



Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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July 7, 2003

Dr. Jorge I. Velez Arocho
Chancellor
UPR - Mayaguez
P. O. Box 9000
Mayaguez, PR 00681

Dear Dr. Velez Arocho:

This is just a reminder that the Commission on Higher Education expects to receive a report from your institution on the date indicated on the enclosed Commission action letter. Also enclosed is the "Policy on Follow-up Reports".

Please send four (4) copies of the report and any attachments to me at the Commission Office and include a copy of your most recent Institutional Profile with each copy of the report.

If you have any questions or if I can be of assistance, please feel free to call or write.

Sincerely,

Carmella R. Morrison

Carmella R. Morrison
Office Associate

832-0119
Dr. Shanna

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Saludos. Por favor
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esta petici3n de AUSA

Garcia
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Follow-up Reports and Visits

The Commission may require colleges or universities to conduct follow-up activities and submit follow-up reports as part of its action in response to a visiting team's recommendation on an institution's request for initial accreditation, for reaccreditation, or in response to the institution's periodic review report filed at the midpoint between decennial evaluations. The Commission also may require a follow-up visit to an institution, either after a review of a follow-up report or at the request of staff in light of an institution's changing internal or external environment.

Follow-up Reports

The Commission usually requires an institution to submit a follow-up report when the Commission needs additional information in a specific area not adequately covered by the institution's decennial self-study report or in response to a recommendation made by the visiting team. The Commission also may wish to assist an institution by focusing early attention on a special issue of concern or a need for further information.

The preparation of a follow-up report, like a self-study report, can provide opportunities for constructive discussions on a campus, involving many members of the academic community and bringing many points of view to the consideration of a particular issue. The report also should serve as a useful planning document for the institution.

There is no set format for a follow-up report. It should have a functional title page (see inset Sample Cover Page), including the institution's name and location; the date it was prepared; and a quotation from the Commission's letter requesting the report, excerpted so as to identify the subject of the report.

Follow-up reports should be addressed to the Commission. The scope of the report depends on the nature of the follow-up activities and issues specified in the Commission's letter communicating its accreditation action.

If the institution requires clarification of the issues or of the Commission's concerns, please contact the Commission staff member who serves as liaison to the institution.

Sample Cover Page for a Follow-up Report

Follow-up Report to the
 Middle States Commission on Higher Education
 from
HILLTOP COLLEGE
 Punxsutawney, PA 12345

Prepared by
 John Q. Academe

(Date)

Subject of the Follow-up Report:
(Quote from Commission's Letter)

If this report follows an evaluation, indicate

Date of the Evaluation Team's Visit:

Chair of the Evaluation Team:

Or if this report follows the submission of a Periodic Review Report, indicate

Date the PRR Was Submitted:
 (Month and Year)

The text of the report should establish the context for the materials being submitted. Because a year or more usually elapses between the Commission's request for a report and the date the report is filed, the report should review sufficient background to make the significance of current developments clear to people who are not involved in the institution's daily affairs.

The report could be as brief as a memorandum to the Commission. However, it should be as explicit and precise as the nature of the materials permits, and it should enable readers to assess the situation at the institution.

Where appropriate, provide supporting data if they strengthen and clarify the report. Appendices should be limited to those items essential to a reader's understanding of the report. The documentation should be interpreted and presented so that its relevance to the issues being discussed is apparent.

The complete report should be securely stapled together, not bound or placed looseleaf in a folder.

Send four copies of the follow-up materials, each with a copy of the institution's most recent Annual Institutional Profile (AIP) attached, to the Evaluation Services Office at the Commission.

The Commission will act upon follow-up reports at its next scheduled meeting. For action at its February meeting, the report must be submitted by November 1. For action at the June meeting, the report must be submitted by April 1. For action at the November meeting, the report must be submitted by September 1.

After Receipt of the Follow-up Report

The Committee on Follow-Up Activities/Candidate Institutions, which consists of commissioners, reviews each report. In addition, reports on financial information are reviewed and interpreted by a finance associate. After a thorough discussion of the report and any accompanying materials, the Committee forwards its recommendation to the full Commission at its next scheduled meeting. The Commission reviews and discusses the Committee recommendations and takes one of the actions outlined in the "Range of Actions" policy statement.

Follow-up Visits

Follow-up visits are made following a specific action of the Commission or at the request of an institution. The Commission also may require a visit after reviewing a follow-up report or information provided by staff. The areas of coverage in a special follow-up visit usually are limited to specific topics. However, Commission accreditation applies to an entire institution, and therefore every Commission visit implies an evaluation of the specific topic in the context of the institution as a whole.

The visiting team may be limited in number, and it may include a staff observer and a representative of the appropriate state agency.

Preparation for Follow-Up Visits

The chair of the follow-up team visiting an institution will find it useful to review the Commission's *Handbook for Chairing and Hosting an Evaluation Team*. Of special importance are the sections on communicating with other team members about specific assignments and with the institution about the team members' travel plans and meeting schedule. Team members should review the basic principles and procedures in the *Handbook for Evaluation Teams*, as adapted by the chair for the circumstances of the particular follow-up visit.

All evaluators, however, should prepare for a follow-up visit by:

1. reviewing any special reports the institution may have been required to submit;
2. reading carefully the confidential materials provided by the institution or the Commission prior to the visit;
3. communicating to the institution the team members' travel plans and preliminary agenda; and
4. contacting the Commission staff representative if they have questions relating to the visit.

The Visit Schedule

In consultation with the institution's chief executive officer, the chair will arrange a schedule that provides maximum contact with appropriate personnel.

The team's schedule should allow adequate time for the team members to review all the materials provided by the institution and by the Commission office.

The schedule also may include the following, if appropriate to the purpose of the visit:

- a preliminary team conference;
- meeting(s) with key administrators;
- interviews with representative faculty, staff, and students;
- a meeting with the full governing board or, at a minimum, with the board's executive committee;
- meetings with special purpose groups;
- meetings of team members to discuss their findings; and
- an oral report to the institution's representatives.

Conduct of Team Members

Evaluators who review a follow-up report or participate in a follow-up visit should be guided by the following principles:

- It is the obligation of every team member to hold in total confidence any information learned about the host institution.
- Team members must not compare the campus situation they are observing with conditions at their home campuses.
- No member of a visiting team may serve as a consultant to the host institution for a period of one year following the visit.
- The Commission relies on the personal and professional integrity of individuals to refuse any assignment where even the slightest potential for conflict of interest exists.

Writing the Follow-up Visit Report

The visiting team is responsible for preparing a report to the institution and to the Commission. Although all members contribute to the report, the Chair has the chief responsibility for organizing and writing the report so that it covers the requested areas.

The report on the follow-up visit should summarize: 1) the rationale for the visit, 2) the conduct of the visit, and 3) the course(s) of action recommended to the institution. The length of the report will vary according to the nature and scope of the visit; however, brevity and substance are expected.

Sample Cover Page for a Follow-up Visit Report

Report to the
Faculty, Administration, Trustees, and Students
of
HILLTOP COLLEGE
Punxsutawney, PA 12345

by
A Team Representing the
Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Prepared After a Visit to
the Campus on
(Dates)

The Members of the Team:
(Names of the chair and
all team members,
their titles, and
full addresses)

Working with the Team:
(Name of Commission staff person
and/or
state education department representative)

The Chair must send a draft copy of the report to the institution's chief executive officer, offering the institution the opportunity to correct any inaccuracies or errors of fact. The Chair's cover letter should indicate the date by which the corrected report should be returned to the chair.

The Chair should send the team's final report, incorporating any appropriate corrections that the institution recommended, to the institution and also send four copies to the Evaluation Services Office at the Commission.

Recommendation to the Commission

The Chair should send a separate brief, addressed to the Commission *only*, containing a copy of the team's summary report and a confidential recommendation for Commission guidance. The language of the team's recommendation should incorporate the appropriate

actual language in the "Range of Commission Actions" policy statement.

If the Commission requested additional information in a specific area, the recommendation(s) of the team should focus on the issues under review.

Institutions should be commended for their follow-up activities, if that is appropriate; and if additional follow-up in the form of reports or visits is appropriate, such actions should be recommended.

If the Commission action deferred consideration of the institution's accredited status and required a follow-up visit, the team will be asked to provide its recommendation on accreditation.

The Institution's Response to Follow-up Visit Reports

The institution is required to submit to the Commission a formal response to the team's report, agreeing or disagreeing with the team's findings and providing the Commission with any additional relevant information that is necessary.

The institution should send four copies of its response to the Evaluation Services Office at the Commission.

Commission Review

The Commission staff forwards all pertinent documents to the Commission's Committee on Follow-up Reports/Candidate Institutions for review, discussion, and formulation of recommendations to the full Commission.

The Commission will act upon follow-up visit reports at its next scheduled meeting. For action at its February meeting, the entire process—including the Chair's confidential brief and the institution's response—must be completed by December 15. For action at the June meeting, the process must be completed by April 15. For action at the November meeting, the process must be completed by September 15. After appropriate review, the Commission takes one of the actions outlined in its "Range of Actions" policy statement.

When the final report has been submitted, the visitors' assignment has been completed. However, each team member will receive a confidential copy of the Commission's action letter to the institution. Any further communication from the institution should be directed to the Commission office.

Reporting Expenses

Following the visit, each team member should report to the Commission immediately all expenses associated with the visit, including travel, incidentals, meals, and housing if it is not provided by the institution. Receipts must accompany expense vouchers. Expenses should be reported on the form that the Commission includes with the materials it sends to each team member, and additional forms are available from the Commission office. Team members are expected to pay for all personal items, such as newspapers, telephone calls, bar bills, dry cleaning and laundry; charges for these items will be deducted from the claim. In addition to expense reimbursement, visitors receive a modest stipend to defray personal expenses.

Previously published as:

"Suggestions for Preparing a Middle States Follow-up Report,"
April 1959; February 1984

and as sections of the former handbook:
Assessment Visits, Candidate Status Review Visits, Follow-up Visits
1983, 1989

Published as a revised single document, April 1998

Rev. January 2001

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