Site Visitor Training

Accreditation Purpose and Process
Becoming a Site Visitor

- Nominated by either AICP or ACSP and approved by PAB to either the “educator pool” or the “practitioner pool” of potential site visitors
- Complete all training modules
- Assigned to a Site Visit Team
Focus of this Training Module

- **Section 1**: Accreditation in the U.S.
- **Section 2**: Planning Accreditation Board
- **Section 3**: The Site Visit
- **Section 4**: The Site Visit Report
- **Section 5**: Expectations of Site Visitors
Your Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Summarize the purpose of accreditation in higher education
- Recognize the role PAB plays in the accreditation system in the U.S.
- Describe the PAB site visit process and timeline
- Summarize your role and responsibilities as a site visitor
Section 1

Accreditation in the U.S.
Accreditation in Higher Education

Purpose

Aid in entrance to profession

Seek continuous improvement

Assure quality of education and services to students
Accreditation in Higher Education

Both a Process and a Status

Process
- External peer review
- Standards defined and assessed
- Decision by independent third party and due process

Status
- University – “accredited”
- Professional/Specialized Program – “accredited”
Accreditation in Higher Education

- Institutional – Regional Accreditors

- NEASC
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges
- Higher Learning Commission
- MSCHE
- Commission on Colleges

P A B Planning Accreditation Board

Strengthening the Foundation
Accreditation in Higher Education

- Professional/Specialized Accreditors

- ...and many more
Section 2

Planning Accreditation Board
Planning Accreditation Board

Mission:

To ensure high quality education for future urban planners.

Sponsoring Organizations
The PAB Accreditation Process

- Self-Study Report
- Site Visit
- Site Visit Report
- Accreditation Decision by PAB
Section 3
The Site Visit
The Site Visit Team (SVT)

- Team Chair - Educator
- 2nd Educator
- Practitioner
The Site Visit Objectives

- Verify information in SSR
- Gather new information through observations and interviews
- Assess the degree to which the Program meets the PAB accreditation standards; and
- Identify/verify program strengths and areas of improvement
Pre-Site Visit Checklist

✓ Confirm participation – time, availability
✓ Complete conflict of interest form
✓ Read Self-Study Report (SSR)
✓ Develop preliminary assessments of standards
✓ Complete travel logistics
✓ Participate in team conference call (share preliminary assessments, discuss logistics)
Pre-Site Visit Timeline

SVT receives electronic and hard copy, if requested, of materials from PAB staff

PAB staff安排s initial conference call for SVT members

8 wks

SVT members make travel arrangements

6 wks

SVT Chair receives draft schedule for review and comment

4 wks

3 wks

2 wks

Site Visit

Initial SVT conference call
The Site Visit Schedule

President / Chancellor (optional)

Provost

Dean

Department Chair

Program Chair

Program Faculty

Full-time in Program
Part-time in Program
Adjunct/Contract

Students

Research Institute Personnel

Other Department Heads

Facility

Career Services

Employers

Alumni

APA Chapter
Interviews

- Prepare questions in advance to share with your team
- Decide who will lead interview, who will take notes
- Begin with introductions and background (usually by SVT chair):
  - Describe who you are and why you are here
  - Set ground rules, including the timeframe
  - Provide assurance of confidentiality
Interviews

- Have a positive attitude and tone
- Do not express views that could be interpreted as biased about program content and outcomes
- Be thorough and objective
- Pursue the interview as a means of verifying the information the program provided
Interviews

- Do not compare with your program or experience
  - Program is being assessed against the standards
  - What your program does or what your experience was is not directly important
Exit Interviews

- Thank your hosts
- Be specific with chair; get less specific with dean/provost
- List the strengths of the program
Exit Interviews

- Do not state number of partially-met or unmet assessments
- Do not give an indication of team recommendation on reaccreditation
- Write a script
- Take your time and allow time for questions
Site Visit Checklist

- Work together as a team
- Conduct interviews and take notes
- Review student work and tour facilities
- Participate in team discussions
- Refine assessments of standards and recommendations
Post-Site Visit Checklist

- Submit travel expenses for reimbursement
- Keep records for 1 year
- Maintain confidentiality forever
- Write the Site Visit Report
- Provide team recommendation to PAB
Post Site Visit Timeline and other logistics....

After Site Visit

Draft SVR due to PAB staff

Submit expense reimbursement form and original receipts to PAB staff

Revise SVR for Program’s comments; email to PAB staff

Upon request, submit SVT formal accreditation recommendation

SVT Chair meets with PAB during accreditation review

Destroy all SV-related materials and notes
Section 4
The Site Visit Report (SVR)

- Part 1 – Compliance Checklist
- Part 2 – Program Overview and Compliance
- Part 3 – Assessment and Recommendations
  - Met, Partially-Met, or Unmet
- Part 4 – Program Strengths
- Part 5 – Furthering Excellence
Tips for the Site Visit Report

- Recognize the broad audience reading SVR
- Provide some context
- Explain evaluations of Met/Partially-met/Unmet
- Avoid individual names and superlatives
- Tailor “recommendations” for Partially-met and Unmet criteria:
  - Be creative, not prescriptive
  - Limit to those affecting the Program
More Tips for the SVR

2. Students

E. Student engagement in the profession

This criterion was assessed as met based on the SVT review of the SSR, and materials gathered during the Site Visit.

E. Student engagement in the profession

There are numerous opportunities for the students to engage with the profession. Students are required to take a studio course which deals with a real world project and client. The program maintains a lecture series where researchers, officials, professional planners and academics discuss a range of topics with the students. In addition, the program encourages and provides funding for students to attend state and national APA conferences.
Section 5

Expectations of Site Visitors
Expectations of Site Visitors

- Understand accreditation process
- Agree to PAB site visitor policies, procedures, timelines
- Prepare, prepare, prepare
- Make fair assessments based on evidence
- Provide useful recommendations and suggestions to help program improve
Expectations of Site Visitors

✓ Provide input to team
✓ Contribute to SVR
✓ Maintain confidentiality

✓ Learn about planning education
Additional Resources

- Site Visit Manual
- Interview Book
Thank you!

www.planningaccreditationboard.org