



STEERING COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

Consult the *Membership and Accreditation Guide, 20th edition* for detailed information about these areas.

The first key step of Year One is to select the Steering Committee Chair(s) and committee members. They will ensure that the school undertakes preliminary activities to provide the foundation for the self-study process in Year Two. The steering committee also ensures that the self-study process is conducted successfully during Year Two and that preparations are in place for the accreditation team in Year Three.

YEAR ONE: Prepare for the Self-Study Process

Led by the steering committee chair(s) and in collaboration with the head of school, the steering committee has oversight responsibilities for several tasks during Year One of the accreditation cycle:

- Confirming that the school has considered, revised (if desired), and affirmed the school's mission statement at some point within the most recent accreditation cycle, including official approval by governing body vote that appears in meeting minutes.
- Confirming that the school's governing body has reviewed the school bylaws and updated them within the most recent cycle, if necessary, including official approval by governing body vote that appears in meeting minutes.
- Confirming the status of the school's strategic planning.
- Confirming that the school conducts an independent full-opinion financial audit at least once every three years. In intervening years, the school generates year-end statements of financial position and activities.
- Ensuring that the school's curriculum is reviewed and updated.
- Conducting the ISACS School Community Survey (or similar survey instruments with the approval of the Director of Accreditation) and evaluating the results to include in the self-study report.
- Collecting data about school alumni to use when writing about alumni in the self-study report, including the following areas:
 - Success of the school in preparing alumni for the next phase of their lives
 - Impact of their experience at the school and its mission on alumni lives
 - Assessment of alumni loyalty to the school
- Scheduling the kick-off meeting day with the Director of Accreditation for the latter part of Year 1 or early Year 2.

YEAR ONE/TWO: Organize the Self-Study Process

- Create the self-study calendar by determining the projected season (fall or winter/spring of Year Three) of the accreditation team visit and working backward to the beginning of the self-study process.
- Determine the number of self-study report chapters. Include required content and any additional chapters to address areas unique to the school, e.g., strategic planning or schoolwide themes, school mission or other guiding principles.
- Create a chapter committee for each self-study chapter. Assign chairs(s) for each committee. Select the members of each committee – the entire school community should be represented on the chapter committees; it's helpful to include someone from outside the department in each group.
- Create the chapter committee meeting schedule. Having each committee meet 3 or 4 times is ideal. Consider dividing the overall self-study calendar into sessions:

Example 1 – Two sessions: write half of the chapters in Session One, half in Session Two, perhaps by writing some curricular and administrative chapters in the first half, the rest in the second half

Example 2 – Three sessions – write 1/3 of the chapters in each session

SELF-STUDY REPORT SECTIONS AND RELATED STANDARDS FOR MEMBERSHIP

20th Edition Report Sections	Relevant Standards
Section One. Introduction	
Section Two. Mission and Governance	
A. Mission and Guiding Principles	A1-A4
B. Governance	A5-A15
Section Three. Learning and Teaching	
A. Program Overview	B1-B10, C4
B. Equity and Inclusion	A7, B2, B3, B7, C1, C3
C. School Climate and Community: one or more chapters about overall school climate; the school's constituent groups (students, families, alumni) and their relationship with and commitment to the school; the local community	B2, B3, C5
D. Curricular Areas: multiple chapters organized by (i) school structure, (ii) disciplines and programs, or (iii) thematic construct	B1, B4-B8
E. Student Services: one or more chapters; areas in this section may be combined or omitted, as appropriate for the school's structure: advising and counseling (academic, personal, guidance, college, school placement, advisory programs); health care; student records; library and information services; academic technology; learning support services (including ELL)	B3, B7-B9
F. Student Life: one or more chapters; areas in this section may be combined or omitted, as appropriate for the school's structure: cocurricular and extracurricular programs (special interest groups, performing arts, athletics, etc.); special programs (military; religious; residential, homestay, etc.); auxiliary programs (extended day, summer programs, etc.)	B2, B3, B5, B9, B10
Section Four. Administration and Operations	
A. Administration Overview	A2, A3, A5, C1-C4
B. Advancement: one or more chapters about fundraising, donor relations, marketing, communications, public relations	A6, A7, C5
C. Enrollment Management: one or more chapters about admissions, financial assistance, student body demographics, student retention	C3, C6-C8
D. Business Management	A5, A7, C9-C10
E. Personnel and Human Resources	B2, B3, C3, C11-C17
F. Facilities, Safety, and Security: one or more chapters about the physical plant, technology infrastructure and data security, physical safety and security	A8, B3, C18, C19
Section Five. Conclusion	
Section Six. Standards for Membership Checklist	

YEAR TWO: Complete the Self-Study Report, Confirm the Standards for Membership

Prepare to Launch the Self-Study Process

- Publish chapter committee assignments and self-study meeting schedule.
- Establish deadlines for incoming chapter drafts to accommodate Steering Committee workload: one option is to divide chapter committees into manageable groups with each group having a unique deadline for chapter submission.
- Set aside extra time as a cushion for unexpected events.
- Check with the business office to confirm its schedule for full-opinion financial audits. The most recent audit and year-end financial statements are due in ISACS Office, Chicago, and made available for the accreditation team by the **start** of its visit.

