

NWCCU EVALUATIONS | EVALUATION COMMITTEE PROCEDURES KEY POINTS

Role of the Committee

The Committee's function is to analyze the institutions performance and to evaluate the effectiveness of its procedures, programs, services, and resources for continued improvement. The institution is evaluated in terms of its own mission, goals and objectives. Evaluators play a key role in helping to identify an institution's significant strengths and in making recommendations concerning adherence with Commission eligibility requirements, standards, and policies.

Pre-Visit Organization Meeting

Chair is in charge of the evaluation process and is the committee's official spokesperson during the visit. The chair is responsible for seeing that the evaluation follows the Commission's evaluation policies; that all important aspects of the institution are reviewed; and that all necessary people are consulted.

The chair assigns committee members to areas of the institution not initially assigned; notes institution-wide issues that require in-depth review by the committee; and reviews daily schedule for the visit.

Committee members are reminded to concentrate on things that really matter and avoid the trivial. They are encouraged to maintain a professional relationship with members of the institution and approach the accreditation process as an objective evaluator. Members are encouraged to conduct interviews with as many faculty, staff, and students as possible and be prompt for appointments. Members are also reminded to search for verifiable evidence that the institution is achieving its objectives and accept original and unique solutions. It should be understood that even though each committee member has specific responsibilities, the institutional evaluation is a team enterprise.

Committee members are expected to participate fully in, and be prompt for all committee meetings and to provide the chair with a draft of the report for your assigned area prior to departure.

The committee reviews the institution's self-study report, college catalog, Basic Institutional Data Form, and other institutional documentation, exchanges preliminary impressions. The chair establishes a common work plan and poses questions that need to be addressed during the visit.

A common detailed set of operating procedures is not appropriate, since each institution is unique. There is no formula or rating scales to apply and no predetermined patterns to impose. Committee members are expected to adapt to the circumstances in which they find themselves and use whatever procedures and techniques seem appropriate. Frequent consultation among committee members is necessary. Your effectiveness is directly related to your ability to communicate well, record info accurately, and cooperate and collaborate with colleagues on the committee in order to check and cross check perceptions and information.

Even though individual committee members have specific assignments, the committee works as a team. Since responsibility for the quality of the evaluation committee report is a shared responsibility, it is essential that members maintain close communication and frequent conferences to report on broad areas, such as general education/related instruction, program assessment, faculty evaluation, distance education, faculty governance, faculty morale, student satisfaction, institutional publications, use of library resources, academic advising and personnel policies.

Visit Structure

First Day –

The institutional evaluation begins with a meeting hosted by the institution. Attendees include the evaluation committee, assigned institutional liaisons, and key institutional administrators, faculty and staff. At the conclusion of the meeting committee members begin evaluation activities.

Introductory Meeting

Evaluation Activities

Committee Meeting

Provide a brief oral summary report of findings.

Do not provide detailed findings of an individual area.

Convey overall quality of your area and the institution

Identify problems

Share initial information and concerns

Assist the chair in determining areas that need to be investigated in more detail

Second Day –

Evaluators conduct evaluation activities and convene as a committee to discuss findings.

Evaluation Activities

Committee Meeting

Provide a brief focused oral outline of your section of the report

Identify what you think should be included in the summary and general recommendations

Do not provide detail on area-specific findings that do not have institution-wide implications

Work as a team to pool information

Stimulate and question each other

Seek understanding through discussion until points are clear and consensus is achieved

Third Day-

The evaluation committee meets to vote upon general commendations and general recommendations and to vote on the confidential recommendation to the Commission. The chair will meet privately with the president to convey the committee's findings of general commendations and general recommendations. Committee members will attend the exit meeting during which the chair presents publicly the committee's general commendations and general recommendations and cites relevant ERs, standards, or policies. The committee's confidential recommendation is not disclosed either privately or publicly. Drafts of individual reports are finalized and submitted to the chair.

Final Committee Meeting

General Commendations/Recommendations

Confidential Recommendation

Submit Draft Reports

Exit Meeting

Committee members promptly exit at the end of the exit meeting. Remember, it is critical that information discovered during the visit and committee recommendations to the Commission regarding the accreditation status of the institution are to be held in the strictest confidence by members of the committee both during and following the visit.

Reminders

- When conducting interviews, do a lot of empathetic listening but do not get involved with personal problems or campus politics.
- Pertinent information from unhappy employees should be checked for accuracy and relevance.
- Unanticipated discoveries should be presented to the entire committee for discussion and review, so the chair can decide whether or not to assign it for further investigation.
- Be aware that due to loyalty to institution, interviewees may say what they think the evaluator wants to hear, rather than their real feelings.
- Use private settings to interview as many people as possible.
- Ask students about their satisfaction regarding the quality of courses, academic advising and institutional practices such as registration, refunds of tuition and fees, grading, and use of library resources in academic programs.
- Determine if students are aware of their rights and responsibilities, institutional procedures for grievances and complaints, and accommodations for ADA students.
- Verify that the institution has a record of student complaints and a process for review
- When talking with faculty and staff, avoid referencing or recommending what your institution does.
- Adjust work schedule to accommodate host needs, since they are still trying to do their jobs
- In addition to personal interviews, seek out supplemental materials, documents and records that prove claims made in the institution's self study.
- Clarify and verify results that attest achievement of goals.
- Respect the confidentiality of the self-study report, institutional documents, and information gathered from personal interviews.
- Minutes of meetings of the faculty senate, curriculum committee and other governing bodies may help determine whether these groups understand and exercise their proper functions.
- Visit off-campus sites as appropriate to your assignment.
- Review Credit Hour Policy and practice
- Review distance education programs if any

Evaluation Committee Report

- Prepare the section of the report for your assigned individual area.
- Write as you go. Do not wait until the evening of the second day to begin writing.
- Adhere to any guidelines set forth by the chair.
- Characteristics of an Effective Report:
 - Analyzes, interprets, gives perspective
 - Provides a detached point of view
 - Weighs the quality of institutional achievement
 - Minimizes description of what an institution is and does
 - Avoids information available in the self-study or other institutional documents
 - Is fair and accurate
 - Avoids unverified information, assumptions, and unsupported generalizations
 - Provides a balanced analysis
 - Recognizes accomplishments as well as problems
 - Avoids the transitory and concentrates on matters of continuing significance.
 - Provides just enough detail to be helpful
 - Is clear, succinct, readable, and useful.
 - Notes institutional attempts to make needed corrections reported in past evaluations.
 - Ties any deficiencies to Commission ERs, standards, and/or policies