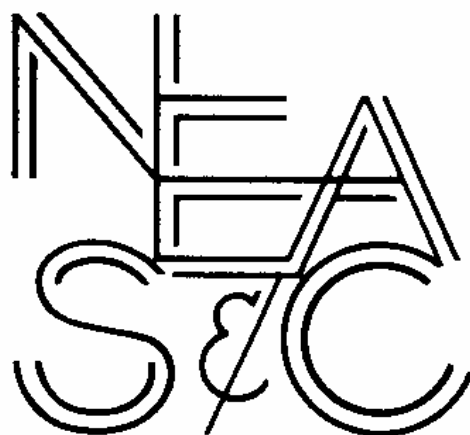


**FOCUSED VISIT GUIDE
FOR
SUPERINTENDENT/PRINCIPAL/DIRECTOR**



**SECONDARY TECHNICAL SCHOOLS
AND
SECONDARY APPLIED TECHNOLOGY CENTERS**

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MATERIALS

THE FOLLOWING COMMISSION DOCUMENTS WILL BE NECESSARY FOR COMPLETING A FOCUSED VISIT REPORT:

- Focused Visit Guide with flash drive
- Most recent edition of the Secondary Accreditation Handbook containing
 - Commission's Policies and Procedures
 - Standards of Membership
- Most recent decennial evaluation report
- Reports and letters of notification since the most recent decennial evaluation

FOCUSED VISIT GUIDE FOR SUPERINTENDENT/PRINCIPAL/DIRECTOR AND STAFF

The Commission on Technical and Career Institutions mandates as a matter of policy that all of its accredited institutions, whether on the secondary or postsecondary level, must undergo a focused visit no later than five years following a decennial or initial accreditation visit. If deemed necessary, the Commission may also request a focused visit at a time other than the five-year point. The process includes two major components: (1) a report prepared by the staff of the institution scheduled for a focused visit, and (2) a site visit conducted by a committee assigned by the Commission office.

The following information is presented to assist school administrators and staff members in planning for a focused visiting committee representing the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc.

PREPARATION FOR THE FOCUSED VISIT

It is the responsibility of the superintendent/principal/director to submit the formal **Request for a Focused Visiting Committee** (see the Accreditation Handbook) to the Commission. Schools scheduled to host a focused visit will receive this form from the Commission in January of the year preceding the scheduled evaluation so that the Commission and the school will have ample time to make the necessary arrangements. Since the visit will have budgetary implications, it would be well to advise the board of control that the focused visit is to be scheduled and that budget provisions should be made for the visit. Upon request, the Commission office will provide information related to cost for secondary focused visit evaluations.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURES

Notify the Director of the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions that the institution is preparing for a focused visit review. At that time, a date for the visit should be selected.

NOTE: A Focused Visit Report requires preparation at least six months prior to the visit.

Annual half-day self-study workshops for those responsible for preparing the school's Focused Visit Report are conducted by the Commission to assist schools. Announcements of such workshops are made to those schools scheduled for visitation in 6 months to 1 year. There is no charge for the workshop.

The Commission grants its permission to candidate and member institutions to copy any and all parts of the Secondary Accreditation Handbook to facilitate the writing of the Focused Visit Report.

NOTE: It is the responsibility of the school to keep archival copies of its self-studies, evaluation reports, progress reports, focused visit reports and Commission letters of notification for at least two decennial periods. We recommend that a file drawer containing these archival materials be under the supervision of a designated individual at the institution.

FORMAT FOR FOCUSED VISIT REPORT

The institution assumes the responsibility for preparing the report in the format prescribed by the Commission.

The purpose of the Focused Visit Report and the ensuing on-site visit is to inform the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions of significant developments and progress made by the institution since the most recent decennial (or initial) on-site visit and to include any progress reports, special reports, or other actions required of the institution by Commission policy or specific action. The focused visiting committee will report the institution's progress in addressing the specific recommendations found in the decennial report and make suggestions that will facilitate continued progress in those areas. Neither the visiting committee nor the institutional staff should regard a focused visit as a "mini-decennial." Only areas that have been previously identified will normally be reviewed. An exception to this approach will be made if the visiting committee observes an area of grave concern which may have arisen subsequent to the decennial evaluation report.

