

International Fire Service Accreditation Congress

Degree Assembly

Program Evaluation Information and Procedures

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a program evaluation to an entity seeking initial accreditation or reaccreditation should be to gather objective data and well-grounded impressions regarding the entity. The members of the program evaluation team should capitalize upon all feasible opportunities to observe characteristic operations of the entity seeking accreditation/reaccreditation. IFSAC Administration, the Degree Assembly Board of Governors, and the Degree Assembly will rely heavily upon presentations in context. The report developed by the program evaluation team should provide a clear and coherent account of the facts and impressions relating to the entity's actual operations.

DEFINITIONS

1. Evaluation Team – The entire team including the onsite evaluation team and the readers.
2. Evaluation Team Leader – The person responsible for the evaluation process.
3. Onsite Evaluation Team –The portion of the team that goes onsite to physically view the program.
4. Program Evaluation – The entire evaluation process including reading of submitted materials, the onsite visit, and post onsite visit work.
5. Readers – The individuals on the evaluation team who read the submitted materials and provide feedback to the onsite evaluation team.

THE PROGRAM EVALUATION TEAM

Selection

The program evaluation team for initial accreditation consists of a minimum of five personnel: one team leader, two members, and two readers. The program evaluation team for reaccreditation consists of a minimum of three personnel: one team leader, one member, and one reader. Selections, where possible, are made to keep travel costs to a minimum, but are also based upon availability of individuals who have been approved and trained to participate in site visits. Site team members should have no direct relationship, past or present, with the entity visited that might be construed as a conflict of interest (see *Degree Program Evaluator Selection Procedure, Appendix E*). The evaluation team is to be selected 60 days prior to the site visit.

Upon selection of the members of an onsite evaluation team, IFSAC Administration communicates this information to the entity hosting the visit and provides each program

evaluation team member with the name, address, and phone number of a representative of the host entity who serves as the local contact for coordination of travel. IFSAC Administration also provides the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the program evaluation team members to the program evaluation team leader and the host entity. This should be done at least 60 days prior to the visit.

In the event of unforeseen circumstances (sudden illness or injury of a site team member or his/her family, travel delays, etc.), with DABOG approval, the number of approved program evaluation team members for an onsite evaluation may be reduced if another member isn't available to attend the program evaluation. Should this occur, and the result is only one site visitor on site, a second evaluator should be available for consultation by electronic means. (Examples include conference call, Skype, GoToMeeting, or other electronic means).

Expense Procedures

Costs for onsite evaluations are the responsibility of the host entity seeking accreditation. The purpose of the reimbursement process is to ensure that onsite program evaluation team members are expeditiously reimbursed for all reasonable expenses. It is the entity's responsibility to provide the proper forms and make the reimbursement process as simple as possible. Onsite evaluation team members are entitled to receive payment for all direct travel related expenses including expenses that incur due to circumstances beyond individual control (flight delays, hotel, and per diem cost due to weather delays). Evaluation team members do not receive compensation for their time.

While it is realized that not all institutions or states permit this, it is highly recommended that travel insurance be purchased when making airline reservations. When such purchase is permitted, this travel insurance shall be part of the site visitor's reimbursable expenses.

Host entities must reimburse onsite evaluation team members directly within 45 days following submission of appropriate expense vouchers. Rates and methods of reimbursement (mileage, lodging, and per diem) are based upon local regulations to which the host entity must adhere. Host entities may also provide prepaid airline tickets to site team members and/or arrange for direct billing of lodging and/or meals. Lodging facilities must be equipped with full automatic sprinkler protection. The extent to which these arrangements are made is the prerogative of the host entity.

IFSAC Program Evaluation Team Code of Ethics

1. Members shall demonstrate the highest standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, honesty, and fortitude in all dealings with entity members, before, during, and after a program evaluation, to enhance fire science education internationally.
2. Members shall serve in a manner as to not receive undue personal gain from the performance of their official duties as IFSAC representatives.
3. Members shall avoid any interest or activity which is in conflict with the conduct of our official duties as IFSAC representatives, such as serving as a consultant prior to or after a program evaluation, or accepting a position of employment from the entity.
4. Members shall conduct their assessment of the entity in a manner that ensures that the entity is administering its system in a fair and equitable manner.
5. Members will treat entity and fire service representatives with respect, concern, courtesy, and responsiveness, recognizing that the improved service of an entity's education system is more important than infliction of punishment for the sake of noncompliance.
6. Members shall seek professional excellence and development through continued training as a program evaluation team participant.
7. Members shall approach their duties as IFSAC representatives with a positive attitude and constructively support open channels of communication, creativity, dedication, and compassion when making decisions regarding entity accreditation.
8. Members shall respect and protect the privileged information to which access is gained in the course of our official duties as IFSAC representatives.
9. Members shall exercise whatever discretionary authority allowed by IFSAC bylaws to promote an accreditation process for degree programs that meet or exceed the various levels of competency identified in standards adopted by the Degree Assembly.
10. Members shall respect, support, study, and when necessary work to improve IFSAC bylaws and criteria for accreditation for improved quality and efficiency in the entity and better service the constituency it serves.¹

¹ ASPA format for Code of Ethics Borrowed.

Characteristics of Successful Program Evaluation Team Members¹

Background – Program evaluation team members have sufficient general education and special training specific to a professional discipline to form a solid foundation for program evaluation. Site team members may be either generalists or content specialists who are themselves practitioners or educators within the field of fire service training, education, and certification.

Program Evaluation Training – The International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) uses only program evaluation team members who have successfully completed an IFSAC sponsored program evaluation team member training workshop.

