

Procedure for Arranging and Conducting an Accreditation Visit

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1. Purpose

This document defines the Procedure for arranging an Accreditation Visit to a University. Three phases are covered: Pre-visit arrangements, the Visit itself and Post-visit activities, including consideration of the report.

Section 3	Identifies roleplayers in the Accreditation process.
Section 4	Details the Pre-visit activities and timeline.
Section 5	Describes the activities arrangements during the Visit.
Section 6	Describes the steps required to finalise the Team report to the UAC.
Section 7	Details of the procedure for considering reports in the UAC meeting.
Section 8	Details of the actions required after the UAC meeting.

2. Related Documents

Refer to section 2 of document **PE-70** for a full list of related documents.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

A number of persons and committees who play key roles and carry important responsibilities in the Accreditation process are identified below:

CEO:	ECSA Chief Executive Officer
CH:	UAC Chairperson
Dean:	Dean of the Faculty in which the Programme(s) are run
EO:	ECSA Education Officer
Head:	Person responsible for the Programme within the University
Rap:	Rapporteur
TL:	Team Leader
UAC:	University Accreditation Committee
UAC Exco:	The UAC Executive Committee
VL:	Visit Leader

Their specific responsibilities are flagged in the Visit arrangements detailed in sections 4-6.

4. Pre-Visit Activities

4.1 Timing of Visit

The Visit takes place in a year determined by the Accreditation cycle or the requirement for an Interim Visit or Final Visit.

The Visit must take place in normal teaching term time. The Visit is best timed for a part of the year to give the opportunity of interviewing students in the latter part of their final year and have experienced second semester courses, and possibly viewing project work. If this timing is not possible post-graduates who completed their degrees in the previous academic year should be interviewed.

4.2 Pre-visit Schedule

The time associated with particular activities expressed as **V-x** indicates that completion is required **x** time units before the Visit.

Table 1: Pre-visit Activities, Timeline and Responsibilities		
Due	Activity	Responsible
V-52 w	Remind Dean that Visit is due	EO
V-40 w	Deans invitation to Visit received by ECSA	EO
V-35 w	Confirm dates for Visit and prepare schedule of key activities with dates and responsible persons	EO
V-35 w	Dean provides information called for in PE-73 section 4.1	Dean
V-26 w	UAC / UAC Exco considers information submitted by Dean, Determines required Teams, appoint Visit Leader, Team Leaders	UAC/ Exco
V-25 w	Secure VL's and TL's commitment	UAC Ch, EO
V-24 w	Inform Washington Accord signatories of Visit details	EO
V-20 w	Appoint Team members	UAC Exco
V-18 w	Secure Team members' commitment to Visit	TL, EO
V-12 w	Training of new Team members	Ch
V-10 w	Approve attendance by Observers	UAC Exco
V-8 w	Book Team hotel rooms, meeting rooms	EO
V-8 w	Finalise team travel bookings	EO
V-8 w	Confirm on-campus venues with Dean	EO
V-6 w	Agree on detailed Visit Timetable for each Programme	Dean+VL Head+TL
V-6 w	Submit documentation to ECSA	Dean
V-5 w	Distribute documentation to Team and Observers	EO
V-3 w	Collate issues, information requirements using form in Appendix A	TL, VL
V-2 w	Check on Team's computing and printing requirements	Head
V-14 d	Call for missing/additional documentation	TL
V-1 d	Preliminary evaluation of documentation	TL, TM

4.3 Venues

Three main types of venues are required for Accreditation activities:

Plenary CR: A conference room large enough to seat all Team members, Heads plus 5 more. Must be centrally located relative to departmental venues in order to minimise walking time.

Team CR: Every Team requires a conference room capable of seating up to 6-8 persons for its exclusive use over the Visit. Extra tables should be made available for laying out on site documentation as required in **PE-73** section 7. In addition, the Team may require a second, larger room, for example a common room, seating approximately twenty persons, for interviews with staff and students.

Team Hotel CR: The ECSA EO will secure a conference room in the Team hotel for the two evening plenary Team meetings.

4.4 Computer facilities for Teams

Each department should ensure that the visiting Team has a personal computer with Word-7 (or later) and printing facilities available in its conference room. Heads of Department must liaise with Team Leaders before the Visit to check whether a notebook computer is being brought by the Team and to establish that the correct printer drivers are available. Each Team must also have access to a photocopy machine and a telephone.

5. Visit Arrangements

5.1 Timetable

As indicated in section 4, the Dean and the Visit Leader are required to agree on the Visit timetable at least six weeks before the Visit. Tables 2 - 5 give a pro forma timetable for a Team's activity. The pro forma is provided to guide planning the actual timetable for each Visit. While the timetable may be varied to suit the needs of particular programmes the following principles must be applied:

1. The timetable contains essential Team activities geared to the evaluation questionnaire in **PE-75**. No essential activities must be eliminated.
2. The timetable follows the logical sequence of the key questions defined in **PE-70** section 4.2.2, focussing in turn on the assessment of outcomes, programme content, effectiveness of teaching and learning and sustainability/capacity for improvement.
3. The pro forma timetable is new with the 2001 Visits and little experience with this sequence exists. For this reason, ECSA discourages radical departures from the pro forma timetable.
4. The times shown are indicative and may be adjusted to deal with specific conditions.
5. Activities common to more than one Team must be synchronised.
6. Visit Leader activities are shown in *italics*.

Table 2: Day 0 Programme - Evening before Visit		
Period	Venue	Team Activity
17:30		Arrival at Team Hotel
18:30 - 20:00	Team Hotel Conference Room	Private Plenary Team Meeting chaired by Visit Leader. (Observers are present) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Visit Leader briefs Teams on Visit Programme, logistics, procedures, reporting (<15 min) • Teams collate members' initial issues & information list into Team list using form in Appendix A (30 min) • Team Leaders present initial appraisal and apparent issues to be investigated . (<10 min per programme) • Identify issues and information needs common across Teams • Further planning of activities as required
20:00	Team Hotel Private Room	Private Team Dinner (Observers present)

Table 3: Day 1 Programme		
Period	Venue	Team Activity
08:30 - 08:45	Plenary CR	Visit Leader to chair Plenary session of all Teams and Heads of Departments. Dean gives overview to Plenary session.
08:45 - 09:00		Question and Answer (High level, non program specific issues only)
09:00 - 12:00	Team CR	Private Team Meeting Activity: Examine material available on site and to elicit further information relating to questions 1 - 4. The Team may call on Head and staff members to (short) ad hoc interviews to provide additional information as required. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of assessment process, verification of selected evidence, resolution of issues toward resolving Question 1. Sample assessment material. • Review of Programme structure, breakdown, core, engineering science profile toward resolving Questions 2.1 - 2.4. • Review aspects of effectiveness of teaching and learning within the Programme (Question 3). • Check on remediation of deficiencies and concerns from previous Visit. • Identify matters to be raised in interviews with Head, staff and students.
09:30 - 10:30	Deans Office	<i>VL Interviews Dean. Agenda: Faculty quality assurance processes, resource allocation, commitment to programmes.</i>
11:00 - 11:45	VC Office	<i>VL pays courtesy Visit to University Executive: Agenda is institutional commitment to engineering in general and programmes.</i>
12:00 - 12:30	Team CR	Interview Head and/or Programme Co-ordinator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine key issues • Appraise of potential concerns and deficiencies • Agree on roster of staff for interviews 08:30 - 10:30 on Day 2
12:30 - 13:30		This lunch may be hosted by the University Executive but must be confined to one hour
13:30 - 15:00	Team CR & Walkabout	Examine resources, Visit laboratories and other facilities. The purpose of this session is to gather material relevant to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question 3 (Teaching and learning effectiveness) and • Question 4 (Sustainability/capacity for improvement). • Identify further matters for student and staff interviews.
14:00 - 15:00		<i>VL meets engineering faculty student leadership.</i>

15:00 - 16:30	Team CR/Other	Student Interviews. May be carried out in parallel sessions. All Team members should see final year students and recent graduates. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put prepared questions Give students opportunity to raise issues
15:30 - 16:30		<i>VL starts drafting VL report.</i>
16:30 - 17:00	Team CR	Closed Team meeting to assess progress on issues and identify outstanding issues and information. Update Team Worksheet
17:00		Transport to Team Hotel

Table 4: Day 1 Evening Programme		
Period	Venue	Team Activity
18:30 - 20:00	Team Hotel CR	Private Plenary Team meeting chaired by Visit Leader (Observers present) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VL presents aspects of VL Report of significance to all Teams Team Leaders provide appraisal of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of outcomes (Q1), Programme content (Q2) Programme teaching and learning effectiveness (Q3) Sustainability/capacity for improvement (Q4) Tentative recommendation Team Leaders identify outstanding issues & information needs, particularly those from outside the departments Consistency check on approach across Teams, triangulate findings Visit Leader co-ordinates visits/interviews to service depts, common facilities for 10:30 - 12:30 on Day 2. Form Teams to perform common interest visits, interviews, etc
20:00	Team Hotel Private Room	Private Team Dinner (Observers present)

Table 5: Day 2 Programme		
Period	Venue	Team Activity
08:00 - 08:30	Dean's Office	<i>VL meets Dean to Co-ordinate activities between 10:30 and 12:30. Distributes confirmed arrangements to Teams by 10:00.</i>
08:00 - 10:30	Team CR	Interviews with staff members. Staff selected individually or in groups according to numbers and needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put prepared questions Give staff opportunity to raise issues Short interview with Head at end
10:30 - 12:30	Various	Co-ordinated interviews, visits to service departments, library and other common facilities, according to agreed plan, concentrating on identified areas (rather than general tour).
12:30 - 15:30	Team CR	Private meeting Light lunch in Team CR Team reviews Q1 - Q4 and selects recommended decision Team writes report, to be completed not later than 15:30 as Draft 1
13:00 - 14:30		Each TL consults the VL to test consistency of recommended decision: must be done by 14:30
By 15:30		<i>VL Report Draft 1 completed.</i>
15:30		Copy of Team report given to VL, VL report to each TL Backup diskettes to EO
15:30 - 16:00	Department	Feedback session to staff of department responsible for Programme.
16:00 - 16:30	Plenary CR	Exit Interview
16:45		Transport to airport

6. Visit Methodology

6.1 Interviews

Confidential interviews with staff and students are vitally important to gauge the morale of the student body and staff of the department, to detect problems which may not be otherwise evident and to obtain further information and clarification. Staff must not be present at student interviews. The interviews should serve two purposes:

- Allow the students or staff to raise issues independently;
- Allow the Team to probe specific issues.

The cross section of students selected by the Head for interview should, as far as possible, cover the spectra of ability, gender and ethnic background in the class. Three to five students should be selected from each year of study.

Post-graduate students who graduated from the degree programme should be interviewed.

6.2 Confirmation of Findings

Findings of concern or deficiencies by the Team and material problems raised by staff and students should be fully examined and confirmed before being referred to in the report. “Triangulation” is essential in all matters likely to be contentious or which may affect the Accreditation decision.

6.3 Proactive roles of Visit Leader and Team Leaders

The successful completion of an evaluation in the period available relies to a large extent on the Visit Leader and the Team Leaders. Their specific responsibilities are defined in **PE-70**. Visit and Team leaders must proactively ensure that all necessary investigations are carried out, activities are co-ordinated and problems encountered by the Teams are solved.

6.4 Method of Evaluation of outcomes, content, programme and sustainability

The Accreditation Team is required to use the set of standard forms in **PE-75 Rev-2**, supplemented by prose statements using the deficiencies, concerns and comment format. The logic underlying the reporting format is embodied in the *key questions* and *decision rules* contained in **PE-70** section 4.4.2 and embodied in **PE-75 Rev-2**. The Accreditation Team is expected to make a recommendation with regard to the Accreditation of the programme leading to the qualification.

Team members must bear in mind that the purpose of the Visit is to evaluate the programme, not the departmental research, university management the faculty or university quality assurance systems, or similar issues, save for the impacts – positive or negative - on the quality and sustainability of the programme.

6.5 Feedback Session and Exit Interview

The intention is to conduct the Accreditation Visit in as open a manner as possible. It is therefore appropriate for Team Leaders (with the full Team present) to conduct a feedback session with the Head and academic staff of the Department. The purpose of the feedback session is to give a provisional indication of the findings and to convey information from the Team which could assist the department with continual improvement of programme quality. Feedback is given orally, using the draft report as a guide. Questions in clarification are allowed, but no debate. No copy of the draft 1 report is left with the department.

The principal recommendations and key elements of the reports are to be conveyed at an Exit Interview. Information is given orally by the Visit Leader, conveying the main points of each Team's findings. The following should be present at the exit interview:

1. The Visit leader (Chair)
2. All Teams
3. The Dean, together with appropriate Deputies/Assistant Deans designated by the Dean.
4. Head of Departments and Programme Co-ordinators (if different to the Head)
5. Members of the University Executive at their discretion.

The Visit and Team Leaders perform the oral presentation observing the following practice:

1. It is essential to speak from a prepared script, culled from the draft reports, and not to improvise.
2. State that the reports are draft 1 and may be subject to further review.
3. Briefly outline the Post-visit process.
4. The approach should be factual rather than judgemental.
5. Specific reference must be made to compliance with the standards under the headings of assessment of outcomes, programme content, and to the Teams judgement of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning programme, and sustainability (or capacity and commitment for improvement, if appropriate).
6. The methodology of deficiencies, concerns and comments may prove useful.
7. Brief questions in clarification may be permitted but no discussion is to be allowed.
8. No copies of the draft 1 reports are left with the University.

The Visit Leader and Team Leader thank the University/Department/Faculty for receiving the Team, the co-operation of the staff, hospitality etc.

7. Post Visit Activities

V+x d indicates a deadline **x** days after the Visit. **M-y-d** indicates a deadline **y** days before the UAC meeting.

Due	Activity	Responsible
V+5 d	Produce second draft report, agreed by Team Send 2 nd Draft to VL	TL
V+ 5 d	Produce second draft Visit Leader's report Send 2 nd Draft VL report to Team Leaders	VL
V+8 d	VL and TLs agree on consistency of reports	VL & TL
V+11 d	Send 2 nd draft reports to ECSA	TL & VL
V+14 d	Send 2 nd Draft reports to Dean for factual correctness	EO
V+ 28 d	Return comments on report to ECSA EO	Dean
V+28 d	Invite Dean to UAC meeting	EO
V+35 d	Produce final report, agreed by Team	TL
V+35 d	Produce final VL report, agreed by TLs	VL
V+35 d	Send signed final Team and VL reports to ECSA EO	TL&VL
M-14 d	Circulate reports with UAC Meeting papers	EO

The implication of this schedule is that at least 50 days must elapse between the Visit and the UAC meeting.

8. UAC Meeting Procedure

The steps in handling the agenda item to consider the Visit reports on a particular University are detailed below:

Step	Activity	Responsible
1	Invite the Dean to join the meeting	Ch
2	Explain the procedure	Ch
3	Invite the VL to present the VL Report and individual Team reports	Ch
4	Present VL report	VL
5	Present report and recommendation for a programme	VL
6	Questions in clarification from Dean & UAC members (no discussion)	Ch, UAC, Dean
	Repeat steps 5 and 6 until all reports have been presented.	
7	Invite Dean to make statement	Ch
8	Ask Dean to withdraw from meeting	Ch
9	UAC deliberation on reports	Ch, UAC
10	Resolution on each programme recommendation	Ch, UAC
11	Recall Dean and summarise resolutions (no further discussion), outline next steps (as in section 9.1).	Ch
12	Thank Dean and release from meeting	Ch

9. Post-meeting Activity

9.1 Mandatory steps

The mandatory actions after the UAC meeting are detailed below.

Due	Activity	Responsible
M+7 d	Write Accreditation decision minute(s)	EO
M+14 d	Check decision minute(s)	VL Ch CEO
M+21 d	Write decision letter(s)	EO
M+24 d	Check decision letter(s)	VL+Ch+CEO
M+28 d	Sign decision letter(s)	CEO
M+28 d	Update list of Accredited Degrees	EO
M+35 d	Check updated list	Ch + CEO
M+45 d	Publish updated list on ECSA website	PRO/Webmaster
M+45 d	Update schedule of Visits for interim evaluation, if required	EO

9.2 Minuting and decision Letter

The UAC meeting minutes must contain a resolution for each programme considered for Accreditation. The resolution must contain the Accreditation decision using the style of wording defined in **PE-75** Rev-2 section 10. Where a decision is based on identified deficiencies, the deficiencies must be specifically identified in the minute for the programme.

The decision letter is addressed to the Vice-Chancellor over the signature of the ECSA CEO. The decision letter must convey the decision and, for all cases other than Accreditation until the next Regular Visit, must convey the deficiencies as grounds for the decision. The decision letter must also enumerate the concerns that must be addressed at the next Accreditation Visit. The Visit Leader Report and individual Team reports are appended to the decision letter.

9.3 Process for Initial Evaluation

The process of Initial Evaluation defined in **PE-70** section 5.1 is as follows:

Timing	Action	Responsibility
S	Documentation submitted to ECSA at date S	Dean
S+2w	Perusal of documentation	UAC Chair
S+4w	Documentation not complete: refer back to Dean	EO
S+4w	Documentation complete: Appoint Team	UAC/EXCO
I	Availability of Team confirmed	
I+1w	Issue documents to Team	EO
I+3w	Team leader contacts Team	TL
...	E-mail, teleconference as required	TL, TM
I+7w	First Draft Report complete & circulate to Team	TL
I+8w	Final Report completed	TL
I+8w	Sign off report and submit to ECSA	TL
M-2w	Report circulated with UAC Agenda	EO
At M	Member of UAC identified by Chair presents Team Report UAC deliberates UAC formulates Opinion	UAC Chair

This schedule ensures that a submission will receive an opinion within six months.

10. Revision History

Version	Date	Revision authorised by	Nature of Revision
Concept-A	15 Oct 1999	UAC	Adapted from UAC Rev-8
Draft -A	18 Jan 2000	UAC	Minor revisions
Draft-B	19 April 2000	UAC Working group	Change Visit timetable, add Appendix A, minor revisions
Draft-C	20 July 2000	UAC	Minor and editorial revisions
Rev - 0	11 Aug 2000	Council	Converted to PDF format
Rev-1 Draft-A	20 Nov 2001		Refinements, Section 10 added
Rev-2	26 July 2004	UAC	Refinements, Appendix A revised

Accreditation Team Worksheet

(The worksheet below is available as Word file **TeamWs.doc**)

Programme:				
Stage of Visit:		Day: (0/1/2)		Time:

Q	Issue for Investigation / Information to be provided	Action / Resolved
1.1		
1.2		
1.3		
1.4		
1.5		
2.1		
2.2		
2.3		
2.4		
2.5		
2.6		
2.7		
2.8		
2.9		
2.10		
3.		
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