The institution's Focused Visit Report should be organized in the following manner:

PART ONE

The staff and administration are requested to report on the continuing compliance of the institution with the Commission's Standards of Membership as they are stated when the report is written. This section may be completed by indicating in the appropriate Chart for ***Compliance with Commission Standards of Membership*** whether it "Exceeds Expectations," "Meets Expectations" or "Needs Improvement." A chart for each standard will be provided on a flash drive for entering this data.

The institution should also note and enumerate any significant changes which may have occurred since the last accreditation review. Additionally, the institution should review the Commission's **Substantive Change Policy** in the Accreditation Handbook and report any such changes.

PART TWO

A statistical data sheet should be completed (*see sample*).

PART THREE

The Commission suggests that a grid (*see sample*) be prepared which clearly illustrates the status of each area of concern and/or recommendation. This display should be in sufficient detail so as to assure the visiting committee and the Commission that progress is being made. It is helpful to the visiting committee and the Commission to summarize such progress in chart and/or "pie graph" format.

Completed - progress has been made to fully implement or exceed that specified in the recommendation

In Progress - steps have been taken to carry out a recommendation but it is not yet fully in operation; it is partially completed with more still to be done

Planned for the Future - those items that have not gone beyond the planning stage, but the expectation is that they will be carried out as soon as conditions permit

Rejected – those items that are unacceptable, impractical, or invalid

No Action - nothing has been accomplished or planned, although they are valid suggestions

The institution must respond to those areas of concern and/or recommendations identified in its most recent decennial evaluation report. The staff of the institution is to comment directly and specifically on action taken (e.g., completed, in progress, planned for the future, rejected or no action) for each area identified. The institution should list, by Standard, each recommendation found in the conclusion of the most recent decennial evaluation report. Following each item, the institution should describe in detail the current status of that recommendation.

PART FOUR

The institution responds specifically and in detail to the recommendations made by the Commission in its one or more letters of notification to the institution since its last decennial visit and as a result of Commission deliberations on the accredited status of the institution.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Copies of the most recent school publications describing the school and its programs, an organizational chart listing both the positions and the names of those in the positions, and any other supporting material to Parts 1-4 may be included as the school sees fit. Although not necessarily a part of the written report, the school may wish to make copies of the following items available to the visiting committee: a floor plan of the school, the current budget, faculty and student handbooks, and information pertaining to any ongoing or planned construction projects.

COPIES

A copy of both the institution's Focused Visit Report and any supporting material should be sent to the Commission office at a date specified by the Commission. **The chair of the visiting committee should receive the same materials in ample time for the pre-evaluation conference, which should take place at least six weeks in advance of the visit.** The visiting committee should receive its materials no later than 30 calendar days prior to the Focused Visit.

COST OF EVALUATION

A fee will be charged to the institution in anticipation of the focused visit. That fee will be calculated at half the cost of the visited institution's annual Association dues as set for the year of

the visit. The fee will be in addition to the dues. Additionally, the institution will be expected to pay the costs of travel and room and board incurred by the visiting committee calculated at rates set by the Association's Board of Trustees. The institution will reimburse committee members directly unless prior arrangements with the Commission office have been made.

SIZE OF THE VISITING COMMITTEE

Commission experience indicates that a focused visit should be completed in 2 and 1/2 days. The visiting committee may be as small as three members but could be as large as five, depending upon the complexity of the report and the visit. The Commission will consider requests for a larger committee only for exceptional reasons.

THE VISIT

PRE-EVALUATION CONFERENCE

The Commission urges visiting committee chairs to arrange a visit to the school at least six weeks in advance of the evaluation date to ensure that all is in readiness for the upcoming visit. He/she will also review the focused visit report.