Guide the Self-Study Process

- Provide the structure, resources, and moral support for the chapter committees.
- Represent the Steering Committee: Steering Committee members should support a specific set of chapter committees and may participate on chapter committees.
- Provide instructions and assemble resources for each chapter committee:
 - Style sheet of writing instructions and standard template for uniform report formatting
 - Meeting schedule and timeline for completion
 - Instructions for composing chapter sections: Overview, Strengths, Challenges, Plans and Priorities, Chapter Committee Roster, Addenda
 - Suggestions for how to conduct meetings
 - Relevant sections from the Membership and Accreditation Guide, 20th Edition, including Essential Questions for Reflection and ISACS Standards for Membership for each chapter
 - Pertinent information from the school community survey and other feedback
 - Chapter from the previous self-study report, if relevant

Edit the Self-Study Chapters

- Review every self-study chapter.
- Ensure that required areas are included in the self-study report, along with any additional chapters.
- Assemble the final report with the reading audience in mind – make it user friendly.
- Ensure the presence of adequate, meaningful references to school community survey(s), relevant data, and school mission.
- Check the report format for consistency, following the school's guidelines.
- Confirm that addenda are included and accessible for each chapter.

Compile the ISACS Standards for Membership Checklist

- Ensure that each chapter committee has confirmed standards for membership relevant to that area.
- Assemble documentation that confirms the school's compliance with each standard for membership in the Standards for Membership Checklist ([Appendix C](#)). If the school is justifiably non-compliant with a standard, be sure to include the explanation along with the checklist.
- Include links to, or descriptions of, the documentation for each standard on the checklist.
- Organize documentation so that it is easily accessible to the accreditation team.

Assemble the Self-Study Report

Title Page: school name and address, month and year of publication

Table of Contents: page numbers for the major sections and chapters

Section One. Introduction

Section Two. Mission and Governance

2A. Mission and Guiding Principles

2B. Governance

Section Three. Learning and Teaching

3A. Program Overview

3B. Equity and Inclusion

3C. School Climate and Community: one or more chapters

3D. Curricular Areas: multiple chapters

3E. Student Services: one or more chapters

3F. Student Life: one or more chapters

Section Four. Administration and Operations

4A. Administration Overview

4B. Advancement: one or more chapters

4C. Enrollment Management: one or more chapters

4D. Business Management: one or more chapters

4E. Personnel and Human Resources

4F. Facilities, Safety, and Security: one or more chapters

Section Five. Conclusion

Section Six. Standards for Membership Checklist

Publish the Self-Study Report

The self-study report may be provided to the school community and the accreditation team in digital and/or hard copy format. Either way, be sure to include:

- Cover page and table of contents
- Major sections clearly demarcated
- Page numbering
- Consistent formatting, including new pages for the start of each chapter

Digital version:

- Format the document as a formal publication that represents the school well.
- Provide the document in a standard format readable on all types of devices, e.g., PDF.
- Check accuracy of links to supporting documents or other resources, if included.
- Organize Addenda to align with the self-study chapters and provide access to the accreditation team in a shared digital folder, on a flash drive, or as a combination of digital and print resources.

The school may print copies of the self-study report for archival purposes and/or the accreditation team. Typically, the printed self-study report is spiral bound, including section dividers and a table of contents for each section on the divider page.

Submit the Self-Study Report

Once the final draft of the self-study report is complete, email a PDF copy of the report to ISACS (accredit@isacs.org), along with the most recent financial audit, including the independent auditor's report and management letter. If the financial audit is more than one year old, submit the school's year-end financial statements of position and activities for any subsequent fiscal years.

YEAR THREE: PREPARE FOR THE ACCREDITATION TEAM

As the self-study process draws to a close, the Steering Committee turns its attention toward preparing for the accreditation team visit. Members of the Steering Committee and/or other school personnel plan:

- The schedule for the accreditation team leader's preliminary visit to campus – the team leader meets with the head of school, steering committee, governing body, and others during the visit
- Lodging and food for the accreditation team members during the team visit; travel arrangements for team members to the school from their home location
- One person to be the school contact for accreditation team members.

