

SAIS Accreditation Chair to Team Member Communication

Communication Schedule

Note 1

Sent upon team member confirmation, approximately 3–4 months prior to the visit. If you do not have your team confirmed by this time, contact SAIS.

Note 2

Sent 6–8 weeks prior to the visit. You are welcome to conduct a virtual meeting if you prefer.

Note 3

Sent 2–4 weeks prior to the visit. Again, feel free to conduct a virtual meeting, but make sure all information is conveyed.

You may also want to call team members, especially those new to the process. You may also choose to conduct a virtual orientation meeting prior to the onsite visit.

Please copy the school's accreditation coordinator and blind copy SAIS, accreditation@sais.org on your correspondence.

Note 1(3-4 months prior to the visit)

Greetings!

Let me thank you for agreeing to serve on the SAIS accreditation peer review team in [Month] for [Name of School]. I am looking forward to our visit and the time we will share as colleagues, professionals, and new friends. Your service for this visit is worth more than you will ever know and on behalf of SAIS, I thank you in advance for your willingness to share your expertise, knowledge, and experience.

I have had the opportunity to pre-visit the school to evaluate their readiness for our team visit. This is a [good, great, solid] independent school, like all of us, trying to stay true to their mission and deliver outstanding student services.

The mission of the school is XXXXX. Before you do too much research or google the school, take a moment to consider their mission statement and visualize what you expect to see. Chief among our responsibilities is using the school's mission as their own barometer of successful planning for their future.

Our visit will begin [start day of week, month, date] and we will give our exit report on [end day of week, month, date].

We are charged with the responsibility to determine whether the school should be recommended for accreditation. On our visit, we will spend a small amount of our time spot-checking the school's standards (as part of my pre-visit, I reviewed all standards and have found the written documentation to be in compliance). During our visit, we will be verifying that the procedures and written materials match their actual practice and reviewing their self-study and plans for growth. We will identify areas for commendations and recommendations. The process will be organized with each team member having specific responsibilities for standards and for the school's strategic goals (although there will many opportunities for collaboration and overlap). During our orientation, I will walk through this process with you. This will be a great and rewarding experience for each of you.

Often, the question arises regarding, "what do I need to do to prepare for the visit?" All team members need to review the notes listed below and the school's materials, which will be submitted four weeks before the visit. Refer to the [SAIS website](#) for additional resources. During our orientation I will explain the process in full detail, and we will have time to discuss any questions or concerns.

(Note 1 continued)

Below are notes regarding our visit:

Schedule

We will begin our visit with an orientation on [day and time and location]. The visit will conclude, and you will be free to leave by [end date and time].

Lodging

The school will make appropriate room reservations.

Directions

The school will provide driving directions and transportation details from the airport. [adjust accordingly]

Agenda

A detailed agenda will be sent to you before the visit, giving all details of our visit to the school.

Preparation

In preparation for our visit, review the materials on the [accreditation resources web pages](#). The school's work and our work will be conducted using the SAIS Accreditation Portal, so please refer to the listed web page, watch the video, read the materials, and make sure you have access to the [SAIS Accreditation Portal](#). Log in today. If you have difficulty, let me know.

Dress code for the visit

We want to provide a professional demeanor while still fitting in with the ethos of the school. [any specifics – business attire, tie and jacket, etc.]

Computer

Please plan to bring a laptop with you. Let me know as soon as possible if you are not able to travel with or bring your own laptop.

Expenses

The school will pay for meals, lodging, and transportation costs (including mileage). Keep receipts for any expenses and mileage recorded. Please let me know as soon as possible of any dietary restrictions, which I will pass along to the school.

I know that our visit is still several months away, but I wanted to send our plans to date. Please feel free to call me at any time you have questions or concerns. Again, thank you for your service to [Name of School] and to the independent school community.

[your name and usual signature / contact information]

[and be sure to CC the accreditation coordinator and blind copy accreditation@sais.org]

Note 2 (sent about 6-8 weeks prior to the visit) – or a virtual meeting if you prefer

Dear [names of team members],

Thank you again for agreeing to serve on the accreditation visiting team for School Name in City. Perhaps you are like me in that leading up to visits I always find myself wondering why I agreed to this, given the piles on my desk. If so, I hope that you will also be like me in ultimately finding the experience to be rewarding and enriching. For me, it feels good to serve other schools by adding value to their self-evaluation processes, and I always learn some things along the way. It's a rare opportunity to step outside our own daily grind and immerse ourselves in the ideas and practices that inform our vocation. Finally, I also try to have a little fun with new and old friends and colleagues along the way.

As you know, I have conducted a preliminary visit at the school and expect that we will have a great visit. The school's materials are available in the [SAIS Accreditation Portal](#) and additional information is available on the [SAIS website](#). All the school's materials for the visit are or will be available through the SAIS Accreditation Portal and their final school report will provide the foundation for a productive visit.

I have attached to this email our full schedule and a list of assignments. *(this is the visit schedule you worked on with the school during the pre-visit.)*

Please review the schedule and let me know if you see any problems, conflicts, or omissions. Notice the visit is scheduled to conclude by [end time]. However, if you need to get on the road (or in the air) before then, just let me know. While I would like for everyone to be able to stay for the final exit interview, we should have most, if not all, writing and editing finished by very early afternoon.

I anticipate that we will work as a team, including writing and editing collaboratively, so that our report will reflect a unified team voice and consensus. However, I have found it helpful to ask individual team members to particularly focus on specific standards and areas. Please review the assignments and let me know if you'd like to propose any changes. These standards and goal areas neither burden you with sole responsibility for that area nor preclude you from being deeply engaged in some other area of interest. This has worked for me in the past as simply a way of helping us be efficient and thorough. With a team of at least two on each of the areas, you will always have someone else with whom to collaborate.

I will follow this email with lodging information, the school report, and any final thoughts about two to four weeks prior to the visit. Let me know if you have any additional questions. Thanks again for agreeing to serve. I'm very much looking forward to it.

[If you are flying in, let me know your times. We can probably arrange ground transportation for you while there.]

[your name and usual signature / contact information]

[and be sure to CC the accreditation coordinator and blind copy accreditation@sais.org]

NOTE 3 (sent about 2-4 weeks prior to the visit) – or a virtual meeting if you prefer

Dear colleagues,

The time is almost here, and I would again like to thank you for agreeing to serve on our SAIS accreditation team for [School Name]. At this time, you should have begun reading through the materials. The school's materials are available in the [SAIS Accreditation Portal](#) and additional information is available on the [SAIS website](#). Please make sure you have familiarized yourself with the school's materials and with the SAIS Accreditation Portal.

[School Name] is an outstanding school and you will quickly see its strengths. Our task is to identify these strengths and identify areas the school should improve. The leadership has worked hard in preparation for our upcoming visit. Our goal is always about school improvement.

These visits are mentally and physically exhausting. Get plenty of rest before the visit and plan to be fully engaged with the process. Schedule an out of office message on your email letting people know you are serving on an accreditation team.

I look forward to seeing and working with you on [date]. We will begin with an orientation in the [room of the hotel/school, on date at time]. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call or email me. Again, thanks and safe travels.

[your name and usual signature / contact information]

[and be sure to CC the accreditation coordinator and blind copy accreditation@sais.org]