MATERIALS TO BE SENT

The host school's staff and administration should forward to each visiting committee member - at least 30 days prior to the visitation, the following:

- a copy of the completed Focused Visit Report
- any other publications that explain the school and its programs
- lodging arrangements and clear directions
- a copy of its most recent decennial evaluation report
- two-year progress report following the decennial evaluation
- any special progress reports that may have been submitted since the last decennial evaluation

During the visit, the school's program should reflect its daily routine with no special performance or unusual activities taking place. Members of the instructional staff should conduct classes in a normal manner.

WRAP-UP SESSION

At the conclusion of the on-site visit, the chair of the visiting committee, with committee members present, will give an oral report to the school's staff, administration, and members of the board. The wrap-up session is primarily intended to point out the highlights of the visiting committee's report to the Commission. It is not an opportunity to contest elements of the report. Members of the press may not be invited, nor should notes be taken or recordings made of the chair's comments.

FOLLOWING THE VISIT

EVALUATION REPORT

Within four weeks following the on-site visit, the visiting committee chair will submit a draft copy of the focused visit evaluation report to the superintendent/principal/director of the evaluated institution who will review the report for factual accuracy.

Adequate payment for clerical assistance required to develop the report should be arranged beforehand between the chair and the superintendent/principal/director.

The Commission's Director is to be kept advised of all communication between school officials and the visiting committee chair. It should be clearly understood that only factual inaccuracies are to be changed in, or deleted from, the report and then only by the visiting committee chair. The Commission will rely on the chair's judgment regarding the contents of the evaluation report.

Once the report is in its final form, the responsibility for its publication and distribution lies with the host school. No later than two weeks following the report's finalization, the superintendent/principal/director should forward one electronic copy to the Commission office (with numbered pages), one copy to the appropriate state department official, copies to the board of control, one copy to the visiting committee chair, a copy to the superintendent when that individual differs from the principal/ director, and sufficient copies for use by local officials. (See Commission documents: **Distribution of the Report** and **State Department of Education** in the Accreditation Handbook.)

The Commission considers the report a confidential matter between it and the institution. However, the written report is generally released to the public by the school, and it must be released in its entirety. No excerpts of the report may be given to the press or interested citizens. The superintendent/principal/director will be asked to complete a form entitled **Distribution of the Report** to provide the Commission with information indicating the extent to which the report is released. (See Commission policy, **Release of Accreditation Information** in the Accreditation Handbook).

DISPOSITION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

After the report has been received and the staff given an opportunity to become familiar with its contents, a program to implement valid recommendations of the visiting committee should begin. Since one of the main purposes of the evaluation process is to improve the services offered by a vocational technical school or applied technology center for its students and the community, each recommendation should be examined to determine its appropriateness. It is desirable to set aside a reasonable period after the evaluation before reviewing recommendations. Since the focused visit steering committee will be conversant with programs in their areas, they will be able to judge the validity of visiting committee recommendations.

It should be pointed out that the best staff response to visiting committee findings will lie somewhere between inaction and precipitous attempts to implement all recommendations immediately.

Ideally, the school should develop a carefully organized plan to improve the school's program over a reasonable period of time, determining a realistic and thoughtful pace for implementing valid recommendations.

Because the evaluation procedure attempts to assess an institution within a continuous process of providing educational opportunities, almost every school will have some high and some low evaluations. Since the process of education is dynamic, high evaluations should not be a reason for complacency nor should low evaluations be cause for undue concern. In either event, officials should continue to strengthen all aspects of the program to ensure that the school continues to meet the diverse needs of the students enrolled.

If the focused visit is the school's mandated fifth-year focused visit, the next scheduled evaluation will likely be the decennial evaluation. In addition, a special progress report due on a date specified by the Commission may be requested.

If the focused visit is not the mandated fifth-year focused visit, that visit at the five-year point in the decennial cycle is still required.

A Sample Format for Focused Visit Report begins on page 11. You may wish to include your school's logo on the cover.

SAMPLE NOTIFICATION LETTER

DATE

SCHOOL

I write to inform you of deliberations at the _____, 20__ meeting, at which time the Commission on Technical and Career Institutions reviewed the evaluation report of the Commission's decennial visiting committee dated _____, 20__, and voted continued accreditation for (SCHOOL), with a two-year progress report due _____, 20__, and a focused visit in the (SPRING/FALL 20__). The Commission's decision to continue accreditation does not require further action by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges Board of Trustees.