Finalize Arrangements prior to the Accreditation Team Visit

The group in charge of planning the accreditation visit finalizes the details:

- At least four weeks prior to the arrival of the accreditation team, communicate with the accreditation team leader and members to share a welcome letter to the accreditation team, the self-study report, marketing materials from school and local geographic area, and any additional information that might be helpful for the accreditation team as an introduction to the school and its community.
- Confirm all travel to and from airports and hotel, dietary requirements and allergies, other special needs.
- Finalize arrangements with the accreditation team leader for the school's opening reception and planning for team meals and snacks during the visit.
- Welcome the team members at the hotel with a "goodie" bag containing snacks, welcome note from the steering committee or a student, something small that represents the school.
- Provide name tags for team members and school employees to use each day of the visit.
- Make sure that team members have the technology and other materials they need.
- Double-check signage throughout the school so that team members can easily find their way; provide team members with a map of the school.

Support the Team During the Visit

- Confirm arrival arrangements for accreditation team members.
- Confirm transportation to and from school.
- Sunday tour and reception – it is ideal if students can participate as tour guides.
- Monday/Tuesday – school visits:
 - Talk to faculty about the visit: short time of classroom visits; be open and honest; schedule active learning for class time, no major tests or field trips; faculty are not being evaluated individually.
 - Provide the schedule of group meetings with governing body members, families, students, alumni, faculty and staff.
- Wednesday:
 - Confirm team member departure and transportation arrangements.
 - Arrange to have reimbursement checks for each team member available by departure time, if possible.
 - The accreditation team leader conducts an exit meeting at school to share impressions of the visit, along with the accreditation team's major commendations and recommendations for school improvement. All faculty and staff are expected to attend, and the governing body is invited to attend.

Accreditation Team's Meeting Rooms at the School and Hotel

- Maintain confidentiality.
- Set up meeting rooms in comfortable, conversation style, e.g., conference table or horseshoe.
- Ensure reliable wireless network access and secure access to school documentation, including addenda and standards for membership checklist.
- Provide technology and other tools based on team leader's expectations: printer, projector, power strips, pencils, pens, paper, paper clips, etc.
- Make tent name tags available for tables for accreditation team members - they do not know each other.
- Have full faculty/staff list and schedules available, along with campus maps, and classroom and office locations.
- Have snacks and beverages available and refreshed each day.
- Have rooms cleaned each night.

Documentation Checklist for the ISACS Accreditation Visit

Depending on school structure, items on this list are made available to the accreditation team at the time of their visit, either linked to from the ISACS Standards for Membership checklist and/or in a digital folder:

- Map of campus showing classroom and office locations.
- Chart, showing the names, job assignments, and pictures, if available, of all school employees, with space to indicate which employees the team has visited.
- Employee schedules, indicating times when they are available to speak with team members
- ISACS Standards for Membership Checklist, including documentation and confirmation that the school meets all standards.
- The completed School Profile form (Membership and Accreditation Guide, Appendix D).
- Tabulated report of school constituent survey(s).
- The school's IRS 501(c)(3) letter or its equivalent confirming tax-exempt status.
- Confirmation that the school appoints an ISACS Teacher Representative.
- School statements of mission and guiding principles, with date of most recent revision and evidence of most recent governing body approval in meeting minutes.
- The school bylaws and confirmation in meeting minutes that the governing body has reviewed them within the past accreditation cycle.
- Recent governing body minutes (previous three meetings).
- The governing body directory, designating officers and current family members, alumni, etc.
- Most recent school strategic plan, with dates of adoption and revisions.
- The school's academic profile, graduation requirements, and/or portrait of a graduate.
- Copy of the daily schedule and the yearly calendar.
- Curriculum map or overview for the school.
- Sample student report forms and permanent records.
- Family, student, and employee handbooks.
- Job descriptions for all administrative positions in the school.
- Administrative organizational chart.
- Confirmation of school's compliance with all state guidelines/laws for recognition as a school in the school's home state.
- Governing body/school policies for federally mandated matters (Family and Medical Leave Act, ADA, Sexual Harassment, blood-borne pathogens, EPA requirements for asbestos, lead, radon, etc.).
- Examples of external and internal communications with prospective families and students, current students and families, and alumni.
- Statement on admissions policies and procedures, including all references to financial assistance and non-discrimination.
- School's official admissions and financial assistance materials, including official documents and statements explaining family financial obligations upon enrolling a child in the school. Also include an enrollment contract.
- Agendas of the last three faculty and/or all school employee meetings.
- Official school statement on non-discriminatory employment practices.
- Documentation that facilities and personnel conform to local and state public safety and health regulations.
- Sample employee hiring letter/contract, summary of employee benefits, and school policies or statements on employee professional growth and development.
- Evaluation procedures/instruments for all school employees.
- Current year's operating budget.
- Most recent financial audit, including the independent auditor's report and management letter. If the audit is more than one year old, include subsequent year-end statements of financial position and activities.