Attitude – Effective program evaluation team members demonstrate maturity, objectivity, diplomacy, and dedication. They project an image of professionalism both in behavior and appearance. Program evaluation team members appreciate the confidential nature of the task and understand the need for self initiative, for a cooperative attitude, for an analytic approach to the task, and for necessary degrees of flexibility.

Knowledge – Effective program evaluation team members have a thorough understanding of fire education and of the accreditation process. They have sufficient general and special background to be able to exercise appropriate judgment.

Skills – Program evaluation team members are skilled in interviewing, interpersonal communications, self expression, note-taking, and maintaining objectivity. They are skillful in dealing with attitudinal problems that may be presented by those being interviewed. Through experience and education, program evaluation team members have developed capacities for deductive reasoning and logical analysis. They are skilled in writing and accurate in recall.

Physical Factors – The physical condition of the program evaluation team members permits them to do whatever is necessary to conduct the onsite program evaluation in the particular locale and within the specified period.

Empowerment: A By-Product of Being Selected²

Accrediting bodies, as well as program evaluation team members, must realize that program evaluation team members benefit professionally from serving on teams. Some educators currently use "empowerment" as shorthand for this benefit. Onsite evaluation visits are rare learning opportunities. The learning that takes place often enables an onsite evaluation team member to become a more effective participant in his/her entity. By granting these opportunities to individuals, accrediting bodies provide them with unique opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge.

IFSAC, by the very act of naming someone as a program evaluation team member, contributes to the professional stature of that person. Sometimes that added stature is evident only to those who are being visited; sometimes colleagues respond differently because of this apparent vote of approval. Empowerment, then, is not necessarily limited to what can be learned and applied; it can also involve enhanced respect. Program evaluation team members selected and trained by IFSAC should utilize this opportunity to the fullest extent. While avoiding the perception of "stealing" information, the learning

experience itself should provide the program evaluation team members with a professional upgrade.

Conflicts of Interest³

Onsite program evaluation team members must be "impartial, objective and without conflict of interest." Some basic definitions appear to have wide acceptance: (1) visitors will not be current or past employees of the institution/program being evaluated; (2) visitors will not have graduated from the institution/program being evaluated; and (3) mentors who have assisted an entity in preparing for their initial accreditation will not serve as program evaluation team members for the initial accreditation visit. IFSAC will not place on a team, individuals who have openly predetermined their decisions before the program evaluation.

Unknown conflicts of interest can be discovered if an institution/program has the opportunity to respond to the recommended program evaluation team. Often this is the only way an accrediting body can learn that a prospective evaluation team member was a failed candidate for a position there, or had publicly said negative things about the institution or its programs, or had just completed a private consistency there. Each team member should also be reminded that even the appearance of conflicts of interest could weaken the credibility of the evaluation. Therefore, each program evaluation team member must take responsibility to inform the entity of possible conflicts of interest.

Issues of Consulting⁴

Program evaluation team members walk a thin line. In some accrediting bodies, they are encouraged to consult as well as evaluate. IFSAC encourages a frank discussion, and the opportunity for program evaluation team members to offer suggestions to the entity.

One appearance of apparent conflict of interest, however, is when an entity, soon after the visit, hires one of the program evaluation team members as a consultant. IFSAC requires a grace period (at least one year) before program evaluation team members can serve as consultants for an institution/program they just evaluated. Any program evaluation team member who appears to be using program evaluations as a way to establish a consulting clientele will be removed from the pool of eligible program evaluators. If a team member intends to do consulting business with the involved entity in the future they should voluntarily remove themselves from the team.

Public Disclosure and Confidentiality

It is critical for a program evaluation team to maintain the confidence of the institution and people within it. Team members often learn things that are not meant to be shared. The program evaluation team members must protect that confidence on site and away from it; the latter is as critical as the former. Program evaluation team members cannot interject themselves into the problems of an entity or program. They can observe, assess, and

describe these problems, but they are not there to solve them during the site visit. If it is not published in the program evaluation report, keep it to yourself.

It is imperative that program evaluation team members be viewed as impartial, professional, and sincerely interested in the success and quality of both IFSAC and the entity. Onsite evaluation team members must be very sensitive to their language, both when soliciting information and when giving opinions, especially when discussing evaluative issues and observations regarding the entity's compliance with IFSAC accreditation criteria. Words with negative connotations should be avoided, as well as reprimands and lecturing, when ascertaining how faculty, students, and others perceive the program, its policies, and processes.

Onsite evaluation team members should strive, through both verbal and non-verbal communication, to make the persons with whom they are talking feel comfortable about discussing the relative strengths and areas of concern, as well as what they contribute to or receive from the program. If notes are taken during the interviews or discussions, they should be recorded unobtrusively to avoid interfering with developing and maintaining good rapport.⁵

This section applies equally to all onsite evaluation team members, readers, observers, auditors, visitors, and anyone else accompanying the site team.

IFSAC Entity Site Visit - Degree Assembly Code of Ethics

1. Entities shall demonstrate the highest standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, honesty, and fortitude in all dealings with evaluation team members, before, during, and after an evaluation, to enhance fire science education internationally.
2. Entities shall avoid any interest or activity which is in conflict with the conduct of the evaluation team's official duties as IFSAC representatives, such as requesting them to serve as consultants prior to an evaluation, or discussing positions of employment with the entity.
3. Entities shall present the program evaluation information in a manner that allows the evaluation team to determine that the entity is administering its system in a fair and equitable manner.
4. Entities will treat evaluation team members with respect, concern, courtesy, and responsiveness, recognizing that the improved service of an entity's education system is more important than infliction of undue pressure and argument to achieve accreditation.
5. Entity representatives should seek professional excellence and development through continued training in the areas of preparing for and receiving an evaluation.

6. Entities shall approach the evaluation and evaluation team with a positive attitude and constructively support open channels of communication, creativity, dedication, and compassion when undergoing an evaluation.
7. Entities shall respect, support, study, and when necessary work to improve IFSAC bylaws and criteria for accreditation for improved quality and efficiency in the entity and better service the constituency it serves.
8. If the entity and evaluation team and/or other IFSAC representatives are faced with unresolved issues where there is an obvious difference of opinion, it is the entity's responsibility to voice their concerns and/or appeal of such procedures in a civil, professional manner that is in accordance with IFSAC policy.

Evaluation Team Leader Responsibilities

The evaluation team leader has responsibilities beyond those of the other team members. These responsibilities primarily lie in the coordination and reporting of the evaluation. Communication is the key when working with both the entity and the other team members.

Scheduling the Site Visit

Although IFSAC Administration will schedule the onsite visit, the team leader will be contacted for availability. Courtesy would dictate that any adjustments in the scheduled dates are concurred with other team members.

Working Out the Schedule

Once the dates of the visit are established, it will be necessary for the team leader to contact the entity and plan an agenda or schedule. A model agenda is contained in Appendix B.

Contacting and Communicating with Team Members

Constant communication between the team leader and evaluation team members is needed throughout the process on items such as schedules, reports, and additional information. Program evaluations are an ongoing process, as should be communication.

Contacting and Communicating with the Entity

Constant communication between the team leader and the entity is needed throughout the process on items such as schedules, reports, and additional information. Program evaluations are an ongoing process, as should be communication. The team leader becomes the point of contact for the entity once the evaluation process has begun, until DABOG action. The team leader must communicate completely and effectively with the entity on all items.

Communication with IFSAC Administration and DABOG

The team leader is the voice of the team when presenting reports and information to the DABOG. Individual team members should communicate their desires to the team leader, who will then forward them to IFSAC Administration.

Approval of the Report

Once the report has been approved by the team members, the team leader will make a report and recommendation to the Degree Assembly Board of Governors. The report must conform to the requirements outlined in the IFSAC Degree Assembly Bylaws and adopted procedures.

PREPARING FOR THE ACCREDITATION EVALUATION

The Committee on Site Teams, through IFSAC Administration, will schedule all program evaluations. Onsite visits are scheduled upon the entity's completion of all requirements listed in the Degree Assembly bylaws and *Degree Assembly Procedure for Scheduling a Program Evaluation* (Appendix A).

At the time a program evaluation is requested, the host entity must provide the name, address, and telephone number of a local contact person who can assist the onsite evaluation team members with travel arrangements. It is the responsibility of the host entity to contact the individual onsite evaluation team members in order to coordinate travel plans, lodging, and other logistical aspects of the visit. This should be done well in advance of the scheduled site visit (two to six weeks).

Each evaluation team member should carefully review the *Criteria for the Accreditation of Fire Related Degree Granting Programs of the IFSAC Degree Assembly* prior to participating in an evaluation. Evaluation team members should also study applications and support materials which have been submitted by the entity seeking accreditation to determine the apparent degree of compliance with the *Criteria for the Accreditation of Fire Related Degree Granting Programs of the IFSAC Degree Assembly*. A self-study is required to be included in your information. Review it carefully, since their item analysis is very similar to the items you will be studying during the visit. In addition, evaluation team members should review the *Degree Assembly Procedure for Scheduling a Program Evaluation* (see Appendix A) to be sure that they have all the necessary materials for the visit. A notation of questions and concerns should also be made to speed up the interview and information gathering tasks during the visit.

The program evaluation team leader should identify key entity personnel and confirm with the host entity their availability for interviews during the visit. The entity seeking accreditation will distribute the self-study and support materials to the members of the onsite evaluation team at least forty-five (45) days prior to the scheduled visit.

While the host entity's application for accreditation should include all materials essential for review, if it is determined that additional materials are needed prior to the visit, IFSAC

Administration should make this request to the entity seeking accreditation in writing well enough in advance of the onsite evaluation so that the onsite evaluation team may receive any additional information at least ten working days in advance of the scheduled visit.

If you, as an evaluation team member, need additional information for review prior to the visit, please request this through your evaluation team leader, who will compile this information and inform Administration of what is needed.

THE ACCREDITATION SITE VISIT

Onsite visits for initial accreditation will typically be three days depending upon the size and complexity of the program. Reaccreditation onsite evaluations will be for two days unless there are extenuating circumstances. An agenda for the onsite evaluation should be arranged between the evaluation team leader and the program director (or other program official) representing the entity seeking accreditation (see *Model Program Evaluation Agenda*, Appendix B).

The model agenda outlines important events which should take place during the onsite evaluation. The agenda may be modified by the evaluation team leader in coordination with the host entity due to local circumstances. This should be done well before the visit is to take place. The evaluation team leader should then furnish a copy of the agenda to each member of the onsite evaluation team prior to arrival. Officials representing the entity seeking accreditation should take part in the preparation of the agenda so that it accommodates the characteristics of local facilities and allows for scheduled interviews with appropriate faculty, students, and administrators.

Arrival

Upon arrival, the evaluation team leader will contact the entity representative for any final modifications to the schedule. After arrival and check-in, site team members should have a private meeting to discuss any strategies or assignments for the onsite evaluation. The schedule should be reviewed at this time as well.

Site Team Work Area

The onsite evaluation team should be provided a private work area (e.g., conference room) where they can discuss issues without interruption. If possible, the room should also have a telephone and computer connected to the internet.

Preliminary Meeting with Entity Staff

Following an opening conference with entity and program officials to state the purpose of the evaluation, and onsite evaluation team expectations and needs, it is acceptable for the individual onsite team members to undertake separate interviews and visits within the

program and the entity. Onsite team members should plan to come together for conferences and interviews as necessary.

Visit and Review of Support Services

The team should take the time to review any support services that may be relied upon by the entity to carry out their mission. Onsite team members should feel comfortable that these services provide the support indicated by the entity.

Staff Interviews

During an onsite evaluation, onsite evaluation team members should interview agency personnel, such as the director or program chair, department staff and/or faculty, the academic dean, commission or advisory committee, and students.

Program Director

The individual responsible for the overall program should be interviewed separately from staff. Onsite evaluation team members should watch for items such as consistency with other employee views, compatibility with written procedures, and a thorough understanding of the program.

Faculty

The onsite evaluation team members should interview enough instructors to ensure overall entity understanding and commitment to written policies and procedures, as well as consistency with each other and the program director.

Advisory Board

The onsite evaluation team members should attend an advisory board meeting or meet with advisory board members to ensure that the advisory committee is representative of the population served and that they have input in program planning.

Student Interviews

Probably the most effective means of finding out when procedures and policies may not be consistent is through interviews with students participating in the program. Interviews with students should be conducted without the presence of representatives of the entity seeking accreditation. Interviews should be short, and care should be taken not to pressure them, or interrupt the student's academic requirements. They should be made to understand that their interview has nothing to do with their individual performance and how critical their information is to the overall quality of the program.

Conducting Interviews

To gain the maximum utilization of time during the visit, each onsite evaluation team member should have a strong familiarization with interview tactics. This will help ensure an efficient interview and information-gathering session, as well as present a positive image of IFSAC to the staff and professionals of the entity. Following are some tips for conducting successful interviews:

- *Punctual* - Be on time. If individuals have been scheduled to appear before the onsite evaluation team, they may be nervous. Keeping them waiting is both discourteous and may increase their nervous tension. Professionalism is increased by being on time.
- *Adaptable* - Be flexible in manner, adjusting to different personalities of the people being interviewed. Be prepared to change the scheduled or planned questions based on new areas that may present themselves in the interview. Expand on areas that appear to be strong in the individual.
- *Courteous* - These people are not on trial. Treat them with professional courtesy, and remember that they are helping you, and may be doing this voluntarily.
- *Personable* - Be well-groomed, neat, and friendly. Don't look like a police investigator after a criminal. Allow the environment to be relaxed.
- *Poised* - Regardless of what information comes out in the interview, remain poised and direct. Don't act surprised by information, and don't allow or force the individual to feel that he or she has disclosed some unknown secret.
- *Persistent* - Be persistent without being aggravating. Continue on a point, short of becoming overbearing, to make sure you have obtained complete information.
- *Notes* - Take good notes, and take them continuously. Don't jump to your pad on a particular issue, making them feel they just "spilled the beans." Good notes allow for a good report, and make documentation for the report much easier.
- *Attitude* - Be positive. You're not there to convince the people that you know more than they do. Remain positive about their program, even in light of negative information.
- *A good listener* - Listen. Don't lead the individual. Remember that they are providing you with information, not vise-versa.
- *Unbiased* - Remain unbiased on issues with which you don't agree. Consider before a site visit begins that there may be some items about a program you do

not like. Keep your opinions to yourself and judge things on the merit of the accreditation criteria.

- *Concerned* - Present the impression that you are concerned and appreciative of the information being provided, that you have a deep desire to help improve the program, and that you care about it.
- *Discerning* - You have to evaluate the reliability of what is being told. Mentally compare the information being voiced to you in comparison to written procedures.
- *Knowledgeable* - Allow the individual being interviewed to recognize that you know the subject as well. This will build a bond and encourage honesty.
- *Impressive* - Make a good first impression, as well as a good closing impression. In closing, thank each individual for his or her time.
- *Fair* - Be fair in your questions, recognizing that some questions are fair to ask certain individuals, and others are not. Allow the individual to express items without a question, such as closing remarks. This will allow the individual to feel as if he or she has contributed without request, allowing for some surprise information.
- *Be Yourself* - More than likely, you perform a similar job in your state or entity. Don't present the impression that you feel high and mighty. Someone may be interviewing you for the same reason someday.

The Exit Conference

The agenda should include a private onsite evaluation team meeting before the exit conference to reach consensus on findings, to continue preparation of the final report, and to designate onsite evaluation team member roles for the final conference. The agenda should also indicate prompt closure at the end of the exit conference, with the immediate departure of the team.

A final exit conference takes place between the onsite evaluation team and the program director, as well as any other principles the program director wishes to involve. This is the most challenging segment of the onsite evaluation during which the onsite evaluation team explains to the program director exactly what they have found. To prepare for the exit conference, onsite evaluation members should review their findings with other members of the evaluation team. Make sure all essential information is available to make a decision regarding each criterion in the *Criteria for the Accreditation of Fire-Related Degree-Granting Programs of the IFSAC Degree Assembly*. Each NO statement on the checklist should be accompanied by a recommendation or requirement on a *Final Action Report* form (Appendix D) and a rationale for the recommendation or requirement. Decide whether any suggestions related to "weak" areas in the program will be made. Decide how the onsite evaluation members will divide the information to be conveyed in the exit conference (who will say what).

The evaluation team leader begins the exit conference by expressing appreciation for the hospitality extended and the arrangements made by the program director and other representatives of the host entity. The evaluation team leader then reviews the manner in which the exit conference will take place. The evaluation team leader explains that the purpose of the onsite evaluation was to assess the program's compliance with the *Criteria for the Accreditation of Fire-Related Degree-Granting Programs of the IFSAC Degree Assembly* at the time of the evaluation and that the evaluation team will now review its findings.