Subsequent to the last decennial review of (SCHOOL), the Association voted to discontinue the practice of determining terms (years) of membership, with the principle now in place that once a school is accredited, it will have a continuing relationship with the Association subject to periodic review. The 20__ New England Association of Schools and Colleges Membership Roster will indicate 19__ as the date of initial accreditation and 20__ as the date of the most recent comprehensive review.

The report of the visiting committee identifies much strength within (SCHOOL). The visiting committee and the Commission wish to commend the school in a special way. We wish to highlight a few and commend the administration and faculty for the following:

1. The school has developed a comprehensive professional development program, which embraces the need to keep faculty apprised of changes in their technologies and teaching methodologies. The program also is directed at enhancing the skill levels of all school employees.
2. The school has been aware of the need to make program adjustments to accommodate new and emerging technologies.
3. The school worked very hard to prepare a self-study, which could be used as a model for other schools. The self-study was thorough and gave an honest picture of the school. Those who led the self-study process should be specifically complemented for the thoroughness and collegiality of the process.
4. The staff and administration are highly dedicated and demonstrate a sincere concern for their students' well-being.

(SCHOOL)

Date

Page __

The evaluation report also lists many other commendations that it identified and to which the Commission referred during its deliberations. The above listing stands out in the Commission's view. However, they should in no way minimize the many good things listed in the decennial visiting committee's report. It found a healthy school on the verge of excellence, with faculty, administrative staff and students working well together to the benefit of students.

The Commission also focused on several visiting committee recommendations that are of particular concern and to which the school should pay particular attention as it strives to reach excellence:

1. There are under-enrolled towns and cities in the school's service area. The school should attend to the development of a recruitment plan targeted at those towns and cities.
2. The visiting committee points out that HVAC and air quality studies should be conducted with an eye to improving the learning environment.
3. A facilities maintenance planning process should be developed and a standing committee empowered to develop a facilities maintenance plan to minimize the possibility that preventative maintenance will fall behind.
4. The Commission requires that its member institutions engage in effective planning and assessment practices. We are particularly concerned that the school adopt an assessment model, designed to provide feedback, to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning at the school. We therefore recommend that the school begin its assessment model design for implementation by the date of the Commission's focused visit in the (SPRING/FALL 20__).

Other valid and useful recommendations identified by the visiting committee and referred to during Commission deliberations are included in the evaluation report to the Commission.

The previous is an attempt to highlight points of discussion during Commission deliberations and in no way subordinates other valid visiting committee recommendations. The evaluation report contains many other suggestions that could improve the quality of programs offered by (SCHOOL). A review of the enclosed Standards of Membership Checklist should also give the faculty and administration clear insight as to how others perceive the total operation of the school and the quality of the educational process.

The Accreditation Handbook suggests a procedure to follow in carrying out the recommendations of the visiting committee. The two-year progress report, due on or before _____, 20__, should indicate the status of each recommendation submitted and specific responses to this notification letter.

(SCHOOL)

Date

Page __

The (SCHOOL) staff and administration will be asked to classify each visiting committee recommendation into one of five categories - Completed, In Progress, Planned for the Future, Rejected or No Action. The Commission will also request specific reasons why some recommendations have been rejected and for those items on which no action has been taken.

Consistent with the Commission vote on November 16, 1990, each secondary vocational, technical school or center evaluated in 1990 and thereafter will be scheduled for a focused visit in the fifth year of the decennial cycle. The (SCHOOL) staff and administration should prepare for that focused visit in the (SPRING/FALL 20__). The school should file its focused visit report with the Commission office no later than _____, 20__. Enclosed for your information is the current document developed by the Commission as a procedural guide for fifth-year focused visits. Should you have questions on this review procedure, do not hesitate to contact this office.

There are costs associated with any focused visit; currently those costs include a fee calculated at half your institution's dues at the time of the visit. It is also expected that the institution will assume all costs in support of the focused visiting committee as you do for any visiting committee. It is anticipated that the focused visiting committee will consist of no more than 3 or 4 people and last 2 1/2 days.

