



Adventist  
Accrediting  
Association

# ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

## **Part II:**

The  
Accreditation  
Visit

2019

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## THE REGULAR ACCREDITATION VISIT

### Parameters of Visit

The regular accreditation visit can take place under the terms of a Form A Self-Study or the more focused Form B Self-Study. Part I of the *Accreditation Handbook* outlines the basis on which an institution will be accredited under each of these two forms. In both cases, however, the regular accreditation visit is a full accreditation team visit in which the institution will be involved in an extensive self-evaluation process prior to the visit. The conclusions of the self-evaluation will be given in the relevant Self-Study document provided by the institution to the team. This *Accreditation Handbook* will outline the responsibilities of all involved in the visit and identify the possible accreditation recommendations that can be made to the AAA.

### Initial Arrangements

During the year preceding that when a regular accreditation to a college/university is scheduled, the secretary of the Adventist Accrediting Association will inform the institutional president that a visit is due. Along with this letter, the president of the institution will be sent a copy of the relevant sections of the *Accreditation Handbook*. Copies of the letter will be sent to the chair of the Board of Trustees of the relevant institution, the General Conference Education Department liaison to the division in which the institution is located, and to the Division Education Department Director. At the same time, a letter will be sent to the chair of the relevant division BMTE or equivalent with a copy to the institutional president and the board chair, reminding them of the need to ensure that all BMTE/IBMTE endorsement processes are completed prior to the AAA visit.

Once the institution is informed of the plan for an AAA visit, the relevant General Conference education department liaison will take the initiative in contacting both the director of the education department of the division in which the college/university to be visited is located and the president of the institution. They will agree on the appropriate timing for the visit during the scheduled year.

As soon as an institution is notified that an accreditation visit is due, they are advised to start the Self-Study process required for an AAA visit (see Parts III and IV of the *Handbook*).

### Committee Selection

The General Conference liaison usually serves as chair of an accreditation committee and the education director of the division involved serves as the committee's secretary. These two individuals, in consultation with the institutional president, will then select the rest of the team. In some agreed situations, the chair will be an administrator from a Seventh-day Adventist peer institution. In this case, the General Conference and division representatives appoint the chair and the chair is invited to be involved in selecting the rest of the team. When the GC liaison is not the chair, he/she will normally serve as committee secretary.

The individuals recommended for an accreditation team will be experienced in various areas of administration and education, matching the profile of the institution. It is advised that one team member come from another division to the institution being visited and that at least one team member not be a denominational employee. The chair of the evaluation committee or, at his/her request, the committee's secretary will contact the members of the committee and obtain the approval of the employing organization for their involvement in the visit.

## Financial Arrangements

Normally the transportation costs of any team member employed by the Seventh-day Adventist church is the responsibility of the employing organization. The local division is usually responsible for travel expenses of any individual not employed within the church system. The General Conference liaison may negotiate alternative funding arrangements for individuals traveling from other divisions where expenses are excessive.

The institution to be visited is expected to provide room and board in addition to local transportation to the members of the committee.

## Pre-Visit Expectations

Approximately three months before the visit, the chair of the visiting committee will send correspondence to the committee members outlining the plans for the visit and including a copy of the report prepared by the last evaluation committee and a copy of the relevant portions of the *Accreditation Handbook*. Correspondence will be sent also to the president and the board chair of the college or university to be visited, outlining the plans for the visit. All correspondence will be copied to the relevant division education director. The chair of the committee will also work with the institution to establish a tentative schedule prior to arrival of the committee on site.

One-month prior to the visit, the president of the institution will be responsible for providing, through the GC Education Department liaison, to all members of the committee copies of the completed full Self-Study document. With this document, the president should send a current *Bulletin/Catalog/Prospectus* and a copy of the institutional strategic plan. A copy of the most recent audited financial statement should also be sent to the committee chair, in addition to a completed Institutional History & Profile and Financial Indicators. Templates for these latter reports will be provided by the GC Education Department liaison.

The president or his/her designee will also be responsible for assigning a committee room for the visiting team, including access to power, internet, a video projector or other display, and a printer. This room should also contain the documents identified by the AAA as required for a visit (see “Required Documentation”), and these should be in the room when the team arrives on campus.

Prior to arrival on campus, it will be the responsibility of the committee members to read the documents sent to them in advance of the visit and to inform the relevant individual identified by the chair of the time and place of their arrival, so that arrangements for their transportation and housing can be made.

## Overall Schedule

The schedule agreed between the visiting team and the local administration should include times for the following:

- An organizational meeting of the visiting committee to agree on procedures and individual responsibilities.
- An initial meeting between the administrative team of the institution and the visiting committee to discuss the institution’s formal responses to the recommendations of the previous visit, as well as major developments, achievements, trends, and challenges in the following areas: academic, finance, student life, spiritual life, physical plant, industries, etc.

- Opportunity for group interviews with student representatives from various levels and departments, as well as with faculty, staff, alumni, and Board representatives, including its Chair.
- Opportunity for individual interviews between selected members of the committee and members of the administrative team to discuss specific issues relating to the institution and the Self-Study.
- A review of the physical master plan and projections of new buildings, followed by a selected guided tour of the facilities.
- Selected individual meetings between members of the committee and academic department chairpersons/deans, departmental faculty (without chairpersons), campus pastor and/or chaplain, heads of services (dormitories, library, computer center, laboratories, cafeteria, health clinic, industries, maintenance, etc.), and president/officers of the student association.
- Preparation of a written report (see Appendix A for an outline of the evaluation report), with input from all the members of the committee, formal agreement on the recommendation to be forwarded to the Adventist Accrediting Association, and approval of the draft of the report. The accreditation recommendation will be signed by committee members.
- Exit report. After the visiting committee has completed the preparation of the draft of their report, they shall use the following process in the presentation of the exit report.
  1. Review the findings with the institution's Board chair, officers, administrative officers verbally and correct any factual errors that may be pointed out.
  2. Present the report to the administration, faculty, staff, and Board representatives in a public meeting.
  3. The Chair of the visiting committee will not announce the confidential recommendation that will be made to the AAA Board pertaining to the accreditation term.
  4. The Chair shall invite the chief administrator and Board chair to say a few words to receive the report.
  5. No discussion of the report shall be encouraged during the process. Such discussions, if any, can be a part of the response of the administration to the chairman of the AAA committee.
- After the visit, a draft will be sent to the institution for correction of error of fact. The president will send corrections of error of fact to the site visit chair, with supporting documents if necessary. The site visit chair will update the document regarding any needed corrections of error of fact.
- After being voted by the AAA Board, the final copy of the report will be sent back to the institution by the AAA secretary. The board chair will present it to the Board and the college/university president shall present it to the faculty to initiate broad-based engagement in fulfilling the recommendations of the report. For example, administration may choose to form faculty committees to study one or more parts of the report to suggest a strategy for fulfilling the recommendations within a set timeframe. An institutional entity should be tasked with general oversight of the implementation of recommendations. The administration should also present to the Board an annual progress report regarding the implementation of recommendations.

## Required Documentation

The following documents and materials must be available to members of the accreditation committee in a room designated for their work on campus at the time of their arrival on campus:

- The Self-Study and supporting evidences
- The *Board Handbook* or *Manual*
- The latest edition of the college or university *Bulletin*
- The *Faculty/Staff Handbook*, including job descriptions for administrators, faculty, and staff
- The *Student Handbook*
- Minutes of the Board and the Administrative Committee for the last three years
- All audited annual financial statements since the last regular accreditation visit (or three years in the case of Form B institutions)
- The current institutional budget
- A year-to-date financial operating statement
- Report of the Financial Oversight committees (Audit and Compensation Review).
- Annual report of the treasurer/chief financial officer that is provided to the Board. This report must include the financial statement, all schedules—including loans receivable or loans guaranteed or cosigned for subsidiary organizations, assets pledged as collateral, and any off-balance-sheet obligations of the organization concerned
- A copy of the class schedule and the academic calendar
- Campus map
- Institutional master plan(s), including spiritual master plan(s) if not integrated in a detailed manner into the full master plan
- Documents on affiliations and extensions
- Representative sample of course syllabi, organized by schools and departments, with information on how the integration of faith and learning takes place in classes
- Listing of church affiliation of each administrator, faculty, and staff member by department
- Church affiliation percentages for the student body, for traditional and non-traditional students
- Institutional publications, including news releases and PR materials used with the university/college constituency
- Records of faculty research/publication. Access shall also be provided to faculty files/portfolios
- Administrative/faculty/staff pay scales as related to the approved denominational scales or approved by Board action
- A list of recommendations for endorsement of relevant faculty teaching in the seminary/department of religion and a copy of any alternative International Board of Ministerial and Theological Education (IBMTE) process approved for the institution
- Copies of any national/regional accreditation/validation material (annual reports, self-studies, government accreditation/validation notifications, any correspondence changing accreditation/validation status, etc.)

## The Accreditation Report

The accreditation report written during the accreditation visit will follow the outline identified in Appendix A. While the chair and secretary of the committee will be responsible for ensuring the completion of the report, all team members will be involved in writing the report, particularly the writing of findings, commendations, and recommendations in their areas of expertise. Appendix B provides advice to team members on writing recommendations and commendations.



## Accreditation Recommendation

The accreditation recommendation is the overall recommendation on whether an institution should be accredited or reaccredited, and, if so, for what term and with what conditions, if any.

In considering the accreditation recommendation (to be reached by a majority vote), the visiting committee will have at its disposal the following options (a visualization of these options and their corresponding criteria may be found in Appendix C):

1. *A five-year institutional accreditation with no interim visit. Interim reports may be requested.* This option is typically for an institution that (a) has fulfilled or satisfactorily addressed all recommendations from the prior AAA visit, having successfully resolved persistent issues and concerns identified in prior AAA reports; (b) shows strength in each Area of its operation; (c) has submitted an acceptable Self-Study at the designated time; (d) presents evidence that all programs offered have been approved by the IBE/IBMTE; and (e) presents no major circumstance which would negatively impact its mission, its Seventh-day Adventist focus or identity, or the financial or administrative well-being of the institution. (*Option valid for either Form A or Form B institutions.*)
2. *A five-year term of institutional accreditation, with a report and administrative review visit at the end of that period, with the possibility of extension of the term to the duration of the regional or government term of accreditation. Interim reports may be requested.* This option is typically for an institution that (a) has a strong track record of success in external accreditations; (b) has fulfilled or satisfactorily addressed all recommendations from the prior AAA visit, having successfully resolved persistent issues and concerns identified in prior AAA reports; (c) shows strength in each Area of its operation; (d) has submitted an acceptable Self-Study at the designated time; (e) presents evidence that all programs offered have been approved by the IBE/IBMTE; and (f) presents no major circumstance that would negatively impact its mission, its Seventh-day Adventist focus or identity, or the financial or administrative well-being of the institution. (*Option valid only for Form B institutions.*)

At the time of the administrative review visit, the team will expect to find that the institution has: (a) met the major recommendations of the previous visiting committee, (b) made significant progress toward meeting all other AAA recommendations, and (c) evidenced satisfactory progress in addressing the relevant issues raised by the regional accrediting or governmental review process. Only if these criteria are met, may the visiting committee recommend, and the AAA grant, an extension of the accreditation term that will match the number of years of the term granted by the regional or governmental agency. If these requirements have not been met, the visiting committee shall recommend, and the AAA may grant, a one-year extension of accreditation to the institution to allow it to prepare a Self-Study and be ready for a full accreditation visit at the end of the one-year extension.

3. *A five-year institutional accreditation with an interim visit. Interim reports may be requested.* This option is typically for an institution that (a) has fulfilled or satisfactorily addressed all recommendations from the prior AAA visit, having successfully resolved persistent issues and concerns identified in prior AAA reports; (b) has submitted an acceptable Self-Study at the designated time; and (c) presents evidence that all programs offered have been approved by the IBE/IBMTE. Nevertheless, the institution shows weaknesses in one or more Areas of its operation; or is experiencing or will experience in the near future important circumstances in its administration, finances, status, programs, or size which could negatively impact the institutional mission, or its Seventh-day Adventist focus or identity. These specific issues will

be identified in major recommendations. (*Option valid for either Form A or Form B institutions.*)

At the time of the interim visit, the team will expect that the institution has fulfilled or made substantial progress in fulfilling all the major and other recommendations. The approximate time for the interim visit will be identified in the accreditation recommendation. If these requirements have not been met at the time of the interim visit, the visiting committee may recommend, and the AAA may grant, a shortening of the accreditation term.

4. *Three or four-year institutional accreditation. Interim reports or visits may be included.* This option is typically for an institution that does not qualify for a five-year period of accreditation, in that, while having submitted an acceptable Self-Study at the designated time, it (a) has not fulfilled or satisfactorily addressed one or more major recommendations from the prior AAA visit; (b) has not resolved persistent issues and concerns identified in prior AAA reports; or (c) has not presented evidence that all programs offered have been approved by the IBE/IBMTE. Only on rare occasions, where external situations result in institutional instability beyond the control of the institution, may a team give a recommendation of regular accreditation of less than three years. (*Option valid for either Form A or Form B institutions.*)
5. *Deferral.* Deferral is not a final decision. It is interlocutory in nature and designed to provide time for the institution to correct certain deficiencies. This action allows the AAA Board to indicate to an institution the need for additional information or progress in one or more specified areas before a decision can be made. Deferrals are granted for a maximum period of one year, during which the prior accreditation status continues. (*Option valid for either Form A or Form B institutions.*)
6. *Probationary status, with a specific time limit of two years or less.* This is typically for an institution where the accreditation visit is unsatisfactory or the pre-work by the institution is unacceptable. One or more of the following will be evidenced:
  - The institution has not submitted an acceptable Self-Study
  - The institution has not submitted a Self-Study on time
  - The institution has not made significant progress in fulfilling the recommendations of the previous evaluation visit
  - The institution shows substantial weaknesses in major areas of its operation or leadership
  - The institution is not representative of Seventh-day Adventist educational philosophy, policy and/or practice
  - The institution disregards IBE/AAA guidelines and/or actions

These weaknesses need to be carefully documented, with specific conditions, expected evidence of their fulfillment, and a timeframe for the removal of the probationary status. In situations where one department/school shows significant weaknesses, the visiting team may recommend a focused visit to the institution within a two-year period to review that program. If the college or university has not resolved the identified problems by that time, then the whole college/university may be issued an Order to Show Cause. (*Option valid for either Form A or Form B institutions.*)

7. *Issue an Order to Show Cause.* An Order to Show Cause is a decision by the AAA Board to suspend or terminate the accreditation of the institution within a maximum period of one year from the date of the Order, unless the institution can show cause why such action should not



be taken. Such an Order may be issued when an institution is found to be in substantial noncompliance with one or more Standards or Criteria for Review, or has not been found to have made sufficient progress to come into compliance with the Standards. An Order to Show Cause may also be issued as a summary sanction for unethical institutional behavior or persistent disregard of IBE/AAA guidelines or actions. In response to the Order, the institution has the burden of proving why its candidacy or accreditation should not be suspended or terminated. The institution must demonstrate that it has responded satisfactorily to AAA Board concerns, has come into compliance with all Standards, and will likely be able to sustain compliance. (*Option valid for either Form A or Form B institutions.*)

While the candidacy or accredited status of the institution continues during the Show Cause period, any new site or degree program initiated by the institution during this period is regarded as a substantive change and requires prior approval. In addition, the institution may be subject to special scrutiny by the AAA Board, which may include special conditions and the requirement to submit prescribed reports or receive special visits by representatives of the AAA. The Order to Show Cause is sent to the president of the institution and the chair of the governing board.

8. *Suspension of accreditation.* This is typically for an institution that either refuses to fulfill the recommendations of previous evaluation visits, does not welcome an AAA visit, or openly deviates from the philosophy and objectives of Seventh-day Adventist education. These will need to be carefully documented, with specific conditions that will allow the institution to regain regular status with the Adventist Accrediting Association. (*Option valid for either Form A or B institutions.*)

## **Right of Appeal**

Appeals on actions related to the approval of new programs or programs undergoing substantive changes may be submitted to the International Board of Education. Appeals regarding accreditation are submitted to the Adventist Accrediting Association. The reasons for the appeal must be predicated on one of the following: the team or Board drew their conclusions based on inaccurate information, the team or Board failed to follow procedure, or the team or Board acted unprofessionally (for example, through conflict of interest, prejudice, etc.).

*Right of Appeal—Division.* Within 90 days of the Division Board of Education and/or Executive Committee issuing a decision, the involved institution may request reconsideration of the decision by the division education committee, provided the request is based on new information. Such review may be supported by representation of no more than three persons appearing before a meeting of the division education committee. The division education committee in executive session shall then render its final decision. If, after the final decision is rendered by the division Education Committee, the matter is not resolved, written appeal by the institution may be made to the International Board of Education or the AAA, through the General Conference Department of Education which shall have discretion to determine whether to accept the appeal for review. The Department of Education may recommend an independent assessment of the proposal and make a recommendation to the IBE/AAA based on its independent conclusions.

*Right of Appeal—Site Visit Report.* Applying institutions can appeal the overall conclusion of the on-site team by writing a response to the team report within 90 days of receipt of the final report. This will only be considered by the IBE/AAA if the appeal is in reference to the major recommendation regarding approval of the proposed new/changed program. Disagreement with other statements in the report may be documented, but these will not constitute an appeal. Any appeal should succinctly identify the reasons for disagreement with the findings of the site team, provide supporting

evidence for the request for a differing conclusion, or demonstrate where the team did not follow procedure. An appeal must be submitted within 90 days of the completion of the original report and at least 10 working days prior to the meeting of the IBE/AAA. Such an appeal may be supported by a representation of no more than three persons before a meeting of the board. The board, in closed session, shall then render its decision.

*Right of Appeal—IBE/AAA.* If the International Board of Education/Adventist Accrediting Association changes the recommendation of the on-site team to the detriment of the applying organization, that organization can appeal the Board action by submitting a written request for a reconsideration of the action within 90 days of receiving notification. This request must provide reasons, with supporting documentation attached, for why the Board action is considered unfair by the organization. This appeal will be considered at the next meeting of the IBE/AAA. Such an appeal may be supported by a representation of no more than three persons before a meeting of the board. The board, in closed session, shall then render its decision. In extreme and far-reaching decisions, further appeal may be made to the General Conference Executive Committee.

### **Accreditation Recommendation for an Institution Facing Initial Accreditation**

An institution facing its first accreditation after being awarded candidacy status can be given any of the accreditation terms identified in 1, 3-5 above, although its Self-Study will respond to recommendations made at the time candidacy was granted.

If the visiting accreditation team considers that an institution in candidacy status does not reach the required standard for accreditation, it may recommend that the institution be dropped from candidacy and that no accreditation be awarded, or it may extend candidacy for a maximum of two years. If an extended term of candidacy is awarded, the institution will need to have met both the initial recommendations from the team recommending candidacy and any additional recommendations/conditions made at the time of the first AAA visit before the end of the extension period. An extension to candidacy can only be given once.

### **Final Report and Accreditation Action**

The committee chair and secretary will ensure that the executive secretary of the Adventist Accrediting Association will receive the final report no later than two months after completing the visit, including the confidential recommendation regarding the term of accreditation or other options. The date when the AAA will consider the report and the accreditation recommendation will be identified to the institution. (Note: Given the international nature of the AAA, the board meets twice annually.)

Once the draft accreditation report is received by the institution from the visiting team, it can be used immediately for planning and action. It is expected that the president of the institution visited will distribute copies of the evaluation report among the members of the board and review its recommendations during the next board meeting. In addition, the president will propose to the board a process for addressing each recommendation and assign responsibilities for their fulfillment, with timeframes, among his/her administrative team.

However, while the team report can be used as a working document, it will still be considered a draft until the report is voted by the AAA Board. The AAA Board reserves the right to make changes to the terms of accreditation recommended and to make alterations to the submitted report. The institution and its board chair will receive copies of actions taken by AAA Board as soon as practicable after the meeting.

## THE INTERIM ACCREDITATION VISIT

### Parameters of Visit

An interim evaluation of an Adventist university or college takes place when the AAA Board, upon the recommendation of an appointed visiting team, deems it necessary for the AAA to visit the institution in between the times of regular accreditation visits. The decision for an interim visit is voted as part of the AAA action following a regular accreditation visit.

### Initial Arrangements and Committee Appointments

As with regular accreditation visits, in the year preceding an interim visit, the Executive Secretary of AAA will inform the institutional president of the visit that will take place the next year and of the institutional responsibilities in preparation for that visit. The chairman of the institutional board, the education director for the relevant division, and the GC liaison for that division will also receive copies of the correspondence.

Once this correspondence has been conveyed, the GC liaison will contact the administration of the institution to be visited and, in consultation with the division education director, will establish the dates of the visit.

The committee appointed to conduct an interim visit will be smaller in size than the one appointed to conduct a full accreditation visit. Its composition will be agreed upon by the GC liaison for and the education director of the world division in which the institution is located. These individuals usually serve as chairman and secretary of the committee. Other members of the committee will be selected in mutual consultation, taking into consideration the areas or functions of the institution that will be evaluated.

### Financial Arrangements

Normally the relevant sending organizations will be responsible for the travel costs of the team members to the college/university campus. The administration of the institution visited will provide local transportation as well as room and board to the members of the committee during the visit. The division education representative will be responsible for all practical arrangements for the trip.

### Pre-visit Expectations

Approximately three months before the visit, the GC liaison will forward to the members of the committee a copy of the report of the last full evaluation visit and a copy of the relevant sections of the *AAA Accreditation Handbook*. He/she will also confirm the plans for the visit in writing with the institutional president and board chair and will agree to a preliminary schedule.

The president of the institution being visited, in turn, will provide the members of the visiting committee, one month in advance of the visit, a written report identifying progress made on the recommendations made by the last full AAA team, with particular focus on the major recommendations.

### The Visit

The interim visit will review progress on the recommendations made by prior AAA team(s) with special focus on the major recommendations made at that time and on the manner in which the college/university administration has addressed and responded to all recommendations. The

committee members will meet with board representatives, administrators, faculty, staff, and students, as required, to ascertain the satisfactory fulfillment of these recommendations.

In preparing its report, the visiting committee will reinstate the recommendations only partially fulfilled or unfulfilled, and may add others that require attention before the end of the accreditation period. In cases of institutional disregard for the recommendations made by the last full evaluation, the interim committee may recommend that the period of accreditation be shortened, that the institution be placed on probation, or that its denominational accreditation be suspended. In any of these cases, the committee will provide specific documentation and evidence in support of these recommendations. The report should follow the pattern of regular accreditation visit reports using commendations and recommendations. Members of the interim evaluation committee will sign the report.

Before leaving campus, the committee will present an exit report of the major findings of the visit to the chair of the board, the institutional president, and others as agreed with the president.

### **Follow-up**

The chair of the committee will be responsible for sending a final copy of the report to the Executive Secretary of the AAA, with copies to the institutional president, the board chair, and the division education director no later than one month after completing the visit, although the overall recommendation remains confidential. The institution may consider the report as a working document as soon as the report is received and should discuss its findings at the next meeting of the institutional board. However, the AAA reserves the right to make changes to the recommendations at the time a vote is taken by the AAA Board.

The AAA Board will consider the report at its next full meeting. This will include any recommendation that would change the status of the institution with the AAA or the length of time to the next full accreditation visit. After action is taken by the AAA Board, the Executive Secretary of the AAA will be responsible for informing the institution of the action.

## **THE ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW VISIT**

### **Parameters of Visit**

An administrative review visit takes place when an institution accredited by the AAA under Form B guidelines has been given a maximum term of accreditation by the AAA (five years) but has a regional/government accreditation term that runs for a longer period. An administrative review visit is intended to provide an opportunity for the AAA to interface in a formal way with an institution after five years have passed since its previous full visit, but without expecting the institution to prepare a full Self-Study. If the team is satisfied with the progress made during that time, it may recommend to AAA an extension of the five-year term to coincide with the number of years of the term given by the regional/government accreditation body.

### **Initial Arrangements and Committee Appointments**

As with regular accreditation visits, the Executive Secretary of AAA will ensure that in the year preceding the visit, the institutional president is informed of the visit that will take place the next year and is reminded of the preparation that will need to be made. The chairman of the institutional board, the education director of the relevant division, and the General Conference liaison for that division will also receive copies of the correspondence.

The administrative review team will typically include at minimum the appropriate GC liaison, the division director of education, and an administrator of a peer institution (ideally an individual present at the last full visit). If the chair of the last visit was a peer institutional administrator, that individual (or a suitable replacement) will typically be asked to chair the administrative review team and the General Conference liaison will serve as the secretary. In other cases, the General Conference liaison will serve as the team chair and the education director of the division will be the secretary. The appointment of the team will be by the General Conference liaison and division education director.

Once the committee is determined, the division education director will contact the administration of the institution to be visited and, in consultation with other team members, will establish the dates of the visit.

### **Financial Arrangements**

Normally the relevant sending organizations will be responsible for the travel costs of the team members to the college/university campus. The administration of the institution visited will provide local transportation as well as room and board to the members of the committee during the visit. The division education representative will be responsible for all practical arrangements for the trip.

### **Pre-Visit Expectations**

Approximately three months before the visit, the GC liaison will forward to the members of the committee a copy of the report of the last full evaluation visit and a copy of the relevant sections of the AAA Accreditation Handbook. He/she will also confirm the plans for the visit in writing with the institutional president and board chair. The correspondence will include an invitation to the board chair to meet with the team in person, or to speak to them by telephone or video conference call.

In preparation for an administrative review, the institutional administration will prepare a written report that:

1. Reviews the institution's progress in meeting the recommendations of the last full accreditation visit. (The team will expect that substantial progress has been made in meeting all major and other recommendations.)
2. Identifies key changes and developments in the institutional operation since the last full visit that have impacted on the institutional mission. This might include, for example, major changes in key personnel, shifts in institutional strategy, curriculum developments, the financial status of the institution, and the relationship between the institution and its external accrediting body (bodies).
3. Discusses future directions/plans that will impact the mission.
4. Raises other items of institutional concern that the administration wishes to discuss with the visiting team.

This report will be sent to all team members at least one month prior to the visit. After receiving the report, the GC liaison will be responsible for developing a schedule that will include selected meetings with administration, faculty, staff, and students as necessary.

The team will also want to see, at a minimum, the latest Self-Study report written by the institution for the AAA, and the Self-Study most recently prepared for any government accreditation visit (or equivalent) along with the response from that accreditation team. These should be made available

to the team on arrival on campus. The committee may also direct the institution to have other documentation ready for their examination at the time of the visit.

### **The Visit**

Typically, the administrative review visit will be about two days in length and will largely focus on the content of the institutional report.

The team report will respond to the report from the institution and the follow-up discussions resulting from that report. It will be written in the same format as regular AAA reports, using commendations and recommendations, and will be signed by all members of the team. Based on their findings, the team will recommend either a continuation of accreditation to match overall the term given by the local accrediting body, up to a maximum extension of an additional five years or that the AAA visit the institution in a year's time with a full team. The next visit after an administrative visit will be a regular full visit.

The administrative review team will give an exit report to the administration at the end of its visit. The board chair will also be invited.

### **Follow-up**

The final report must be forwarded to the Executive Secretary of the AAA within a month of the conclusion of the visit. The institutional president and board chair shall also receive a copy of the recommended report, although the overall recommendation remains confidential.

The AAA Board will act on the recommendations of the report at its next scheduled meeting. The institution can consider the report as a working document until that time and its findings should be shared with its institutional board at its next meeting. However, the AAA reserves the right to make changes to the recommendations when a vote is taken by the AAA Board.

The Executive Secretary of the AAA will inform the president of the college/university visited of the final AAA Board action.

## **FOCUSED ACCREDITATION VISIT**

### **Parameters of Visit**

Once the AAA Board takes an action regarding the length of an accreditation term, this decision will be upheld. However, in exceptional circumstances, the AAA may decide to visit an institution during an accreditation term to respond to an identified area of concern.

A request for a focused visit may be initiated by the institution's administration, board, or constituency, or by the AAA board itself responding to circumstances observed in the institution.

Exceptional circumstances may include the following:

1. A financial crisis that could have an adverse impact on the wider church
2. A crisis of mission—where the identity of the institution as a Seventh-day Adventist College or University is at risk. This could be the result of institutional policies that operate outside the expectations of a church institution.



3. A refusal of the institution to respond to the professional requests/expectations of the church—such as in providing information and reports that are integral to the accreditation process.
4. Exceptional personnel issues that leave the institution in a critically unstable situation.

## **Procedures**

Where an institution recognizes it is facing a critical situation, the administration and board may choose to approach the AAA to ask for a focused visit. Such a request should be channeled through the appropriate division department of education. Such a visit will be considered informal. The team membership will be agreed upon between the institution, the division education director, and the GC liaison. The report with recommendations will be provided to all groups involved in making the original request.

A special visit may also take place by the request of the church organization directly responsible for the organization (normally the union or division), the relevant division department of education, or due to substantial concern on the part of the General Conference Department of Education. In each of these cases, the AAA, through the GC liaison, will coordinate the visit with the administration of the relevant division through its department of education.

When a visit is initiated outside the institution, other than by the AAA board itself, the AAA will send a letter of enquiry to the chairman of the board and the chief administrator of an accredited institution with a copy to the division education director outlining the issue at hand and requesting a formal response within 30 days. Based on the response received and in consultation with the division education director, the AAA staff will decide whether (a) the answer resolves the issue, (b) additional information is required, or (c) a focused visit is warranted. If the staff agrees to recommend a focused visit, all members of the AAA Board will be contacted, and a two-thirds vote of members casting a ballot will be required to proceed with the visit, which should take place within 60 days of the action. If a focused visit takes place, the GC liaison for the respective division will normally serve as the chair of the team.

## **Financial Arrangements**

Normally the relevant sending organizations will be responsible for the travel costs of the team members to the college/university campus. The administration of the institution visited will provide local transportation as well as room and board to the members of the committee during the visit. The division education representative will be responsible for all practical arrangements for the trip.

## **Follow-up**

The written report of the focused visit, with recommendations, will be considered by the AAA Board and the relevant division administration for appropriate action.