



Independent Schools
Association of the Southwest

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GUIDE FOR THE HOST SCHOOL

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OVERVIEW

Self Study affords the opportunity for reflection on a school's mission, on its efforts to fulfill that mission, and on areas which call for improvement. The Accreditation Visit provides a goal toward which Self Study progresses. The integrity of the school's work is validated by the observations of the Visiting Committee, and school constituencies benefit from the feedback provided by the Commendations and Recommendations in the Report of the Visiting Committee.

Early Planning

A successful Accreditation Visit calls for advance planning by the school and coordination with the Chair of the Visiting Committee and with ISAS staff. Online workshops are offered each spring for Visit Coordinators and for Heads of schools hosting visits.

Scheduling the Visit

In the fall of the academic year preceding the year of the Visit, host schools are offered the opportunity to send dates preferred for hosting the accreditation visit. ISAS staff coordinates the calendar, sends confirmation to each school of the dates, and posts the accreditation calendar on the ISAS website.

Appointment of the Chair of the Visiting Committee

The Executive Director, in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee, appoints the Chair of the Visiting Committee. The Head of a school preparing for an Accreditation Visit does not appoint the Chair or members of the Visiting Committee. However, the Executive Director may confer with the Head about qualities uniquely appropriate in that school's Chair.

Selection and Size of the Visiting Committee

Visiting Committee members are recruited by ISAS staff in the spring of the year preceding an Accreditation Visit. Enrollment, grade range, and special programs for which expertise should be recruited (based on information requested from each host school) determine the composition and size of each Visiting Committee. Selection of Committee members is based on balancing areas of expertise and levels of previous committee experience and on achieving a representative mix of ISAS schools. Except in fulfillment of an unusual need, Committee members are drawn from faculty and staff of ISAS schools. The Head and the Committee Chair are given the opportunity to veto an appointment for valid reasons.

COMMUNICATION

In the spring, the Directors of Accreditation Services issue invitations to Committee service and confirm participation and preliminary assignments.

In the summer, a roster of Committee members is sent to the Head and to the Chair of the Visiting Committee. An informal welcome from the Head is appropriate at this time. The communication from the Head should include the name of the Visit Coordinator.

At least three months before the Visit, the Head or the Visit Coordinator sends Committee members an email which contains:

- Instructions for making travel arrangements,
- The Travel and Support Questionnaire ([Exhibit C](#)),
- Instructions for requesting reimbursement,
- The Visiting Committee Request for Reimbursement ([Exhibit D](#)),
- Preliminary arrangements for transportation from the airport to the hotel,
- Directions to the hotel for Committee members who drive,
- The hotel name, address, and phone number, and
- The school's address, phone number, and website address.

Visiting Committee members should be instructed to make travel arrangements that insure their arrival at the hotel by 2:00 PM on the Sunday which begins the Visit and allow their departure from the school after 1:00 PM on Wednesday. The school should give clear information on which airport to use and on the time it takes to collect baggage and for transport from the airport to the hotel on Sunday and from the school to the airport on Wednesday.

At least one month prior to the Visit, the school sends the Self Study (printed and bound) to Committee members.

Two weeks before the Visit, the school sends:

- A digital copy of the Self Study in Word format,
- The Visit Schedule (example at [Exhibit B](#)) with the location of the organizational meeting indicated,
- Instructions on arrival and on transportation from the airport to the hotel, and
- The cell phone number of the Visit Coordinator.

All communication should be digital to facilitate assimilation of any substitute Committee members.

ARRANGEMENTS

Preliminary Visit

The Head of the host school contacts the Chair of the Visiting Committee soon after the Chair is confirmed to coordinate the preliminary visit to the school. The preliminary visit takes place well in advance of the Visit (the preceding spring for an early fall visit) to confirm preparation and finalize plans. The Chair should be given the opportunity to become familiar with the school's history and mission, the campus, the local community, enrollment trends, the school's financial condition, and current issues. Meetings with the Head of School, President of the Board of Trustees, the Business Officer, Division Heads, and the Visit Coordinator are helpful in this introduction.

Travel Arrangements

Host school communication instructs Visiting Committee members to make their own travel arrangements and to arrive at the hotel by 2:00 PM on Sunday afternoon and to depart the school after 1:00 PM on Wednesday. The school collects information from Committee members on flight arrival and departure times and arranges for transportation of Committee members to the hotel (**Exhibit C**). Directions to the hotel should be provided to Committee members who choose to drive. The school arranges transportation for the Committee to and from the school each day and transportation from the school to the airport on Wednesday afternoon.

Hotel Accommodations

The school makes hotel reservations for the Visiting Committee. Each Committee member must have a single room. Arrangement should be made for each member's account to be transferred to the school master account. This arrangement must be facilitated through the hotel's credit office. Early check-in on Sunday afternoon should be arranged. Meeting room space should be reserved at the hotel for Sunday afternoon and for each evening, Sunday through Tuesday, of the Visit.

