

Focused Visit Guide  
for  
Superintendent/Principal/Director



Technical Schools  
and  
Career and Technical Centers

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## **MATERIALS**

### **THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEE DOCUMENTS WILL BE NECESSARY FOR COMPLETING A FOCUSED VISIT REPORT:**

- Focused Visit Guide with Focused Visit Report Template
- Most recent editions of the Committee's Policies and Procedures, and Standards for Accreditation, available on our website at: <https://ctci.neasc.org>
- Most recent decennial (or initial) evaluation report
- Reports and letters of notification since the most recent decennial (or initial) evaluation

# **FOCUSED VISIT GUIDE FOR SUPERINTENDENT/PRINCIPAL/DIRECTOR AND STAFF**

The Committee on Technical and Career Institutions mandates as a matter of policy that all of its accredited institutions must undergo a focused visit no later than five years following a decennial or initial accreditation visit. If deemed necessary, the Committee 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 school/center scheduled for a focused visit, and (2) a site visit conducted by a team assigned by the Committee office.

The following information is presented to assist school/center administrators and staff members in planning for a focused visiting team representing the Committee 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 Team** to the Committee. Schools/centers scheduled to host a focused visit will receive this form from the Committee in January of the year preceding the scheduled evaluation so that the Committee and the school/center 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 Committee office will provide information related to cost for focused visit evaluations.

## **SUGGESTED PROCEDURES**

Notify the Associate Director of the Committee 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/center's Focused Visit Report are conducted by the Committee to assist schools/centers. Announcements of such workshops are made to those schools/centers scheduled for visitation in 6 months to 1 year. There is no charge for the workshop.

NOTE: It is the responsibility of the school/center to keep archival copies of its self-studies, evaluation reports, progress reports, focused visit reports and Committee 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 school/center.

## **FORMAT FOR FOCUSED VISIT REPORT**

The school/center assumes the responsibility for preparing the report in the format prescribed by the Committee.

The purpose of the Focused Visit Report and the ensuing on-site visit is to inform the Committee on Technical and Career Institutions of significant developments and progress made by the school/center since the most recent decennial (or initial) on-site visit and to include any progress reports, special reports, or other actions required of the school/center by Committee policy or specific action. The focused visiting team will report the school/center's progress in addressing the specific recommendations found in the decennial/initial report and make suggestions that will facilitate continued progress in those areas. Neither the visiting team nor the school/center 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 team observes an area of grave concern which may have arisen subsequent to the decennial/initial evaluation report.

**The school/center'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 school/center with the Committee's Standards for Accreditation as they are stated when the report is written. This section may be completed by indicating in the appropriate Chart for ***Compliance with Committee Standards for Accreditation*** whether it is in "*Full Alignment*", "*Partial Alignment*", or if there is "*Insufficient Evidence for Alignment*".

The school/center should also identify any significant changes (positive changes) and any substantive changes (changes that have had a negative impact on the school/center) which may have occurred since the last accreditation review.

### **PART TWO**

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

### **PART THREE**

The Committee 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 team and the Committee that progress is being made. It is helpful to the visiting team and the Committee 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 school/center must respond to those areas of concern and/or recommendations identified in its most recent initial/decennial evaluation report. The staff of the school/center 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 school/center should list, by Standard, each recommendation found in the conclusion of the most recent initial/decennial evaluation report. Following each item, the school/center should describe in detail the current status of that recommendation.

## **PART FOUR**

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

### **SUPPORTING MATERIALS**

Copies of the most recent school/center publications describing the school/center 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/center sees fit. Although not necessarily a part of the written report, the school/center may wish to make copies of the following items available to the visiting team: a floor plan of the school/center, the current budget, faculty and student handbooks, and information pertaining to any ongoing or planned construction projects.

### **COPIES**

A copy of both the school/center's Focused Visit Report and any supporting material should be sent to the Committee office at a date specified by the Committee. **The chair of the visiting team 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 team 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 school/center in anticipation of the focused visit. That fee will be calculated at half the cost of the visited school/center's annual Association dues as set for the year of the visit. The fee will be in addition to the dues. Additionally, the school/center will be expected to pay the costs of travel and room and board incurred by the visiting team calculated at rates set by the Association's Board of Trustees. The school/center will reimburse team members directly unless prior arrangements with the Committee office have been made.

## **SIZE OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Committee experience indicates that a focused visit should be completed in 2 and 1/2 days. The visiting team 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 Committee will consider requests for a larger team only for exceptional reasons.

## **THE VISIT**

### **PRE-EVALUATION CONFERENCE**

The Committee urges visiting team chairs to arrange a visit to the school/center 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/center's staff and administration should forward to each visiting team 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/center and its programs
- lodging arrangements and clear directions
- a copy of its most recent initial/decennial evaluation report
- two-year progress report following the initial/decennial evaluation
- any special progress reports that may have been submitted since the last initial/decennial evaluation

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

### **WRAP-UP SESSION**

At the conclusion of the on-site visit, the chair of the visiting team, with team members present, will give an oral report to the school/center's staff, administration, and members of the board. The wrap-up session is primarily intended to point out the highlights of the visiting team's report to the Committee. 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 team chair will submit a draft copy of the focused visit evaluation report to the superintendent/principal/director of the evaluated school/center 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 Committee's Associate Director is to be kept advised of all communication between school/center officials and the visiting team 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 team chair. The Committee 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/center. The Committee recommends that the school/center send a copy of the report to the following: district leadership, appropriate state department official, board of control, local officials.

