Virtual Continuous Improvement Review Visit Protocols and Best Practices

There are times when AACSB may deem it necessary to conduct a continuous improvement review visit in a virtual manner—in particular, if a location is experiencing challenges that could compromise the safety or health of a volunteer. In such cases AACSB will determine whether it is best for the school and volunteers to postpone the visit to another time when a team could be deployed, or whether it is best to proceed with conducting the continuous improvement review visit virtually. This second option could involve members of the peer review team connecting from their home or school, or from a central location, such as one of AACSB’s three offices. If a virtual visit is determined to be the most appropriate course of action, both the dean/head of the host school and all members of the peer review team must agree to this format.

The continuous improvement review visit relies on extensive and effective communications between the host school and the peer review team. With careful preparation, a virtual accreditation visit can be an effective substitute to an on-site visit and can result in a high-quality experience. To ensure a productive peer review team visit that fosters a high level of engagement among participants, this document includes the protocols that must be followed, as well as best practices that AACSB has observed over time that can enhance the virtual visit experience.

Virtual Visit Protocols

- The on-site visit must consist of the same meetings suggested in AACSB’s sample CIR agenda. Likewise, the same individuals from the sample agenda should be included in the virtual visit agenda. For example, the virtual visit must include students, faculty, and other key stakeholder groups. As always, work closely with your peer review team chair on the development of the visit schedule.

- When preparing the agenda and meeting times, factor in the time zones of your team members and plan meetings for times that are conducive to their locations.

- Use a school-supported virtual meeting platform.

- Consult with your peer review team chair to see if they would like to use your virtual meeting platform or their own platform for team meetings in between sessions and while they are working on their report.

- Test the technology with each member of the team in advance of the first meeting.

- Have your I.T. support available before and during each virtual session to assist with troubleshooting as needed.

- Establish meeting guidelines and share with all meeting participants. Examples may include muting yourself when not talking, raising a virtual “hand” when someone wants to talk, turning on video during meetings, discouraging multitasking during meetings, etc.
• If participants will be in the same room, ensure the room is equipped with appropriate audio equipment such as multiple microphones that can pick up all participants.

• For concurrent meetings, reserve separate meeting rooms to allow the teams to meet with groups separately at the same time. If your visit will have multiple virtual meeting rooms, provide clear instructions on the agenda regarding which room each meeting will occur in.

• Ensure that every participant has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

• Create a virtual “base room” with materials such as CVs, AoL data, student records, and other supporting documentation and share the instructions for accessing with the team prior to the first meeting.

• Connections to any internal databases, intranet, etc., that may be shared with the team should be cleared and tested in advance.

• Arrange for a virtual tour of the school’s facilities. This can be pre-recorded and shared with the team prior to the visit.

Virtual Visit Best Practices

• Have participants introduce themselves at the beginning of each meeting.

• Build in 10-to-15-minute breaks between consecutive meetings.

• Consider modifying the schedule to minimize long days in front of the computer. For example, consider spreading the visit over a longer period of time.

• Consider having a hand-held camera that will more closely capture facial expressions, body language, etc. to enhance the experience.

• If both team and school are comfortable and in agreement, consider recording meetings, especially in the case of a meeting with key stakeholders in which not all team members are able to attend.

• Assign a lead person for each meeting. This can be helpful in assisting with introductions and directing questions, particularly with large groups.

• To support faculty or staff who may not be as familiar with the virtual meeting platform, have office hours for them to direct questions to the appropriate expert.

• Hold a preparatory meeting with external constituents who will be involved with meetings to ensure they have an adequate comfort level with the technology prior to their meeting.