Meals and Hospitality for the Visiting Committee

The school should be a good host as Committee members take time from their schools and families to contribute to this vital element of the process. Some schools prepare a welcome for Committee members with inexpensive local items and school souvenirs. If a school elects to provide a gift, the items should be consumable or easily packed.

Breakfast may be furnished at the hotel or at the school. Lunch may be in the school lunchroom or in the Committee workroom. The school arranges dinner for Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday evenings with arrangements made in advance for payment of the bill. Dinners should not include school representatives.

Dinner on Sunday should be an event which places the school in the cultural context of its community, and wine and other alcohol may be served. Dinner on Monday and Tuesday should be expeditious—at the school, a conveniently located restaurant, or catered in at the hotel—as Monday and Tuesday evenings involve extensive Committee work and discussion. These dinners need not be elaborate, and alcohol should not be offered.

EXPENSES

Expenses for an Accreditation Visit vary with the location of the school, the number of Committee members, and the school's custom in hosting a Visit. The budget for school expenses should include:

- Travel expenses, including airfare, baggage fees, automobile mileage, and airport parking for the Committee Chair's preliminary visit and for the Visit,
- Lodging expense incurred in providing a single room for each member of the Committee,
- Meeting room space at the hotel for Sunday afternoon and for each evening, Sunday through Tuesday, of the Visit.
- Meals in transit and during the Visit,
- Reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, and
- Production and distribution of the Self Study.

This sample budget illustrates the kinds of expenses incurred in an Accreditation Visit.

Committee Chair preliminary visit	\$500
Self Study production	200
Faculty/Committee reception	<u>2,000</u>
Total	\$2,700

Airfare between most ISAS cities is \$300-\$500. Some Committee members will travel by car and are to be reimbursed at the prevailing IRS rate. In making Committee appointments, ISAS takes into account the travel distance for participants and attempts to balance overall travel costs. The following example is a guide. Costs will vary.

	<u>Per Person Cost</u>
Airfare	\$500
Hotel, 3 nights	450
Meals, 4*	200
Miscellaneous	<u>50</u>
Total per person	\$1,200

**Assumes reasonable payment for lunch and dinner on Sunday and dinner on Monday and Tuesday. Lunches will be at the school.*

Reimbursement

Reimbursement forms are provided in emails from the school and should also be available in the Committee workroom at the school (**Exhibit D**). Committee members are asked to submit reimbursement requests by Tuesday afternoon if they wish to receive reimbursement by noon on Wednesday. Committee members may also choose to submit reimbursement requests before or after the Visit.

THE VISIT

A Sample Accreditation Visit schedule can be found at [Exhibit B](#). The organizational meeting of the Committee takes place on Sunday afternoon in the hotel meeting room. At this meeting, each Committee member is furnished with an information packet containing a nametag, the final Visit Schedule (marked Final), a campus map, and a teaching schedule for each faculty member. Since Committee members plan their classroom observation on Sunday and as many members have cross-divisional responsibilities, it is imperative that schedules are easily understood, that times are listed for each schedule block, and that the rotation schedule is clearly indicated for each day of the Visit. Classroom observation schedules are not planned by the host school.

After the organization meeting, the Committee is transported to the campus, and school representatives (administration, faculty, or students) conduct a tour of the campus. A reception, with the entire faculty and with representatives of the Board of Trustees, follows. The purpose of this event is for the Head to welcome the Visiting Committee, for the Committee Chair to introduce Committee members and ISAS representatives, and for Committee members to meet faculty members with whom they will be interacting.

The formality and style of the reception vary depending on the culture and custom of the school. The essential element is the opportunity for interaction between Visiting Committee members and the school community. Most schools choose to host a reception of light refreshments in the school dining room or hospitality area. The Visiting Committee goes to dinner after the reception. The events should conclude early enough that the Committee can reconvene at the hotel meeting room.

Typically, the Committee is at the school from 7:30 AM until 5:00 PM on Monday and Tuesday. If dinners on Monday and Tuesday are at restaurants, Committee members are transported to the restaurant from the school unless the restaurant is within walking distance of the hotel. The Committee meets and works in the evenings in the hotel meeting room.

Technical Support

Committee members are asked on the Visiting Committee Travel and Support Questionnaire ([Exhibit C](#)) if they will bring laptops. The school furnishes laptops to members who do not bring them. Technical support must be available for the laptops, for the Committee workroom computer and printer, and to members of the Visiting Committee.

Expectations of School Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff members should be available to Visiting Committee members during classes and school activities Monday through Wednesday. Visiting Committee members may request individual or departmental meetings. Faculty should be advised that they should not schedule tests or independent work during the Accreditation Visit. **While Visiting Committee members will NOT evaluate individual teachers, it is essential that they have consistent opportunities to observe faculty teaching and students engaged in learning activities.**

Committee members observe in classrooms on Monday and Tuesday. Each teacher should have a chair or desk available for Committee members near the classroom door. When a Committee member enters a class, it is not necessary to break the tempo of the class for an introduction. Depending on the size of the school and the Visiting Committee, it may not be possible for every teacher to be observed. On Wednesday morning, Committee members are writing reports which must be submitted by noon. There will be few classroom observations.

Faculty have the opportunity (usually on Tuesday after school hours) for input during the accreditation visit through meetings organized by division, by department, or both, depending on the curricular organization of the school.

Administrators and staff should arrange to be available to members of the Visiting Committee on both Monday and Tuesday of the Accreditation Visit. Committee members will schedule appointments as needed.

Availability of Other School Constituents

Arrangements are made for meetings with trustees, administrators, teachers, parents, and students on Monday and Tuesday (**Exhibit B**). The meeting of the Committee Chairs and ISAS representatives with the Head of School should be scheduled for Monday morning. Trustees, parents, and students invited to meetings with Committee members should represent diverse perspectives and a broad range of experience with the school. The head of school should not attend the meeting of the administrative committee. Division heads should not be present at meetings of division or department faculty. It is not appropriate for the Head of School or other administrators to be present at meetings with faculty, trustees, or parents.

The Visiting Committee workroom is reserved for Committee members only. Conversations and meetings with school faculty, staff, and administration should take place in other locations.

Exit Meeting of the Head of School and the Visiting Committee Chair

Early Wednesday afternoon, the Visiting Committee Chair and the Head of School meet privately to review the Visit and to preview the Chair's exit report to the faculty.

Visiting Committee Chair Exit Report to the Faculty and Staff

The Chair of the Visiting Committee makes an oral report to the faculty and staff at the end of classes on Wednesday. This report is an overview and summary of the Committee's impressions, not a complete report. **Questions or comments will not be accepted.**

THE REPORT

A draft of the Report of the Visiting Committee is made available to the Head of School through the ISAS Accreditation Portal no more than four weeks after the Accreditation Visit. The Head of School may note corrections in fact but may not edit findings or conclusions of the Visiting Committee. Suggested corrections should be submitted by email to the Chair of the Visiting Committee. The final Report is available to the school through the ISAS Accreditation Portal, and a copy of the Report is printed for the Head of School, the President of the school's Board of Trustees, and the ISAS office.

The school completes Documentation of Adherence to Standards as part of Self Study. Submission through the ISAS accreditation portal must be complete one month prior to the Accreditation Visit, and one hard copy, including uploaded submissions, is made available in the Committee workroom at the school during the Accreditation Visit. ISAS staff reviews the Documentation of Adherence to Standards for accuracy and compliance during the Accreditation Visit, and various Committee members utilize the data and documents.

During the time the Report of the Visiting Committee is compiled and edited by the Chair of the Visiting Committee, the school has the responsibility, when possible, to remediate any areas of non-compliance with ISAS standards identified during the Accreditation Visit. The review of the Documentation of Adherence to Standards is included in the Report of the Visiting Committee.

The written Report of the Visiting Committee is the official ISAS document of the Accreditation Visit. The Standards Committee reviews the Report in preparation for their next meeting (November, April, or June) and makes a recommendation for official action by the ISAS Board of Directors on accreditation and membership.

The Association expects member schools to demonstrate adherence to all ISAS Standards. It is the responsibility of the Standards Committee, on behalf of the membership, to make judgments and recommendations to the Board of Directors on how well a school, reflecting its mission and philosophy, accomplishes adherence to Standards. The Standards Committee may recommend to the Board of Directors that exceptions to adherence to Standards be allowed.

Exhibit A

School Checklist for Visit Arrangements

In the year before the Accreditation Visit:

1. Visit planning
 - a. Appoint a representative to handle Visit logistics, the Visit Coordinator.
 - b. Arrange the preliminary visit of the Visiting Committee Chair.
 - c. Discuss any unique requirements in Committee composition with the Directors of Accreditation Services.
 - d. Reserve hotel rooms for the Visiting Committee.
 - e. Prepare parent group and others responsible for Visiting Committee support.

In the year of the Visit:

2. Communication to Visiting Committee members
 - a. Welcome email from the Head after receipt of the Committee roster
 - b. **At least 3 months prior to the Visit**—Communication from the Head or Visit Coordinator:
 - Instructions for making travel arrangements, including the preferred arrival airport and the time required to claim baggage and for transport to the hotel to ensure arrival by 2:00 PM on the Sunday beginning the visit
 - The Travel and Support Questionnaire ([Exhibit C](#))
 - Instructions for requesting reimbursement and the Visiting Committee Request for Reimbursement ([Exhibit D](#))
 - Preliminary arrangements for transportation from the airport
 - Directions to the hotel for Committee members who drive
 - The hotel name, address, and phone number
 - The school's address, phone number, and website address
 - c. **At least 1 month prior to the Visit**, send the printed and bound Self Study.
 - d. **At least 2 weeks prior to the Visit**, send:
 - A digital copy of the Self Study in Word format
 - The Visit Schedule (with location of organizational meeting indicated)
 - Final instructions on transportation from the airport to the hotel
 - Cell phone number of the Visit Coordinator
3. Hotel and Restaurant Arrangements
 - a. Confirm room reservations (singles only) and direct billing arrangements. Arrange for early check-in on Sunday afternoon.
 - b. Arrange meeting room for Sunday afternoon and evening, Monday evening, and Tuesday evening.
 - c. Arrange refreshments and meals.

4. Submit the Documentation of Adherence to Standards through the ISAS accreditation portal at least **one month in advance** of the Visit. Assemble one printed copy (with uploaded submissions) for the Visiting Committee workroom at the school.
5. Visiting Committee Information Packets—distributed at Sunday afternoon meeting
 - a. Name tags
 - b. Final Visit Schedule
 - c. Teacher and class schedules
 - d. Campus map and floor plan of the school
 - e. Expense reimbursement form
6. Materials in the workroom at the school
 - a. **Documentation of Adherence to Standards** (one copy)
 - b. Power strips to provide an outlet for each Committee member
 - c. One computer with internet access and a printer
 - d. Complete constituent survey results
 - e. Master list of faculty with subjects/levels taught
 - f. Daily teacher schedules
 - g. Extracurricular activities scheduled during the Visit
 - h. Curriculum notebooks, scope and sequence, or instructions for online access
 - i. School policy manuals, handbooks
 - j. Sample school and student publications
 - k. Legal pads, pens
 - l. Light refreshments
7. Materials in the workroom at the hotel
 - a. Note pads, pens
 - b. Water and decaffeinated coffee on Monday and Tuesday evening
8. Transportation
 - a. Arrangements to meet airport arrivals
 - b. Transportation to and from the school each day
 - c. Arrangements for airport departures
9. Technical support
 - a. Laptops for committee members who do not bring personal laptops
 - b. Technical support for laptops and workroom computer and printer
 - c. A shredder on Wednesday morning
10. Classrooms
 - a. A chair for a visitor near the door
 - b. Set of materials, if needed to observe the lesson

Exhibit B

Sample Accreditation Visit Schedule

Sunday

2:00 PM	Committee members arrive at the hotel
3:00 – 4:00	Organizational meeting
4:30 – 5:30	Campus tour
5:30 – 6:30	School/Committee reception
6:30 – 7:30	Dinner for Committee
8:00	Committee meeting at the hotel

Monday

	Breakfast, hotel or school
Morning	Class observation Meeting of Chair and ISAS representatives with Head of School Meeting of Chair and ISAS representatives with trustees
Afternoon	Class observation Sub-committees meet with a. Representative group of students b. Administrative committee
5:30 – 6:30 PM	Dinner
7:00	Full committee meeting

Tuesday

	Breakfast, hotel or school
Morning	Class observation Sub-committee meets with representative group of parents
Afternoon	Class observation Meetings with academic departments or divisions (after school)
5:30 – 6:30 PM	Dinner
7:00	Full committee meeting and work on reports

Wednesday

Morning	Complete research and finish reports
11:00- Noon	Final meeting of Visiting Committee
Noon	Reports due
1:00 PM	First departure for airport Meeting of Chair with Head of School
3:00 - 3:30	Exit report to faculty

Exhibit C

Visiting Committee Travel and Support Questionnaire

Name and Title for

Nametag _____

School _____

Home Phone _____

Work Phone _____

Cell Phone _____

E-mail _____

TRANSPORTATION

I will be traveling by Car Air

If by air, Arrival

Arrival

Arrival

Airport

Flight # _____

Date _____

Time _____

and Airline _____

Departure

Departure

Departure

Airport

Flight # _____

Date _____

Time _____

and Airline _____

The Visiting Committee may be using vans during the Visit. Would you be able to drive, if needed?

Yes

No

COMPUTER

Will you bring a laptop computer?

Yes

No

FOOD/BEVERAGE

Special Diet _____

Allergies _____

Exhibit D

Visiting Committee Request for Reimbursement

Name _____ Date _____

Home Address _____

School _____

Address _____

Please attach receipts.

Expense Description	Reimbursement to me	Reimbursement to my school	Total
Mileage at \$.58/mile			
Total Reimbursement			

Signature of Committee Member: _____

<p>For school use only</p> <p>Approved: _____ Date: _____</p>
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