The Committee considers the report a confidential matter between it and the school/center. However, the written report is generally released to the public by the school/center, and it must be released in its entirety. No excerpts of the report may be given to the press or interested citizens. (See Committee policy, **Release of Accreditation Information** online:

[https://ctci.neasc.org/downloads/Secondary/Release\\_of\\_Accreditation\\_Information-rev2017.pdf](https://ctci.neasc.org/downloads/Secondary/Release_of_Accreditation_Information-rev2017.pdf)).

### **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 team 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 team recommendations.

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

Ideally, the school/center should develop a carefully organized plan to improve the school/center'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/center 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/center continues to meet the diverse needs of the students enrolled.

If the focused visit is the school/center'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 Committee 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 10. You may wish to include your school's logo on the cover.**

# SAMPLE NOTIFICATION LETTER

DATE

SCHOOL/CENTER

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

The Committee on Technical and Career Institutions, at its \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_ meeting, reviewed the decennial evaluation report from the \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_ visit to (SCHOOL/CENTER), and voted to award the school/center *initial / continued* accreditation in the New England Association of Schools & Colleges. The school/center's Two-Year Progress Report is due by \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_, and a Five-Year Focused Visit will be scheduled in (SPRING/FALL 20\_\_).

The Committee was impressed with many of the programs and services and wishes to commend the following:

- the well-maintained facilities that support a positive school/center atmosphere
- the engaged and invested staff that facilitates student learning
- the positive relationship the school/center has with the local communities it serves
- the generous financial support for professional development, instructional programs and school/center activities

The Committee has made the following recommendations for school/center improvement:

- review course enrollments to determine if current staffing levels are adequate for all programs and adjust levels accordingly
- develop and implement a plan to provide adequate storage for all programs
- secure the doors in the Automotive program to provide improved security

(SCHOOL/CENTER)  
DATE  
Page Two

The Committee congratulates the school/center administration and faculty for completing the first two phases of the accreditation program: the self-study and the *initial/decennial* visit. The next step will be the follow-up process during which the school/center will implement valid recommendations in the *initial/decennial* report, and complete the Two-Year Progress Report. Information about the proper preparation of the Two-Year Progress Report and Five-Year Focus Report will be provided to school representatives at the Follow-Up Seminar which will be scheduled for 20\_\_.

The Committee trusts that the staff and administration at (SCHOOL/CENTER) found the evaluation process professionally rewarding and especially directed to the benefit of students. The Committee 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 New England Association of Schools & Colleges can take pride in their collective commitment to improving career and technical education through regional accreditation.

Sincerely,

cc: Chair, Visiting Team  
Chair, Committee on Technical and Career Institutions

# **SAMPLE FORMAT FOR FOCUSED VISIT REPORT**

**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES, INC  
COMMITTEE 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/CENTER)

(CITY, STATE)

DATE

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- .....	
- .....	
Responses to Committee Recommendations .....	

**PART ONE**

**COMPLIANCE WITH COMMITTEE STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION**

**FA = Full Alignment**

**PA = Partial Alignment**

**INS = Insufficient Evidence for Alignment**

<b>1. SCHOOL/CENTER PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS</b>
--

	<b>FA</b>	<b>PA</b>	<b>INS</b>
1. The school/center 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/center's publications.			

**Comments**

**Repeat for each Standard. The Focused Visit Report Template contains a complete chart of Compliance with Committee Standards for Accreditation.**

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

**SIGNIFICANT CHANGES**

**SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES**

**PART TWO**

**STATISTICAL DATA SHEET**

**FOCUSED VISIT REPORT**

**Date focused visit report submitted** \_\_\_\_\_

**School/Center** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Superintendent/Principal/Director** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of decennial evaluation** \_\_\_\_\_

At the time of the evaluation: school/center enrollment \_\_\_\_\_ grades included \_\_\_\_\_

At the present time: school/center enrollment \_\_\_\_\_ grades included \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of recommendations made by the visiting team \_\_\_\_\_

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 TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Educational Component	Completed	In Progress	Planned for the Future	Rejected	No Action	Total per Component
1. School/Center Philosophy and Goals						
2. School/Center and Community Relations						
3. Educational Programs						
(list programs)						
4. Educational Media Services						
5. Student Services						
6. Student Records						
7. School/Center Staff						
8. Administration						
9. Finance and Business Operations						
10. School/Center Facilities						
11. School/Center Atmosphere						
<b>Total by Category</b>						
<b>Percentage of Total</b>						

**NOTE: Edit Educational Component list above to reflect curriculum at school/center**

**STATUS OF VISITING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

**Standard: School/Center Philosophy and Goals**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Comments</b>
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 Committee Recommendations** **From Notification Letters (Decennial, Two-Year Progress Report, Special Progress Report)**

1. Review course enrollments to determine if current staffing levels are adequate for all programs and adjust levels accordingly

Response:

2. Develop and implement a plan to provide adequate storage for all programs

Response:

3. Secure the doors in the Automotive program to provide improved security

Response: