Site Visit Prep Sessions - Agenda

- Overview of the site visit process
  - Why it is important
  - What to expect
- Practice mini-session
- Final Q&A
Why do we do accreditation?

• Institutional (formerly regional) accreditors like MSCHE have been charged by the federal Department of Education with ensuring that all institutions meet a set of quality standards.
  • MSCHE confirms that we meet those standards, therefore making us eligible to award federal financial aid.

• As part of the 8-year process, we are asked to prepare a self-study and then participate in the site visit process to earn reaccreditation.
Site Visit Overview

• The purpose of the site visit is to confirm and clarify what was written in the self-study report.
  • The visiting team members will have already read our self-study report and have an idea about the status of our compliance. This visit helps them be sure they understand what we’ve submitted.
  • It is important that we are able to do just that: confirm what was written in the self-study report and willingly clarify and provide examples that demonstrate our compliance, as requested.
What to Expect

- Because of the pandemic, we are hosting a **Virtual Site Visit**.
  - All meetings are being managed through Zoom.
  - Most group meetings will be small – 10-12 participants.
  - At least 1-2 members of the visiting team will be in each meeting.
  - Meetings are scheduled for 1 hour, but the visiting team may decide to end them early if they choose.
How to Prepare

• Read the self-study
  
  • Most important: the Executive Summary and the Standard that you will be representing

• Reflect on your own unit/area
  
  • Think of examples from your own area that you can share, and be ready to speak concisely about them.

• Take a breath! 😊
  
  • Remember that this isn’t supposed to be a scary process – it really is a group of our peers who are trying to help us be in compliance.
What kinds of questions will they ask?

It's impossible to know for sure exactly what they will ask. However, we can make some educated guesses about the types of questions that will be common …

• Clarifying what is in the self-study
  • “I read in Chapter X that … can you tell me more about that?”

• Asking for additional information
  • “I see that you’ve done X. Can you share a different example of how you …”

• Checking in on our progress
  • “It says that the school has … How have you seen that manifested on campus?”

• Talking about future goals
  • “One of your opportunities for improvement is … Do you think that’s realistic, and how might it be implemented?”
What should I say? What should I not say?

• You should tell the truth and provide information that advances the goals of the self study.
  • Provide clarification of what is in the document.
  • Share examples of the great work that your unit is doing.
  • Be honest about where we are continuing to grow. Remember, this is about improvement – we don’t have to be perfect, we just have to keep moving forward.
What should I say? What should I not say?

• You *should not* say things that are untrue and or unnecessary, or that don’t align with the goals of the self-study process.
It’s okay to not know an answer!

- If a question is asked and you do not know the answer, that is okay.
  - Don’t try to guess – it’s better to just say that you don’t know than to make up an answer.
- Some soft ways to respond:
  - “My unit isn’t the best place for that question, but maybe someone else in the room knows?” [if you know who should be able to answer it, it’s okay to tell them]
  - “That’s a great question – I’ll need some time to think about it.”
  - “I’ll find an answer to that for you.”
LET’S WORK THROUGH A PRACTICE QUESTION
CAN WE PLEASE SPLIT INTO TWO GROUPS?
NOW, LET’S DEBRIEF. WHAT DID YOU EXPERIENCE?
Quick Reminders

• Balance the present with the future – remember, this is about *continuous improvement* – don’t focus too much on the past.

• Be inclusive of every person and unit represented in your meeting group.

• Be honest, but avoid “airing dirty laundry”

• Remember, Zoom is tough for everyone. Stay engaged, be mindful of body language and distractions, etc.
If asked for additional information ...

• If a team member requests additional evidence, please email ie@Mercyhurst.edu
  • What was requested (and attach it)
  • What meeting you were in
  • Who requested it
  • A short description of why, if you know it

• We must upload all documents to a special portal, so nothing should be directly sent to any individual!
What comes next?

• Each participant will receive information about their meeting
  • A custom email with some specific questions for your standard(s), as well as the meeting time
  • A calendar invite with the Zoom link and meeting details

• Then, we’ll meet with the team! April 3-6 (most meetings M-Tu)
  • Afterward, they’ll write the report, share it with us, and we have time to respond. The final Commission action won’t take place until November.
Q&A
WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE REMAINING?