The evaluation team leader should begin the discussion by listing the strengths of the program. Identifying strengths as well as weaknesses provides the host entity with a more balanced report. This should be followed by a discussion of the specific areas related to the *Criteria for the Accreditation of Fire-Related Degree-Granting Programs of the IFSAC Degree Assembly* in which the program is weak, and how to improve in these areas. The host entity should be informed in detail of all findings before the onsite evaluation team leaves the site. There should be no surprises when the entity seeking accreditation receives the final report.

During the exit conference the program director and others should be allowed to ask any questions and/or make any comments that they wish. However, the discussion should avoid debating the accreditation criteria or the evaluation team's findings. The representatives of the host entity should have the opportunity to understand *why* any deficiencies were cited. The host entity should also have an opportunity to clarify the findings at this point.

In closing the exit conference, the evaluation team leader should explain that the evaluation visit team members are fact-finders only and that the IFSAC Degree Assembly Board of Governors will make the final decision on accreditation status. The evaluation team leader should also explain the next steps in the accreditation process and any corrective actions which remain at the end of the evaluation.

The evaluation team leader then thanks the host once again and lets them know that the evaluation team's responsibilities are over and if they have any further questions regarding the evaluation, they should contact IFSAC Administration.

Deficiencies, Recommendations, and Requirements

The evaluation site team leader will make the determination of when to disclose any deficiencies, recommendations, or requirements that are discovered during the reading of the self-study or during the onsite evaluation to the entity requesting the program evaluation. The following shall serve as guidelines of when and how the deficiencies, recommendations, or requirements are revealed and recorded.

1. If there are major deficiencies found during the reading of the self-study, the onsite evaluation will be postponed and the entity will be asked to provide a more complete self-study. The entity will be advised that it is highly

recommended that they work with a mentor that has previously completed a successful self-study to assist with the self-study revision.

2. If there are criteria found during the reading of the self-study that need further explanation prior to the onsite evaluation, the evaluation team leader will contact Administration to request the additional information in writing from the program.
3. If perceived deficiencies, recommendations, or requirements were due to unclear or incomplete information in the self-study, but it is found that the entity is actually meeting the criteria, then these items will not be noted in the program evaluation report or on a *Final Action Report form*.
4. If deficiencies, recommendations, or requirements are found during the reading of the self-study or during the onsite evaluation, but are corrected before the end of the onsite evaluation, they still should be noted in the program evaluation report and on final action reports as appropriate.

Review of Report Forms

Each onsite evaluation member must approve and sign the report form. It is suggested that before leaving the entity's site, the onsite evaluation team completes a rough draft of the report. After this, the evaluation team leader can return home and organize the report to its final form. The report should then be mailed/faxed to the remaining onsite evaluation team members for concurrence. The final program evaluation report is to include:

1. Narrative report.
2. Final action reports for any recommendations or requirements noted in the narrative report.
3. Completed *Degree Program Evaluator Checklist* and verification of the items listed on the last page of this checklist.
4. Supporting documentation as appropriate.

AFTER THE SITE VISIT

The evaluation team leader is responsible for the completion and filing of the team report in draft form with IFSAC Administration within thirty (30) days of the site visit. Before endorsing it by signature, each onsite evaluation team member must review the final report to ascertain the following:

1. It is legible, clear and accurate, without important omissions.
2. Personal or unverified observations have been removed.
3. Editorial improvements have been made as necessary.
4. Deficiencies cited are supported in the body of the report, each references one or more specific criteria for degree accreditation and the deficiencies (recommendation or requirement) are noted on a *Final Action Report* form.

IFSAC Administration is responsible for forwarding the report along with any comments that were received from the entity seeking accreditation to the Degree Assembly Board of Governors thirty (30) days prior to the next scheduled meeting of the DABOG. The report and any correspondence received will be reviewed by the DABOG, who will then make a decision. The entity will then receive notice of the DABOG's decision in writing thirty (30) days after the meeting.

APPENDICES

Appendix A - IFSAC Degree Assembly Procedures for Scheduling a Program Evaluation

Appendix B - Model Program Evaluation Agenda

Appendix C - Model Program Evaluation Report

Appendix D – Final Action Report

Appendix E – Degree Program Evaluator Selection Procedure

Appendix F – Reaccreditation Program Evaluation Policy

Appendix G - Timeline

Endnotes

APPENDIX A - IFSAC DEGREE ASSEMBLY PROCEDURES FOR SCHEDULING A PROGRAM EVALUATION

IFSAC Degree Assembly Procedures for Scheduling a Program Evaluation

Note: *The following process will take a minimum of ninety (90) days after a completed self-study is received and must take place while school is in session.*

INSTITUTION RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Step 1: The institution notifies IFSAC Administration of their intent to become accredited.
- Step 2: The institution receives, from IFSAC staff, an *Application for Accreditation and Criteria for the Accreditation of Fire-Related Degree-Granting Programs*.
- Step 3: The institution returns the completed *Application for Accreditation* to the IFSAC Administrative Office. When an institution is requesting accreditation for more than one degree program, it **MUST** submit an application for **EACH** degree to be considered.
- Step 4: The institution conducts the self-study using the *IFSAC Degree Assembly Criteria for the Accreditation of Fire-Related Degree-Granting Programs*. The institution must complete and return, to IFSAC Administrative Office, the self-study **at least 90 workdays prior** to the requested site visit start date.
- Step 5: The institution prepares five additional copies of the completed self-study, including all supporting documentation. Once IFSAC Administration confirms the evaluation team, the institution seeking accreditation will mail the additional copies to each onsite evaluation team member (2 or 3, as applicable) and reader (2).
- The self-study may be submitted in print or electronic format.
 - Electronic submissions must be by CD, DVD, thumb drive/jump drive, or email.
 - If submitted by email, all files should be in one compressed (zipped) folder or a PDF portfolio so that all items download at once. [Note: File servers of the recipient may prohibit large file downloads.]
 - Submission via “cloud” platforms or Dropbox or sources will not be accepted.

