

Accreditation Team Orientation

Training and Resources



Welcome!

Thank you for joining an SAIS accreditation team. Your input and time are invaluable to our peer-review model, which aims to strengthen member schools through high-quality accreditation processes. SAIS accreditation derives its greatest benefit from peer educators like you reviewing a school's self-study and responses to standards and indicators, evaluating them in light of the school's mission and evidence gathered during your visit.

Your dedication helps schools achieve strategic growth and sustain long-term success, ultimately enriching and advancing independent schools towards greater heights of excellence and stewardship. We couldn't do it without you, and we wouldn't want to try.



Meet the SAIS Accreditation Team

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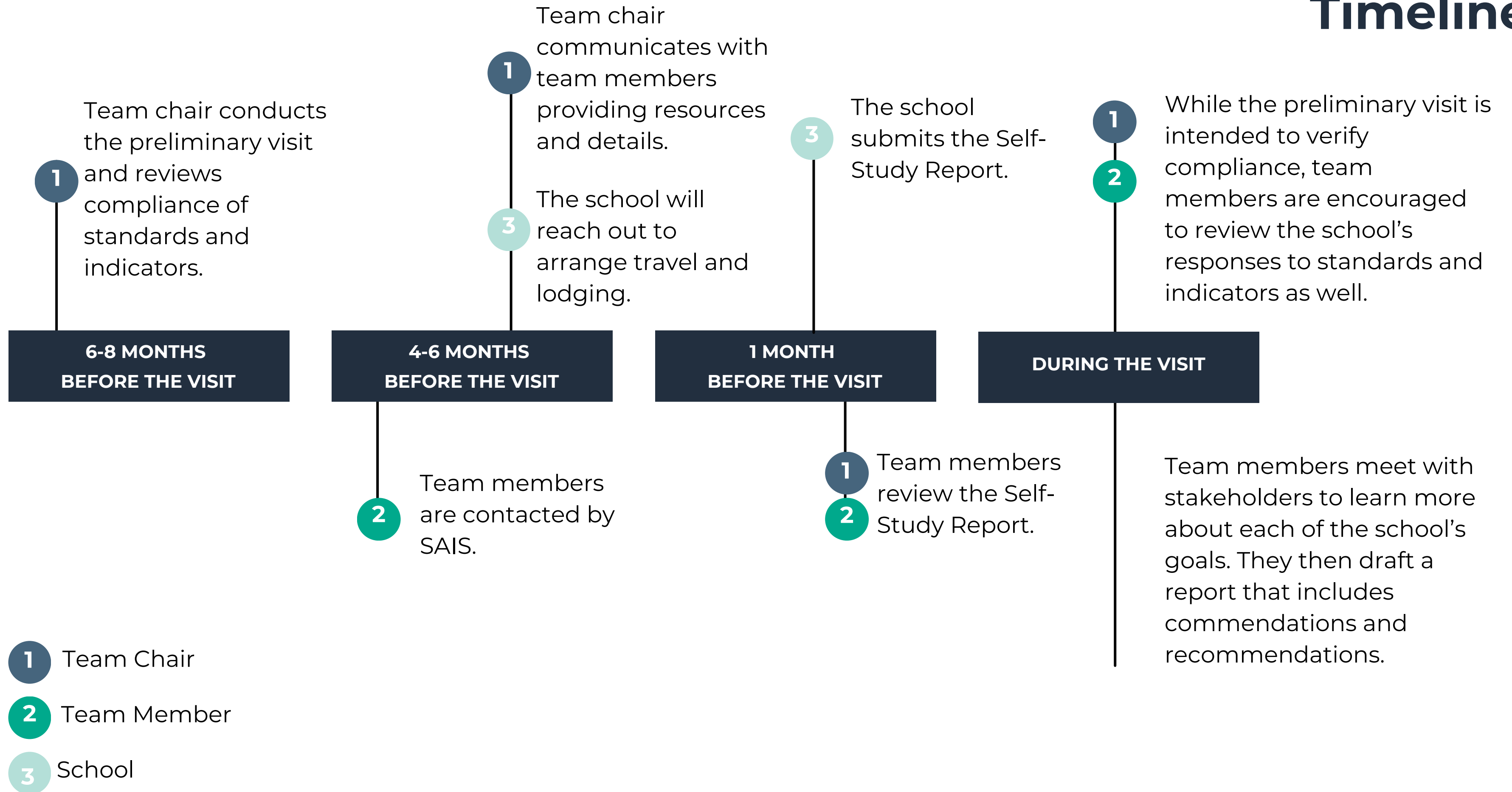
Questions?



Timeline

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Expectations

Expectations of Team Members

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Expectations



SAIS accreditation is based on a peer-review model that derives its greatest benefit from peer educators reviewing the school's self-study and responses to standards/indicators and evaluating them in light of the school's mission and evidence gathered during the team visit.

Professionalism

Display a high degree of **professionalism and ethical behavior**, fully engaging with the school through the lens of its own unique mission.

Preparation

Get to know the school by reviewing its **school snapshot and responses to the standards and indicators**. The chair of the visiting team has reviewed standard compliance before the visit occurs.

Review and evaluate the **school's self-study report**. The self-study report should be thorough and accurate, and effectively communicate the school's "story" as it relates to the accreditation standards and process and its commitment to its growth mindset.

Collaboration

Collaborate with your team throughout the visit. Help write the visit report.

The report serves as the feedback to the school and includes commendations and recommendations based on the school report and the team visit. The report is also the document that recommends the school's accreditation status to the SAIS Accreditation Review Committee.



Before the Visit

Travel and Lodging
Visit Preparation
The Portal

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Note:

Please keep in mind that you will receive various emails from SAIS related to accreditation visits. Some of these messages are generated by the Accreditation Portal and may be blocked by certain school firewalls. To ensure you receive all communications, please add **email.accportal.org** to your school's approved email domain list.

Travel and Lodging



Travel and Lodging

The School will contact you regarding travel and lodging arrangements. Each school manages these arrangements differently.

You will be reimbursed for any travel-related expenses. Please ensure we are being good stewards of the school's financial resources with every reimbursement request.



Visit Preparation



Visit Preparation



Learn About the School

Take time to look at the school's website, social media, and uploaded materials such as handbooks, profile, and marketing materials. Read the school's snapshot to get an overall sense of the school.



Review the Standards and Indicators

Review the standards and indicators. Remember that the team chair will review them at the pre-visit to determine compliance. However, it is important for you to read through them as well.



Review the Self-Study Report

Review the self-study report. You will be assigned two or more goals to focus on during the team visit. The report is found in the accreditation portal.



Self-Study Report



VISIT PREPARATION:

Reviewing the Self-Study Report

- Introduction** — A brief introduction/ welcome letter from the head of school
- Progress Summary** — An update on the progress made toward the school's last set of strategic goals
- Response to Recommendations** — Responses to the recommendations made by the previous visiting team
- Self-Study Process** — A description of how the school approached the self-study process and its source(s) of data reflecting input from all stakeholder groups
- Strategic Goals & Critical Questions** — Mission-based, strategic, comprehensive, and measurable goals with answers to the four critical questions for each major goal
- Conclusion** — The School may wish to include a conclusion



The Four Critical Questions

PROFILE

What is the current status of each goal area?

A **PROFILE** of the school's current status with respect to each selected goal and what led to the identification of each goal

VISION

What does the school hope to achieve in terms of each goal?

A **VISION** for where the school wants to go relative to each goal

PLAN

What specific steps must the school take to accomplish each goal?

A **PLAN** for achieving the desired outcomes of the school's goal

RESULTS

How will the school determine whether it has reached each goal?

Measurable **RESULTS** that will demonstrate the school's movement towards the completion of each goal


If the goals are not clear or the four questions are not answered, contact your team chair for clarification.




The Portal




The Accreditation Portal

**SAIS**


Manage My Accreditation


 Previous Reports

 Control Panel


SAIS Norcross, GA

Print My School Snapshot & Standards


 HTML

 PDF

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|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Preliminary Visit: 02/18/2022 | Self-Study Report Due: 08/18/2022 | Visit Start: 09/18/2022 | Visit End: 09/20/2022 | Visiting Team Report Due: 09/30/2022 |
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Email Everyone Below 

My Report


 **Head of School**




The Portal


The Accreditation Portal

Logging In

 **SAIS**


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Email Everyone Below 

My Report

 Head of School



During the Visit

Responsibilities and Reminders

Schedule

Writing the Report

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Responsibilities



Behaviors

- Maintain **professionalism** as a representative of both your school and SAIS.
 - Remember, all information gathered during this visit must remain **confidential** both during and after the visit.
- Show **respect** for the school's culture and mission.
 - Avoid imposing your own culture or educational biases.
- Strive to be as **unobtrusive** as possible.
- Refrain from continually referencing your own school.
- Ensure your demeanor is **open-minded** and **non-judgmental**.
- If you have **questions** before or during the visit, communicate with your team chair. In the event that you have concerns related to the team chair, please reach out to Pat Cuneo, Director of Accreditation, or Jo Stoltz, Assistant Director of Accreditation.