Finally, the Commission trusts that the staff and administration at (SCHOOL) found the evaluation process interesting and profitable and especially to the benefit of its students. The Commission believes that the evaluation report should provide guidance for the staff and administration as they work to build on past accomplishments. All those associated with (SCHOOL) can take pride in their collective commitment to improved vocational technical opportunities through regional accreditation.

Sincerely,

Enclosures

c: _____, Commission Chair
_____, Visiting Committee Chair

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR FOCUSED VISIT REPORT

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC
COMMISSION ON TECHNICAL AND CAREER INSTITUTIONS**

***NOTE:** Include Five-Year in the name of the report if this is the five-year review.

***FIVE-YEAR FOCUSED VISIT REPORT**

As submitted by the staff of

(SCHOOL)

(CITY, STATE)

DATE

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-	
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PART ONE

COMPLIANCE WITH COMMISSION STANDARDS OF MEMBERSHIP

E = Exceeds Expectations M = Meets Expectations N = Needs Improvement

1. SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

	E	M	N
1. The school has a separate, clearly stated philosophy which is:			
a. Approved by the staff.			
b. Approved by the administration.			
c. Approved by the Governing Board.			
d. Supported by definite, stated goals.			
e. Designed to meet the individual needs of students and their communities.			
2. The philosophy and goals have been cooperatively developed with student, staff, administration, and community participation and are subject to periodic review.			
3. Institutional philosophy and goals are subject to continuous review to ensure relevance.			
4. The Philosophy and Goals are stated in the school's publications.			

Comments

Repeat for each Standard. Compliance charts are provided on a flash drive for your use in preparing the report.

PART I should next include any SIGNIFICANT CHANGES AND/OR SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES.

PART TWO

STATISTICAL DATA SHEET

FOCUSED VISIT REPORT

Date focused visit report submitted _____

School _____

Address _____

Superintendent/Principal/Director _____

Date of decennial evaluation _____

At the time of the evaluation: school enrollment _____ grades included _____

At the present time: school enrollment _____ grades included _____

Total number of recommendations made by the visiting committee _____

Number of Recommendations		Percentage in Each Category	
1. Completed		1. Completed	%
2. In Progress		2. In Progress	%
3. Planned for the Future		3. Planned for the Future	%
4. Rejected		4. Rejected	%
5. No Action		5. No Action	%

PART THREE

STATUS OF VISITING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Educational Component	Completed	In Progress	Planned for the Future	Rejected	No Action	Total per Component
School & Community						
Philosophy & Goals						
Curriculum						
English						
Guidance						
Mathematics						
Physical Education						
Science						
Social Studies						
Special Education						
Automotive Technology						
Auto Body						
Carpentry						
Computer Technology						
Cosmetology						
Culinary Arts						
Electricity						
Electronics						
Health Occupations						
Heavy Equipment						
Machine Shop						
Plumbing						
Welding						
Total by Category						
Percentage of Total						

STATUS OF VISITING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

NOTE: Begin each Standard or Educational Component on a new page.

Standard: School Philosophy and Goals

Recommendations	Status	Comments
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

PART FOUR

NOTE: The following “sample” recommendations are taken from the recommendations included in the sample notification letter on page 8.

RESPONSES TO COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There are under-enrolled towns and cities in the school’s service area. The school should attend to the development of a recruitment plan targeted at those towns and cities.

Response:

2. The visiting committee points out that HVAC and air quality studies should be conducted with an eye to improving the learning environment.

Response:

3. A facilities maintenance planning process should be developed and a standing committee empowered to develop a facilities maintenance plan to minimize the possibility that preventative maintenance will fall behind.

Response:

4. The Commission requires that its member institutions engage in effective planning and assessment practices. We are particularly concerned that the school adopt an assessment model, designed to provide feedback, to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning at the school. We therefore recommend that the school begin its assessment model design for implementation by the date of the Commission’s focused visit in the (SPRING/FALL 20__).

Response: