Peer Evaluator Training

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TRACS utilizes peer evaluators:

- (1) on Evaluation Teams, (most common)
- (2) on Focus Teams, (for specific reviews) and
- (3) as Peer Reviewers (for Institutions participating in the Interim Fifth-Year Review (IFYR) process)

Evaluation Team members, Focus Team members and/or IFYR Peer Reviewers are selected and appropriately assigned areas of review from the Peer Evaluator Pool.

Evaluation Teams

- Evaluation Teams are utilized in the review of an institution's level of compliance with TRACS Standards as a part of the institution's involvement in the Self-Study process and in conjunction with a certain accreditation status being sought by the institution.

Purposes of the Accreditation Process

- To provide / ensure quality educational program(s)

- To assist the institution in the improvement of its entire operation by assessing both strengths and weaknesses

The Meaning of Accreditation

- The institution has demonstrated an acceptable level of compliance with the standards and criteria and has the prospects of addressing any identifiable weaknesses within a reasonable time.

- The institution has demonstrated that its educational program(s) possess a satisfactory level of quality.

The Meaning of Accreditation

- The institution has demonstrated that it has the adequate resources to support the program.

- The institution has committed itself to self-improvement and self-enhancement.

Overview of Accreditation

- It is voluntary and non-governmental in nature.

- It is a system of institutional self-regulation.
  - *Institutional* means the institution as a whole is considered rather than individual programs within the institution.

- It is based on peer review.

Scope of TRACS Accreditation

TRACS provides accreditation for

- Bible Colleges / Institutes
- Christian Liberal Arts Colleges/ Universities
- Graduate Schools
- Seminaries

Accreditation for Institutions Offering…

- Certificates
- Diplomas
- Associate degrees
- Bachelor's degrees
- Master's degrees
- Doctoral degrees

Levels of Compliance

- **Basic** – (Candidate) - The IERs serve as the threshold for determining eligibility for candidate status. The institution is reviewed on the level of compliance with all TRACS standards.
- **Substantive** – (Accredited or Reaffirmation)– Substantive compliance with all TRACS standards serves as the threshold. The institution is reviewed on the level of compliance with all TRACS standards.

Four Major Steps in the Accreditation Process

- Self-Study Process and Self-Study Report

- Evaluation Team Visit and Report

- Accreditation Commission Action

- Follow-up

Self-Study and Self-Study Report

- The institution conducts a Self-Study and prepares a Self-Study Report.
- The Self-Study Report addresses the institution's analysis concerning the level of compliance with each standard.
- The Self-Study Report is supported with verifying documentation.
- The Self-Study Report becomes the basis for the review conducted by the Evaluation Team.

Evaluation Team

- Team members are selected by TRACS staff from a list of trained individuals.
- The teams will vary in size depending on the institution and the type of visit.
- Most teams consist of 5 members.
- One of the team members is designated as the Team Chair and will work closely with TRACS staff in preparation for the on-site visit.

Evaluation Team

- A TRACS Staff Representative always accompanies the team and serves as a resource for the team.
- An attempt is made to match the experiences and credentials of the team members with the needs / specific situations of the institution.

Basic Purposes of the Evaluation Team

- To determine the institution's level of compliance with TRACS Standards
- To identify areas that need improvement
- To validate the Self-Study Report
- To make recommendation to the Accreditation Commission concerning the accreditation status sought by the institution

Team Preparation

Evaluation Team Members should read / be familiar with relevant TRACS Manuals / Documents

(These will be provided to team members and/or are available on the TRACS website)

- *Policies and Procedures Manual*
- *Accreditation Manual*
- *Benchmarks for Excellence*
- *Evaluation Team Procedures Manual*
- *Evaluation Team Workbook*
- *Evaluation Instruments*

Team Preparation

Additionally, team members should…

- Read the entire Self-Study Report, along with all supporting documents / material submitted by the institution.
- Analyze their particular area of assignment in detail.
- Formulate questions, determine interviews that are necessary and / or additional documentation that may need to be reviewed on-site.

Team Preparation

- Team members should prepare a draft copy of their section of the Evaluation Team Report prior to the visit including preliminary Recommendations and / or Suggestions.

- Team members should be prepared to discuss their initial thoughts / findings with the team during team meetings.

The Team Chair

- The Team Chair establishes and maintains contact with the team members and the institution in preparation for the visit.

- The Team Chair, in conjunction with TRACS staff, coordinates the various aspects of the visit and provides support for the team members.

- The Team Chair leads team meetings.

The Evaluation Team Visit

- The team evaluates…
  - The institution according to its mission
  - The Self-Study Report

- The Evaluation Team Visit is a major and required component of the overall institutional review process.

- A typical visit usually lasts four days.
  - Monday – Thursday
  - Tuesday - Friday

The Evaluation Team Visit

- The team members arrive on the first day in time to participate in a team orientation in the late afternoon.

- Team members provide a list of individuals to be interviewed and / or additional documents to be reviewed to the Team Chair at the team orientation.

- A dinner or reception is held on the first evening with the key administrators / leaders of the institution.

The Evaluation Team Visit

- The second and third days are dedicated to interviews, meetings, review of documentation and report writing.

- On the afternoon / evening of the third day, a draft copy of the complete Evaluation Team Report is compiled by the team, and required evaluation instruments are completed.

- An exit interview is held in the morning on the fourth day.

The Evaluation Team Visit

- A draft copy of the Evaluation Team Report (containing Commendations, Suggestions, and Recommendations) is left with the institution for review and follow-up.

- The team makes a confidential recommendation to the Accreditation Commission concerning the accreditation status sought by the institution.

General Duties of the Evaluation Team

- Ask questions
- Visit classes / chapel
- Review documents and conduct Interviews
- Conduct open meetings
- Take extensive notes
- Share findings with other team members
- Make Recommendations and Suggestions for institutional compliance or improvement.
- Participate in the writing and compilation of a comprehensive and cohesive Evaluation Team Draft Report

Typical Team Assignment Roster – Team Member # 1 (usually the Team Chair)

I. Foundational Standards
a. Biblical Foundations
b. Purpose and Objectives
c. Philosophy of Education
d. Ethical Values and Standards

II. Operational Standards
a. Operational Authority
b. Organizational Structure
   1. The Board
   2. The Administration
   3. The Support Staff

Typical Team Assignment Roster – Team Member # 2

II. Operational Standards
c. Publications and Policies
    1. Publications
    2. Policies

j. Library and Learning Resources

Typical Team Assignment Roster – Team Member # 3

II. Operational Standards

d. Educational Programs
   1. Undergraduate and Graduate Programs
   2. Alternative Delivery Methods
      1. Distance Education
      2. Correspondence Education
   3. Branch Campus
   4. Teaching Sites
   5. Non-Degree Granting Programs

e. Faculty

Note: If the institution to be reviewed offers DE and/or CE, an individual with expertise in these areas and who has participated in the DE/CE specific training will be assigned to the team to provide evaluation specific to these areas.

TRACS defines Distance Education as follows:

Education that uses one or more of the technologies listed to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the instructor and <u>to support regular and substantive interaction between the students and the instructor,</u> either synchronously or asynchronously. The technologies may include the internet; one-way and two-way transmissions through open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, broadband lines, fiber optics, satellite, or wireless communications devices; audio conferencing; or video cassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs, if used in a course in conjunction with any of the technologies listed above.

TRACS defines [Correspondence Education](#) as follows:

Education provided through one or more courses by an institution under which the institution provides instructional materials, by mail or electronic transmission, including examinations on the materials, to students who are separated from the instructor; interaction between the instructor and the student is limited, is not regular and substantive, and is primarily initiated by the student; correspondence courses are typically self-paced; and correspondence education is not distance education.

Typical Team Assignment Roster – Team Member # 4

II. Operational Standards
f.   Student Services
   1.   Student Service Programs
   2.   Intercollegiate Sports

h.   Institutional Assessment

i.   Institutional Research and Planning

Typical Team Assignment Roster – Team Member # 5

II. Operational Standards

g. Financial Operations
   1. General
   2. Federal Title IV Compliance

k. Facilities and Equipment

l. Health and Security

The Institution Responds

- Following the Team Visit, the institution is given a set period of time to report "Errors of Fact" contained in the draft of the Evaluation Team Report.

- The Evaluation Team Report is finalized by TRACS staff and a copy of the final report, along with a response matrix, is provided to the institution.

- The institution responds to Recommendations and Suggestions from the Evaluation Team Report on the matrix provided according to the timeline set forth in the Evaluation Team Report.

Accreditation Commission Action

- The Accreditation Commission reviews:
  - The Self-Study Report
  - The Evaluation Team Report and recommendation
  - TRACS Staff recommendation
  - The responses submitted by the institution to the team report
  - The Commission Readers' recommendation
- The institution is invited to have representative(s) present for the Accreditation Commission's decision-making meeting
- The Accreditation Commission makes the final decision on the accreditation status of the institution

Follow-Up

- The institution will be notified of the action / decision of the Accreditation Commission by a letter from the President.

- The institution follows-up on remaining Recommendations and Suggestions from the Evaluation Team Report and/or Accreditation Commission conditions. - A Progress Report (matrix) is prepared and presented to the TRACS Office according to the timeline established by the Accreditation Commission.

Things You Might Want to Know

- The institution, in conjunction with TRACS staff, arranges for airport and on-site transportation, lodging, and meals.
- The institution provides a separate hotel/motel room for each team member.
- A team work room is provided at the hotel and at the institution.

Things You Might Want to Know

- A computer and printer is provided by the institution in the team work room on the campus.

- You may wish to bring your own computer.

TRACS Staff Responsibilities

- Make the team assignments
- Provide a roster and team itinerary to all parties involved
- Make the team travel arrangements
- Provide a packet of information to the team that contains forms, etc.

Reminders – Writing the Evaluation Team Report

- All Recommendations and Suggestions must be supported in the narrative preceding the Recommendation(s) / Suggestions(s).
- No individuals names are to be used – Use titles instead.
- Combine Recommendations where possible.
- Use the wording of the Benchmarks when writing the narratives.
- Use the wording of the Standards and/or Benchmarks when writing Recommendations

Reminders continued…

- Collaborate with other team members prior to "finalizing" your portion of the Report.

- Begin each Recommendation, Suggestion, and/ or Commendation with "The Evaluation Team….."

- Recommendations should be based solely on non-compliance with TRACS Standards. Cite the particular Standard in non-compliance at the end of the Recommendation statement.

Additionally…

- The Evaluation Team Report should represent an accurate "snap shot" of the institution at the time of the visit.
- Don't deal with future promises.
- The Evaluation Team Report should validate / refute the Self-Study Report.
- The findings contained in the Evaluation Team Report should be supported by document review and interviews with key individuals within the institution.

More…

- The Evaluation Team Report should represent the team's overall assessment of the institution's compliance / non-compliance with TRACS Standards and criteria.

Focus Teams

- Focus Teams are utilized in the review of an institution's level of compliance with TRACS Standards when an institution files an Institutional Change Proposal with TRACS and when the proposed change requires not only the review of TRACS staff, but also that of a Peer Evaluator(s) with expertise in the area(s) to be reviewed.

Focus Teams

- As required, Focus Teams may be utilized to evaluate institutional compliance with TRACS Standards in matters that do not necessarily relate to an Institutional Change Proposal, but may involve situations where institutional compliance in specific areas needs to be verified

Focus Teams

- Generally, Focus Teams are smaller in number than Evaluation Teams and will be made up of professionals, administrative personnel, academic personnel, educators, and faculty members as appropriate. Focus Teams will maintain specific focus, based upon the particular area(s) to be reviewed.
- A staff representative acts as a resource to the team for each visit.

IFYR Peer Reviewers

- TRACS institutions that have been granted a ten-year reaffirmation status are required to participate in the Interim Fifth-Year Review (IFYR) process.

- IFYR Peer Reviewers are utilized as independent assessors of documentation submitted to TRACS by institutions that are participating in the IFYR process.

CHANGES MAY BE COMING!

The TRACS Accreditation Commission is discussing a change in the standards from the over 200 that are currently being used to 17 comprehensive areas with many less evaluation criteria under each. This is now under discussion but approval may come in the near future. This would change some of the specific things mentioned today but the process will be basically the same.