

Assessor Training

Stage 2: The Site Visit

Outline

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1. SET roles and Responsibilities

1.1 SET Roles and Responsibilities

Recapping the role of the SET

Reviews documentation submitted by education provider covering aspects of the program relevant to the Accreditation Standards

Conducts a site visit to verify information provided and clarify any matters by:

- interviewing provider staff, students and other relevant stakeholders,
- assessing provider facilities and teaching hospitals/clinics

Prepares, for consideration by the Accreditation Committee:

- a detailed report evaluating the program against the Accreditation Standards
- advice to foster quality improvement, through Recommendations and acknowledgement of good practice
- an overall recommendation concerning accreditation of the program to:
 - (re)accredit without Conditions up to the maximum applicable for the program being considered
 - (re)accredit with Condition(s) up to the maximum applicable for the program being considered
 - refuse to accredit or to revoke accreditation

Role of SET Chair

- Chairs the SET and provides leadership and direction in evaluating the program, e.g. leading in-camera discussions concerning the program
- Provides leadership in determining the SET's approach to program evaluation, including the nature and structure of the site visit
- Leads SET questioning of provider staff and stakeholders
- Ensures the timely completion of the SET report

Role of Director, Accreditation

- Manages and ensures ADC staff support for the SET
- Manages the liaison between the SET and the provider
- In collaboration with the Chair, ensures the visit runs to time and schedule
- Provides key advice to SET on the interpretation and application of the Accreditation Standards
- Ensures consistency in application of Standards across SETs
- Ensures that SET activity is consistent with the ADC's responsibilities under the National Law
- Manages the Accreditation Committee's consideration of SET report and overall recommendation

Key qualities of SET member

Integrity:

- impartial and unbiased evaluations
- maintains confidentiality regarding all documentation reviewed, discussions held and interviews undertaken
- declares potential or actual conflicts of interest

Does not use in-confidence information for personal benefit or the benefit of another organisation

Professionalism:

- respectful of provider staff and stakeholders
- familiar with the relevant ADC Standards and Competencies
- contributes to SET discussions, questioning of interviewees and the formulation of SET findings



2. Conducting the Site Visit

2.1 Setting the scene

Setting the scene - staff

Be aware that staff may:

- resent the notion of an external body telling them how to teach ('academic freedom')
- be subject to other external or internal reviews
- operate in an environment where change is either difficult or constant and resources are scarce
- have little understanding of purpose or process of accreditation

Setting the scene - stakeholders

Students may be constrained by:

- fear of the impact of their ability to register as a practitioner if their course is not accredited
- fear of retaliation from the provider

Professional/ practitioner stakeholders may think:

- the ADC needs to raise standards / be tougher on providers
- the ADC is too academic in its approach

Both sets of stakeholders may have unrealistically high expectations of ADC's powers and functions

Setting the scene - the interviews

Chair to explain at the outset of interviews

- **Purpose of the Site Visit:** to consider the program for ADC (re-)accreditation
- **Purpose of the interview:** to hear honest appraisals of what works well and what needs improving, as part of an evaluation of whether the program meets the Accreditation Standards
- **Confidentiality:** no identification of individuals - individual views will not be fed back to the provider's staff



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2. Conducting the Site Visit

2.2 Interviews

Interviews - the purpose

Interviews should be used to gather evidence to:

- inform judgments on compliance with the standards
- support findings in the report regarding compliance with the Standards
- support the SET's overall recommendation, including any recommendations to impose conditions
- provide the context for quality improvement recommendations

Interviews - general approach

Remember your evaluation techniques:

- tracking, trailing/drilling down and sampling
- Triangulation of information

Interviews can be used:

- to track, drill down or sample an issue being considered
- Triangulate SET findings

The **questioning must be fair and polite**, but also be **rigorous and incisive**

Facilitate engagement: give all participants the opportunity for input – don't focus questions on one or two interviewees

Questions should relate to the **Accreditation Standards**

Interviews - pitfalls to avoid

Avoid compromising interviewees: don't interview staff together in reporting/power relationships, e.g. Head of School with Program Coordinator, staff with students

Avoid promising changes/resolutions to problems

Do not identify previous interviewees, even if asked to: e.g. as the source of a line of inquiry, or by quoting them directly

Asking Questions - what to avoid

Assessors should avoid:

- using wordy preambles to questions
- telling anecdotes or making speeches
- prejudging outcomes, e.g. statements such as ‘we are going to recommend accreditation of the program’ or similar
- asking complex or multiple questions - a more straightforward question, with a follow-up question(s) is generally more effective

Asking Questions - what to avoid

Types of questioning assessors should avoid:

- putting words into the mouths of interviewees, e.g. prefacing questions with 'Do you agree that the situation at your School needs improving?'
- detailing the situation in their own organisation, e.g. 'At my School we...'
- offering suggestions or advice 'What I would do if I was you is...'
- questions that reveal in-confidence evidence from previous interview session, e.g. 'In the last session with the students we heard that...'



2. Conducting the Site Visit

2.3 The SET Report

The SET Report

Pointers on writing the report:

- begin writing sections as findings are made
- short focused bullet points are best
- clearly indicate how an individual Standard is met, substantially met, or not met (as the case may be)
- evaluate the program against the Standards only
- support findings with evidence
- be clear and consistent in conclusions and findings
- complete a draft by the of end of the site visit, where necessary, finalising any remaining matters via email



2. Conducting the Site Visit

2.4 After the visit

After the visit

The report is considered by the Accreditation Committee

- The Accreditation Committee considers the recommendation of the SET, but may come to a different conclusion
- The Accreditation Committee will make a decision or if needed refer to the ADC Governing Board for a decision
- The provider is advised of the ADC's decision and provided the full SET report
- Assessors are advised of the outcome and provided with the summary report
- Assessors are reminded to destroy all materials, both electronic and in paper form regarding the visit

The DBA is advised of the ADC's decision

- The DBA makes its own approval decision which may differ from that of the ADC's

3. Handy tips for assessors





Avoiding errors of judgment

10 potential assessor errors to avoid

1. Judgments/recommendations that are not clearly related to a Standard
2. Making assumptions without checking facts
3. Making commitments on behalf of the ADC
4. Misinterpreting the Standards
5. Getting involved in matters beyond ADC's powers
6. Revealing sources of information
7. Acting on hearsay and not checking veracity of information
8. Becoming overly concerned with a pet issue
9. Inadequate preparation – e.g. failure to read documentation, undertake assigned tasks
10. Failure to declare conflicts of interest

Discussion & Questions