Responsibilities | Effective Strategies for Gathering Insights

Interviews

- **Approach:** Conduct interviews that feel more like conversations than inquisitions.
- **Group Dynamics:** Interview small groups or break larger groups into subgroups to capture a wider range of representative voices.
- **Best Practice:** Ask each stakeholder group the same question(s) to ensure consistency.
 - *Example:* “What do you identify as the school’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for growth, and obstacles to growth?”.
- **Resources:** [Student Interviewing Method](#) | [Sample Interview Questions](#)



Responsibilities | Effective Strategies for Gathering Insights

Classroom Visits

- **Objective:** Observe how the mission is embodied within the classroom setting.
- **Duration:** It's not necessary (or feasible) to visit every classroom; aim for visits lasting around 3 to 5 minutes. The team will work together to develop the most effective visiting strategy.

Collaborate and Communicate

- **Approach:** Engage in open discussions within the team to share insights and information effectively.
- **Group Dynamics:** Foster collaboration by encouraging feedback on the report and facilitating input from all team members. It is important to share your thoughts and insights with the team to gather all perspectives.
- **Best Practice:** Seek input from each other as you are writing the report.



Visit Schedule

The team visit usually lasts two and a half days. The **first day** of the visit typically begins in the late afternoon or early evening with a tour of the school and a reception with school leaders and/or trustees.

The **second day** of the visit often includes several meetings between the team and various stakeholder groups: faculty, staff, trustees, students, parents, alumni, and others.

The focus of the **final day** of the visit is usually on drafting the Visiting Team Report.



Writing the Report



Responsibilities | Writing the Report

Guidelines for the Visit Report

- The visit report responds to the school's strategic goals.
- It must be written in a cohesive voice - the team chair will help to guide the writing.
- Utilize clear language and ensure proper grammar.
- Refrain from naming individuals, suggesting monetary solutions, or endorsing specific products or programs.
- Maintain objectivity and avoid personal bias.
- Opt for active voice throughout the report.
- Use complete sentences.



Responsibilities | Writing the Report

Report Structure

- For each strategic goal, the team will provide commendations and recommendations.
- Additionally, the team can provide general commendation and recommendations that do not fit under the school's goals.
- Begin all commendations and recommendations with a gerund
- In general, try to balance the number of commendations and recommendations (3-6)



Responsibilities | Writing the Report

Commendations

- Emphasize notable events, actions, practices, and contributing factors.
- Recognize actions that are often overlooked or unexpected.
- Acknowledge practices that lead to significant outcomes.
- Celebrate initiatives that the school has dedicated substantial effort to.

Example

Note that this stem is already provided in the report format. You will not add this to the beginning of your commendations.

The visiting team commends the school for the following:

- Creating ways to connect students to resources and opportunities for authentic engagement.

Starts with a gerund.

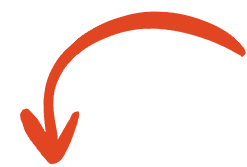


Responsibilities | Writing the Report

Recommendations

- Address areas that hinder the school from fully realizing its potential.
- Focus on actions that have the most substantial impact.
- Provide evidence that is both substantive and supportive.
- Be visionary, strategic, and process-oriented.
- Note that an explanation or rationale for your recommendations is not required.
- Remember that the school must respond to each recommendation in the two-year report.

Example



Note that this stem is already provided in the report format. You will not add this to the beginning of your recommendations.

The visiting team recommends that the school *consider* the following:

- Including an additional professional development focus on the area of leadership for faculty, in order to ensure that future school leadership is being cultivated within each division.



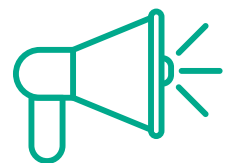
Responsibilities | End of the Visit and Exit Report



Within 10 days of the visit, the team chair will finalize and submit the report to SAIS.



As a team, you will make a **recommendation** to grant or deny accreditation. The final decision is made up to 30 days after the visit by the Accreditation Review Committee.



At the end of the visit, the team may provide an exit report to the school. The format of the team exit report varies from visit to visit. The exit report only provides a representative sample of the full Visiting Team Report. In most cases, each team member will share one commendation and one recommendation from their respective goal area(s).



Thank you for agreeing to serve on an accreditation visiting team. Serving on an accreditation team is demanding both mentally and physically. Please remember to take care of yourself throughout the visit and rely on your team chair and fellow members for support. While the work is challenging, it is also incredibly rewarding.

Thank you!

Resources

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Resources for Team Members

- Accreditation Guidebook
- Standards and Indicators
- Sample Interview Questions for Various Stakeholder Groups
- Student Interviewing Method Example
- Sample Accreditation Visit Schedule
- Accreditation Portal Access
- Accreditation Portal Reference Guide
- SAIS Travel and Reimbursement Policy
- Role of the Team
- Role of the Team Chair

Questions?

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