

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ACCREDITATION

SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBERS: A DELPHI STUDY

A DISSERTATION

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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Leland R. Christian entitled "Characteristics of Site Visit Team Members that can Facilitate an Effective Programmatic Accreditation Process." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Health Studies.

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Roger Shipley, Dr. William Cissell, Dr. Susan Ward, and Dr. Mary Shaw-Perry. All gave freely of their time and energy to guide me through this process. Dr. Shaw-Perry especially has been my mentor and friend from the beginning. I also dedicate this research to my wife, Star Christian, who steadfastly believed I could do it and taught me to believe anything is possible.

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ABSTRACT

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MAY 2003

The purpose of this study was to produce a list of characteristics that site visit team members should possess. This list of characteristics was created by a panel of experts in specialized programmatic accreditation of allied health educational programs. On average, these experts had participated in 19 site visits. The Delphi process was used to arrive at consensus among these experts. A series of four open-ended questions were distributed to a total of thirty-one expert site visitors. The panel was asked to list the essential characteristics in the following four areas of interest: 1) responsibilities of a site visit team member, 2) the essential attributes of a site visit team member, 3) the knowledge of the accreditation process a site visit team member should possess, and 4) the programmatic evaluation knowledge a site visit team member should possess.

The study was conducted in three rounds. In Round One a list was compiled from all responses from the panel. In Round Two the panel was asked to rate each response on a scale of one to five with one being the least important to five being essential. Only those responses that scored four or higher were included in round three. The panel then rank ordered the responses in numeric order of importance, with one being the most

important response. A total of 68 characteristics made the final cut. There were 29 responsibilities of a site visit team member selected by the panel. The panel chose 19 essential attributes. Knowledge of the accreditation process produced 14 responses. The panel selected six responses to reflect the knowledge of programmatic evaluation that a site visit team member should possess.

The results of this study should be incorporated into the curriculum of training courses for site visit team members. In so doing, accreditation agencies can address the concern voiced by some programmatic officials that it is the conduct of the site visit team members during an on-site evaluation, rather than the condition of the program, which leads to a negative accreditation action.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Rationale

The programmatic accreditation process is used by educational institutions to assure the public of the quality of the educational experience (Aspen Reference Group, 1997). The programmatic accreditation process is conducted by an independent agency charged with determining the program's compliance with certain standards of education in the specific field of study. The accreditation process includes the submission of an application by a program and/or institution, a comprehensive self-study, a site visit from the accreditation agency, and peer review of the entire process (Chaffee, 1997).

The site visit component of the accreditation process provides an opportunity for interaction between the accreditation agency representatives and various persons affiliated with the program/institution. The site visit team must verify that the information contained in the self-study document is accurate. Additionally, the site visit team must determine whether the physical resources are in place that will allow the program to provide a quality educational experience to each student enrolled in the program. Therefore, site visit teams are key players in the accreditation process for both the program under review and the accreditation agency tasked with determining the viability of the program.

Because site visit teams are composed of experts in the field of study for which the program seeks accreditation, a gap may exist between the content knowledge and

process knowledge of the experts charged with review of the program (Ewell, 2001). Site visitation is the most contentious portion of the programmatic accreditation process. Clearly, site visit team training varies widely among allied health accreditation agencies. The essential characteristics of allied health accreditation site visit team members have not been clearly identified by the agencies responsible for accreditation.

Statement of the Problem

The essential characteristics of allied health accreditation site visit team members have not been clearly identified by the agencies responsible for accreditation of educational programs in allied health.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of the study was to utilize a panel of experts to establish a consensus on the essential characteristics of an allied health accreditation site visit team.

Research Questions

The following questions were addressed within this study:

1. What are the responsibilities of the members of the site visit team during an on-site evaluation?
2. What are the essential attributes of a site visit team member during an on-site evaluation?
3. What knowledge of the accreditation process should a site visit team member possess during an on-site evaluation?
4. What programmatic evaluation knowledge should a site visit team member possess during an on-site evaluation?

Delimitation

The study was delimited by the following:

1. The panel of experts was composed of nominated individuals.
2. The literature review was limited to that which is available to the researcher and published in the English language.
3. The questions were presented to the panel of experts through three rounds for consensus.
4. The panel answered a six-item questionnaire on age, gender, ethnicity, profession, number of years in the profession, and number of programmatic accreditation site visits in which they have participated.

Limitations

The study was limited by the following:

1. The study was limited in scope to the setting from which the sample was obtained; therefore generalizability was impacted.
2. Volunteers identified through non-probability purposive sampling determined participation, thus limiting generalizability.
3. Only experts nominated by directors of professional associations and institutes, and editors of journals associated with health science educational programs within the United States were participants.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following was assumed:

1. Nominated experts were eligible for inclusion in the study.

2. Participants answered candidly.
3. Experts participated of their own free will.
4. Participants were interested in the subject and desired to improve the effectiveness of site visit teams and the accreditation process.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined for the purpose of this study:

1. Allied health/health sciences-used synonymously to describe those specialties in the field of medical science not represented in the areas known as Medicine, Osteopathy, Dentistry, Veterinary, Ophthalmology, Psychiatry, and Podiatry (MODVOPP).
2. Site visit team-two or more individuals dispatched by the accreditation agency during the accreditation process to visually inspect, without a consulting or service fee, the resources of a program and verify the activities reported in the self study document.
3. Accreditation-a voluntary process conducted by peers via non-governmental agencies to accomplish at least two things--to attempt on a periodic basis to hold one another accountable to achieve stated, appropriate institutional or program goals; and to assess the extent to which the institution or program meets established standards.
4. Institutional accreditation-deals with the entire institution and is conducted by elected commissions, small professional staff, and volunteer consultants and

evaluation team members via nine regional commissions in six accrediting regions and via four national agencies.

5. Specialized accreditation-deals with constituent programs or clusters of programs within post-secondary institutions. In general, specialized accreditation is based on compliance with professional standards determined by self-evaluation, peer review, and agency recognition.
6. Experts in site visitor training-individuals recognized through a nomination process from within their own profession as having achieved respect for positive contributions in voluntary programmatic accreditation.
7. Education process-defined as those practices used by professional educators to formulate, deliver, and evaluate content in the field of post-secondary education.
8. Essential Characteristics-those qualities in a programmatic accreditation site visit team member that demonstrate competency.

Importance of the Study

During the site visit, representatives of the accreditation agency interact directly with educational program officials. The site visit team members make real-time decisions to accept or reject evidence offered by the program as proof of compliance with accreditation standards. When a negative recommendation is the outcome of the accreditation application, program officials often cite their interactions with the site visit team members while on site as the basis for appeal of the agency's decision. The existing body of literature does not address the actions of site visitor team members during a site

visit. References to the training of site visitors tend to be general in nature without documentation of curricula used to conduct site visitor training. Accreditation agencies chose site visitors based on their discipline-specific knowledge rather than on their knowledge of the accreditation process or conduct during a site visit. The need exists for a comprehensive evaluation of the site visit process. Emphasis should be placed on the conduct of the site visit team while on site.

This study used a panel of site visit experts in allied health educational program accreditation to identify the essential characteristics of site visit team members. Site visit team members who have these characteristics should be able to conduct appropriate site visits. Accrediting bodies should be able to use the identified essential characteristics of site visit team members as baseline information that can be used in developing a training curriculum for site visit training.

The curriculum should then facilitate the development of a core set of skills for site visit team members that will improve the overall performance of each site visit team. If the performance of site visit team members improves accreditation agencies and allied health educational institutions should have greater confidence in the accreditation actions that follow. And finally, the general public should have increased confidence in the value of specialized accreditation for educational programs in allied health.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter two is presented in five parts. The first part is a brief history of institutional accreditation in allied health education. The second section is a brief history of specialized accreditation in allied health education. These first two sections introduce the use of peer review and site visitation into the accreditation process. The third section is an explanation of the role of the site visit team member in specialized accreditation of allied health educational programs. The fourth section describes the barriers and challenges facing site visit team members during the accreditation site visit. The fifth and final section reports the advantages and disadvantages of using the Delphi method to gain consensus from a panel of experts. The literature contains few references describing the content of the training courses for site visit team training in allied health educational program accreditation. No references were found that directly related to the essential characteristics of a site visit team member.

Institutional Accreditation

In the 1880s, regional accreditation efforts were begun for the purposes of improving educational articulation and introducing agreements on the number of years an educational program would encompass, admissions, criteria, or standards and the like (Young, Chambers, and Kells, 1983). These efforts to formalize a process that would assure the public that a school's educational program was adequate led to the introduction

of the foundation of educational accreditation in America. By the 1920s, accreditation was an elitist, exclusive process undertaken by liberal arts colleges only (Kells, 1982). It involved no self-study, no periodic review, and no team visits. The standards used were arbitrary, and partially quantitative. This form of accreditation based on institutional status lingered until the middle of the 20th century. In the 1950s, self-study was introduced, as was periodic review. The types of institutions participating became more varied and the shift began toward qualitative assessment of goal achievement (Kells, 1982). In the 1970s and 80s, attention to self-study, services to institutions, and goal achievement increased. Flexible approaches to self-study were introduced. Diversity among accredited institutions increased, as did cooperation with specialized agencies.

Accreditation has essentially shifted from a primarily exclusive to a primarily inclusive process (Chaffee, 1997). Membership in the accredited group is no longer elitist, but egalitarian. The focus is no longer on quantitative evaluations such as size of the institution or its history, but on qualitative evaluation of the curriculum. Clearly, today the institution rather than the accrediting agency is the primary focus of the accreditation process. The stated intentions have evolved from having the agency periodically involved to stimulating continuous study and change at participating institutions, and from an inspection orientation to the identification and projected recommendations for solution of problems before any visit occurs. Accrediting agency reaction has generally shifted from being prescriptive in nature to being supportively probing (Aspen Reference Group, 1997).

Specialized Accreditation

Even though it must remain a purely advisory body and have no legal status, the Council on Medical Education of the AMA will undoubtedly exercise a strong, indirect control over medical schools by its schemes of reports and inspections and by scattering broadcast the results of their inspections.

- Dr. Henry B. Ward (1908)

In 1847 the American Medical Association appointed a committee on medical education, well before the institutional accreditation efforts. The American Medical Association took steps to improve the process of educating physicians in America as early as 1876 by agreeing to certain standards (Berliner, 1975). By 1890 the medical curriculum of physician training programs were required to be at least three-years in length as one condition of membership. Changes and additional requirements were made in 1894 and 1900. In 1903 the secretary-treasurer of the AMA was authorized to visit each member college and make a detailed study and report. The Council on Medical Education was made a permanent body, and an ideal standard for medical education was developed, and tables were published listing medical schools in four classes based on the percentage of state licensure examination failures. A rating system with ten categories of qualification was developed, and inspections were begun in 1906 (Berliner, 1975).

The AMA efforts gave rise to the Carnegie Foundation of New York commissioning Abraham Flexner in 1910 to conduct his famous Flexner Report (Flexner, 1910). This report in essence severely criticized medical education in this country. Flexner also advocated incorporating medical schools as organic departments of universities, eliminating proprietary schools, requiring basic scientific courses by full-time faculty, and the use of teaching hospitals for clinical experience. This report led to

reducing the 160 medical schools down to 85 by 1920. The results led to eliminating marginal and substandard schools and to reducing the excessive number of physicians being trained (Ludmerer, 1985). Similar efforts began to spring up in law schools and seminaries. The American Bar Association began to publish an annual list of law schools in compliance with a set of minimum standards (Young, et al, 1983).

Medical education established specialized accreditation as a viable practice that all professions now embrace. Most of these early efforts could not be called accreditation as that term is now understood. Even the American Medical Association did not institute self-study as part of the evaluation process until 1977 (Ludmerer, 1985). Efforts to provide the public with confidence in specialized education led to professional associations of practitioners, associations of professional schools, and state agencies to act, separately and on occasion cooperatively, in dealing with the same set of problems. In these early efforts institutions, through membership requirements and other self-regulatory efforts, played a little-recognized leadership role in establishing standards for specialized accreditation. However, the professional association often later became the dominating partner (Ewell, 2001). The professions of medicine and law provided the first instances of conflict over standards and practices between a profession and the institutions that prepare its practitioners, a tension that has existed to some degree ever since.

One major difference between institutional accreditation and specialized accreditation is that the former is likely to be controlled by educators and the latter is likely to be controlled by peers from the profession (Kells, 1982). Ideally, there will be a

balance struck between both groups that will benefit the general public. In 1981 the Commission on Programmatic Accreditation (COPA) made the statement that specialized accreditation exists primarily for the purpose of providing some assurance to the public of the quality of education received by professionals, a responsibility for which members of an organized or licensed profession have traditionally been held accountable (The Aspen Group, 1997). It is the movement of this responsibility of ensuring quality of education to an external agency that allows allied health to be perceived by the public as something other than a trade organization (Ewell, 2001).

There is a social need for quality assurance in the education of practitioners in health-related fields. However, some college officials have voiced the opinion that outside evaluators are more concerned with the vested interests of their profession than with educational quality (Glanz et al., 1997). Also, the absence of clearly stated criterion levels for each standard often confuses site visit team members (Kells, 1982).

Role of the Site Visit Team Member

The purpose of a site visit is to judge a program's compliance with national standards and its own stated objectives (NAACLS, 1997). Some site visit teams are unable to achieve this goal primarily due to the quality of the team visiting the institution. A team chair or a dominating team member who has a strong set of personal notions about what constitutes quality (usually the way that person's own institution does things) can greatly skew the review process.

The role of the site visit team member is to verify fact (Curry, 1993). Armed with the self-study document and all corrections and additions to that document requested by

the accreditation agency, the site visit team member is placed on site to inspect the program. Each team member is responsible for conducting interviews with faculty, current and former students, clinical personnel, and administrators who have direct responsibility for the program. These interviews along with a visual inspection of documents and the physical plant provide the site visit team member with the information needed to verify the content of the self-study document. While on site, the site visit team member must determine if sufficient evidence exists to support the claims made in the self-study document. Most accreditation agencies charge the site visit team member with only this role. Some expand that role to include a consultative role as well. Few accreditation agencies delegate the responsibility of determining compliance with the Standards and Guidelines solely to the site visit team.

Barriers and Challenges

Jorden (1970) reported that 25% of site visit team members engaged in a study of special teacher improvement programs on a post site visit questionnaire were unsure of the purpose of the site visit. A good site visit team, even one that is perceived to be tough, is valued by the institution over any other part of the accreditation process; however, a poor site visit team evokes more anger and negative comments than does any other component of the process (Dill, 1998). Preparing site visit team members to function effectively in this emotionally charged environment is key to the success of the accreditation process.

Site visit team member training is the responsibility of the accreditation agency. Training of site visit team members varies widely among allied health accreditation

agencies. Team members are chosen from a pool of content experts, practitioners, and educators in the field. Some agencies require that these potential site visit team members simply read a self-study document and attend a site visit as an observer. While other agencies conduct multi-day training seminars usually in conjunction with professional society annual meetings (Curry, 1993). The curricula for these training courses are established by the accreditation agency. The majority of the content focuses on the Standards and Guidelines used by that agency (NAACLS, 1997). Case studies, role playing, and modeling are the preferred methods of delivering training. These methods are based on the concept of using the experiences of others to serve as a guide for decision making in the future. There is little emphasis during the training process on team member characteristics that, if displayed during the site visit, can contribute to the success of the entire accreditation process.

Preparing documents as part of the accreditation process, whether it is during the application process, the self-study, or the response to these documents, creates opportunities to correct content prior to submission of the self-study report. Finding of fact at the time of a site visit provides no such opportunity. Determining the existence of evidence to support the facts that are reported in the self-study document requires the site visit team member to use subjective analysis. Following the site visit, the site visit team member is faced with the challenge of reporting those subjective findings to the accrediting agency in a way that accurately reflects the facts. Reaction to the emotions of the visit can often lead to errors in reporting that can result in inappropriate accreditation

decisions. When there is a dispute between the parties involved in the accreditation process, it is this subjective analysis that is called into question.

The Delphi Method

Olaf Helmer and Norman Dalkey of the Rand Corporation invented the Delphi method in 1953 for the purpose of addressing a specific military problem (Helmer, 1983). The object of the Delphi method is to obtain a reliable response to a problem or question from a group of experts. This is done by giving individuals in the group a series of questionnaires (or interviews) that reiterate the same questions while providing group feedback from previous rounds (Helmer, 1983). Delphi experiments tend to produce convergence of opinion – not just toward the mean but toward the true value (Helmer, 1983). The Delphi method is based on the qualities of "anonymity, statistical analysis, and feedback" (Armstrong, 1989). In a Delphi study, the participants do not interact with one another, their responses are anonymous, the group results are given in terms of means, medians, or standard deviations, and participants are given the opportunity to reconsider their response after receiving the group feedback.

Although originally developed and used by Rand as a forecasting methodology, the Delphi method is used today in business, education, and the social sciences for a number of applications, including management decision making, policy evaluation, program planning, and prioritization of issues or actions (Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975; Dunham, 1998).

Delphi Advantages

When faced with an issue where the best information obtainable is the judgment of knowledgeable individuals, and where the most knowledgeable group reports a wide diversity of answers, the old rule that two heads are better than one, or more practically, several heads are better than one, turns out to be well founded. (Dalkey and Rourke, 1972). Generally, a group response will come closer to the truth than that of any one individual. The Delphi method offers the advantage of group response without the attendant disadvantages sometimes experienced with group problem solving or decision-making.

According to Helmer, one of the advantages to the Delphi method is that the expert participants are more likely to generate reasoned, independent, and well-considered opinions in the absence of exposure to the "persuasively stated opinions of others" (Helmer, 1983). Because the experts do not ever participate in a face-to-face discussion, there is no danger of one or more individuals' opinions being swayed by a more dominant or more experienced individual. Dalkey points out two other advantages that arise from the absence of face-to-face discussion: 1) irrelevant or biasing communication based on group interests rather than the problem at hand is eliminated and, 2) peer pressure or pressure to conform to the group is not a factor (Dalkey and Rourke, 1972).

Another advantage of the Delphi method is its efficiency and flexibility, especially in light of modern communication technologies such as e-mail and the Internet. Experts may be drawn from a wide geographic area, and the participants'

commitment in terms of time and money invested is minimal. Delphi studies, though traditionally conducted in four rounds, can be done with more or fewer rounds, depending on the information needed (Delbecq et al., 1975). Debecq also notes the advantage of the usual Delphi procedure of obtaining ideas in writing. The act of writing forces participants to contemplate the subject thoughtfully and tends to produce a high volume of ideas (Debecq et al., 1975).

Finally, the Delphi method has been shown to be an effective way to conduct research when the responses being sought are value judgments rather than factual information. Although it is more difficult to assess the "correctness" of value judgments, it is generally agreed upon that value judgments are not all equal but can in fact be more "right" or more "wrong." To test the value of using Delphi procedures in obtaining non-factual data (Dalkey and Rourke, 1972) conducted Delphi experiments in which university students were asked about the objectives of higher education. They determined from the outcome of these experiments that Delphi procedures are "appropriate for generating and assessing value material" (Dalkey and Rourke, 1972). Linstone and Turoff (1975) agree that Delphi is particularly useful for studies that call for subjective judgment rather than precise statistical analysis.

Delphi Limitations

Delbecq, et al. point out that the Delphi method should not be used when any of the following three critical conditions are not present: adequate time, participant skill in written communication, and high participant motivation (Delbecq, Van de Ven, and Gustafson, 1972). They estimate that a minimum of 45 days is required to carry out a

Delphi study. Participants must be knowledgeable and able to clearly communicate their ideas. A high degree of motivation is needed to offset the tendency for participant dropout as the study progresses. Because there is no direct contact between participants, those who are not highly motivated and interested in the subject at hand may feel isolated or detached from the process.

Linstone and Turoff (1975) also note that participant dropout can be a problem in Delphi studies. They suggest that failure to allow participants to adequately contribute their own perspectives to the problem or issue at hand or failure to properly recognize or reward participants can negatively impact results. Other common pitfalls mentioned are the use of unclear evaluation scales and poor techniques in interpreting results (Linstone and Turoff, 1975).

The Delphi method is well suited to the current research problem, that is, identification of the essential characteristics of a site visit team member. First, the questions to be posed are subjective and call for value judgments – the results cannot be analyzed in a strictly statistical manner. Second, since professionals who are experts in the field of specialized accreditation site visitation are widely scattered geographically, the use of this method allows for input from highly qualified individuals without the need for travel and with a minimal commitment of time on the part of these individuals. Finally, the participants, as higher education professionals or clinicians, were judged very likely to be able to communicate their ideas in writing and, as allied health education practitioners and researchers, would be motivated by their own existing commitment to the topic.

Summary

The performance of the site visit team member during a site visit plays a dominant role in the outcome of the accreditation process for educational programs in allied health. Site visit team members are selected for their specialized knowledge of the accreditation process; however, their ability to interact with the program's officials has a significant influence on the outcome of the accreditation process. The training of site team members does not emphasize those characteristics of a site visit team member that can be effective in rendering a successful conclusion to the accreditation process, specifically for the allied health program under review.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study is discussed in relation to its population, procedures used to sample the population, instruments used to measure the variables, procedures used to collect the data, and descriptive and/or statistical techniques that will be used to treat the data.

Population and Sample

Non-probability purposive sampling was used to identify and invite a panel of experts who have served on a site visit team for programmatic accreditation activities to participate in a Delphi process (Appendix A). Additional inclusion criteria were: (a) officials of state agencies charged with site visiting educational programs for accreditation, (b) institutional and program officials that have had significant experience in conducting site visits for accreditation of health science programs, and (c) institutional and program officials that have had significant experience being visited by health science accreditation agencies.

A nomination process was initiated to form a list of potential respondents to participate as a member of a panel of experts. Requests for qualified candidates were sent to such agencies as the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs, American Nurses Association, National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses, and the State of Pennsylvania Department of Education. Nominees were then contacted to solicit a commitment to the project so a panel could be solidified (Appendix

B). The panel was engaged in a consensus building process through the completion of three successive questionnaires. The first questionnaire consisted of four open-ended questions; subsequent questionnaires were developed based on responses from previous questionnaires toward the goal of answering the four original questions (Appendix C). Additional data gathered from panel members confirmed eligibility and established a profile of the panel.

The selected panel members were asked to complete a confidential personal information questionnaire containing seven questions. (1) Name, (2) Age, (3) Gender, (4) Ethnicity, (5) Profession, (6) Number of years in the profession, and (7) Number of site visits in which they were members of a site visit team (Appendix D). Thirty-one experts were selected for the first round. Twenty-eight went on to the second round. Twenty-one started the third round and fifteen completed all three rounds.

Protection of Human Participants

The study was submitted for approval by the Texas Woman's University Human Subjects Review Committee and by the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research (Appendix E). All panel members were required to sign a consent form that had been approved by the Texas Woman's University Human Subjects Review (Appendix F). All correspondence with panel members was conducted by mail, email, fax, or telephone individually. An example of the correspondence sent to the panel members by mail can be found in Appendix G. None of the participants knew the identities of other participants with two exceptions. Two panel members were married to each other and two participants worked in the same office. Questionnaires were sent to each participant

individually either by email, fax, or post. Responses were collected individually and re-written prior to distribution to the panel for evaluation. All original correspondences will be held by the primary researcher for a period of five years after first publication.

Data Collection Procedures

A Delphi process was used to investigate the research questions from the perspective of selected trainers of site visit teams for programmatic accreditation in the health sciences. The first phase of this study consisted of a nomination process to identify and enlist a panel of experts. Nomination requests were sent to directors of professional associations and institutes, and editors of journals associated with health science educational programs within the United States. Multiple nominations were encouraged from each source; see Appendix H for nomination form. Nominees were contacted to solicit a commitment to the study and a panel of experts was solidified. Additional data was gathered from panel members to confirm eligibility and establish a profile of the panel. The second phase was a combination of data collection and data analysis accomplished through a series of three questionnaires in which panel members engaged in a consensus building process. The final phase of this project involved comparing these research findings to information found in recent literature and to make recommendations for the design, implementation, and evaluation of a curriculum for training site visit teams for programmatic accreditation.

Instrumentation

The Delphi group process was used to collect data for this study. The initial questionnaire was submitted to a panel of experts, who were experienced in conducting

site accreditation, to ensure the content validity of the instrument to be used in the study. In round one, the initial survey contained panel member eligibility criteria and demographic information. The demographic information (age, gender, ethnicity, profession, number of years in the profession, and number of site visits in which they have participated) provided a profile of the participants. The collective responses to the open-ended questions provided comprehensive preliminary answers to the research questions. The study began on March 15, 2002 with the initial submission of the nomination letter and nomination forms to selected agencies and groups previously identified as active in the accreditation process of allied health educational programs. Those agencies and groups selected individuals from among their ranks they felt met the criteria for inclusion on the panel. The nominees were contacted by their agency or group and instructed to respond if interested. Nomination forms began to arrive on April 9, 2002. By April 29, 2002 the 31 experts had been selected to participate in the study.

In round one the panel members were sent a copy of the consent form, the personal data questionnaire, and the four research questions by U.S. mail. Each question was listed on a separate sheet of paper and instructions were included to use extra blank sheets if required to respond to the question. Round one was mailed on May 1, 2002 with a deadline of returning the responses by May 15, 2002. No one met the deadline so an extension was granted. The revised due date for round one was June 20, 2002. Of the thirty-one original panel members, twenty-eight met the deadline. Participants were given the choice to complete the remainder of the study by email if they preferred. Twenty-seven of the twenty-eight responders chose to use email for the remainder of the study.

The twenty-eighth respondent requested to participate by fax and completed the remainder of the study in that manner.

The panel members were asked to list the essential characteristics of site visit team members related to the four open-ended research questions. Those responses were compiled and the resulting statements were merged into one file (Appendix I). Each of the four original research questions with the total responses attached was sent to the panel in round two. Instructions were included with the questions for the panel to rank order each response according to its importance. Participants were asked to use a Likert Scale of 1 – 5, with 1 - being less important, 2 - less important, 3 - important, 4 - very important, and 5 - essential.

Round two was sent out by email on June 23, 2002. The deadline for submission of round two was July 30, 2002. Sixteen of the panel members met the deadline and were included in round three.

Round three was submitted via email on August 6, 2002 with a deadline for return submission of September 20, 2002. Fifteen of the sixteen panel members from round two completed round three prior to the deadline.

Data Analysis

The purpose of round one was to generate a list of responses unique to each panel member. Panel member responses were then combined anonymously by cutting and pasting each panel member's list on to one set of questions. All responses were then reviewed and identical responses were eliminated. The final list was re-formatted to ensure that no response could be traced to its creator.

The panel used the previously described Likert Scale of 1 to 5 to score the final list as round two. A statistical analysis of the ranking given by the panel in round two was performed. The total score of each response was calculated. The median was used in all cases, as the data were not continuous. Only responses that received a median score of four or greater were included in round three (Appendix J). Question one received 110 total responses, question two had 59 unique responses, question three generated 68 responses above the cut score of four, and question four had 75 responses.

In round three the panel was asked to rank all responses in the order of their importance, numerically from 1 to n, with n being equal to the total number of responses to that question. The final analysis of round three was to total the score received for each response. The response to each of the four original research questions that received the lowest total score was ranked as the most important characteristic of a site visit team member. Question one had twenty-nine responses. Question two had nineteen responses. Question three received fourteen responses. Question four has a total of six responses.

Summary

A panel of experts in allied health accreditation site visits participated in a Delphi process containing three rounds to determine the essential characteristics of site visit team members in allied health educational programmatic accreditation. The study posed four research questions. The responses from the first round were ranked in order of importance and submitted to the panel for round two. The third round consisted of numbering those responses in order of importance with the lowest scoring response designated the most important. The Delphi process was chosen because it provides the

appropriate platform in which a panel of experts in a given field can reach consensus on the essential elements of a posed topic.

CHAPTER IV

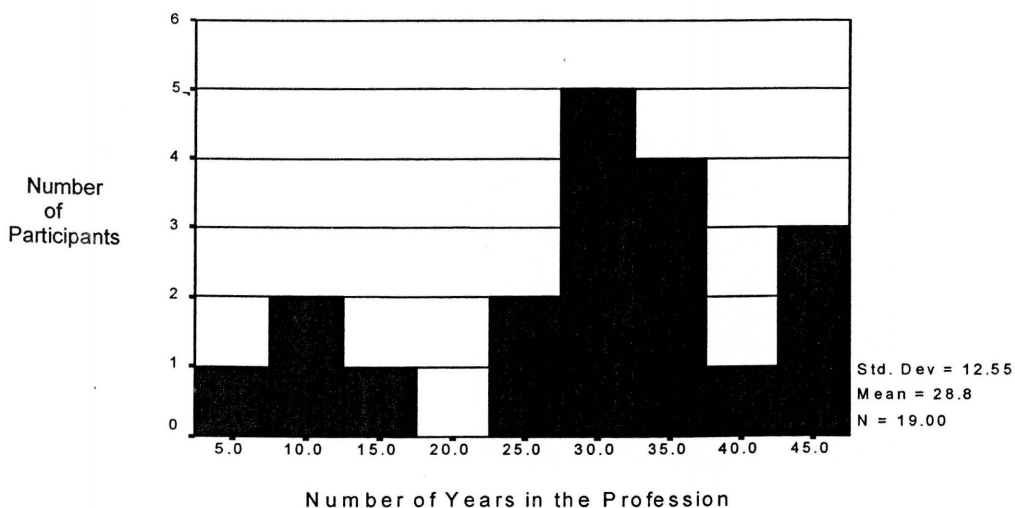
RESULTS

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used throughout this Delphi process. Qualitative methods were used heavily in the beginning because quantitative methods were more heavily relied upon in the final phases of research. Descriptive statistics were used to identify the panel as well as to assess levels of consensus.

Panel Member Data Sheet

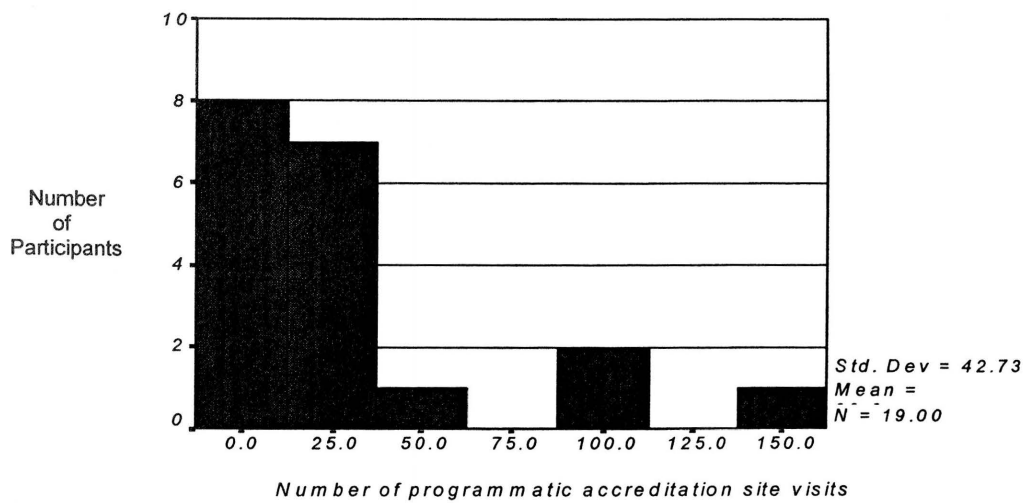
Members of this panel were asked to complete a confidential panel member data sheet containing seven questions. (1) Name, (2) Age, (3) Gender, (4) Ethnicity, (5) Profession, (6) Number of years in the profession, and (7) Number of site visit in which they were members of a site visit team. The length of practice ranged from three to forty-six years. The mean number of years in the field was 28.8 (Figure One).

Figure One: Number of Years in the Profession



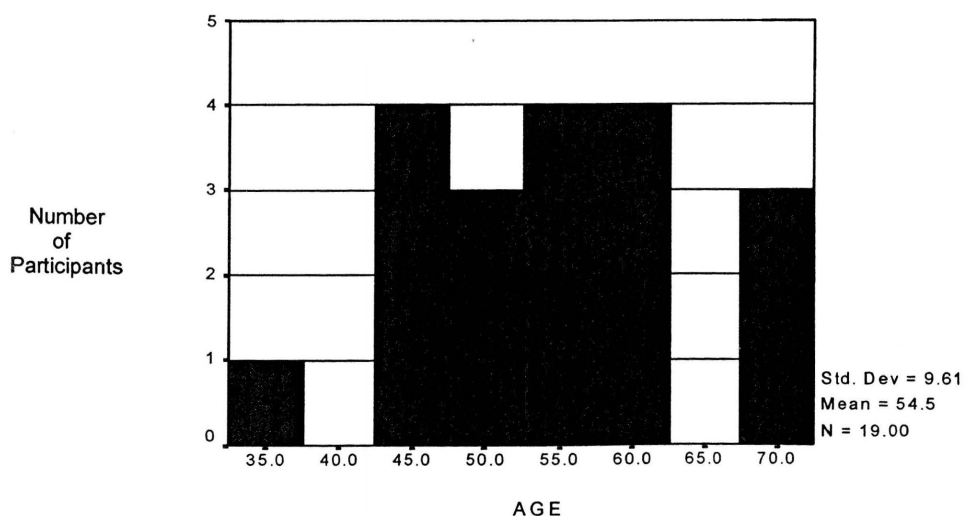
There was a total of 548 years of practice among the panel. The panel had been on a total of 563 programmatic accreditation site visits. Site visits ranged from a low of zero site visits to a high of 160 site visits. The mean number of site visits was 29.63 per panel member (Figure Two).

Figure Two: Number of Accreditation Visits in Which Each Person Has Participated



The panel ranged in age from 33 to 72 years of age. The mean age was 54.5 years of age (Figure Three).

Figure Three: The Age of the Participants



Nine of the 28 panel members did not complete the study. Of those nine, six were male and three were female. All nine who did not complete the study listed their profession as educators. There were six male and thirteen female panel members who completed all three rounds of the study. All reported their ethnicity as Caucasian. The 19 panel members responded to the question of profession as: 3 – Program Director, 2 – Associate Professor, 1 – Assistant Professor, 8 – Clinical Practitioners, 1 – Professor Emeritus, 1 – Associate Dean, 2 – Dean, 1 – Professor, and 1 – College Faculty (Table One).

Round One

Round One, Part 1 elicited 191 total responses to the research question: What are the responsibilities of the members of the site visit team during an on-site evaluation? All ideas were represented by a final list of 110 statements after the duplicate responses were removed. The responses included a mixture of personal traits such as friendly and concerned for the education of the student to being diplomatic. Responses to the question regarding the responsibilities of the site visit team members varied from, “able to answer questions about accreditation,” to “who from the program would be interviewed.” Responses that were used were restated in some cases.

Round One, Part 2 brought a total of 68 responses to the research question: What attributes are essential in a site visit team member during an on-site evaluation? All ideas were represented by a final list of 59 statements after the duplicate responses were removed. Responses ranged from personal attributes such as congeniality to the degree of knowledge one must have regarding the area of study.

Table One: Biographical Data

Name	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Profession	Number of years in the profession	Number of site visits
Member A	47	Male	Caucasian	Program Director Cardiovascular Technology	10	8
Member B	59	Female	Caucasian	Medical Illustrator/Associate Prof	33	6
Member C	45	Female	Caucasian	Diagnostic Medical Sonography	24	21
Member D	69	Female	Caucasian	Professor Emeritus MUSC College of Nursing Nurse-Midwife: Dir. Grad Prog in NM	46	15
Member E	48	Female	Caucasian	Electroneuro-diagnostics	29	8
Member F	53	Female	Caucasian	Associate Dean Health Professions	8	17
Member G	33	Female	Caucasian	Ophthalmic	13	2
Member H	72	Male	Caucasian	Medical Illustrator/Associate Professor	44	6
Member I	51	Female	White non-hispanic	Respiratory Therapist (R.R.T.) Educator Director of School of Allied Health	31	20
Member J	69	Female	Caucasian	Medical Assistant	45	21
Member K	47	Female	Caucasian	Professor - Discipline Medical Assisting	25	15
Member L	56	Male	Caucasian	Dean of Health Science	36	160
Member M	47	Female	Caucasian	Organizational Development Consultant	3	6
Member N	59	Female	WASP	Faculty College	40	100
Member O	51	Female	White non-hispanic	Medical Technologist	30	15
Member P	62	Male	Caucasian	Dean - Administration	36	100
Member Q	53	Male	White non-hispanic	Respiratory Care	30	38
Member R	61	Female	White non-hispanic	Assistant Professor, Chair Allied Health Science, Admin Dir Mercy Med Center	36	5
Member S	54	Female	Caucasian	Certified Nurse Midwife	29	0

Round One, Part 3 returned 107 total responses to the research question: What knowledge of the accreditation process should a member of the site visit team possess during an on-site evaluation? After duplicate responses were removed, these responses were represented by a final list of 68 statements regarding the knowledge of the accreditation process. Responses ranged from requiring a general knowledge of the accreditation process to the ability to ask typical interview questions that will elicit relevant information about the accreditation process.

Round One, Part 4 gained a total of 81 responses to the research question: What knowledge of programmatic evaluation related to the education process should a member of the site visit team possess during an on-site evaluation? A total of 75 statements were required to capture all ideas from the original 81 responses. The remaining 6 responses were duplicates of other listed responses. A wide range of responses were received from statements on the philosophy, goals, and objectives of the program to the financial ability of the program to sustain itself.

No attempt was made to rank or order the responses that were presented to the panel in Round Two. The intent of Round One was to gather the collective thoughts of the panel on the four research questions. The position of each response was arbitrary.

Round Two

The responses collected in round one were emailed to the panel as statements for their evaluation. The panel was asked to rate each statement from 1 to 5 using the following scale: 1- Least Important; 2 – Less Important; 3 – Important; 4 – Very Important; 5 – Essential. Each response from the sixteen panel members who returned

round two was analyzed to determine the group rating for that statement. The data was non-continuous, therefore, the median score for each response was used to determine its inclusion in round three. Only responses that scored a median of 4 or greater were included in the third round.

Research question one had 29 responses that scored 4 or greater. Question two had 19 responses with a score of 4 or greater. Question three had 14 responses with a score of 4 or greater. Question four had six responses with a score of 4 or greater. The responses that made the cut were submitted to the panel in round three for the final analysis of the four research questions.

Round Three

In Round Three the panel was asked to rank order the responses in order of importance from 1 to n, (where, n is equal to the total number of responses to that research question) with the number one given to the most important response and number n given to the least important response. When the total score for each response was calculated, the response with the lowest total score was ranked as the most important response. Group consensus was thus derived mathematically for each response. The following is a list of the final responses in round three for each of the four questions:
Round Three, Part 1: What are the responsibilities of the members of the site visiting team during an on-site evaluation?

1. The major task for the site visitor is to help ascertain if the program meets the preexisting standards set for educational programs in the discipline or profession.

2. Before going to a site visit the team must thoroughly read the Self-Study that the school has submitted.
3. Reading and having a complete knowledge of what the program prepared in their site self-study.
4. They should have studied the self evaluation document carefully and be prepared to ask the administrators, faculty and students any questions required to fully understand every facet of the program.
5. The members, through the activities on site, validate the information submitted by the institution in the Self Study. Validation is done using a number of primary sources, and places the information within the context and culture of the institution.
6. To verify data in the self study.
7. When on-site, it is the responsibility of the team to verify that the facts contained within the Self-Study are true.
8. Identify strength, possible problems, areas of non-compliance with the accreditation Standards.
9. Stick to Standards and clearly understand difference between Standard and guidelines.
10. The site visitor's are there to confirm that the information that was presented is accurate and to acquire any missing documentation that was not previously submitted.

11. Each member of the team must set aside his/her biases as a professional and as an educator, and focus on the intent of the accreditation standards.
12. Focus on issues of compliance with Standards, not petty issues.
13. The on site visiting team should encourage an atmosphere that is non-threatening and is respectful to all individuals involved in the process.
14. The members of the on-site team function as the “eyes and ears” of the accreditation agency.
15. Introduce self, at beginning of visit, to institution’s administration explain purpose of visit, answer question, thank institution for participation.
16. It is vitally important that confidentiality be maintained, before, during and after the on site visitation.
17. Keep an open mind – realize there is more than one way to deliver an education.
18. To refuse to serve as a site-visitor if any real or perceived conflict of interest with the program site.
19. Be thorough and recognize there are many ways to the same destination.
20. Remove one’s self from the team if there is any conflict of interest between yourself and program being reviewed.
21. The site visitors are usually the only face-to-face contact that the institution being evaluated has with the accrediting organization and it should be a positive one.

22. Following the on site visit, it is the responsibility of the team coordinator to submit a written report, documenting the findings of the team.
23. The site visiting team's main responsibilities are to the accreditation organization.
24. Avoid making promises to program faculty and administration for assistance that is beyond scope of site team.
25. Deliver site evaluation oral report to key administrators at the conclusion of visit.
26. Do not try to recruit program faculty.
27. State the purpose of the exit conference.
28. Do not try to be a candidate for positions open in the program being reviewed.
29. Mail disk and hard copy of site visit report to headquarters.

Round Three, Part 2: What attributes are essential in a site visiting team member during an on-site evaluation?

1. Knowledgeable about the accreditation process, the Standards, and the Self Study, as well as CAAHEP policies and procedures.
2. Well prepared.
3. The ability to gather significant amounts of information, synthesize the information, and apply it to the accreditation standards.
4. Current knowledge in their field of practice.
5. Knowledgeable of the area under study.

6. The ability to document findings in a concise manner while describing the elements of “evidence” used to demonstrate compliance with the standards.
7. Integrity.
8. Integrity – team members must be honest in their assessment of the program/institution.
9. Maintaining confidentiality is essential.
10. Project a professional image.
11. View the situation with an unbiased and non-prejudiced view (not simply racial, but includes school rivalries etc.)
12. Be Punctual – at the on-site visit and in submitting reports in a timely manner.
13. Listening skills – team members must be able to listen to those being interviewed.
14. Be tactful and politically aware (e.g. the ideal team member will not jeopardize the program by inappropriate comments to deans, directors etc.)
15. Team members must gather as much information as possible in order to yield a fair assessment and recommendation.
16. Team player.
17. A site visitor must be able to work and respect the other team members and if there are any problems it should not be evident to the institution in which they are visiting.
18. Diplomatic to deliver the bad news when necessary.

19. The ability to avoid making promises about the outcome of the accreditation visit.

Round Three, Part 3: What knowledge of the accreditation process should a member of the site visit team possess during an on-site evaluation?

1. Detailed knowledge of the accreditation Standards and Guidelines.
2. Knowledge of standards to which the program is held.
3. Knowledge of the educational Standards and what constitutes non-compliance with the Standards.
4. Knowledge of what minimum criteria is needed for the program to meet the standard.
5. Knowledge of the self evaluation report.
6. Understand entire accreditation process – what type of documents should be examined, who should be interviewed; types of questions to ask.
7. Team members should be given the specific requirements for accreditation.
8. The difference between the Standards and the guidelines.
9. Be able to identify areas that do not meet the standards.
10. Citing for non compliance must be clear and tied to an Essential not a guideline.
11. The site visitor should also know their limitations.*
12. The site visitor should also know their limitations.*

13. If they are not sure of something that occurs during the site visit they should know when a phone call to the executive office is necessary and appropriate.**

14. If they are not sure of something that occurs during the site visit they should know when a phone call to the executive office is necessary and appropriate.**

* This researcher discovered that responses 11 and 12 were identical after Round Three was mailed to the panel; therefore, the analysis and report included both responses to reflect the work of the panel.

** This researcher discovered that responses 13 and 14 were identical after Round Three was mailed to the panel; therefore, the analysis and report included both responses to reflect the work of the panel.

Round Three, Part 4: What knowledge of programmatic evaluation related to the education process should a member of the site visit team possess during an on-site evaluation?

1. The site visitors should know the standards of the field and be able to evaluate if the program is meeting these standards.
2. The members of a site visit team must be well-versed in all aspects of the Standards and Guidelines of the programmatic accreditation.
3. The team must be able to evaluate each component part of the program to assure the program is in compliance with the Standards.

4. Are measurable outcomes identified (enrollment, attrition, employment, registry, graduate survey, employers survey, program officials survey, etc.)
5. The team members should understand competency based education, as well as outcome measurements.
6. Although members are fact finders they need to report accurate data.

Summary

When taken in context of the four original research questions, the panel completed three rounds of the study and concluded that there are 68 essential characteristics of site visit team members in allied health accreditation (Table Two).

Table 2: Total Responses for each Research Question

Research Question	Round One Total Responses	Round Two Total Responses	Round Three Total Responses
Question One	191	110	29
Question Two	68	59	19
Question Three	107	68	14
Question Four	81	75	6

Twenty-nine of those characteristics relate to each team member's responsibility during an on-site evaluation. For example, the number one responsibility identified by the panel is to ascertain if the program meets the preexisting standards set for educational programs in the discipline or profession taught by the program. Nineteen of the 68 essential characteristics are related to attributes site visit team members should display during an on-site evaluation. For example, the number one response to question two was the site visit team member should be knowledgeable about the accreditation process, the standards, and the self-study, as well as policies and procedures of the accreditation

agency. Fourteen characteristics relate to knowledge of the accreditation process. For example, the site visit team member should have detailed knowledge of the accreditation standards and guidelines. While six characteristics are related to the knowledge of programmatic accreditation that a site visit team member should have during an on-site evaluation. For example, the site visit team member should know the standards of the field and be able to evaluate if the program is meeting these standards. It is of interest to note that the number one response to each of the four questions relates directly to knowledge of the standards to which the program is to be held.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A summary of the research process and outcomes is presented along with reflections on researcher subjectivity. Conclusions and implications for allied health education accreditation site visit team members are discussed, and recommendations for further research are made.

Summary

A Delphi process was used to answer the following four research questions: 1) What are the responsibilities of the members of the site visiting team during an on-site evaluation?, 2) What attributes are essential in a site visiting team member during an on-site evaluation?, 3) What knowledge of the accreditation process should a member of the site visit team possess during an on-site evaluation?, and 4) What knowledge of programmatic evaluation related to the education process should a member of the site visit team possess during an on-site evaluation? A panel of experts was established through a nomination process. Panel members contributed to a consensus building effort by responding to a series of three rounds.

The panel was representative of several allied health occupations, educational facilities, accreditation agencies, and societies. All panel members had personal experience as members of a site visit team for allied health educational program accreditation. The panel identified 29 essential characteristics of site visit team members

related to site visitor responsibilities during a site visit. The panel identified 19 essential characteristics in relation to the attributes that site visitors should display during an on-site evaluation. Fourteen essential characteristics were identified related to the knowledge of the accreditation. Finally, the panel reached consensus on six essential characteristics related to the knowledge of the educational process that site visit team members should possess during an on-site review.

Discussion and Implications

The qualitative and quantitative nature of the Delphi process and its dependence upon emerging information to further guide the research process, allowed the researcher to make many decisions during the period of data collection and data analysis to further the goal of reaching consensus. Some decisions were made based on familiarity with related literature, such as the narrowing of disciplines to be included on the panel of experts. Other decisions were made based on previous life experiences, such as the vocabulary chosen to communicate combinations of panel members' ideas. Still other decisions were made on a more intuitive level, such as those regarding format and design of questionnaires.

The researcher did not disclose his personal experience with allied health accreditation site visit teams. Nor, did the researcher contribute as a panel member at any time during the study. The intent of these actions were to reduce the possibility that personal bias would be introduced into the study. Although strong attempts were made to avoid personal bias as a factor in data interpretation, some degree of bias was inevitable. Attempts were made to accommodate panel member suggestions and comments

whenever the possibility of moving toward greater consensus seemed likely. The following seven points should be considered when reviewing this study:

1. Very little literature exists on training allied health accreditation site visit team members. This researcher found no references in the literature primarily focused on conduct of the site visit team member during a site visit.
2. The Delphi process was chosen because it is a well-accepted method for gaining consensus about a subject from recognized experts in the field.
3. The accreditation process brings together multiple groups with differing viewpoints; therefore, the only opinions collected during the study were from persons who have experience serving as a site visit team member. Note that panel member S listed zero site visits; however, prior to the completion of the study she had participated in one site visit.
4. The diversity of professions, titles, and years of experience among the panel members is remarkable for the depth of knowledge it reveals regarding the accreditation process in allied health education.
5. The contribution to the field of health education this study will make is the lists of characteristics in each of the four categories of the study.
6. It is remarkable that the interpretation of the four research questions by the panel has as a central theme, knowledge of the standards for accreditation. As example, the number one response to each of the four research questions related to the standards of accreditation.

7. The emphasis of the study is on the opinions of the experts rather than on the researcher's data analysis.

Although not the traditional application of a study in the discipline of health education, accreditation of allied health educational programs has at its very core the principles embraced in all of health education. The field of health education is a multidisciplinary practice concerned with the design, implementation, and evaluation of educational programs that enables individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities to play an active role in achieving, protecting, and sustaining health (The Aspen Group, 1997, p. 7). Accreditation serves to ensure the public that health care practitioners are qualified to take an active role in protecting its health.

McDermott and Sarvela (1999) suggest that evaluation can be used for judging decision alternatives. Knowing what characteristics should be included in a site visit team-training curriculum provides agencies with the means to select good training alternatives. Further, McDermott and Sarvela describe program evaluation as "used to judge effectiveness and improve quality." The premise for this study is that site visit team training is not effective in addressing the actions of site visit team members during on-site evaluations, nor is the quality of that training sufficient to ensure the success of the accreditation process.

Glanz, Lewis, and Rimer (1997, p. 464) were not directly discussing allied health accreditation when they defined reciprocal determinism as "drawing attention to the temporal and dynamic process of change across multiple levels of social influence over

time.” However, this study is a first step in the long road to changing the practice of on-site evaluation as it relates to allied health educational programs.

Green and Ottoson (1999) suggest that beneficial health behaviors will result from indirect evidence borrowed from experiences outside the fields of health and education. Although accreditation is not truly outside health and education, it is an indirect component of the health behavior of specific populations.

There is always a struggle between the proper role of ideas being brought to the data and the ideas emerging from the data, (Banning, 1997). Subjectivity can and should be channeled into an asset rather than a liability. Personal bias must be acknowledged at every point during data analysis. Bias, tempered with experience and reliance on the collective body of literature, can help focus the direction of study toward a common goal, in this case consensus among the panel members.

The panel identified 29 essential characteristics related to the responsibilities of a site visit team member. Detailed study of the 29 responses revealed that numbers two and three addressed the same issue of knowledge of the self-study with respect to what the program had included. Numbers five, six, seven, and ten were related to the responsibility of site visit team members to verify the data presented in the self-study document. Conflict of interest was the topic of numbers 18, 19, and 20. Responsibilities related to knowledge of the standards to which the program was held can be found in responses one, eight, nine, and eleven.

The panel developed a total of only 39 essential characteristics related to the three other research questions combined. In part two, responses four and five address the same

issue of content expertise. Response eight is an elaboration of the single word “integrity” response, number seven. In part three responses one and two relate to knowledge of the standards of the field of study. As cited in the list for round three part three, responses 11 and 12 are duplicate statements as are responses 13 and 14. By citing 29 responsibilities of the site visit team member the panel underscored the primary reason for conducting this study. The site visit team members, during the on-site evaluation, exert a great influence on the outcome of the accreditation process. When the outcome of the accreditation process is a negative recommendation by the committee, it is the actions of the site visit team members during the on-site evaluation that appears most often as a basis for the appeals process, (Shaw, 1987). There exists an expectation among the educational community that the site visit team member will be an expert both in the field of study as well as in the process of education. It is when these expectations are challenged by the actions of the site visit team that institutional officials feel justified in citing perceived deficiencies as a causal factor in a negative accreditation recommendation. Therefore, it is possible that the demonstration of these characteristics by site visit team members could reduce the likelihood that the actions of the site visit team member’s actions would be cited as a causative factor in a negative accreditation recommendation. Site visit team member training conducted by accreditation agencies should contain a module that addresses the development and uses of these characteristics during an on-site evaluation.

Recommendations

This study used the Delphi process to gain consensus on the essential characteristics of site visit team members. A prudent course of action for accreditation agencies is to incorporate these findings into their training curriculum for site visit team members. However, as evidenced by the scant body of published information on the subject of site visit team member training; or, on their actions during a site visit, abundant opportunity exists to study each aspect of the accreditation process with respect to understanding how to improve it. A focus on how often accreditation actions result in a negative recommendation would highlight the scope of the problem. A comparison of training curriculum between various accreditation agencies and the effectiveness of their site visit teams could lead to the design of an ideal training curriculum for site visit team members. There has been so little information published on the subject of site visit team training that even the most basic aspects of the training should be subjected to scientific investigation if the process is to be improved.

These findings should be incorporated into the development of a training curriculum for site visit team members. In addition to instruction in the traditional aspects of site visit team member knowledge, such as, the standards and guidelines a site visit team member curriculum could address the conduct while on site of site visit team members and the consequences of those actions. Lastly, a study should be conducted to evaluate the impact and or influence of this training on the performance of the site visit team.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Nominations Letter

~ Date ~

Dear Director or Editor:

As a person with access to numerous members of the community involved with accreditation of health science programs, you are invited to contribute to a nation wide study which will attempt to identify characteristics of effective site visit team members for accreditation of health science educational programs. Please take a few minutes to nominate experts who, in your opinion, have made significant contributions to the process of programmatic accreditation in health science.

Nominees must meet the following criteria: 1) served as a team member on more than five accreditation site visits, 2) served as a team leader on at least two accreditation site visits within the past 24 months, and 3) are recognized by their peers and have a good working knowledge of the formal educational process in health science education.

Nominate as many individuals as you feel meet these criteria, self-nominations are acceptable. Please provide as much information as you can regarding a nominee's full name, credentials, address, telephone number, and e-mail address. Nominees who are selected for inclusion in this study will be invited to accept or decline participation on a panel of experts to assist in the development of a consensus document by responding to a series of questionnaires.

Nominations will be accepted through February 28, 2002 and may be sent in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope, or may be transmitted electronically to the following: Fax to Randy Christian at 972-396-1617 or e-mail to: lelandchristian@home.com or randy.christian@siemens.com.

Thank you for your participation in this phase of an exciting and important attempt to add to the body of research on accreditation of health science educational programs. Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information if necessary.

Sincerely,

Randy Christian, MHA
principal investigator
972-747-1120

Mary Shaw-Perry, Ph.D.
Research advisor
940-898-2865

Department of Health Studies, Texas Woman's University, Denton, TX

APPENDIX B

Prospective Panel Member Letter

Dear Prospective Panel Member,

You have been nominated to participate as a panel member of a Delphi Group on programmatic accreditation site visit team members. You have been identified as an expert who can contribute valuable information regarding specific characteristics of effective site visit team members. The study is being conducted by Leland R. Christian as partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Health Education at Texas Woman's University. The study entitled "Essential Characteristics of Accreditation Site Visit Team Members: A Delphi Study" will be conducted in three rounds of open-ended questions.

Nomination requests were sent to directors of professional associations and institutes, and editors of journals associated with health science educational programs within the United States. The list of potential panel members were generated from the membership directories of specialized accreditation agencies, state and national governmental agencies involved with specialized accreditation of health science programs, and the American Medical Associations Health Professions Career and Education Directory. A nomination form was attached to the letter requesting nominations. Multiple nominations were encourage from each source. Non-probability purposive sampling was used to identify and invite site visitors of health science educational programs, such as you, to participate in this Delphi process. Those health science professionals who have served on a site visit team for programmatic accreditation activities were considered as candidates for the panel of experts. Additional inclusion criteria included: 1) officials of state agencies charged with site visiting educational programs for accreditation and certification, 2) institutional and program officials that have had significant experience in conducting site visits for accreditation of health science programs, and 3) institutional and program officials that have had significant experience being site visited by health science accreditation agencies.

Should you decide to participate, a consent form detailing your involvement in the study, the time commitments, and security procedures will be sent to you. The study will require about two hours of your time over the three rounds of open-ended questions.

You may accept this nomination by mail at the address below. You may also respond to the email address as well. Should you have any questions regarding the study you may call either phone number listed below.

Thank you for your consideration,

Leland R. Christian, principle investigator
2921 Oakland Hills Drive
Plano, TX 75025-6453
(972) 747-1120

Dr. Mary Shaw-Perry, research advisor
Texas Woman's University
(940) 898-2860

APPENDIX C

Four Research Questions Round One

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ACCREDITATION
SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBERS: A DELPHI STUDY

Round One Questionnaire

Code # _____

Part 1: What are the responsibilities of the members of the site visiting team during an on-site evaluation? (You may use additional paper if necessary.)

Part 2: What attributes are essential in a site visiting team member during an on-site evaluation? (You may use additional paper if necessary.)

Part 3: What knowledge of the accreditation process should a member of the site visit team possess during an on-site evaluation? (You may use additional paper if necessary.)

Part 4: What knowledge of programmatic evaluation related to the education process should a member of the site visit team possess during an on-site evaluation? (You may use additional paper if necessary.)

APPENDIX D
Biographical Data Sheet

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ACCREDITATION
SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBERS: A DELPHI STUDY

Confidential Panel Member Data Sheet

Code # _____

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Ethnicity:

Profession:

Number of years in the profession:

Number of programmatic accreditation site visits in which you have participated:

APPENDIX E
IRB Approval Letter

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
P.O. Box 425619
Denton, TX 76204-5619

Phone: (940) 898-3375

Fax: (940) 998-3416
E-mail: IRB@twu.edu

March 12, 2002

Mr. Leland Christian
2921 Oakland Hills Drive
Plano, TX 75025

Dear Mr. Christian:

Re: Essential Characteristics of Accreditation Site Visit Team Members: A Delphi Study

The above referenced study has been reviewed by a committee of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and appears to meet our requirements in regard to protection of individuals' rights.

If applicable, agency approval letters obtained should be submitted to the IRB upon receipt prior to any data collection at that agency. A copy of your newly approved consent form has been stamped as approved by the IRB and is attached, along with a copy of the annual/final report. Please use this consent form which has the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. The signed consent forms and final report are to be filed with the Institutional Review Board at the completion of the study.

This approval is valid one year from the date of this letter. Furthermore, according to HHS regulations, another review by the IRB is required if your project changes. If you have any questions, please feel free to call the Institutional Review Board at the phone number listed above.

Sincerely,

Dr. Gail Davis, Chair
Institutional Review Board - Denton

enc.

cc Dr. Susan Ward, Department of Health Studies
Dr. Mary Shaw-Perry, Department of Health Studies
Graduate School

APPENDIX F

Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
SUBJECT CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: Essential Characteristics of Accreditation Site Visit Team Members: A
Delphi Study

Investigator: Mr. Leland R. Christian, MHA940/898-2860
Advisor: Ms. Mary Shaw-Perry, Ph.D.....940/898-2865

You are being asked to participate in a research study for Mr. Christian's doctoral dissertation at Texas Woman's University. The purpose of this research is to determine the essential characteristics of site visit team members in the accreditation process for health science educational programs. The researcher will use a Delphi Process to gain consensus among experts in the field about site visitor training for health sciences educational programmatic accreditation. The experts will be asked by mail for their opinions on the characteristics of site visitors that would be useful in the accreditation process of health sciences education programs. The study will be conducted by mail and each participant will be unaware of the identity of the other participants. The results from each round will be compiled by the principal researcher and submitted to the group for further clarification and acceptance. The study will conclude at the end of the third round of polling the panel of experts. The results of the Delphi rounds, along with currently available published data on site visitor training, will be used to make recommendations for the design, implementation, and evaluation of a curriculum for training site visit team members.

Participants could experience anxiety from offering their opinion to a group of their peers. The Delphi Process will be employed to limit the involvement of participants with each other to a list of compiled statements typed and sent by separate cover to each panel member.

Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The polling of the experts will be by mail or electronically via e-mail and the original data collected from each panel member will be destroyed after the study is published or no later than February 15, 2007. It is anticipated that the data will be published for thesis, books, and/or journals. However, names or other identifying information will not be included in any publication. Those participating by email will be sent individual emails addressed only to them with no carbon copies or blind copies created. Each email will be from the principal researcher's home email address only. All email correspondence will be saved in a password protected directory on one local hard drive. Only the principal researcher will have the password. Upon receipt of a potential panel member's email address the principal researcher will create an email addressed only to that potential panel member without a

carbon copy or blind copy to anyone. The potential panel member will be instructed to create their response using a word processing software. That document should be created without any personal references to the creator. The file will be attached to the email response. The file will be detached and stored on a hard drive directory that is password protected and filed only by study round one, two, or three. All email will be kept on a password protected local drive and deleted from the mail server. Those participating by mail will receive correspondences addressed only to them from the principal researcher. All correspondence will be kept in a locked cabinet in a secure location accessible only by the principal researcher.

Participation in the study is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation in the study at any time without penalty.

The only direct benefit of this study to you is that at the completion of the study, a summary of the results will be mailed to you upon request.

If you have any questions about the research study you should ask the researchers: their phone numbers are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact Ms. Tracy Lindsay in the Office of Research & Grants Administration at 940-898-3377 or e-mail IRB@TWU.EDU.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. If you have any questions, Please contact the investigators at the above phone number. You will be given a copy of this dated and signed consent form to keep.

Signature of Participant

Date

- ☐ *Check here if you would like to receive a summary of the results of this study and list below the address to which this summary should be sent.*

- ☐ *Check here if you do not wish to receive a copy of the results of the study.*

APPENDIX G

Note to Panel Members

NOTE TO PANEL MEMBERS

In the interest of time I am enclosing several documents. Should you decide to participate in the study, please follow these instructions:

1. Sign the Consent Form and date it.
2. Return the Consent Form in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope.
3. Complete the bio sheet.
4. Answer the four questions. This is Round One.
5. All returned information **OTHER THAN** the Consent Form may be submitted electronically to my email address: randy.christian@sms.siemens.com.
6. Please return all information within two weeks of receipt. This will ensure the study can be completed in two months or less. Thank you.

APPENDIX H
Nominations Form

Nomination Form
-for Panel Members to participate in-
Essential Characteristics of Accreditation Site Visit Team Members: A Delphi Study

Name	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
Telephone	
E-mail	

Name	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
Telephone	
E-mail	

Name	
Address	
City, State, Zip	
Telephone	
E-mail	

Nominated by: _____

Thank you for your assistance!

This form may be duplicated to offer additional nominations.

APPENDIX I
Results of Round One

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ACCREDITATION
SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBERS: A DELPHI STUDY

Round One Questionnaire

Code # _____

Part 1: What are the responsibilities of the members of the site visiting team during an on-site evaluation? (You may use additional paper if necessary.)

- The members must be: punctual, friendly and concerned for the education of the students;
- Able to adapt the accreditation guidelines to the present situation;
- Able to interpret what is being said in response to questions posed;
- Able to make those being questioned comfortable;
- Able to pose questions in such a way that the answers are meaningful to the process.
- The on site visiting team has the responsibility of presenting themselves in a professional manner. The demeanor of the team must convey confidence, credibility and knowledge to the school.
- Initially, each member of the team must understand the purpose of the accreditation process.
- Before going to a site visit the team must thoroughly read the Self-Study that the school has submitted.
- Any questions, or concerns, that arise from this preliminary reading should be written down so follow up can be done at the actual site visit.
- When on-site, it is the responsibility of the team to verify that the facts contained within the Self-Study are true.
- Interviews are conducted with administration, program director, faculty, clerical staff, and support staff.
- The team will objectively look for documentation to ascertain that the [sic] program is in substantial compliance with the Standards and Guidelines, and that the Entry-Level Competencies [sic] are being taught. Each team member must keep notes as the on site visit takes place.
- Following the on site visit, it is the responsibility of the team coordinator to submit a written report, documenting the findings of the team.
- The on site visiting team should encourage an atmosphere that is non-threatening and is respectful to all individuals involved in the process.
- The tone of the visit must be established at the opening interview and be carried on throughout the visit.
- The on site visiting team must be diplomatic in their approach.
- It is vitally important that confidentiality be maintained, before, during and after the on site visitation.

- The major task for the site visitor is to help ascertain if the program meets the preexisting standards set for educational programs in the discipline or profession.
- Clarify if any areas of the self evaluation report of the program are unclear
- Amplify areas of the self evaluation report that are lacking information to meet standards
- Report any facts on the program that are related to the Standards under which the program must comply
- Report on issues of “things” that would be considered outstanding or features of the program that could be deemed meritorious.
- Know which issue they are addressing
- Gather pertinent documents from those interviewed that might provide insight into the area you are evaluating
- Assess the information that has been received against the accreditation requirements and balance that against your experience and knowledge to assess the institution’s or program’s ability to meet their requirements of the achievement of the requirements
- Know how, when certain things will be needed
- Be objective- site only those things that are not in compliance with Standards
- Provide educational opportunities if requested by site members
- Obtain additional information relevant to determining the degree to which the program meets the accreditation Standards
- Identify strength, possible problems, areas of non-compliance with the accreditation standards
- Members must evaluate outcome tools (surveys) to validate program’s effectiveness
- Members must tour facility to ensure classrooms, lab, library, faculty offices meet standards
- Members must visit externship site to verify students are receiving appropriate training experience in appropriate environment
- Members must answer questions posed by program/institution personnel
- The members of the on-site team function as the “eyes and ears” of the accreditation agency.
- The members, through the activities on site, validate the information submitted by the institution in the Self Study. Validation is done using a number of primary sources, and places the information within the context and culture of the institution.
- The members of the on-site team must balance the inherent tension between their commitment to their own profession, and by extension its accreditation agency, and the need to maintain a fair and objective perspective when reporting on-site observations.
- Each member of the team must set aside his/her biases as a professional and as an educator, and focus on the intent of the accreditation standards.
- The members of the on-site team function as consultants to the institution. In this role, the on-site team does not offer definitive “fixes” or solutions to perceived problems at the institution, rather they respond to specific questions asked by the

program faculty and offer alternative approaches based on their individual experiences.

- Members of the on-site team have a responsibility to avoid being the “big stick of accreditation” for faculty.
- Team members must avoid becoming ensnared in battles between faculty and institutional administrators, specifically when faculty attempt to use accreditation to force the administration into only the faculty’s desired approach to providing resources for the specific educational program.
- To verify data in the self study
- The site visit team should be aware that they, along with the administration and the faculty, are working together to examine the program thoroughly and with goodwill for the benefit of the students
- They should have studied the self evaluation document carefully and be prepared to ask the administrators, faculty and students any questions required to fully understand every facet of the program
- Prove that the program is sound, well run and the students are protected
- The site visit team also tries to establish the institution’s support of the program both financially and through the budget process and long term through commitment to long term goals and objectives. As well as support for the faculty and students and the decisions that sometimes must be made. I look for students to be treated as students not customers, I look for respect in faculty but firmness and complete fairness
- Introduce self, at beginning of visit, to institution’s administration explain purpose of visit, answer question, thank institution for participation
- Stick to predetermined (mutually agreed upon) agenda – maintain low key, minimize disruption of operation
- Stick to Standards and clearly understand difference between Standard and guidelines
- Be thorough and recognize there are many ways to the same destination
- Non-judgmental at all times
- Allow for time to review findings with key personnel before meeting group at formal exit conference
- Answer question, clarify when requested and know the role – do not go beyond
- Consultation
- Collaboration
- Cross pollination
- Build collegial relationships
- The site visiting team’s main responsibilities are to the accreditation organization.
- Accept site reviewer assignment only if you can devote adequate time to do a good job.
- Recuse self if there is any conflict of interest between yourself and program being reviewed.
- Clarify parameters of site visit: ask pertinent questions about site visit schedule, site team member(s), or particular problems with this site review.

- Cooperate with Committee on Accreditation in scheduling the site visit and making travel arrangements.
- Make site visit travel arrangements with economy of cost in mind
- Review site visit agenda and request changes if needed. For example has enough time been allotted to prepare site visit oral report.
- Be open minded and impartial
- Practice good questioning techniques:
 - Begin with open-ended questions followed by direct questions
 - Ask clarifying questions.
 - Avoid asking leading questions
- Practice good listening skills:
 - Focus on speaker with good eye contact
 - Give verbal and non-verbal feedback to show you are listening
 - Periodically rephrase or summarize what you've heard to confirm understanding.
 - Don't let note taking interfere with rapport between interviewee and interviewer.
- Cooperate with team member(s)
- Cooperate with and support site team chair
- Meet with team member(s) the night before site visit to discuss strategy of site visit
- Share questions and problems you've identified after reading self-study
- Share note taking and interviewing duties.
- Avoid making promises to program faculty and administration for assistance that is beyond scope of site team.
- Focus on issues of compliance with Standards, not petty issues.
- Avoid non-pertinent socializing.
- Do not divert conversation to issues unrelated to site visit.
- Do not try to recruit program faculty.
- Do not try to be a candidate for positions open in the program being reviewed.
- Meet with team members prior to beginning of site visit to: make sure all team members know their role, to decide on strategy for conducting the site visit e.g., group and/or individual interviews, and to delegate and share responsibilities of the site visit e.g., note taking, interviewing, etc.
- At the beginning of each interview introduce the site team, restate the purpose of your visit, and confirm the length of the interview.
- When in a group interview, serve as the meeting chair to keep the interview focused.
- Thank those present for their hospitality and cooperation during the site visit.
- State the purpose of the exit conference.
- State the timeframe for the written report and when the program can expect to hear the status of their accreditation.
- Deliver site evaluation oral report to key administrators at the conclusion of visit.
- State that the program director will have the opportunity to reply in writing to the written report.

- Leave immediately after the exit conference. Do not remain at site for socializing or rehashing the site review.
- Write the written site evaluation report in a timely manner with input from team member(s) and send to the program director and other key administrators.
- Be spokesperson for team
- Wear name badge
- Introduce team
- Interpret to each person/group the purpose of the visit
- Take time each day to review exhibits, materials, notes and confer with junior SR for any concerns
- Read site visitor's report to program representatives and any guests they invite
- Make any changes after site visit report is read and program has addenda or corrections
- Mail disk and hard copy of site visit report to headquarters.
- Learn as much as possible about the program
- Keep an open mind – realize there is more than one way to deliver an education
- The site visiting team main responsibilities are to the accreditation organization
- The site visitor's are there to confirm that the information that was presented is accurate and to acquire any missing documentation that was not previously submitted.
- The site visitors are usually the only face-to-face contact that the institution being evaluated has with the accrediting organization and it should be a positive one.
- To refuse to serve as a site-visitor if any real or perceived conflict of interest with the program site
- Reading and having a complete knowledge of what the program prepared in their site self-study

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ACCREDITATION
SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBERS: A DELPHI STUDY

Round One Questionnaire

Code # _____

Part 2: What attributes are essential in a site visiting team member during an on-site evaluation? (You may use additional paper if necessary.)

- A team member must be: congenial;
- Knowledgeable of the area under study;
- well prepared;
- Able to formulate questions that can be answered;
- Able to make the individual/s being questioned be at ease;
- Adaptable to different/sometimes trying situations.
- Knowledgeable about the accreditation process, the Standards, and the Self Study. and CAAHEP policies and procedures.
- Current knowledge in their field of practice
- Good interpersonal skills
- Project a professional image
- Be Punctual – at the on-site visit and in submitting reports in a timely manner
- Team player
- Be able to adapt to new situations.
- Maintain composure under difficult circumstances.
- Integrity
- Work as a team and bring complementary abilities (e.g. one team member in practice; one in academics)
- Remember the role (e.g. not become a consultant)
- View the situation with an unbiased and nonprejudiced view (not simply racial, but includes school rivalries etc.)
- Have stamina
- Have microanalysis ability (e.g. matching standards, self evaluation reports and reality indicates a micromanagement personality, not a laissez faire one)
- Have flexibility (e.g. ability to view traditional syllabi, as well as distance education courses)
- Be tactful and politically aware (e.g. the ideal team member will not jeopardize the program by inappropriate comments to deans, directors etc.)
- Broadly view a program (e.g. more than simply a curriculum: is it student centered, financially sound?)
- The ideal team member must be computer literate
- Understand the mission (scope) of the institution that is being visited
- Be frank

- If suggestions are made the site visitor has the responsibility to let the program know that they are just that
- Integrity – team members must be honest in their assessment of the program/institution
- Be willing to defend their position during discussions with other team members.
- Maintaining confidentiality is essential
- Listening skills – team members must be able to listen to those being interviewed
- Ask open-ended questions
- Team members must gather as much information as possible in order to yield a fair assessment and recommendation
- Social ease – team members function best if they are able to build quick rapport with those being interviewed and it makes for more open discussion with team members when the team is more at ease
- Experience – it helps to have had significant experience in the area that the team member is responsible for in order to know what questions to ask and how to assess the program
- Professional knowledge – it is important that the team member have knowledge of the field and be current with respect to changes in the profession the team member represents
- Written and oral communication skills are imperative
- Personable, but not overly friendly
- Able to quickly establish rapport with individuals and groups
- Confident to hold the Standards and Guidelines in the face of disagreement with program personnel
- Diplomatic to deliver the bad news when necessary
- Assertive
- Sense of humor
- The ability to gather significant amounts of information, synthesize the information, and apply it to the accreditation standards.
- The ability to document findings in a concise manner while describing the elements of “evidence” used to demonstrate compliance with the standards.
- The ability to avoid making promises about the outcome of the accreditation visit! This is the role of the accreditation agency, not the on-site team.
- Humility
- All areas of concern need to be proved beyond a reasonable doubt – hear them from more than one source.
- Critical analysis (looking and seeing below the surface)
- Dedication
- Enjoying what you are doing is essential.
- Inductive and deductive reasoning: ability to gather facts, analyze them and deduce findings to see the big picture.
- Understand the role of the Department of Education in the accreditation process

- Ability to “probe deeper” in order to get the information needed if non compliance is possible
- They should be able to ask an open ended-question and listen fully to the answer and have the critical thinking skills to know what the person is really saying.
- The site visitors should be able to refrain from commenting or getting into discussions where they voice their opinion.
- The site visitor should be able to refrain from offering their opinion or performing a mental comparison of their facility with the one in which they are site visiting.
- A site visitor must be able to work and respect the other team members and if there are any problems it should not be evident to the institution in which they are visiting.
- Observant

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ACCREDITATION
SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBERS: A DELPHI STUDY

Round One Questionnaire

Code # _____

Part 3: What knowledge of the accreditation process should a member of the site visit team possess during an on-site evaluation? (You may use additional paper if necessary.)

- Understand the limits of the accreditation process;
- Understand completely what the various possible decisions mean.
- [*sic*] Be able to communicate effectively with the administration and faculty of the institute they are visiting.
- First the team must know the purpose of accreditation.
- Knowledge of standards to which the program is held
- Knowledge of what minimum criteria is needed for the program to meet the standard
- Knowledge of the self evaluation report
- Knowledge of his/her own personal strengths and weaknesses in the site visit process
- Knowledge of other team members' personal strengths and weaknesses in the site visit process
- Where does it go from the site visit
- How many programs are accredited
- How many fail accreditation
- What other options are available in addition to accreditation or failure
- All should understand that Standards are subject to interpretation and they should do their best to affirm the process and not be a "nit picker"
- Team members should be given the specific requirements for accreditation
- Team members should know where the institution/program is in the accreditation process
- Know what is to happen next in accreditation process if person has a deficiency
- Know the time limit for the next phase of accreditation process
- Know who and when will send out certificate of accreditation
- Know what faculty can do if that want to protest a deficiency found by site visitors
- Know if any thing will be changed in the future for accreditation process
- Detailed knowledge of the accreditation Standards and Guidelines
- Typical interview question that will elicit the relevant information
- General information on the sequence of steps in the process
- Examples of how a program might come into compliance on an area that is cited
- Examples of how a program might improve in areas that are not cited.
- Know the timeline for the process
- Understand entire accreditation process – what type of documents should be examined, who should be interviewed; types of questions to ask

- The on-site team members must clearly understand the role of the team as it is described by the specific accreditation agency, and be able to articulate (and assume) that role during the visit.
- In order to be effective consultants, the members of the on-site team must have a working knowledge of how to implement the accreditation standards. This knowledge is likely gained most effectively when the members of the on-site team have primary experience with seeking and gaining accreditation status for programs within their own institution.
- Current Program problems/concerns
- Professional outcomes
- Job satisfaction of students within the profession
- The program requesting accreditation or re-accreditation must prepare a self evaluation document that examines all facets of the program to assure that it meets or exceeds the published accreditation standards
- It should describe the program's sponsorship, resources, operations, student policies and practices curriculum and plans for addressing any factors that fall below the standards
- The self evaluation document should be received by the site visit team at least 30 days before the scheduled site visit
- The self evaluation document should be carefully studied and annotated
- The more the better
- A site visitor needs to completely understand the self study method of filing and content as well as the self study report and the document of Essentials
- Siting of non compliance must be clear and tied to an Essential not a guideline
- Essentials may be vague requiring a lot of knowledge about the intent of the Essential
- The site visitor should attend a brief but substantive training session before being assigned the first visit. (One visit as an observer would be an additional bonus.)
- To reinforce the training, when the self study is sent, so should a disk or hard copy of the board's procedures dealing with on site visits
- Knowledge and consistency in decision making are very critical to the process of accreditation
- Most importantly-Know how the site visit fits into the accreditation process.
- Specifically, the site visit team simply collects DATA and makes no judgment as to the compliance with the standards and guidelines.
- The site visit team should make this completely clear and avoid any implication that something is "in compliance" or "not in compliance"
- The best way to understand the accreditation process from the opposite side of the table is to have gone through the process of writing a self-study report and to have had a site visit.
- The site visitors should be able to answer questions regarding the accreditation process and if necessary explain the process to the people at the institution which is being evaluated.

- Be able to identify areas that do not meet the standards.
- The site visitor should also know their limitations.
- If they are not sure of something that occurs during the site visit they should know when a phone call to the executive office is necessary and appropriate
- The difference between programmatic and institutional accreditation
- The role and relationship between the site evaluators, the committee on accreditation, and the accrediting agency
- Types of accreditation that can be granted: initial, full cycle, reduced cycle, probationary accreditation, administrative probationary accreditation, withholding or withdrawing accreditation, and voluntary withdrawal of accreditation.
- Length of accreditation awards
- Knowledge of the educational Standards and what constitutes non-compliance with the Standards.
- The difference between the Standards and the guidelines
- How the committees work, the responsibilities of the accrediting body, and how the two communicate
- A working knowledge of the different accreditation categories offered by the accrediting body
- The committee's policy and procedures regarding site visits
- How the committee uses the information obtained by the site visit team
- All aspects of their professional organizations and an in depth knowledge of the specific type of program being evaluated
- Knowledge of accreditation in the USA and policies the DOE has in regard to the accreditation process.
- Roles of the CoA and the accreditation agency
- Rights of the program and site visit team in the accreditation process
- The site visitor should also know their limitations.
- If they are not sure of something that occurs during the site visit they should know when a phone call to the executive office is necessary and appropriate.
- Absolute and complete knowledge of the entire process and policy/procedure to carry out a site-visit and to focus on the responsibility and ethical principals of serving as a site visit team member. This is essential to assure the integrity of the accreditation review process

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ACCREDITATION SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBERS: A DELPHI STUDY

Round One Questionnaire

Code # _____

Part 4: What knowledge of programmatic evaluation related to the education process should a member of the site visit team possess during an on-site evaluation? (You may use additional paper if necessary.)

- A team member must have a firm understanding of the educational level the program material is geared to.
- The team members should understand competency based education, as well as outcome measurements.
- The members of a site visit team must be well-versed in all aspects of the Standards and Guidelines of the programmatic accreditation.
- The team must be able to evaluate each component part of the program to assure the program is in compliance with the Standards.
- Teams must be aware of the various evaluation tools that are used to demonstrate that the student has been taught, and is able to perform, the various requirements [*sic*].
- Curriculum consistent with that of the program in question (e.g. graduate level, distance education, modular)
- Evaluation methodology used by program for students (e.g. essay testing, clinical orals, no testing at all) as well as for the program (e.g. graduate surveys)
- Faculty rights, responsibilities and positions (e.g. in a university versus other types of programs)
- Financial ability of program to continue (e.g. faculty practice and where the money goes)
- Methods of Adult Education (e.g. issues of Pedagogy versus androgogy)
- Organizational administration (e.g. org charts, committees)
- Philosophy, goals and objectives and how they are integrated into the program
- Student rights and responsibilities
- Various ways decisions can be made in programs (e.g. who hires/fires, chooses students)
- All members of the site visiting team should be intimately conversant with the Accreditation Standards and Task Analysis of Practice of the Profession
- Outcome assessment is a major component of accreditation
- The issue of evaluation must be clearly understood by the profession
- Benchmark data needs to be available to programs, the accreditation group need to provide leadership on this issue
- Site team members need to know what the profession is “looking for”. Post secondary education has not done well on this subject. We have been too interested in the process and not the final product.

- Team members should understand that programmatic evaluations are essential for continuous improvement
- Team members should understand that site visits are all about offering guidance to and professional support to the program/institution being evaluated, not an opportunity to advance or diminish the institution or program
- The team should know how the program is evaluated – results on certifying exam
- If the accreditation process contains sufficient detail then the site team would not have to know too much about evaluation process
- Specific examples for that program – of how the program might come into compliance on areas cited
- Specific examples for that program – of how the program might improve in an area not cited
- Educational methods so as to assess the appropriateness of the program's methods
- The appropriate role of clinical/externship in accomplishing the goals of the program relative to the Standards and Guidelines
- Members should have a good understanding of programmatic evaluation so he/she can determine quality of tools being used and be able to identify potential problems
- Although members are fact finders they need to report accurate data
- Members must understand that the effectiveness of the educational process is verified through program evaluation
- Members should be aware of the types of documents that are appropriate to evaluate (survey tools – graduate, students, employers, etc.) and verify that the information being collected is used to enhance program effectiveness evaluate the curriculum and its progression from simple to complex materials;
- Compare the stated course objectives to sample examination questions and activities;
- Evaluate the teaching methodology employed by faculty in various learning environments (e.g., classroom, laboratory, clinical);
- Assess the evaluation instruments for appropriate use within the various learning environments;
- Evaluate the degree to which the program has stated its outcomes, the appropriateness of the various instruments used by the program to gather information about its graduates and their achievements, and the activities employed by the program to use the information gained in curriculum review and modification.
- What outcomes are being achieved
- Other programs work differently but achieve the same goal
- I am not sure what you are looking for with this question
- I have found the best way to evaluate the effectiveness of a program is to interview recent graduates
- A site visitor needs to be an educator – you can not really verify activities you do not understand. You can't make a judgment about curriculum if you have not taught it in the classroom setting. You can not evaluate clinical training if you have not been exposed to it.

- Good site visitors are hard to find and once you have the makings of one then they too need to be supported by the JRC and taught everything about the process and what the JRC needs; Since they are volunteers they also need to be treated with respect and everything possible needs to be done to make it easy for them to give up 2-3 days of their busy life to do the service for their profession
- Knowledge of programmatic evaluation could certainly be one of the selections criteria used for selecting site visitors. If not, this topic must at least be topically discussed in site visitor training
- It would appear that a general understanding of program evaluation would be absolutely necessary if the site visitor was expected to evaluate a program's compliance with published Standards
- The importance of a comprehensive evaluation that has a balance of structure, process, and outcome evaluation.
- The site visitor should possess minimal competency on the subject matter of the program i.e. registered or licensed in the specialty of the program.
- The site visitor should be familiar and hopefully have working knowledge of the educational process.
- They should be able to evaluate the validity of the tools, which the program uses for evaluation of the students
- An understanding of the material will assist in reviewing evaluation tools to assess if they are obtaining the results for which they are intended.
- The site visitors should know the standards of the field and be able to evaluate if the program is meeting these standards.
- The selection process for entry into a program: prerequisites and qualifications for students selected
- Identification of learning objectives and outcomes
- Ways to evaluate whether learning has occurred.
- Logical sequencing of curriculum content and learning objectives.
- Typical credit hour formulas for lectures, labs, discussion, fieldwork, independent study, thesis, research project.
- Typical student workload per week and per term.
- Strategies for teaching different types of learning objectives.
- Content and sequence of course syllabi and lesson plans.
- Typical faculty workloads, qualifications, and salaries in the discipline.
- The team should know whether the program is evaluated by process or by outcomes
- No matter which evaluation method is used, the team should know the tools to evaluate the program
- A current program director who has gone through the accreditation process – self study and site visit – usually has the knowledge to be an excellent site visitor
- A general knowledge of post-secondary education is of value as is a knowledge base about curriculum
- Evaluation and resources in higher education

- A sound knowledge base in distance education and computer based learning is essential to doing an adequate site visit
- Methods of testing and program evaluation methods are needed
- Admission and selection criterion for students applying to the program
- Difference between process orientation and product/outcome orientation
- Cut score determination
- Are accommodations made to instruct students with various learning styles
- Are clearly written objectives, competencies, criterion for successful completion described in course syllabi
- Are mastery criterion identified
- Does the program employ an education process that provides instruction and evaluation in the psychomotor, knowledge, and affective domains
- Are measurable outcomes identified (enrollment, attrition, employment, registry, graduate survey, employers survey, program officials survey, etc)
- The site visitor should possess minimal competency on the subject matter of the program i.e. registered or licensed in the specialty of the program.
- I am sorry but I am not sure where you are going with this question

APPENDIX J
Results of Round Two

Part 1: What are the responsibilities of the members of the site visiting team during an on-site evaluation?

There are 29 responses to Part 1 that statistically rated above the cut score of 4 on the last round. Please rank them in order with number 1 being the most important and number 29 as the least important.

1. Before going to a site visit the team must thoroughly read the Self-Study that the school has submitted.
2. When on-site, it is the responsibility of the team to verify that the facts contained within the Self-Study are true.
3. Following the on site visit, it is the responsibility of the team coordinator to submit a written report, documenting the findings of the team.
4. The on site visiting team should encourage an atmosphere that is non-threatening and is respectful to all individuals involved in the process.
5. It is vitally important that confidentiality be maintained, before, during and after the on site visitation.
6. The major task for the site visitor is to help ascertain if the program meets the preexisting standards set for educational programs in the discipline or profession.
7. Identify strength, possible problems, areas of non-compliance with the accreditation Standards
8. The members of the on-site team function as the “eyes and ears” of the accreditation agency.
9. The members, through the activities on site, validate the information submitted by the institution in the Self Study. Validation is done using a number of primary sources, and places the information within the context and culture of the institution.
10. Each member of the team must set aside his/her biases as a professional and as an educator, and focus on the intent of the accreditation standards.
11. To verify data in the self study
12. They should have studied the self evaluation document carefully and be prepared to ask the administrators, faculty and students any questions required to fully understand every facet of the program
13. Introduce self, at beginning of visit, to institution’s administration explain purpose of visit, answer question, thank institution for participation
14. Stick to Standards and clearly understand difference between Standard and guidelines
15. Be thorough and recognize there are many ways to the same destination
16. The site visiting team’s main responsibilities are to the accreditation organization.
17. Remove one’s self from the team if there is any conflict of interest between yourself and program being reviewed.
18. Avoid making promises to program faculty and administration for assistance that is beyond scope of site team.

19. Focus on issues of compliance with Standards, not petty issues.
20. Do not try to recruit program faculty.
21. Do not try to be a candidate for positions open in the program being reviewed.
22. State the purpose of the exit conference.
23. Deliver site evaluation oral report to key administrators at the conclusion of visit.
24. Mail disk and hard copy of site visit report to headquarters.
25. Keep an open mind – realize there is more than one way to deliver an education
26. The site visitor's are there to confirm that the information that was presented is accurate and to acquire any missing documentation that was not previously submitted.
27. The site visitors are usually the only face-to-face contact that the institution being evaluated has with the accrediting organization and it should be a positive one.
28. To refuse to serve as a site-visitor if any real or perceived conflict of interest with the program site
29. Reading and having a complete knowledge of what the program prepared in their site self-study

Part 2: What attributes are essential in a site visiting team member during an on-site evaluation?

There are 19 responses to Part 2 that statistically rated above the cut score of 4 on the last round. Please rank them in order with number 1 being the most important and number 19 as the least important.

1. Knowledgeable of the area under study
2. Well prepared
3. Knowledgeable about the accreditation process, the Standards, and the Self Study, as well as CAAHEP policies and procedures.
4. Current knowledge in their field of practice
5. Project a professional image
6. Be Punctual – at the on-site visit and in submitting reports in a timely manner
7. Team player
8. Integrity
9. View the situation with an unbiased and non-prejudiced view (not simply racial, but includes school rivalries etc.)
10. Be tactful and politically aware (e.g. the ideal team member will not jeopardize the program by inappropriate comments to deans, directors etc.)
11. Integrity – team members must be honest in their assessment of the program/institution
12. Maintaining confidentiality is essential
13. Listening skills – team members must be able to listen to those being interviewed
14. Team members must gather as much information as possible in order to yield a fair assessment and recommendation
15. Diplomatic to deliver the bad news when necessary
16. The ability to gather significant amounts of information, synthesize the information, and apply it to the accreditation standards.
17. The ability to document findings in a concise manner while describing the elements of “evidence” used to demonstrate compliance with the standards.
18. The ability to avoid making promises about the outcome of the accreditation visit! This is the role of the accreditation agency, not the on-site team.
19. A site visitor must be able to work and respect the other team members and if there are any problems it should not be evident to the institution in which they are visiting.

Part 3: What knowledge of the accreditation process should a member of the site visit team possess during an on-site evaluation?

There are 14 responses to Part 3 that statistically rated above the cut score of 4 on the last round. Please rank them in order with number 1 being the most important and number 14 as the least important.

1. Knowledge of standards to which the program is held
2. Knowledge of what minimum criteria is needed for the program to meet the standard
3. Knowledge of the self evaluation report
4. Team members should be given the specific requirements for accreditation
5. Detailed knowledge of the accreditation Standards and Guidelines
6. Understand entire accreditation process – what type of documents should be examined, who should be interviewed; types of questions to ask
7. Citing for non compliance must be clear and tied to an Essential not a guideline
8. Be able to identify areas that do not meet the standards.
9. The site visitor should also know their limitations.
10. If they are not sure of something that occurs during the site visit they should know when a phone call to the executive office is necessary and appropriate
11. Knowledge of the educational Standards and what constitutes non-compliance with the Standards.
12. The difference between the Standards and the guidelines
13. The site visitor should also know their limitations.
14. If they are not sure of something that occurs during the site visit they should know when a phone call to the executive office is necessary and appropriate.

Part 4: What knowledge of programmatic evaluation related to the education process should a member of the site visit team possess during an on-site evaluation?

There are 6 responses to Part 4 that statistically rated above the cut score of 4 on the last round. Please rank them in order with number 1 being the most important and number 6 as the least important.

1. The team members should understand competency based education, as well as outcome measurements.
2. The members of a site visit team must be well-versed in all aspects of the Standards and Guidelines of the programmatic accreditation.
3. The team must be able to evaluate each component part of the program to assure the program is in compliance with the Standards.
4. Although members are fact finders they need to report accurate data
5. The site visitors should know the standards of the field and be able to evaluate if the program is meeting these standards.
6. Are measurable outcomes identified (enrollment, attrition, employment, registry, graduate survey, employers survey, program officials survey, etc)