Why Accreditation
(especially for DoD Schools)
Accreditation of DoD Schools

DoD Instruction 1400.25-V410 paragraph 3.l., dated September 25, 2013, states:

“It is DoD policy to: Implement TE&PD activities and programs for civilian employees at the highest possible level of academic quality and cost-effectiveness, consistent with the standards established by external accreditation and certification entities recognized by the U.S. Department of Education when applicable standards exist, or standards established by DoD when external standards do not exist or are inappropriate.”
Accreditation

• A status granted to an educational institution or program that has been found to meet or exceed stated standards and criteria of educational quality and student achievement

• Uniquely American and overseen by Department of Education and / or Council for Higher Education accreditation (CHEA)

• Conducted by a peer review against the stated standards and criteria

• Applies to institutions or programs, not individuals

• Types of accreditation
  
  − Programmatic or specialized (program within a postsecondary institution
  
  − Institutional (considers educational offerings as well other institutional characteristics such as student services, financial status, administrative structure, facilities, and equipment)
Purpose

- Assure the quality of the institution or program
- Demonstrate to stakeholders and customers (including the taxpayer) the value of the institution or program
- Assist in the continuous improvement of the institution or program
- Put a “stamp of approval” on graduates
- Facilitate an emerging “culture of evidence”
Accreditation Benefits

- Review of internal controls
- Forum to share ideas and innovation
- Foundation for self-assessment
- Opportunity for continuous improvement

Source: U.S. Accreditation and the Future of Quality Assurance by Dr. Peter Ewell
Why Council on Occupational Education

- National institutional accrediting agency for postsecondary occupational education institutions
  - Non-degree-granting
  - Applied associate degree-granting
- Recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a reliable authority on the quality of education offered by the institutions it has accredited
- Aligned with type of learning and development provided by Federal and DoD Schools

COE Mission
Assuring quality and integrity in career and technical education

Flexible in adapting standards and criteria for Federal and DoD schools
COE Standards

Evaluates entire institution
Looks at OUR processes and are we following them

Institutional/Community Characteristics
Std 1 – Institutional Mission
Std 2 – Educational Programs
Std 3 – Program Outcomes
Std 4 – Strategic Planning
Std 5 – Learning Resources
Std 6 – Physical Resources & Technical Infrastructure
Std 7 – Financial Resources
Std 8 – Human Resources
Std 9 – Organizational Structure
Std 10 – Student Services and Activities
Substantive Changes

- Application for a planned substantive change must be submitted for approval no later than 90 working days prior to the change being implemented
  - Change of a branch to a main campus
  - Change of location
  - Merger of two or more institutions
  - Establishment of a branch campus
  - Establishment of an extension campus
- Failure to implement approved substantive changes within 180 days of approval results in revocation of the initial approval
- Must notify commission within five working days after unplanned substantive change occurs
  - Loss of accreditation or placed on probation by another accrediting agency
  - Loss of good standing with a regulatory or governing body
  - Findings of a regulatory/oversight agency which may affect operations and/or institutional stability
  - Permanent or temporary closing of the main campus or an additional site
  - Substantial disruption of classes caused by any number of means to include natural disasters that may cause degradation in operations or temporary displacement of students to alternative learning sites
  - Unplanned change of location

A moratorium will be placed on the acceptance, processing, and approval of ALL substantive changes beginning 6 months prior to the scheduled dates of accreditation team visits through the date the commission grants initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation.
Innovation

- COE welcomes and encourages perceptive and imaginative experimentation aimed at increasing effectiveness of the institution

- Such innovative approaches must be consistent with
  - Institution’s mission and goals
  - COE’s mission, goals, and objectives

- Where innovative or experimental program may be at variance with accreditation criteria, the institution must request Commission concurrence prior to implementation

- Concurrence shall be based on institution’s ability to
  - Identify specific criteria that cannot be applied to the innovation
  - Propose alternate ways to assess the effectiveness of the innovation in achieving objectives related to the criteria that cannot be applied to the innovation

*Keep this in mind if your institution moves to other types of learning delivery*
Steps to Seek Accreditation or Reaffirmation

1. Submit a letter of intent to seek candidacy with COE
2. Attend a candidate academy (Mar, Jul, Nov) within 18 months of estimated date of accreditation visit
3. Submit a candidate application
4. Host a candidate team visit; receive report and provide response to findings
5. Gain candidacy approval by the COE commission (Commission meets Feb, Jun, Sep, & Nov)
6. Conduct Self-Study Assessment and prepare report (takes 6 – 12 months)
7. Host a preliminary visit (30 days prior to team visit)
8. Host accreditation team visit and receive visiting team report
9. Respond to visiting team report
10. Initial accreditation or reaffirmation awarded by the Commission (at Feb, Jun, Sep, or Nov meetings)

No substantive changes
Preparing to Host a Federal School Site Visit
Federal School Site Visit

- Purposes of Types of Visits
- Recent Visit Procedures (Due to Travel Restrictions)
- Way Forward (Lessons Learned / Best Practices)
- Preliminary Visit (Team Lead only)
- Team Visit
Visits

• Purposes – under normal circumstances
  • Preliminary Visit
    ✓ Ensure Organization is ready for Site Visit
    ✓ Team Lead can take burden off of Team Members
  • Team Site Visit
    ✓ Exhibit Review
    ✓ Interviews
    ✓ Facilities Tour
Team Members

• Team Members
  ✓ May have to take personal leave to participate in the Visit
  ✓ May have to travel on Sunday to reduce amount of personal leave taken
  ✓ Must front the cost of travel, lodging*, meals, other expenses
  ✓ Are reimbursed by COE for exact cost (based on receipts) – no per diem
  ✓ COE Policy - No Invitational Travel Orders (Team Members responsible for own travel arrangements)
  ✓ Depending on Visit – members may be away from work for 2-5 days

• Benefits – what’s in it for them?
  ✓ Satisfaction of knowing they helped -
    ▪ Schoolhouse self-examination process as colleagues, team mates, and peers (not inspectors)
    ▪ Improve overall training – quality of graduates
  ✓ Able to bring back Best Practices to their own organizations
  ✓ Professional Development
  ✓ Pat on the back
Visits
(COVID era / March 2020 – July 2021)

• Virtual – all aspects (preliminary visit, report/exhibit reviews, interviews, facility tours, etc.)
• Platform
  ✓ Whichever worked and was agreed upon by the institution
  ✓ MS Teams, Zoom (personal computer/phone/iPad), etc.
• Exhibits
  ✓ Sent in any manner agreed upon by both parties
  ✓ CD (snail-mail, FEDEX, USB stick, etc.)
  ✓ File Transfer (SAFE [https://safe.apps.mil], TeamBeam, etc.)
• Facility Tours – live streaming or videos (pre-recorded)
• Length of “Visit” – ~1 to 1.5 Days
Visits

*(COVID era / March 2020 – July 2021)* continued

- Boots on Ground (after travel resumes)
  - ✓ DOE Requirement
  - ✓ Team Lead +1 Team Member
  - ✓ Prior to final (re)affirmation by COE Commission
  - ✓ Checklist forthcoming from Commission
  - ✓ Few hours on ground
Visits
(August 2021 – Moving forward >>>)

• Based on Lessons Learned from Virtual Visits
  ✓ COE’s plan to return to “normal” beginning in August
  ✓ Remainder of 2021 & 2022 serve as test bed (pilot) for FCOP
  ✓ Regular In-Person Team Site Visit (Pre-COVID) (School’s discretion)
  ✓ Partial Virtual Team Site Visit (Voluntary – School’s discretion)
Visits
(August 2021 – Moving forward >>>)

- Preliminary Visit – Virtual
  - Based on its purpose
  - Time and cost savings for both School and Team Lead
  - Integrity of process maintained (if not strengthened)
  - Mitigates time-on-station exposure risks
Visits
(August 2021 – Moving forward >>>)

- Exhibits – reviewed in-advance (Voluntary – School’s Discretion)
  - Shortens the in-person visit by an entire day
  - Saves school money and team members time
  - Allows for a more thorough review – adds to integrity of process
  - Mitigates time-on-station exposure risks
Visits
(August 2021 – Moving forward >>>)

• Hybrid Visit
  ✓ Voluntary but may not always be possible or practical
  ✓ At least two members on-site during Team Visit
  ✓ One or more members – completely virtual

• Benefits of Hybrid Visit
  ✓ Save School money
  ✓ Makes Team Member participation possible

• Cons of Hybrid Visit
  ✓ Virtual Platform (i.e., connectivity)
  ✓ Time/Effort on part of School
Preparing for Site Visit

• Attend COE Self-Study Workshop
  ✓ 6 to 18 months before site visit

• Open comms with Team Lead ASAP
  ✓ Information about school
  ✓ Concerns
  ✓ Ideas
  ✓ Questions
## Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>NLT # Days Before Site Visit</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mandatory Timelines &amp; Key Events (Minimum Requirements)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60 Days</td>
<td>Final <em>Draft</em> of Self-Study Completed (98% complete) <em>Sent to Team Leader for review</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 Days</td>
<td>Team Lead - Preliminary Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Days</td>
<td>Travel and Accommodations Confirmed (e.g. Hotel Reservations, transportation, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Days</td>
<td>Send Final Self-Study to COE and Team Lead (who forwards to team members)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 0</td>
<td>Travel Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Day 1 ***</td>
<td>Introductions and <strong>quick</strong> tour of facilities / Team works UTC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**Day 2 ***</td>
<td>Final Team work / Time and location for Exit Brief should be flexible – most likely in the morning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preliminary Visit (Virtual)

Send the following documents for Review Prior to Visit Date:

• FTE Calculations
• Institutional Advisory Minutes (sample)
• Annual Curriculum Reviews (sample)
• School (Student, Staff, & Faculty) Handbooks, Brochures, etc.
  ✓ All must align with identical information
• Permanent Accreditation File
  ✓ All institutional correspondence with COE
  ✓ Last Self-Study
  ✓ Last accreditation visiting team report
  ✓ All annual reports since last site visit
  ✓ All institutional responses, if applicable
Preliminary Visit (Virtual)

Send the following documents for Review Prior to Visit Date:

- Requested Exhibits (spot check)
- Self-Study Workshop Attendance Certificate
  - Within the past 6 to 18 months
- Photo/Video showing the proper Display of COE Accreditation Certificate
Preliminary Visit (Virtual)

Send the following documents for Review Prior to Visit Date:

- Notice in appropriate newspaper/media regarding (re)affirmation of accreditation
- Strategic Plan
- Grievance Policy
- Student Record(s) (spot check)
Checklist for Preliminary Visit

Items to discuss during the Preliminary Visit

• Confirm that Classes are in session for the dates scheduled for the team visit
  – Avoid scheduling when local festivals, holidays, or other events are occurring during that time in the surrounding community that may make housing, transportation, or other event planning for the team difficult
Checklist for Preliminary Visit

Items to discuss during the Preliminary Visit

- Remind school that Self-Study is to be transmitted to the Commission 20 days before visit
- Confirm Hotel reservations
  - Centrally located in a safe, clean area (Typically Marriott or Hilton)
- Confirm Transportation arrangements
  - Team Leader can rent a vehicle (if school desires)
  - Arrangements made to get team members from airport to hotel and back again. Plans to get team to and from dinner & social function
  - Transportation to school and back to hotel each day
  - Transportation to airport (or hotel) after Exit Report
  - Transportation arranged for travel to branch and extension campuses
- Restaurants and other facilities identified
Checklist for Preliminary Visit

Items to discuss during the Preliminary Visit

- Team Workroom:
  - MUST be off-limits during team visit
  - Furnished appropriately for number of team members
  - Well-lit with access to a phone and printer
  - Computers with Internet access (Chrome or Firefox browsers)
    - ✓ Personal computers and phones – school rules/requirements?
    - ✓ Access to Electronic Exhibits
Checklist for Preliminary Visit

Items to discuss during the Preliminary Visit

• Team Workroom (continued):
  – Have IT personnel available to keep the team work moving
  – Possible Amenities
    • Room should allow water at a minimum
    • Team will most likely eat lunch in the workroom (Possible that they may request someone to bring in sandwiches to allow the team to make the best of their time)
  • Refreshments in the team workroom:
    ➢ Are not required – ~BUT~
    ➢ Option - Team Leader can purchase water for the team at a local store (s/he will be reimbursed when filing final voucher)
Team Visit

Items suggested to have available on-site for team members:

- School (Facilities) map
- Staff and faculty directory (with pictures if possible)
- List of Classes in session, their room numbers, training topic, instructor names and any other information necessary for classroom observation
- Students will be interviewed *ad hoc* thus a list of the break times and break areas is helpful
- Optional Name tags prepared for key Faculty and Staff and Team Members
# Typical Site Visit Agenda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 0 – COE Team Travel Day (Sunday)</th>
<th>POC / Room</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>16:00</strong> COE Team meeting</td>
<td>COE team only / Hotel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17:00</strong> Optional Evening welcome and social</td>
<td>PLACE TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>07:30</strong> Arrival / coffee, orientation/Optional Breakfast Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>08:00</strong> Welcome &amp; Opening remarks and School Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Recommend Name tags for key personnel if possible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>08:15</strong> COE Team Introductions and Review of Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>08:30</strong> Quick Tour of School Facilities (Tour will end at COE Workroom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>09:00</strong> Team will begin their review and continue work until complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>07:30</strong> Team continues work until complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TBD</strong> Exit Report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note: Every School is Unique!** The actual visit agenda and how the team approaches the task is a mutual agreement between the team leader and the CAO/ALO
Other notes

Group interviews

- Student interviews may be done as a class or in a small group
  - Students are more comfortable in a group vice individual
  - Saves TIME! With less interruption
  - Gives a better overall look at the student population
- No substantive changes 6 months prior to the scheduled dates of the team visit
Exit Briefing

Be ready & flexible for the Exit Briefing

- Final Agenda item
- Rather mundane and anticlimactic
- One-way event – Team Members read Findings and/or Commendations for each Standard
- Commander determines who will attend and location of briefing
- No discussion regarding Exit Briefing permitted
- Team Members will depart the school immediately following briefing

- **Best Practice** – Pre-brief the Commander to preclude any “surprises” in front of cadre, staff, or faculty

**NOTE**: The Final Team Report only provide recommendations to the COE Commission – the final decision is theirs
Keys for Success

- Use the Team Leader and COE staff members as your resources
- The Team Leader is there to help you and to ensure your institution is ready for the Visit
- Finalize all plans with the Team Lead far in-advance of Visit
- Prepare the Students, Staff & Faculty on what to expect from Team
- Ensure the Host POC is available at all times during Team Visit
- Adhere to Team Visit schedule as much as possible