chair	Discuss on-site plans and logistics	As soon as possible
Team Chair	Finalize the on-site schedule	As soon as possible
Team Chair	Schedule pre-visit meeting with team and institution	At least two weeks before visit
Team Members	Become familiar with the Self-Study	At least one week before visit
	<b>On-Site Activity</b>	
Team Chair	Facilitate meeting with local personnel	Eve of the on-site visit
Team Chair	Finalize the on-site schedule	Eve of the on-site visit
Team Chair	Coordinate interview and report writing assignments	On-site
Team Chair	Facilitate discussion about accreditation standards	On-site
Team Chair	Draw team consensus on each standard	On-site
Team Chair	Draw team consensus on recommendation to Board	On-site
Team Chair	Facilitate the exit interview	On-Site
	<b>Post-Visit Activity</b>	
Team Chair	Circulate a draft site visit report to team members	Within two weeks of the visit
Team Chair	Deliver a final draft report to the institution	Two weeks after the site visit
Institution	Respond to the draft on matters of factual accuracy	As soon as possible
Team Chair	Complete a final report for institution and ATMAE	Within 45 days of the site visit
Team Chair	Complete an evaluation of team members	Within 45 days of the site visit
Institution	File a response to the final report (optional)	Within 45 days of the hearings
Team Chair	Contact the institution to arrange pre-hearing meeting	Two weeks before hearings
Team Chair	Review of report for areas of partial and non-compliance	Before the hearings
Team Chair	Prepare a recommendation statement for the Board	Before the hearings
Team Chair	Present the recommendation to the Board	At the hearing appointment

## Section 4 - The Site Visit

### On-Site Evaluation

The site visit is a series of focused interviews, meetings, observations, inspections and tours that provide the opportunity to verify the information in the Self-Study report and to further evaluate the program. Opening meetings are often with the institution's leaders to gain a sense of the vision. ATMAE conducts both comprehensive visits (a review of all the standards) and focused visits (to address only certain standards) as directed by the Board of Accreditation.

The information gathered during interviews, meetings, tours and observations must effectively support accreditation decisions. Proper observations and documentation should be:

- Objective and unbiased, and not based on hearsay or negative or positive perceptions of the institution, program or people.
- Consistent and balanced, using the same levels of detail for positive and negative findings without letting one finding overshadow all others.
- Factual and accurate, using direct observations and specific examples with confirmation from multiple sources.

Team members are encouraged to ask questions. Because the visiting team must assess and validate the Self-Study report, it is important and appropriate to pose the same questions in multiple sessions and to different individuals. If an area of Partial (P) or Non-Compliance (N) is found, the proper questions will help the team to understand how the program rationalizes it in terms of its unique mission and resources.

Questions should not be presented in a judgmental manner; they should seek information and clarification. Team members should not offer examples from their home institution because the program under review is unique. Such comparisons, while often offered in a positive sense, can be misconstrued. Clearly document your findings in your notes. When taking notes:

- Tell interviewees that you are taking notes to remember key points and that remarks are confidential.
- Avoid allowing interviewees to see your notes.
- Write key words and phrases as you hear them to help reconstruct the sessions.
- Only keep notes that are related to the Standards.
- Compare your notes to those of your team members.

## Sample Site Visit Schedule

	<b>Day 1 - Arrival</b>
3:00 pm	Team members arrive in late afternoon, check into the hotel, and contact hosts
6:00 pm	Dinner for team members; optionally with faculty and administrators to get acquainted
8:00 pm	Team work session
	<b>Day 2 - First Day on Campus</b>
7:00 am	Team breakfast; optionally with the institution contact
8:00 am	Departure to host institution
8:30 am	Meetings with Program Head
9:30 am	Meetings with Dean/Associate Dean
10:30 am	Meetings with full-time faculty individually or in groups
12:30 pm	Lunch with faculty and/or staff and/or students, alumni, advisory board
1:30 pm	Team begins reviewing documentation
4:30 pm	Meetings with students, alumni, community partners, advisory board
6:00 pm	Working dinner for the visiting team only; set priorities for gathering and reviewing information
	<b>Day 3 - Second Day on Campus and Wrap-up</b>
7:30 am	Team breakfast
8:30 am	Meeting with the Dean and/or Program Head to facilitate any further arrangements
9:00 am	Additional interviews with faculty and administrators as needed
10:00 am	Visits to facilities, labs, classrooms, placement services, student services, library, budget director
11:00 am	Finish reviewing documentation; identify any additional information requirements
12:00 pm	Working lunch for visiting team only to arrive at consensus and begin a report outline
2:00 pm	Final exit interview with the appropriate officials
3:00 pm	Site visit is complete and the team departs

## Evaluation within the Standards

ATMAE accreditation standards are created and revised through a consensus process that calls for input from educators, students, practitioners, employers, regulators, administrators, and the public. Input is gathered by staff and, after a lengthy process of comment and revision, accepted by ATMAE's governing bodies. Standards are subject to the review process on a five-year cycle.

Visiting team members will decide whether certain issues are within the scope of their authority and whether information is useful for decision-making. It is important that an adequate auditing process take place for those records supporting the factual presentation in the Self-Study report. A "hands-on" familiarity with program records is likely to be important.

Standards establish the level of quality around which evaluations and accreditation decisions are based. The visiting team should refrain from addressing issues that fall outside the standards. Teams must decide whether an issue has an impact on the program's ability to comply with the standards. The relevance of issues and the appropriate application of the standards will generate much discussion among team members. Discussions that result from site visits will test the application of the standards and will help improve the process over time.

## **ATMAE Outcomes Assessment Model**

The objective of ATMAE accreditation is to ensure that programs in Technology, Management, and Applied Engineering meet established standards and that outcome measures are used to continuously improve programs. The ATMAE Outcomes Assessment Accreditation Model requires that consideration be given to both the qualitative and quantitative criteria set forth in the standards. Currently there are twenty-one (21) ATMAE accreditation standards organized into four main sections (Program Inputs; Program Operation; Program Outcomes; Program Improvement). Section 5 of this packet is a reviewers' guide to the ATMAE Outcomes Assessment Model.

Generally, the visiting teams review programs for accreditation by examining whether:

- The programs have outcomes that are validated in some way.
- The programs have course objectives or desired student competencies mapped to the student outcomes.
- The program leaders have conducted follow-up studies of the program graduates.
- The help of the advisory committee documented in some way.
- The above information is shared with students, parents and the public.

### **The Exit Interview**

The exit interview is the team chair's opportunity to report preliminary findings to personnel of the institution. The report should be given with confidence and done in a professional and convincing manner. Prior to the exit interview, the team chair must discuss any role the visiting team members may have in the session. Those in attendance should include, but are not limited to, the institution's highest level administrators, program heads, faculty, and the accreditation contact person. The Team chair must discuss necessary attendance at this session, when it is scheduled, early in the accreditation process.

The primary purpose of the exit interview is the identification of accreditation standards that the visiting team finds in Partial (P) or Non-Compliance (N) for each program and/or program option. In addition, the Team chair will inform institutional personnel of what will be the visiting team's recommendation to the ATMAE Board of Accreditation. This session is not intended to provide a forum for discussion of team findings; it is intended reveal the preliminary findings to personnel of the institution. The exit interview should last no more than thirty (30) minutes.

A typical exit interview is called to order by the team chair. The role of visiting team members in this session must be determined prior to the meeting. The interview room should be arranged so that visiting team members are seated with the Team chair and personnel from the institution are seated together.

The session should follow an agenda that includes the following:

A. Opening Remarks

1. Thank the host for their hospitality.
2. Reinforce the “eyes and ears of the Board” message.
3. Restate that the team does not consult but does verify the information in the Self-Study.
4. Compliment the host on an area that may or may not relate to accreditation standards.
5. Relate what the team has done in its efforts to validate the accreditation standards.

B. Presentation of Visiting Team Findings

1. Review only the accreditation standards that the visiting team found in partial or non-compliance.
2. With each, make a general statement regarding why the standard was found in partial or non-compliance. Do not allow this to become a discussion.

C. Recommendation to the Board of Accreditation

1. The visiting team will make a recommendation for each program and/or option that was reviewed:
  - a. Accreditation
  - b. Accreditation with a report in two years
  - c. Accreditation with a report and a site visit in two years
  - d. Non-Accreditation
2. The visiting team reports and recommends only. The Board of Accreditation makes the actual decision and takes appropriate action at the Board of Accreditation hearings.

D. Next Steps

1. A draft report will be presented for review for possible errors of fact or substance.
2. A representative of the institution should be present at the upcoming Board of Accreditation hearings. Provide dates and location of the hearings.
3. Future communications will take place with the team chair that is responsible for final preparation and filing of the report with the Board of Accreditation.
4. Only the Board of Accreditation makes decisions concerning program accreditation status. The visiting team, through the Team chair, recommends and will be prepared to defend the recommendation at the Board of Accreditation hearings.