IFSAC RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Step 1: Upon receipt of an institution’s intent to become accredited, IFSAC staff shall send an *Application for Accreditation and Criteria for the Accreditation of Fire-Related Degree-Granting Programs*.
- Step 2: Upon receipt of the completed application and application fee (may be invoiced) for accreditation from the institution, IFSAC staff shall verify the degree(s) to be accredited and the dates for the site visit.

Step 3: IFSAC staff will update the institution file.

Step 5: IFSAC staff will initiate the procedures for selection of evaluators. **Final confirmation of onsite evaluation team members will not be completed until the application for accreditation and self-study documents are received by IFSAC Administration.**

APPENDIX B - MODEL PROGRAM EVALUATION AGENDA

IFSAC Onsite Team Schedule
_____ Community College
Fire Science Technology, A.A.S. Degree

March 21, 2011 – March 25, 2011

Monday, March 21, 2011

2:00 PM Evaluation team member #1 arrives at _____ airport
2:40 PM Evaluation team member #2 arrives at _____ airport
2:55 PM Evaluation team member #3 arrives at _____ airport

Onsite team members check into hotel and prepare for onsite evaluation.

Tuesday, March 22, 2011

8:10 AM: Opening Interview with College representatives (President, Dean, Department Staff, other college officials decided upon by Onsite Team Leader and hosting entity).

9:10 – 11:30 AM Evaluate Classes – Meet instructors – Interview Students / Review Documentation

12:00 – 1:30 PM Lunch

1:30 PM Review Library to examine holdings

2:30 PM Meet with Student Service Representatives

3:30 – 5:00 PM Work documentation and discuss criteria/self-study

Wednesday, March 23, 2011

8:00 – 10:00 AM Observe Fire Science Advisory Committee – Meet with committee members

10:00 – 11:30 AM Meet with Dean and other Staff Members

12:00 – 1:00 PM Lunch

1:00 – 5:00 PM Work on report / discuss findings / meet with college officials as needed

Thursday, March 24, 2011

8:00 – 11:30 AM Meet with College Officials as needed / Complete Evaluation Report / Complete Final Action Reports as needed and prepare for exit interview

12:00 – 1:00 PM Lunch

2:00 Exit Interview with College Officials

Onsite Team Members leave late afternoon or following morning.

APPENDIX C - MODEL PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT



International Fire Service Accreditation Congress

San Antonio College

Fire Science Technology Associate in Science Degree Program

Accreditation Evaluation Report International Fire Service Accreditation Congress March 3-5, 2008

International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) Team:

Visiting team:

Randy Souther, Aims Community College
Lee Silvi, Lakeland Community College
James Pharr, Eastern Kentucky University

Readers:

Whitney Innes, Kentucky Community and Technical College System
Doug Wood, Public Board Member

The onsite evaluation team arrived in San Antonio on Sunday, March 2 and over the next three days conducted an onsite evaluation review of the San Antonio Fire Science Program. The San Antonio College is a comprehensive community college and is part of the Alamo Community College District. San Antonio College has an average semester enrollment of 22,000 credit students and is the largest single-campus community college in Texas and one of the largest in the United States. The Fire Science Program, in addition to the EMS and Criminal Justice programs, fall under the Protective Services Department. Fire Science offers certificate training and three A.A.S degrees. The Fire Science Department is seeking reaccreditation for an A.A.S. Degree in Fire Science and an A.A.S. Degree in Fire Arson Investigation. The self-study was exemplary and our program evaluation only confirmed the details outlined in the self-study. After the completion of the onsite evaluation we found all requirements of the "Criteria for Accreditation" to be met and offered four recommendations to further strengthen the program during our exit interview (see attached).

The following is a summary of our evaluation:

Monday, March 3

We met with Dr. Robert Zeigler, President of San Antonio College. Dr. Zeigler welcomed us to the college and offered to assist us with our review in any way possible. He confirmed that he, along with the rest of the college administration, is very supportive of the career and technical programs at the college including the Fire Science Program. Dr. Zeigler discussed the future plans/vision of building a First Responder training center off-campus that would house the Fire Science Program further confirming the college's long-term commitment to the Fire Science Program.

The onsite evaluation team met with Gary Fox and J.D. Richardson Monday morning to discuss program specifics, obtain clarification on some of the self-study documentation, and better understand the programs offered by the Fire Science Department. Gary and J.D. were very helpful and informative regarding the program and were great hosts throughout the evaluation process.

Marcela Castaneda is the administrative support person for the Protective Services Department. Marcela showed Lee Silvi the student and faculty records, the storage area, and audio visual equipment used by the department. Lee was very impressed with the record keeping system established by Marcela and the college's procedure used to double check graduation applications.

The Fire Administration II class met on Monday afternoon. The onsite evaluation team audited the class for a short time and also spoke with some of the students. Some of the students were attending class to acquire learning credits for state certification requirements while others were taking the class as a requirement of the degree. The class was made up of a diverse group of students including a captain from a career department, students from volunteer departments, and students pursuing the fire service as a career.

The remainder of Monday was spent visiting different areas of the college to include the library, office area, student advising area (confidential area), and student center. We also reviewed syllabi, master course documents, and transcripts of graduates to verify students are meeting program requirements.

Tuesday, March 04

Tuesday started with a meeting with the VA Benefits advisor, Mr. James Demasi. Mr. Demasi explained how he works with Fire Science students that qualify for VA Benefits and that want to pursue the Fire Science Program. Mr. Demasi stated that he has a great working relationship with the Fire Science area and was very complimentary of Gary and J.D.

Following our discussion with Mr. Demasi, we met with Mr. Singh from the Library. Mr. Singh demonstrated how students affiliated with San Antonio College can access thousands of documents online. Mr. Singh also confirmed that the Fire Science Program has direct input in resource purchases for the library and have a \$10,000 budget for such purchases.

The rest of Tuesday morning was spent visiting Fire Academy locations, reviewing the equipment, academy file locations, and auditing a fire academy class. We also observed two counseling sessions of fire academy students and Lee audited part of a fire academy lecture. The equipment, supplies, and classrooms were all more than adequate to meet the needs of the program.

Tuesday afternoon started with a meeting with Emma Mendiola, Interim Dean of Student Affairs. Dean Mendiola discussed the role of Student Affairs and the student discipline

process. Dean Mendiola also mentioned how impressed she was of the Fire Science Program.

Lee Silvi met with Mr. Tomas Campos from the Financial Aid Office. Mr. Campos reviewed the financial aid process, grants and scholarships available, and how San Antonio's financial aid requirements are more stringent than most colleges in the state. Approximately 45% of the student body is on financial aid. Mr. Campos provided Lee with a copy of the financial aid process that he put together for the college department chairs for quick reference. Mr. Campos also confirmed that student records are maintained in locked files. Mr. Campos, as most others on the campus that we spoke with, complemented the Fire Science Program.

Tuesday afternoon Jim audited the Tactics and Strategy class and met with one of the students. The student is finishing his degree this semester. The student confirmed that course content material is very applicable to the duties expected in the fire service.

Wednesday, March 5

Wednesday morning was spent completing the evaluation team reports and meeting with the administration for the exit interview.

The evaluation team unanimously recommends reaccreditation of San Antonio College for the two degrees requested.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Souther Date

Lee Silvi Date

Jim Pharr Date

APPENDIX D - FINAL ACTION REPORT

**International Fire Service Accreditation Congress
FINAL ACTION REPORT**

_____ Requirement _____ Recommendation

Name of Institution	
Degree Program involved	
EVALUATION AREA	
CONDITION NUMBER	
CONDITION	
Format requirements	
Evidence that condition has been met should be sent to:	
By the following date	
If evidence that condition has been met cannot be completed by due date, contact:	

APPENDIX E -DEGREE PROGRAM EVALUATOR SELECTION PROCEDURE

International Fire Service Accreditation Congress Degree Program Evaluator Selection Procedure

PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the qualifications, selection criteria, and procedure for selecting Degree Program Evaluators.

QUALIFICATIONS

Degree Program Evaluation Team Member Qualifications

An evaluation team member shall be a member Emeritus or any person appointed by the DABOG who meets the following qualifications:

- Possess a degree - preferably in a fire-related training or educational area.
- Have attended degree program evaluator training within the last three years, or after initial training, a team member must have attended refresher training every three years.

Exceptions to Training Qualifications for Team Members

Until such time that refresher training becomes available by a distance learning method:

Emeritus members and past/present public members who have served as a site team member or site team leader at least three times in a three-year period may be exempted from the refresher training requirements for a like number of years.

Administration will maintain a list of qualified evaluators.

Degree Program Evaluation Team Leader Qualifications

The team leader shall possess the qualifications and experiences listed above and shall have:

- Served as a degree program evaluation team member.
- Successfully completed degree program evaluation team leader training within the last three years; or after initial training, a team leader must have attended refresher training every three years.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Degree program evaluators shall:

- Not act as a compensated consultant to the institution in any manner pertaining to accreditation.
- Not be from the same state, province, or geographical boundary; (for example, college A is in Portland, Oregon and college B is College A's competitor right across the border in Vancouver, WA.).

- Not be a graduate or past or present employee of the institution seeking accreditation.
- Not have received any compensation from the institution seeking accreditation.
- Possess peer review capability - in terms of having relevant experience of appropriate programs, student population, etc. (for example, evaluators must have experience of program length and diversity of the type they will be evaluating).

SELECTION PROCEDURE

Step 1: Within 30 days following annual Degree Assembly site team training, IFSAC Administration shall compile a list of people qualified to participate in the accreditation evaluation process for the next year (annual training to next annual training). The list shall be compiled into three qualification categories (site team leader, site team experienced member, and site team member without experience) in priority order based on the person's last site team participation (not including reader).

Step 2: IFSAC Administration reviews the list of qualified degree program evaluators, and selects five (5) qualified evaluators, and two (2) qualified team leaders. During reaccreditation site visits, the members of the last site team shall be ineligible for the current visit unless circumstances mandate a prior visitor to be a member of the team.

Leaders and visitors should be rotated from the top to the bottom of the list (prioritized) based on visits completed. IFSAC Administration should attempt to include one qualified member on each visit who has not attended a visit previously.

Step 3: Readers will be designated as alternate members of the site team. One of the selected team leaders shall be designated as the primary team leader and the other as the alternate. If a site team member/leader must cancel because of an emergency, IFSAC Administration will notify the appropriate alternate as soon as possible. The entity will make travel arrangements for the alternate.

Step 4: IFSAC Administration indicates the names of prospective team leaders, site visit team members, and readers on the list and places these names in priority order from one (1) through five (5) (#1 is first priority).

Step 5: IFSAC Administration should provide the entity representative with the list compiled for approval at least 75 days prior to the requested site visit dates. Evaluators on the list shall be placed on the list in priority order, including two site team leaders and five site team members/readers, and copies made for recording purposes.

Step 6: The entity representative reviews the list, strikes any names that are unacceptable, and returns the approved list within 10 days to IFSAC Administration.

- Step 7: IFSAC Administration contacts each member on the list, and the alternate, to verify availability based on site visit dates identified on the entity's application.
- Step 8: IFSAC Administration determines who will be the team leader, team members, and readers.
- Step 9: IFSAC Administration sends a confirmation letter containing entity contact information, pertinent site visit information, evaluation team leader/members/reader contact information, etc., to entity representative, site visitors, and readers.

In the case of a reaccreditation where only two members will attend the site visit, IFSAC Administration shall use the same process outlined in the steps above.

International Fire Service Accreditation Congress

DEGREE EVALUATOR QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

NAME: _____

EMPLOYING INSTITUTION: _____

STATE: _____

Does this person possess a degree - preferably in a fire-related training or educational area?

Yes _____

No _____

Has this person attended IFSAC evaluator/leader training within the last three years, or after initial training, has this person attended refresher training every three years.

Yes _____

No _____

If the answer to all of the above is "yes", this person is qualified to be a(n) evaluator/leader. Is this person qualified?

Yes _____

No _____

APPENDIX F - REACCREDITATION PROGRAM EVALUATION POLICY

IFSAC Degree Assembly Reaccreditation Program Evaluation Policy

Note: *The following process will take a minimum of ninety (90) days after a completed self-study is received and must take place while school is in session.*

INSTITUTION RESPONSIBILITIES:

Step 1: Institution submits an application for reaccreditation along with a modified self-study document to IFSAC Administration 90 days prior to the requested site visit start date.

Step 2: Institution conducts a complete self-study.

At a minimum, the modified self-study for reaccreditation must address the following items:

- a. Substantive changes that have occurred in the program since the last site visit.
- b. How the program addressed any requirements or recommendations noted at the last site visit.
- c. Substantive changes that have occurred within the college that affect the program since the last site visit.
- d. Address accreditation criteria 23.4.10 (April 2011) or accreditation criteria G23.5.6 (April 2017).

The institution must comply with all the criteria for accreditation and will be held to that standard during the site visit.

Step 3: Institution works with evaluation team leader regarding an agenda for the onsite evaluation and with onsite team members for travel arrangements.

IFSAC RESPONSIBILITIES:

Step 1: Following the *Degree Program Evaluator Selection Procedure*, IFSAC Administration schedules evaluation team members..

Step 2: IFSAC Administration works with the institution to finalize the dates for the site visit.

Step 3: The institution prepares and mails additional copies of the modified self-study documents to each site team member and reader.

- Evaluation teams for reaccreditation will typically consist of two members and three readers.
- Onsite evaluations for reaccreditation will typically be scheduled for two days not including travel time.
- Onsite evaluations can be scheduled for three days if requested by the institution.

Step 4: The evaluation team members may request information, documentation, or to visit with appropriate college personnel regarding any items listed in the *Criteria for the Accreditation of Fire-Related Degree-Granting Programs* during the onsite evaluation – not just those items addressed in the modified self-study document. Additional information should be requested through the evaluation team leader.

APPENDIX G - TIMELINE

IFSAC Degree Assembly

Site Visit Timeline for Accreditation/Reaccreditation

- Program requesting accreditation notifies IFSAC Administration of their intent to become accredited.
- IFSAC Administration sends program an *Application for Accreditation* and the *Criteria for the Accreditation of Fire-Related Degree-Granting Programs*.
- Institution conducts self-study.

Minimum of 90 Days Prior to Site Visit Date Requested

- Program submits application for accreditation, completed self-study, and payment to IFSAC Administration.
- IFSAC Administration verifies the following:
 - Program is a voting member (Bylaw 21.4.1.1.1 & 22.5.2)
 - Program has at least one graduate from the program (Bylaw 22.5.6)
 - Verify the degree(s) to be accredited (*Procedures for Scheduling a Site Visit*)
 - Dates for the site visit (*Procedures for Scheduling a Site Visit*)
 - Program has regional accreditation or state sanction (Bylaw 22.5.4)
 - Self-study meets initial review for completeness (Bylaw 22.5.5)

Minimum of 60 Days Prior to Site Visit

- Onsite evaluators & readers selected per the *Degree Program Evaluator Selection Procedure*.
- Program forwards contact information to Administration.
- Administration forwards contact information for onsite evaluation team members, readers, and the program contact person to each of the aforementioned.

Minimum of 45 Days Prior to Site Visit

- Program confirms with the evaluation team leader that key institution personnel are available to meet during the onsite evaluation.
- Evaluation team leader and program develop onsite evaluation agenda.
- Program delivers self-study document and supporting documents to program evaluators.

Minimum of 2 - 6 Weeks Prior to Site Visit

- Travel, lodging, and other logistical arrangements completed (*Program Evaluation Information and Procedures Document – Preparing for the Accreditation Site Visit*).

Maximum of 30 days After Site Visit

- Final narrative report, final action reports, and verification of all the items on the last page of the *Program Evaluator Checklist* (Bylaw 22.5.8)

Maximum of 45 days After Site Visit

- Institution provides appropriate reimbursement to onsite evaluation team members.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Adapted from the American Medical Association's Accreditation Manual, Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation, 1991.
- 2 Portions adapted from the "Site Visitors in the Accreditation Process: A Guide to Issues and Practical Concerns, Council on Postsecondary Education, October 1988.
- 3 Adapted from the American Medical Association's Accreditation Manual, Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation, 1991.
- 4 Adapted from the American Medical Association's Accreditation Manual, Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation, 1991.
- 5 Adapted from "A Decalogue for the Accreditation Team," Hector Lee (COPA Agenda, February 5, 1976 and the American Medical Association Accreditation Manual from the Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation.