

Quality Checkup Site Visit

Purpose, Contents, Results

The Quality Checkup requires two or more evaluators and occupies two or more days on campus. The AQIP Reviewers prepare for the visit by reviewing relevant organizational and AQIP file materials, particularly the organization's last *Systems Appraisal Feedback Report* and the Commission's internal *Organizational Profile*, which summarizes information reported by the institution in its *Annual Institutional Data Update*.

Goals of the AQIP Quality Checkup Site Visit:

- affirming the accuracy of the organization's online *Systems Portfolio* and verifying information included in the portfolio;
- reviewing with organizational leaders *Action Projects* and strategies identified to capitalize on the strengths and opportunities for improvement;
- assuring continuing organizational quality improvement commitment;
- confirming the institution's compliance with accreditation expectations and counsel the institution concerning any issues that require immediate attention; and
- reviewing and updating the relationship between the institution and the Commission

Components of the AQIP Quality Checkup Site Visit:

Systems Portfolio Clarification and Verification

The Quality Checkup Site Visit will affirm the accuracy of the organization's online Systems Portfolio and verify information included in the Portfolio that the last Systems Appraisal has identified as needing clarification or verification.

Systems Appraisal Follow Up

This component involves a formal review, with organizational leaders, of the Strategic Issues Analysis to make certain that the organization has understood all issues raised by the Strategic Issues Analysis, and to understand and confirm the strategy adopted by the organization in order to capitalize on the advice provided it via the Systems Appraisal.

Organizational Quality Commitment

A variety of occasions to interact with personnel from the organization will occur to assess the strength and direction of the organization's commitment to systematic quality improvement. There should be at least one public meeting scheduled to which organizational administrators, faculty, staff, students, and other constituencies are invited. Separate sessions may include:

- Meetings with the institution's quality steering council or its equivalent.
- Meetings with current and past Action Project team leaders and members.
- Open meetings with institutional personnel groups: faculty, staff, administrators.

Accreditation Issues Follow Up

This component involves a formal review, with organizational leaders, of the Accreditation Issues Analysis. Its goal is to make certain that the organization has understood all issues raised by the Analysis and has either rectified them or is taking affirmative action to correct problems prior to its next scheduled Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

Commission Relationship Review

The SAS describes an institution's relationship with the Commission. If the institution asks the team to consider recommending a change, the team will evaluate the institution's capacity to support the desired changes and make a recommendation in accord with its evaluation.

Federal Compliance Review

The Commission expects its affiliated institutions to comply if required with the Title IV requirements of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act as amended in 1998. Therefore, institutions will provide for review and consideration the most recent default rates (and any default reduction plans approved by the Department of Education) and any other documents concerning the institution's program responsibilities under Title IV of the Act, including any results of financial or compliance audits and program reviews.

Federal Compliance Material Packet

As early as possible, but no later than four weeks before the visit, the institution must provide one electronic PDF copy of the Federal Compliance Materials Packet to AQIP and one to each Quality Checkup team member.

The Federal Compliance Material Packet must include a brief report, ideally about 20 pages, along with copies of or links to evidence provided to document the narrative. The report must include:

1. An evaluation of the organization's student loan default rate and its plans for reducing default.
2. Evidence of the institution's compliance with Commission policy I.C.7, Credits, Program Length, and Tuition.
3. A description of any issues related to Commission policy III.A.1, Professional Accreditation.
4. A review of any issues related to Commission policy IV.B.4, Organizational Records of Student Complaints.
5. A description of the organization's processes for ensuring adherence to Commission goals and expectations in soliciting third-party comment in relation to accreditation processes.
6. Copies of documents relevant to Title IV compliance, or where those documents might be readily found.
7. Samples of the organization's advertising and recruitment materials to determine the institution's compliance with Commission policy IV.B.2, Advertising and Recruitment Materials.

Quality Program Summary

In addition to the Compliance Materials Packet, the institution should prepare and send the team and AQIP a brief narrative, no more than 10 pages, describing the current state of the institution's quality program: how it is organized, what the institution has done over the past few years, as well as any information that will help the team better understand the institution's commitment to continuous improvement, as expressed in its actions. It must be received no later than six weeks before the visit begins.

Tips about Quality Checkups

Work collaboratively with the team and to decide:

- Logistics for visiting team (lodging, transportation, schedules)
- Key contact at institution, and key team person for specific topics
- Selection of sessions and activities that maximize use and value of the team
- Who should be at each session and what should be discussed
- How many people the team should engage at a time
- How the team should engage students, faculty, and staff
- Whether sessions should be open to observers
- How to arrange and use observers effectively
- Effect of the presence of observers on the involvement of the participants in each session
- The “down time” or break time the team needs to confer and keep on track
- The “slack” time needed in case things get off schedule
- The best use of meal time
- Whether “campus tour” activities are necessary, meaningful, and useful,
- How to effectively demonstrate how the institution exercises effective quality control over its off-campus sites and distance education

For the institution:

- Publicize the agenda.
- Establish the focus and tone for a session.
- Make sure everyone knows how the visit fits into AQIP.
- Use space and setting to create the appropriate climate and environment for dialogue.
- Model the way for the visit.
- Complain if things don't go constructively.
- Make sure everyone stays available.
- Include students and community people in sessions.

Some sample questions to stimulate discussion at Quality Checkup sessions. The following sample questions may be useful to stimulate thinking through the specific agenda for the visit.

Do the mission, values, and vision statements:

1. Present the organization as something employees, students, stakeholders, and the community should identify with and admire?
2. Get used as rallying points, uniting people in working toward a common goal?
3. Focus on quality, continuous improvement, and stakeholder satisfaction?
4. Stress the needs of employees with respect to their long-term value as a critical resource?
5. Take a long-term view, committing the organization to developing new programs and services for the future, and putting resources into training, research, and education?
6. Take into account all those concerned with the organization's ultimate survival?
7. Establish organizational purposes that remain constant despite change in management?

About collegiality and consensus decision-making

1. Are the institution's common purposes clear enough to encourage collegiality?
2. How does the institution place value on and strive for consensus in decision-making?

About integrity and ethics

1. Do the identified core values define our institution's identity?
2. Are the values translated into behaviors that can be observed, emulated, avoided, and evaluated?
3. How do our values shape and inform the decisions we make?

About assessment of student learning

1. Are the stated student learning outcomes appropriate to our mission, programs, and degrees?
2. What evidence do we have that students achieve our stated learning outcomes?
3. In what ways do we analyze and use evidence of student learning?
4. How do we ensure shared responsibility for assessment of student learning?
5. How do we evaluate/ improve the effectiveness of assessment of student learning efforts?

About systematic quality improvement

1. Who is in charge of our quality initiative?
2. What power and influence does our quality initiative have?
3. How do we make sure we have the resources our quality initiative requires?
4. What do our people know about our quality initiative?
5. What arouses our quality initiative to action?
6. How does our quality initiative link with our other efforts?
7. How satisfied are we that our quality initiative is working as well as it could?