E. Closing Remarks

1. Ensure that everyone understands what happens after the visiting team departs and what is expected of the institution’s contact person.
2. Offer the opportunity for comments by team members and the college representative.
3. Adjourn the exit interview.

## Section 5 - Guide to ATMAE Outcomes Assessment

Outcomes assessment is a process. The success of an outcomes-based assessment is closely related to how program outcomes have been integrated into the daily operation of a program. Institution or department-level outcomes are not sufficient for program accreditation.

A **program outcome** is a program-level expectation of the result of teaching and learning. Course competencies are evaluated individually and collectively to determine whether a program outcome has been met. These outcomes are identified, implemented, validated, and revised in order to provide continuous improvement measures for academic programs. Program outcomes are established before the accreditation process, which only verifies that they are in place and part of a continuous improvement process.

**Accreditation outcomes** address the twenty-one (21) standards in ATMAE's outcomes-based assessment model. In preparing the Self-Study, responses to each standard should be in the form of the accreditation outcomes listed, followed by the succinct documentation that the outcomes, and thereby the standards, have been met. The visiting team will verify the following:

**Standards** do not mean standardization; they allow for flexibility and diversity as long as the standards are met. Aspirational quality, creativity, and diversity are encouraged to flourish. The result has been continuous growth in the overall quality of professional education and the development of capable new professionals. The higher the level of education in a field, the higher the level of professional knowledge and skill required to make valid evaluations of educational quality and student achievement.

### **Standard 1 – Preparation of Self-Study**

- Is the Self-Study report provided in time and in the correct format?
- Was the report completed by a representative of the institution that is directly related to the program(s)?
- Were students involved in the process?

### **Standard 2 – Program Definition**

- Are all programs and option requirements clearly specified?
- Are any exclusions of options specified?

### **Standard 3 - Program Title, Mission, and General Outcomes**

- Are programs are compatible with definitions of ATMAE and each degree level?
- Do programs have appropriate titles consistent with the approved ATMAE definition of technology, management, and applied engineering?
- Are general outcomes established for each program/option?
  - o Specific measurable competencies are written within the framework of the general outcomes.
- Have the general outcomes been validated by more than one source? Normal sources for validation are through the use of:
  - o external experts
  - o an industrial advisory committee
  - o follow up studies of graduates (after the program is in operation)
- Institution has legal authority from the State to offer ATMAE programs
- Institution is regionally or nationally accredited
- University/college community understands the program(s)
- Business/industry community understands the program(s)

### **Standard 4 - Competency Identification & Validation**

- Does each program/option have its own measureable competencies tied to the general outcomes
- Have measurable competencies been validated by
  - o external experts
  - o an industrial advisory committee
  - o follow up studies of graduates after the program is in operation

### **Standard 5 - Program Structure & Course Sequencing**

- Is there a specific list of courses and credit hours that are being counted toward each foundation category included in the Self-Study Report and reported on Table C?

#### ***A. Associate Degree***

- Are there a minimum of 60 semester hours required for the Associate Degree?
- Are there 6-9 hours of both written and oral communication?
- Are there 3-9 hours of math?
- Are there 3-12 hours of physical sciences? If life science is included, does it make sense for the program/option?
- Are there 29 hours of management and/or technical courses?
- Are there between 0 and 12 hours of electives?

## **B. Bachelor's Degree**

- Are there a minimum of 120 semester hours required for the Bachelor's Degree?
- Are there 18-36 hours of general education included?
  - Is oral communications included in general education?
  - Is written communications included in general education?
- Are there 6-18 hours of math?
- Are there 6-18 hours of physical sciences? If life science is included, is it appropriate for the program/option?
- Are there 12-24 hours of management?
- Are there 24-36 hours of technical courses?
- Are there between 0 and 18 hours of electives?

## **C. Master's Degree**

- Are there a minimum of 30 semester hours required for the Master's Degree?
  - Are there 6-12 hours of communications and/or problem solving included?
  - Are there 6-12 hours of research?
  - Are there 12-18 hours of management and/or technical courses?
  - Are there between 0 and 6 hours of electives?
- 
- Is there a provision for a minimum number of technical/management courses to be taken at the institution being accredited?  
(12 minimum for Associate; 15 minimum for Bachelors; 10 minimum for Masters)
  - Is there sequencing to ensure that advanced level courses build upon concepts covered in beginning level courses? Are there examples of graded student work and textbooks for each management and/or technical course provided for the visiting team to review? Is there a safety program/option included in the accreditation for which ATMAE is providing Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP) evaluation? If so, the BCSP may have specific requirements based on local market needs and on national professional safety practice studies and standards. Examples are BCSP Technical Report #3 and ANSI Z590.2. Check with ATMAE office for details.
  - Are there appropriate laboratory activities included in the program/option?
  - Is there a reasonable balance maintained between the practical application of "how" and the conceptual application of "why?" Master's degree programs and/or options may not have formal laboratory activities, but must maintain a balance between the practical application of "how" and the conceptual application of "why."
  - Is there evidence of appropriate sequencing of courses in each program/option to ensure that applications of mathematics, science, written and oral communications are covered in technical and management courses?



## **Standard 6 - Student Admission & Retention Standards**

- Is there evidence showing that the quality of technology, management, and applied engineering students is comparable to the quality of students enrolled in other majors at the institution?
- Are the standards for admission and retention of technology, management, and applied engineering students similar to standards for other programs on campus? Are the test scores and grade rankings of ATMAE programs similar to other programs at the institution?
- Are the general grade point averages of technology, management, and applied engineering students comparable to other programs at the institution?

## **Standard 7 - Transfer Course Work**

- Does the institution have written process for evaluation of transfer coursework?
- Does the department faculty have input into the transferability of technical coursework?
- Does the process ensure that the transfer coursework satisfies the ATMAE foundation requirements?

## **Standard 8 - Student Enrollment**

- Are there an adequate number of program majors to sustain the program, and to operate it efficiently and effectively?
- Are there state, or local requirements on the minimum number of majors/graduates to sustain a program? If so, do any of the programs/options fall below that standard and what is the process for addressing these issues?

## **Standard 9 - Administrative Support & Faculty Qualifications**

- Are there policies and procedures for faculty selection, appointment, reappointment and tenure that are clearly specified and conducive to the maintenance of high quality instruction?
- Are faculty teaching, advising, and service loads reasonable and comparable to the faculty in other professional program areas at the institution?
- Is there appropriate administrative support from the institution for the technology, management, and applied engineering program/option including appropriately qualified administrators, an adequate number of full time faculty members and budgets sufficient to support program/option goals?
- Are the faculty assigned to teach courses in the technology, management, and applied engineering program/option appropriately qualified?
  - Faculty qualifications shall include emphasis upon the extent, currency and pertinence of: (a) academic preparation; (b) industrial professional experience (such as technical supervision and management); (c) applied industrial experience (such as applied applications); (d) membership and participation in appropriate technology, management, and applied engineering professional organizations; and (e) scholarly activities.

- The following minimum qualifications for full time faculty are required, except in unusual circumstances which must be individually justified:

*Associate Degree:*

- Does each regular full-time faculty member have an earned bachelor's degree in a discipline?
- If a faculty member has only an associate's degree, does he/she also have professional certification/licensure closely related to the faculty member's instructional assignments?
- Was this faculty member documented as an exception to the bachelor's degree, and was this documented by the institution as justification?
- NOTE: Faculty members without the minimum of an associate degree and certification/licensure in their instructional area are not considered qualified.

*Bachelor's Degree:*

- Does each regular full-time faculty member have an earned graduate degree in a discipline closely related to the instructional assignment?
- Do fifty percent of the full time faculty members (regular tenure track or non-tenure track assigned to teach in the program of study content area(s) have an earned doctorate or other appropriately earned terminal degree as defined by the institution?
- NOTE: Exceptions may be granted to this standard if the institution has a program in place that will bring the faculty demographics into compliance within a reasonable period of time.

*Master's Degree:*

- Does each regular, full-time faculty member have an earned doctorate degree in a discipline closely related to the faculty member's instructional assignment?
- NOTE: Exceptions may be granted for specialized technical management programs/options.

### **Standard 10 - Facilities, Equipment & Technical Support**

- Are the facilities and equipment adequate to support program/option goals?
- Are the technical support personnel adequate for maintenance and operation of equipment?
- Is there evidence that there is adequate availability of computer equipment and software programs to cover functions and applications in each program area?
- Are the facility and equipment needs included in the long range goals for the program?

### **Standard 11 - Program Goals**

- Does each program have current short and long range goals, and plans for achieving these goals?

## **Standard 12 - Program/Option Operation**

- Are syllabi for management and/or technical courses presented? Look for evidence (two or more) of regularly collected data from graduate assessments.
- Do these syllabi describe appropriate course objectives and content? Review syllabi for the program/option and see that they consistently include course objectives and content.
- Do these syllabi list references, student activities and evaluation criteria? Review syllabi for the program/option and see that they consistently include student activities for successful completion of the course and evaluation criteria.
- Are examples of student's management and/or technical graded work available for the team to review? The resource room should have examples of graded student work in management and/or technical courses required in the program. Review these examples to ensure the level of instruction is appropriate and the evaluations are appropriate and reflective of current ATMAE program practices.
- Are the students motivated and being appropriately advised? Meet with students in the program and assess their perception of the program and through those discussions determine if the students are motivated towards completing their degree and working in the field. Meet with those on campus that are responsible for advising both incoming and continuing students in the programs under review. This often means meeting the director of the advising center to ensure that the program's students are being advised in a manner equal to the advising for students in other majors.
- Does the scheduling of instruction allow students to complete the degree in a timely manner? Review the course schedule for the current and past semester and see that the courses offered are necessary.
- Is the quality of the instruction adequate to give the students the knowledge, skills and abilities identified in the program outcomes?
- Do students and faculty observe safety standards?
- Are resource materials readily available?
- Are assessment measures used to determine student mastery of the competencies that have been identified for each course?
- Is there evidence of appropriate supervision of instruction?
- Are placement services available to graduates?

## **Standard 13 - Graduate Satisfaction with Program/Option**

- Are graduate program/option evaluations made on a regular basis (two to five years)? Look for evidence (two or more) of regularly collected data from graduate assessments.
- Do these evaluations include attitudes related to the importance of the general outcomes and specific competencies identified for the program/option? Look for questions and responses on the graduate assessments that seek attitudes towards the importance of the general outcomes and competencies identified for the program/option.
- Is summary data available for graduate evaluations of the program/option? The institution should report the graduate assessment in summary form (tables, charts and executive summary); the team should not have to derive conclusions from anecdotal evidence.

### **Standard 14 - Employment of Graduates**

- Are placement, job titles, and salaries of graduates shall tracked on a regular basis (two to five years)? Look for graduate surveys and employer surveys. Make sure there is evidence of “regular basis” (two or more results provided).
- Are the jobs held by graduates consistent with program/option goals? Look at the job titles of the graduates and ensure that most are in positions that are aligned with the program/option titles and goals.
- NOTE: the institution provides its own goals and those might be different from a team member’s opinion, but the outcomes model seeks to determine if the institution is meeting their own goals and objectives.
- Is summary data available regarding the employment of graduates? Ensure the data regarding graduates is reported in summary form. It should be in the Self-Study, but may be summarized in the resource room. Teams should not have to look at raw surveys to draw their own conclusion.

### **Standard 15 - Job Advancement of Graduates**

- Is the advancement of graduates within organizations tracked on a regular basis (two to five years) to ensure promotion to positions of increasing responsibility? Look for graduate surveys and employer surveys. Make sure there is evidence of “regular basis” (two or more results provided).
- Is summary data regarding the job advancement of graduates available? Be sure the data collected from graduates and employers reports on job advancement for the graduates.
- Schools can make a case for students changing jobs (companies) as job advancement.

### **Standard 16 - Employer Satisfaction with Job Performance**

- Has the institution been tracking graduates in their jobs and getting feedback from their employers on their job performance?
- Do they do this on a regular basis (every 2 to 5 years)?
- Do they seek competency validation through this mechanism?
- Is summary data regarding the performance of the graduates available?

### **Standard 17 - Graduate Success in Advanced Program**

- Is one of the goals of the program to prepare students for the next level of academic program (Associates to Baccalaureate, or Baccalaureate to Masters)?
  - If so, is there evidence of them regularly tracking the success of these students?
  - Is summary data provided for the results of this tracking of students?

### **Standard 18 - Student Success in Passing Certification Exams**

- Is one of the goals of the program/option to prepare students to pass certification exams?
  - o If so, are they tracking and confirming success?
  - o Is summary data provided on the results of these exams?

### **Standard 19 - Advisory Committee Approval of Overall Program**

- Is there an industrial advisory committee that represents each program? One advisory committee with selective representation can represent multiple programs, or each program can have their own.
- Are there policies in place that :
  - o Define the criteria for committee member selection?
  - o Define the process for selecting members?
  - o Indicate the length of a member's appointment/term?
  - o Define the committee's responsibilities?
  - o Indicate the frequency of meetings (at least once per year)?
  - o Indicate the methods of conducting business (Robert's Rules of Order, etc.)?
- Is a roster of members and past minutes available for the team's review?

### **Standard 20 - Outcome Measures Used to Improve Program**

- Is there evidence provided that demonstrates that multiple outcome measures are used to improve the overall program (Graduate Satisfaction with Program/Option; Employment of Graduates; Job Advancement of Graduates; Employer Satisfaction with Job Performance; Graduate Success in Advanced Programs; Student Success in Passing Certification Exams; and Advisory Committee Approval of Program) reported on table B?
- Is there evidence that program stakeholders have been involved?

### **Standard 21 – Program Responsibility to Provide Information to the Public**

- Did the program provide live website link to where the public can access information on student performance?
- Sources of potential information include, but are not limited to: student graduation rates from the program; average starting salaries; mean grade point averages; promotions achieved; time to secure first position; average years to complete the degree; and student awards/scholarships received.

## **Section 6 - Post-Visit Activities**

### **Writing the Team Report**

Within two weeks of the site visit, the team chair circulates a draft report that objectively addresses key points of the standards based on the evidence provided by the institution and gathered by the visiting team. The visiting team's report should be logical, concise and grammatical. Once reviewed by the team, a final draft is provided to the institution contact for a review of factual accuracy. The institution can respond to the factual accuracy of the final report up to forty-five (45) days before the scheduled accreditation hearings.

### **Evaluating the Visit**

In support of continuous improvement, members of visiting teams are surveyed about their on-site experiences and asked for suggestions. Team chairs are requested to complete written evaluations of team members. ATMAE requests that feedback on reviewers is substantive and not anecdotal. Having comprehensive feedback allows ATMAE to accurately identify and build upon the strengths of the reviewers.

### **Board of Accreditation Hearings**

The team chair's final task is to represent the visiting team at the Board of Accreditation hearings. At the hearings, the team chair will be accompanied by a representative of the institution. The team chair and the representative of the institution will be notified of the date, time and location of the hearings by the Director of Accreditation. The hearings are the forum for the presentation of the visiting team recommendation to the Board of Accreditation and prepared responses to the visiting team report, and provide the opportunity for Board members to question the team chair and institutional representative about specific statements or situations found in the visiting team's report. When discussion is complete, motions are made and Board action is taken on program accreditation status. Before and during the hearings, team chairs are requested to:

- Contact the institution representative prior to the hearing to confirm attendance and arrange a brief meeting before the assigned appointment.
- Inform the representative that they will be given the opportunity to briefly address the Board of Accreditation.
- Assemble all parties in the hearing room before the designated time.
- Be prepared. Review the visiting team report prior to the presentation. The Board notices when Team chairs are not prepared and do not recall the basis for a particular finding.
- Keep remarks brief, concise and to the point. Highlight the positive as well as any negative areas with a brief summary of how the team reached their recommendation.
- Affirm findings that resulted from direct observation or interview. Do not argue with individual board members. Politely remind the Board that your comments, and the team comments, were based upon what was observed at the time of the visit.

- Criticize constructively when needed; this is helpful to the institution as well as to the Board.
- Refrain from making excuses for the institution. Do not attempt to justify an answer to a Board member by referring to the Board's response to an earlier ruling in the hearings.
- Do not attempt to justify why the college/university did or did not meet a particular accreditation standard.
- Board members appreciate any clarification of a particular finding, especially if there appears to be confusion.
- Total time before the Board, including questions and comments, should not exceed fifteen (15) minutes.

## **Section 7 - Forms and Letters**

Communications from team chairs to visiting team members and the institution requesting accreditation can be made by letter, e-mail, telephone, or any combination of these. The importance is not necessarily on the method of communication as much as it is on timeliness and content.

### **Letter Templates**

Formal ATMAE letterhead templates (Microsoft Word format) will be provided by the ATMAE office to Team chairs for the following:

- Letter to the Institution Contact about Pre-Visit and On-Site Requirements
- Letter to the Institution Contact to confirm receipt of the Self-Study
- Letter to the Institution Contact with the draft site visit report
- Letter to the Institution President, Chancellor, and Contact with the final site visit report

### **Sample Email Messages**

An assortment of email message examples, customizable for various situations, will also be provided for suggested messaging between Team chairs, team members, and the institution contacts.

### **ATMAE Accreditation Forms**

- Request for Initial Visit, Reaccreditation Visit, or Report and Visit
- Notification of Team Assignments and Visitation Dates
- Institution Contact and Visiting Team chair Checklist
- Reimbursement Request Form for Accreditation Team Members
- Visiting Team Member Evaluation Form (online survey)
- Consultant Request Form



## Section 8 - Glossary

### **Accreditation**

A voluntary, non-governmental system of evaluation used to protect the public interest and to verify the quality of service provided by academic programs and institutions. The goal of accreditation is to ensure that education provided by institutions of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality.

### **Accredited**

Programs that request an evaluation and that meet certain criteria are then conferred with “accredited” status.

### **Accreditation Actions**

A decision made by an agency affecting the accreditation status of a program. ATMAE Board actions include (a) accreditation, (b) accreditation with a progress report at two years, (c) accreditation with a progress report and visit at two years, and (d) non-accreditation.

### **Adverse Action**

Withdrawal or denial of accreditation by the accrediting agency.

### **Appeal**

The right and process available to a program for the review of an adverse accreditation action.

### **Compliance**

The extent to which a program conforms and adheres to accreditation standards. ATMAE uses Compliant (C), Partially Compliant (P) and Non-Compliant (N) during its evaluations.

### **Comprehensive Review**

The periodic review of a program by visiting teams to determine conformity to standards. The process includes the submission of a Self-Study, undergoing an on-site evaluation, and a decision being made.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Any personal, financial, or professional interest that might create a conflict with an evaluator or a member of a decision-making body’s ability to fairly and objectively carry out accreditation responsibilities.

### **Continued Accreditation**

Accreditation status that is granted to programs that continuously demonstrate evidence of their conformity to standards.

**Decision Document**

The official document that is sent to a program's Dean and to the institution's Chief Executive Officer conveying the Board of Accreditation's decision following a comprehensive or focused review.

**Evaluation (Visiting Team Report)**

A report prepared by the site visiting team during or following the on-site evaluation visit to validate the program Self-Study and document the level of compliance with standards and performance relative to program outcomes.

**External Reviewers (Visiting Team Members)**

A group of individuals appointed by the Accreditation Personnel and Policy Committee to visit a program for the purpose of verifying the information in the Self-Study report.

**Initial Accreditation**

Accreditation that has been granted to a program for the first time.

**Interim Reports (Progress Reports)**

Narrative or statistical reports prepared by the program between comprehensive reviews for the purpose of updating ATMAE on progress towards meeting the standards.

**On-Site Visit**

The part of a comprehensive review in which members of the site visiting team travel to the program's location to validate the information contained in the Self-Study. Interviews are an important part of the visit.

**Outcomes**

Outcomes are results. They may be expressed in terms such as educational achievement, metric indicators, procedural compliance, or reporting formats. Although related, these results are not the same and one is not a substitute for the others. Knowledge of specific content is an essential part of making reliable judgments about results. Accreditation reviews include all four elements and specialized accreditors such as ATMAE focus on the academic content of specific disciplines based upon the standards as defined in the Outcomes Assessment Model.

**Peer Review**

A process for evaluating the quality of a program using one's equals from other programs or institutions to ensure that it meets accreditation standards.

**Program**

A course of study leading to a degree.

**Programmatic Accrediting Agencies**

Organizations that accredit specific educational programs that prepare students for entry into a profession, occupation, or vocation; also known as specialized accreditors.

**Self-Study Report**

A document prepared by the program or institution as part of the comprehensive review process. The document describes the program and institution, how it meets the standards, analyzes its strengths, weaknesses, and challenges, and establishes the program's plans and goals for future development and continued compliance with the standards.

**Standards**

Accreditation standards are statements that define and set expectations about fundamental essentials for education quality. Standards address educational and operational issues and reflect the consensus of experts in a discipline. Reviewers examine evidence that the program operates as intended and improves as necessary.

**Substantive Change**

Significant modification, expansion or contraction in the nature or scope of an accredited program that must be reported to the accrediting agency.

**Transparency**

The concept of making accreditation processes easier to understand including opening them to public scrutiny and making them subject to clear methods of challenge or change.

