International Fire Service Accreditation Congress

Certificate Assembly

Site Visit Team Information

**Prepared
By the
IFSAC Certificate Assembly
Committee on Site Teams**

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a site visit to an entity seeking initial accreditation/reaccreditation should be to gather objective data and well-grounded impressions regarding the entity. The members of the site visit team should capitalize upon all feasible opportunities to observe characteristic operations of the entity seeking accreditation/reaccreditation. IFSAC Administration and the Certificate Assembly Board of Governors (CABOG) will rely heavily upon site visit team's presentations. The report developed by the site visit team should provide a clear and coherent account of the facts and impressions relating to the entity's actual operations (See Appendix E). This document was developed to outline a step-by-step approach for properly conducting a site visit and reporting findings during the visit.

THE SITE VISIT TEAM

Qualifications

Site visit team members and leaders must meet the following requirements in order to be qualified to serve on site visit teams.

Site Visit Team Members

1) Be directly affiliated with or employed by an IFSAC member entity, be a member of IFSAC Administration, a public member, or have emeritus status.

2) Attend, at least once, the following prerequisite sessions held at a regularly scheduled conference:

   a) IFSAC Orientation

   b) Accreditation Process Training

3) Attend, at least once, every three years the Site Visit Team Member Training.

4) Be familiar with IFSAC Bylaws and all other documents related to IFSAC accreditation of certifying entities.

Site Visit Team Leaders

In addition to the site visit team member requirements listed above, individuals must:

1) Have served on at least three site visits as a site visit team member.

2) Attend Site Visit Team Leader Training at least once every three years.

3) Involvement as a host entity member during a site visit.

4) A recommendation by site visit team leader with whom you have previously worked.

Site Visit Team Observers

Selected by their own entity, observers are eligible to participate in site visits at their own expense. Observers shall be approved by IFSAC Administration, site visit team leader and the host entity representative. Observers may participate in the site visit at the discretion of the site visit team leader. The host entity shall not bear any costs for observers.

Criteria for Disqualification or Removal of Site Visit Team Member or Leader

The following are examples, but not limited to:

1) Failure to respond to email solicitations from Administration on three or more occasions.

2) Disciplinary actions.

3) Violation of IFSAC Site Visit Team Code of Ethics.

4) Documented non-affiliation with member entity.

Site Visit Team Member/Leader Requalification

If a site visit team member/leader has been removed or has allowed their qualification to lapse, they are required to requalify. Requalification involves meeting all the requirements of site visit team member/site visit team leader.

Selection

The site visit team consists of a minimum of three personnel (1 team leader, 2 members). The only exception would be for site visits that have five (5) or fewer levels of accreditation - the site visit team shall consist of a minimum of two (2) personnel (1 team leader, 1 member). For site visits that have 30 or more levels, IFSAC Administration, the site visit team leader, and the host entity representative will determine the exact number of site visit team members and/or the requirement of additional days. Factors for consideration include, but are not limited to:

1) Travel distance to host entity (e.g., rest day).

2) Travel distance to testing sites.

3) Number of levels to be reviewed.

4) Host entity requirements (e.g. cultural differences, host agenda requirements).

The site visit team will be selected by IFSAC Administration. Selections, where possible, are made to keep travel costs to a minimum, but are also based upon availability of individuals who have been approved and trained to participate in site visits. Site visit team members should have no direct relationship, past or present, with the entity visited that might be construed as a conflict of interest.

Upon selection of the members of a site visit team, IFSAC Administration communicates this information to the entity hosting the visit and provides each site visit team member with the name, address, and phone number of a representative of the host entity who serves as the local contact for coordination of travel. IFSAC Administration also provides the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the site visit team members to the site visit team leader and the host entity. This should be done at least 45 days prior to the visit.

Travel Procedures for Site Visit Team

Costs for site visits are the responsibility of the host entity seeking accreditation. Generally, travel arrangements for the site visit team are the responsibility of the host entity with a few exceptions:

- IFSAC Administration will confirm with the host entity prior to the site visit whether the entity's travel process will involve the site visit team members completing any U.S.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS), or equivalent, documentation or forms for the host entity; or whether any IRS, or equivalent, documentation or forms will be filed upon completion of the site visit by the entity for travel reimbursement paid to site visit team members. IFSAC site visit team members are volunteering their time to conduct site visits and are not paid for time or services to conduct site visits. The only payment made to site visit team members shall be for reimbursement of reasonable travel expenses related to the site visit.

➢ Only if this documentation is required by the host entity, IFSAC Administration will coordinate travel arrangements for the site visit team and invoice the applicant entity for the travel-related expenses. This includes but is not limited to airfare, lodging, per diem, mileage, baggage fees, etc. IFSAC Administration will follow Oklahoma State University's (OSU) travel policies and procedures when arranging travel for site visits, including adhering to methods and rates established for reimbursement.

➢ If completion or submission of IRS, or equivalent, documents or forms, by site visit team members is not required, or any IRS, or equivalent, documentation or forms will not be filed by the host entity for each site visit team member upon completion of the site visit, then the host entity is fully responsible for working directly with the site visit team to arrange air travel, lodging/hotel accommodations, transportation to and from airport, and notifying the site visit team of the entity's reimbursement process.

➢ By accepting assignment as a member of a site visit team, the member is agreeing to the reimbursement policy and procedure of the host entity or OSU.

➢ Members traveling internationally should coordinate with the host entity well in advance of travel to verify international travel requirements and restrictions (e.g., Visa).

The purpose of the reimbursement process is to ensure that site visit team members are expeditiously reimbursed for all reasonable expenses. Site visit team members are to be provided the proper forms and the reimbursement process should be made as simple as possible. Site visit team members are entitled to receive payment for all direct travel related expenses. Site visit team members do not receive compensation for their time or services.

Site visit team members should be reimbursed directly within 45 days following submission of appropriate expense vouchers, receipts, and/or forms. Rates and methods of reimbursement (mileage, lodging, per diem) for travel arranged and reimbursed directly by the host entity are based upon local regulations to which the host entity must adhere. Host entities should also provide prepaid airline tickets to site visit team members and/or arrange for direct billing of lodging and/or meals. Lodging facilities must be equipped with full automatic sprinkler protection. The extent to which these arrangements are made is the prerogative of the host entity.

IFSAC Site Visit Team Member/Leader Code of Ethics

1. Members shall demonstrate the highest standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, honesty, and fortitude in all dealings with entity members, before, during, and after a site visit, to enhance fire service certification systems internationally.

2. Members shall serve in a manner as to not receive undue personal gain from the performance of their official duties as IFSAC representatives.

3. Members shall avoid any interest or activity which is in conflict with the conduct of our official duties as IFSAC representatives, such as serving as a consultant prior to or after a site visit, or accepting a position of employment from the entity.

4. Members shall conduct their assessment of the entity in a manner that ensures that the entity is administering its system in a fair and equitable manner.

5. Members will treat entity and fire service representatives with respect, concern, courtesy, and responsiveness, recognizing that the improved service of an entity's certification system is more important than infliction of punishment for the sake of noncompliance.

6. Members shall seek professional excellence and development through continued training and certification as a site visit team participant.

7. Members shall approach their duties as IFSAC representatives with a positive attitude and constructively support open channels of communication, creativity, dedication, and compassion when making decisions regarding entity accreditation.

8. Members shall respect and protect the privileged information to which access is gained in the course of our official duties as IFSAC representatives.

9. Members shall exercise whatever discretionary authority allowed by IFSAC Bylaws to promote an accreditation process for certification systems that meet or exceed the various levels of competency identified in standards adopted by the Certificate Assembly.

10. Members shall respect, support, study, and when necessary work to improve IFSAC Bylaws and *Criteria for Accreditation* for improved quality and efficiency in the entity and better service the constituency it serves.[1]

Characteristics of Successful Site Visit Team Members[1]

Background – Site visit team members have sufficient general education and special training specific to a professional discipline to form a solid foundation for program evaluation. Site visit team members may be either generalists or content specialists who are themselves practitioners or educators within the field of fire service training, education, and certification.

Site Visit Training – The International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) uses only site visit team members who have successfully completed an IFSAC sponsored site visit team member training workshop.

Attitude – Effective site visit team members demonstrate maturity, objectivity, diplomacy, and dedication. They project an image of professionalism both in behavior and appearance. Site visit team members appreciate the confidential nature of the task and understand the need for self-initiative, for a cooperative attitude, for an analytic approach to the task, and for necessary degrees of flexibility.

Knowledge – Effective site visit team members have a thorough understanding of the fire service and of the accreditation process. They have sufficient general and special background to be able to exercise appropriate judgment. In addition, effective site visit team members thoroughly understand the NFPA standards or alternative standards and what constitutes deviation from or noncompliance with these standards.

Skills – Site visit team members are skilled in interviewing, interpersonal communications, self-expression, note-taking, and maintaining objectivity. They are skillful in dealing with attitudinal problems that may be presented by those being interviewed. Through experience and education, site visit team members have

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[1] ASPA format for Code of Ethics Borrowed.

Empowerment: A By-Product of Being Selected[2]

Accrediting bodies, as well as site visit team members, must realize that site visit team members benefit professionally from serving on teams. Some educators currently use "empowerment" as a shorthand for this benefit. Site visits are rare learning opportunities. The learning that takes place often enables a site visit team member to become a more effective participant in his/her entity. By granting these opportunities to individuals, accrediting bodies provide them with unique opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge.

IFSAC, by the very act of naming someone as a site visit team member, contributes to the professional stature of that person. Sometimes that added stature is evident only to those who are being visited; sometimes colleagues respond differently because of this apparent vote of approval. Empowerment, then, is not necessarily limited to what can be learned and applied; it can also involve enhanced respect. Team members selected and trained by IFSAC should utilize this opportunity to the fullest extent. While avoiding the perception of "stealing" information, the learning experience itself should provide the site visit team members with a professional upgrade.

Conflicts of Interest[3]

Visiting site visit team members must be "impartial, objective and without conflict of interest." Some basic definitions appear to have wide acceptance: (1) visitors will not be current or past employees of the institution/program being reviewed; (2) visitors will not have graduated from the institution/program being reviewed; and (3) mentors who have assisted an entity in preparing for their initial accreditation ensuing site visit will not serve as site visit team members for the initial accreditation visit. IFSAC will not place on a team, individuals who have openly predetermined their decisions before the site visit.

Unknown conflicts of interest can be discovered if an institution/program has the opportunity to respond to the recommended team. Often this is the only way an accrediting body can learn that a prospective team member was a failed candidate for a position there or had publicly said negative things about the institution or its programs. Each team member should also be reminded that even the appearance of conflicts of interest could weaken the credibility of the site visit. Therefore, each team member must take responsibility to inform the entity of possible conflicts of interest.

Public Disclosure and Confidentiality

It is critical for a team to maintain the confidence of the institution and people within it. Site visit team members often learn things that are not meant to be shared. The site visit team members must protect that confidence on site and away from it; the latter is as critical as the former. Site visit team members cannot interject themselves into the problems of an entity or program. They can observe, assess, and describe these problems, but they are not there to solve them during the site visit. If it is not published in the site visit report, keep it to yourself.

It is imperative that team members be viewed as impartial, professional, and sincerely interested in the success and quality of both IFSAC and the entity. Site visit team members must be very sensitive to their language, both when soliciting information and when giving opinions, especially when discussing evaluative issues and observations regarding the entity's compliance with IFSAC

accreditation criteria. Words with negative connotations should be avoided, as well as reprimands and lecturing, when ascertaining how faculty, students, and others perceive the program, its policies, and processes.

Site visit team members should strive, through both verbal and non-verbal communication, to make the persons with whom they are talking feel comfortable about discussing the relative strengths and areas of concern, as well as what they contribute to or receive from the program. If notes are taken during the interviews or discussions, they should be recorded unobtrusively to avoid interfering with developing and maintaining good rapport.[4]

Site Visit Team Leader Responsibilities

The site visit team leader has responsibilities besides those of the other team members. These responsibilities primarily lie in the coordination and reporting of the visit. Communication is the key when working with both the entity and the other team members.

a) *Scheduling the Site Visit*

Although IFSAC Administration will schedule the visit, the team leader will be contacted for availability. Courtesy would dictate that any adjustments in the scheduled dates be concurred with other team members.

b) *Working Out the Schedule*

Once the dates of the visit are established, it will be necessary for the team leader to contact the entity and plan an agenda or schedule. A model agenda is contained in Appendix C.

c) *Contacting and Communicating with Team Members*

Constant communication between the team leader and team members is needed throughout the process on items such as schedules, reports, and additional information. Site visits are an ongoing process, as should be communication.

d) *Contacting and Communicating with the Entity*

Constant communication between the team leader and the entity is needed throughout the process on items such as schedules, reports, and additional information. Site visits are an ongoing process, as should be communication. The team leader becomes the point of contact for the entity once the site visit process has begun, until CABOG action. The team leader must communicate completely and effectively with the entity on all items. Administration should be copied on all correspondence between the team leader and entity.

e) *Communication with IFSAC Administration and CABOG*

The site visit team leader is the voice of the team when presenting reports and information to Administration and the CABOG. Individual team members should communicate comments or concerns to the site visit team leader, who will then forward them to IFSAC Administration.

f) *Approval and Submission of the Report*

Once the report has been approved by the team members, the site visit team leader will forward a report to IFSAC Administration within 30 days of the conclusion of the site visit. Each requirement in the criteria not met will be addressed in the report.

g) *Presentation of the Report*

The site visit team leader or their designee will make a report and recommendation to the CABOG. The report must conform to the requirements outlined in the *IFSAC Certificate Assembly Accreditation Procedures*.

PREPARING FOR THE SITE VISIT

IFSAC Administration will schedule all site visits. Visits are scheduled upon the entity's completion of all requirements listed in the Certificate Assembly Accreditation Procedures.

At the time a site visit is requested, the host entity must provide the name, address, and telephone number of a local contact person who can assist the site visit team members with travel arrangements. It is the responsibility of the host entity to contact the individual site visit team members in order to coordinate travel plans, lodging, and other logistical aspects of the visit. This should be done well in advance of the scheduled site visit (two to six weeks).

Each site visit team member should carefully review the IFSAC *Criteria for Certificate Accreditation* prior to participating in a site visit. Site visit team members should also study applications and support materials which have been submitted by the entity seeking accreditation to determine the apparent degree of compliance with the IFSAC *Criteria for Certificate Accreditation*. The site visit team should review the applicable National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards or alternative standards by which the entity seeking accreditation proposes to certify individuals. A site visit team leader checklist is provided (see Appendix A). In addition, site visit team members should review the IFSAC Site Visit Team Checklist (see Appendix B) to be sure that they have all the necessary materials for the visit. A notation of questions and concerns should also be made to speed up the interview and information gathering tasks during the visit.

The site visit team leader should identify key entity personnel and confirm with the host entity their availability for interviews during the visit. These key personnel shall be at a minimum: the director of the program and at least two members of the entity's certification staff/faculty (full or part-time). The entity seeking accreditation will distribute all application and support materials to the members of the site visit team at least thirty (30) days prior to the scheduled visit.

While the host entity's application for accreditation should include all materials essential for review, if it is determined that additional materials are needed prior to the visit, IFSAC Administration should make this request to the entity seeking accreditation in writing well enough in advance of the site visit so that the site visit team may receive any additional information at least ten working days in advance of the scheduled visit.

If you, as a site visit team member, need additional information for review prior to the visit, please request this through your site visit team leader.

THE SITE VISIT

Site visits may vary in length from one to four days, depending upon the size and complexity of the program. An agenda for the site visit should be arranged between the site visit team leader and the program director (or other program official) representing the entity seeking accreditation (See Model Site Visit Agenda, Appendix C).

The model agenda outlines important events which should take place during the site visit. The agenda may be modified by the site visit team leader in coordination with the host entity due to local circumstances. This should be done well before the visit is to take place. The site visit team leader should then furnish a copy of the agenda to each member of the site visit team prior to arrival. Officials representing the entity seeking accreditation should take part in the preparation of the agenda so that it accommodates the characteristics of local facilities and allows for scheduled interviews with appropriate faculty, students, and administrators.

Arrival

Upon arrival, the site visit team leader will contact the entity representative for any final modifications to the schedule. After arrival and check-in, site visit team members should have a private meeting to discuss any strategies or assignments for the visit. The schedule should be reviewed at this time as well.

Site Visit Team Work Area

The site visit team should be provided a private work area (e.g., conference room) where they can discuss issues without interruption. If possible, the room should also have a telephone, computer connected to the internet (Wi-Fi), and ability to print documents.

Preliminary Meeting with Entity Staff

Following an opening conference with entity and program officials to state the purpose of the visit, and team expectations and needs, it is acceptable for the individual team members to undertake separate interviews and visits within the program and the entity. Team members should plan to come together for conferences and interviews as necessary.

Review of Policies and Procedures

All policies and procedures referenced to the team during the visit shall be backed up by a written policy and procedures manual. The team members should ensure that what the entity representatives are explaining is in written form. Review available materials both for substantive data and for information that will help in making professional judgments on such matters as the entity's stability, effectiveness of operation, responsiveness and timeliness of correspondence and action, and scope of engagement.

Reviewing the Testing Mechanism

The site visit team will witness the administration of a written and a skills test in accordance with their written procedures. The site visit team will review correlation sheets to verify that the entity is capable of testing 100% of the standard (see Appendix D). Correlation sheets for NFPA pro-qual standards are available from IFSAC. It is the responsibility of the entity to provide correlation sheets in the IFSAC format for all other levels.

Written Tests

A comprehensive test bank management system is essential and useful when managing large numbers of test questions. If an entity is using a written test bank to test requisite knowledge, the entity shall have no less than one test question to support each component within the requisite knowledge. It is recommended that more than one question per component be used to increase the size of the test bank, however, more than one question is not required. It is also acceptable that one

test question supports more than one component, when relevant, within one or more requisite knowledge areas.

Test bank security is important. Records regarding personnel performance and test results must have a high level of security. Team members should underscore this importance by examining the test banks only on the entity's premises. Anyone handling or reviewing entity test banks and tests will do so in a secure manner, and without copying or violating any copyright laws.

Site visit teams should establish that the entity seeking accreditation uses some test validation procedures. Also, the passing score for a knowledge test must be established in a rational way and be uniformly enforced.

Test Validity and Reliability

The Criteria for Certificate Accreditation requires an entity to demonstrate their process for analyzing test items for validity and reliability. For a team to verify this criterion, the team must understand the definitions of the terms. Validity and reliability are the two most important conditions of a well-designed test. *Validity is the extent that a test measures what it says it is to measure.* The best way to ensure validity of the course content is to:

1. Identify the content of the course and the behavioral objectives to be measured.

2. Develop a table of specifications, which specifies the sample of test items to be used.

3. Design a test that matches the specifications.

Reliability is the consistency and accuracy of measurement in a test. A reliable test is free of ambiguous items or directions, vague scoring criteria, environmental distractions, and opportunities for cheating or guessing. A reliable test is one in which separate scorers would give the same score to the same student's test. It also is one in which, if a student were to take the test one day and take the same test three days later, the student would make the same score. If the scores differ, they cannot be said to measure what they set out to measure and are not valid. Therefore, reliability is necessary to validity. Devoting attention to each of the foregoing test characteristics, analyzing a test each time it is given, and discarding or rewriting items that do not meet requirements should aid in improving test reliability.

Test Proctor Instructions

Instructions for taking a test should be brief and to the point. They should explain the purpose of the test to the student. The proctor should make sure the student understands all instructions before proceeding with the test. It is good policy for the proctor to read the instructions aloud as the class reads along, then ask if there are any questions. Where questions are grouped by the type of test item (i.e., multiple choice, True/False), it is frequently desirable to give specific instructions at the beginning of each section.

After reviewing the entity's administrative policies and test banks, the team should witness an actual test to ensure that the *Criteria for Certificate Accreditation* are met and that proctors have an obvious understanding of the system.

Practical/Skills Testing

Practical testing sessions should be observed to establish that the entity's procedures are carefully followed. Issues related to the use of "third party" test proctors are important. Audit systems and procedures relating to the integrity of the testing should be carefully examined. Use of the same

individuals for instructors as well as test proctors for a given group of students is strongly discouraged unless a strong control procedure is in place. The test of that procedure is probably best assessed by the ease of circumventing the procedures and controls.

During the visit, the team should ensure that the documentation presented for evaluation involves testing criteria, and not give credit for objectives accomplished during training, class work, or other means outside the testing mode. Testing can be accomplished during the same time period as long as there is a distinct line between the training mode and the testing mode of that time period. The site visit team should witness a skill test to ensure that the *Criteria for Certificate Accreditation* is met and that proctors have an obvious understanding of the system.

Other Evaluative Methods

An entity may use other evaluative methods such as projects or portfolio in lieu of written and/or skills testing. Review of these methods will vary and the site team will verify that the entity is compliant with their written procedures as well as IFSAC Criteria for Certificate Accreditation.

Visit and Review of Support Services

The team should take the time to review any support services that may be relied upon by the entity to carry out their mission. Team members should feel comfortable that these services provide the support indicated by the entity.

Staff Interviews

During a site visit, site visit team members should interview agency personnel, such as the executive director, certification staff and/or faculty, members of the governing board, commission or advisory committee, and clientele (students).

Program Director

The individual responsible for the overall program should be interviewed separately from staff. Team members should watch for items such as: consistency with other employee views, compatibility with written procedures, and a thorough understanding of the program.

Faculty

The team members should interview enough instructors, proctors, and supervisory personnel to ensure overall entity understanding and commitment to written policies and procedures, as well as consistency with each other and the program director.

Student Interviews

Probably the most effective means of finding out when procedures and policies may not be consistent is through interviews with students participating in the program. Interviews with clientele/students should be conducted without the presence of representatives of the entity seeking accreditation. Interviews should be short, and care should be taken not to pressure them, or interrupt the student's testing process. They should be made to understand that their interview has nothing to do with their individual performance, and how critical their information is to the overall quality of the program.

Conducting Interviews

To gain the maximum utilization of time during the visit, each team member should have a strong familiarization with interview tactics. This will help ensure an efficient interview and information-gathering session, as well as present a positive image of IFSAC to the staff and professionals of the entity. Following are some tips for conducting successful interviews:

- *Punctual* - Be on time. If individuals have been scheduled to appear before the site visit team, they may be nervous. Keeping them waiting is both discourteous and may increase their nervous tension. Professionalism is increased by being on time.

- *Adaptable* - Be flexible in manner, adjusting to different personalities of the people being interviewed. Be prepared to change the scheduled or planned questions based on new areas that may present themselves in the interview. Expand on areas that appear to be strong in the individual.

- *Courteous* - These people are not on trial. Treat them with professional courtesy, and remember that they are helping you, and may be doing this voluntarily.

- *Personable* - Be well-groomed, neat, and friendly. Don't look like a police investigator after a criminal. Allow the environment to be relaxed.

- *Poised* - Regardless of what information comes out in the interview, remain poised and direct. Don't act surprised by information, and don't allow or force the individual to feel that he or she has disclosed some unknown secret.

- *Persistent* - Be persistent without being aggravating. Continue on a point, short of becoming overbearing, to make sure you have obtained complete information.

- *Notes* - Take good notes, and take them continuously. Don't jump to your pad on a particular issue, making them feel they just "spilled the beans." Good notes allow for a good report, and make documentation for the report much easier.

- *Attitude* - Be positive. You're not there to convince the people that you know more than they do. Remain positive about their program, even in light of negative information.

- *A good listener* - Listen. Don't lead the individual. Remember that they are providing you with information, not vise-versa.

- *Unbiased* - Remain unbiased on issues with which you don't agree. Consider before a site visit begins that there may be some items about a program you do not like. Keep your opinions to yourself and judge things on the merit of the accreditation criteria.

- *Concerned* - Present the impression that you are concerned and appreciative of the information being provided, that you have a deep desire to help improve the program, and that you care about it.

- *Discerning* - You have to evaluate the reliability of what is being told. Mentally compare the information being voiced to you in comparison to written procedures. Be alert to BS.

- *Knowledgeable* - Allow the individual being interviewed to recognize that you know the subject as well. This will build a bond and encourage honesty.

- *Impressive* **-** Make a good first impression, as well as a good closing impression. In closing, thank each individual for his or her time.

- *Fair* **-** Be fair in your questions, recognizing that some questions are fair to ask certain individuals, and others are not. Allow the individual to express items without a question, such as closing remarks. This will allow the individual to feel as if he or she has contributed without request, allowing for some surprise information.

- *Be Yourself* **-** More than likely, you perform a similar job in your state or entity. Don't present the impression that you feel high and mighty. Someone may be interviewing you for the same reason someday.

THE EXIT CONFERENCE

The agenda should include a private site visit team meeting before the exit conference to reach consensus on findings, to continue preparation of the final report, and to designate team member roles for the final conference. The agenda should also indicate prompt closure at the end of the exit conference, with the immediate departure of the team.

A final exit conference takes place between the site visit team and the program director, as well as any other principles the program director wishes to involve. This is the most challenging segment of the site visit during which the site visit team explains to the program director exactly what they have found. To prepare for the exit conference, site visit team members should review their findings with other members of the team. Each requirement in the criteria not met will be addressed in the final exit conference. Decide whether any suggestions related to "weak" areas in the program will be made. Decide how the site visit team members will divide the information to be conveyed in the exit conference (who will say what).

The site visit team leader begins the exit conference by expressing appreciation for the hospitality extended and the arrangements made by the program director and other representatives of the host entity. The site visit team leader then reviews the manner in which the exit conference will take place. The site visit team leader explains that the purpose of the site visit was to assess the program's compliance with the IFSAC *Criteria for Certificate Accreditation* <u>at the time of the visit</u> and that the site visit team will now review its findings.

The site visit team leader should begin the discussion by listing the strengths of the program. Identifying strengths as well as weaknesses provides the host entity with a more balanced report. This should be followed by a discussion of the specific areas related to the *IFSAC Criteria for Certificate Accreditation* in which the program is weak, and how to improve in these areas. The host entity should be informed in detail of all findings before the team leaves the site. There should be no surprises when the entity seeking accreditation receives the final report.

During the exit conference the program director and others should be allowed to ask any questions and/or make any comments that they wish. However, the discussion should avoid debating the accreditation criteria or the team's findings. The representatives of the host entity should have the opportunity to understand *why* any deficiencies were cited. The host entity should also have an opportunity to clarify the findings at this point.

In closing the exit conference, the site visit team leader should explain that the site visit team members are fact-finders only and that the CABOG will make the final decision on accreditation

status. The site visit team leader should also explain the next steps in the accreditation process and any corrective actions which remain at the end of the visit.

REVIEW OF REPORT FORMS

It is suggested that before leaving the visit, the site visit team completes a draft of the report. After this, the team leader can return home and organize the report to its final form. The report should then be provided to the remaining team members for concurrence. Each team member must approve and sign the report form.

AFTER THE SITE VISIT

The site visit team leader is responsible for the completion and filing of the team report in draft form with IFSAC Administration within thirty (30) days of the site visit. Before endorsing it by signature, each team member must review the final report to ascertain the following:

1. It is legible, clear, and accurate, without important omissions.

2. Names of persons do not appear in the report proper but do appear as an appended list of those interviewed; titles of persons appear in the report as necessary but only in impersonal and objective reference, or for the purpose of commendation.

3. Personal or unverified observations have been removed.

4. Needed editorial improvements have been made.

5. Any deficiencies cited have been supported in the body of the report and that each references one or more specific *Criteria for Certificate Accreditation*.

If the site visit team leader has not already provided the entity with a copy, IFSAC Administration then sends this report to the entity seeking accreditation/reaccreditation for review and comment. The entity seeking accreditation/reaccreditation is encouraged to respond in writing, although a response is optional. All responses must be received within thirty (30) days from the date the report was sent.

After thirty days, IFSAC Administration is responsible for forwarding the report along with any comments that were received from the entity seeking accreditation to the CABOG. The report and any correspondence received will be reviewed by the CABOG who will then make a decision. The entity will then receive notice of the Board's decision by mail thirty (30) days after the meeting.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – IFSAC CA Site Visit Team Leader Checklist

Appendix B - IFSAC CA Site Visit Team Member Checklist

Appendix C - Model Site Visit Agenda

Appendix D - Correlation Sheet

Appendix E - Site Visit Report Example

Endnotes

APPENDIX A - IFSAC CA SITE VISIT TEAM LEADER CHECKLIST

The following checklist was developed to aid site visit team leaders in knowing what to do and to use as a tool prior to, during, and following a site visit. Tasks listed in the checklist were taken from various documents (Accreditation Procedures, Site Visit Team Information, Bylaws).The checklist can be requested from IFSAC Administration by emailing admin@ifsac.org or calling (405) 744-8303.

CA Site Team leader Checklist

Entity:	
Location:	
POC:	
POC Phone:	
POC Email:	-
Site Visit Dates:	-

Please refer to the current version of the following for more detailed information: Site Visit Team Information document, the Accreditation Procedures and Bylaw Article 12.

	Process Steps	Due Date	Received/ Sent	Completion Date	Notes
1.	Receive notification from IFSAC Administration regarding site visit dates				
2.	Site Team Members - Confirmed				
3.	Send initial email to site team members ie. Welcome, status, processes, etc.				
4.	Application package received from IFSAC Administration (entity to submit at least 90 days prior to scheduled sv)				
	Evidence of empowerment received & checked				
	Doc. of financial support received & checked				
	Doc. of staff support received & checked				

	Process Steps	Due Date	Received/ Sent	Completion Date	Notes
	Application received & checked				
	Completed criteria worksheets received & checked				
	Correlation sheet for each level received & checked				
	Certification policies & procedures received & checked				
	Culturally sensitive information received/sent to STMs (if applicable)				
5.	Request further info if necessary				
6.	Notify IFSAC Administration to move/not move forward with site visit (at least 60 days prior to scheduled site visit)				
7.	Ensure site team members have received copies of the application package documents				
8.	Receipt of confirmation memo/letter to site team members, applicant entity, and COST chair from IFSAC Administration				
9.	Send email to entity regarding status of site visit				
10.	Follow-up (Misc.)				
11.	Work with entity on travel arrangements				
12.	Work with entity on schedule and prepare site visit agenda				
13.	Forward copy of site visit schedule/agenda to site visit team members and applicant entity. Inform team members of what materials to bring (refer to Appendix B of Site Visit Team Information).				
14.	Site visit conducted				
15.	Finalize site visit report (use template)				

	Process Steps	Due Date	Received/ Sent	Completion Date	Notes
16.	Have all site visit team members sign final site visit report				
17.	Site visit report filed with Admin (30 days after concluded site visit)				
18.	Additional/corrective action pending				
19.	Additional/corrective action received (if applicable)				
20.	Final action and recommendation letter prepared and forwarded to site visit team members for review and consensus (if applicable).				
21.	Final action and recommendation letter finalized and sent to IFSAC Administration for distribution to the CABOG (if applicable).				
22.	Present report to CABOG at spring or fall meeting (designate a site team member if unable to attend meeting)				
23.	Accreditation process complete				

APPENDIX B - IFSAC CA SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBER CHECKLIST

Institution or program to be visited   _____

Site visit date(s)   _____

Name of site visit team leader   _____

Address   _____

   _____

E-mail address   _____

Phone/Fax number   _____

Name of entity's contact person   _____

Address   _____

E-mail address   _____

Phone/Fax Number   _____

Accreditation Procedures (available on the IFSAC website)

Site Visit Team Information (available on the IFSAC website)

Copy of application and support materials from entity seeking accreditation

Copy of site visit schedule/agenda

Copies of applicable standards

Local travel reimbursement form (return envelope)

Hotel Information (confirmation form or number)

Pertinent correspondence

APPENDIX C - MODEL SITE VISIT AGENDA

NOTE: This agenda is based on the entity seeking one level of accreditation. It may be necessary to adjust the agenda if more than one level of accreditation is sought.

EVENING PRIOR TO VISIT

Initial Meeting of Site Visit Team (site visit team members only)

Purpose: To allow team members to get acquainted, review the site visit schedule and agenda, discuss their perspectives of the program on the basis of the information provided in the application and support materials provided by the entity seeking accreditation, and identify those areas the team believes merit more thorough review. In addition, the team determines if and how specific activities will be pursued by each member.

FIRST DAY

8:00 a.m. Welcome and Introductions

A meeting with institution officers, the program director, and others as appropriate.

Purpose: a) To allow the site visit team to briefly review the purpose of the site visit, the accreditation process, and the roles and functions of the site visit team, the CABOG, IFSAC Administration, and the Assembly.

b) To review the schedule as planned by the program, making adjustments as necessary.

8:30 a.m. Entity Program Presentation

Purpose: a) To provide the entity with the opportunity to present their program to the site visit team.

b) To provide the members of the site visit team with an opportunity to obtain a more complete understanding of the curriculum and the program objectives, philosophies, course objectives, operational procedures, student selection criteria (if used), student evaluation protocols, enrollment, student attrition rates, processes for monitoring progress in development of student knowledge and skills, etc.

9:00 a.m. Tour of Facilities

Purpose: To familiarize site visitors with classrooms, drill field, and other facilities used by students during didactic and/or supervised practice components of the program.

9:30 a.m. Visits to Support Services (if applicable)

Purpose: To review library facilities, equipment, audio-visual resources, administrative facilities (offices and records), and other support services.

10:00 a.m. Review of Entity Materials

     1. Policies and Procedures

     2. Written Test Banks

     3. Skills sheets

     4. Alternative evaluation methodologies (computers, etc.)

12:00 p.m. Working Lunch (Site Visit Team Members Only)

1:00 p.m. Interviews (Sequence and time allotments may vary as desired)

     ***Faculty/Staff*:** To discuss various aspects of certification procedures, such as logistics, record keeping, testing, etc.

     ***Students*:** To obtain reactions to all phases of the program through a group meeting or private interviews, without faculty or others being present.

     ***Representatives of governing board or advisory committee*:** To get perspectives and comments from entities served by the program and/or to determine the extent to which mechanisms exist for user input into program policies and direction.

     ***Program Director*:** To obtain additional information, to clarify points of information acquired during the day, and to review the schedule for the second day of the visit.

2:30 p.m. Continue Reviewing Entity Materials

4:30 p.m. Site Visit Team Meeting

     Purpose: To allow team members to review and discuss their observations and perspectives of the program on the basis of the information gathered during the first day.

EVENING OF FIRST DAY

The entity hosting the site visit should not schedule activities for the evening. The site visitors use dinner and evening hours to discuss information acquired throughout the day, to identify areas requiring further inquiry the following day, and to draft as much of the site visit report as possible.

SECOND DAY

8:00 a.m. Preliminary Conference

     Purpose: a) To allow the entity and site visit team to confirm the day's activities.

          b) To provide the site visit team the opportunity to address questions raised from the previous day's activities.

9:00 a.m. Observation of Testing Procedures

> **Purpose:** The site visit team is to observe and evaluate at least two representative certification tests actually being administered by the entity seeking accreditation. At least one of these tests must include a psychomotor skill evaluation component.

> These tests are not required to be given at the entity's headquarters site, but may be regularly scheduled tests at an off-site location. If this is the case, the host entity is responsible for logistical arrangements regarding travel, etc., and the site visit schedule must be planned accordingly.

12:00 p.m. Working Lunch

1:00 p.m. Pre-Exit Conference Site visit team Meeting   (Site Visit Team Members Only)

> **Purpose:** To provide a private site visit team meeting before the exit conference to reach consensus on findings, to prepare the final report, and to designate team member roles for the exit conference.

4:00 p.m. Exit Conference

> **Purpose:** To present findings, accompanied by reference to specific IFSAC accreditation criteria if noncompliance is identified, during a conference with the chief executive officer, program administrator or director, and others as deemed appropriate by the institution.

> To provide entity officials with an opportunity to respond to the findings and to correct misconceptions or inaccuracies.

5:00 p.m. Conclusion of Site Visit

APPENDIX D - CORRELATION SHEETS

Correlations sheets can be accessed and downloaded from the member portal on the IFSAC website at https://ifsac.org. Access is only provided to IFSAC Certificate Assembly member representatives and others authorized by a member representative to have access.

Sample of Correlation Sheet

NFPA OBJECTIVE	TEST QUESTION #	SKILL SHEET #	OTHER EVALUATIVE METHOD
4.2.4 *			
Perform an airport operation, given an assignment, a hazardous condition, and the airport policies and procedures, so that unsafe conditions are detected and reduced in accordance with the airport policies and procedure.			
(A) Requisite Knowledge.			
Airport and aircraft policies and procedures for hazardous conditions.			
(B) Requisite Skills.			
Recognize hazardous conditions			
Initiate corrective action.			
4.3 Fire Suppression.			
This duty involves the attack, control, and extinguishment of fires involving aircraft, aircraft cargo, airport facilities, and other equipment related to airport operations and property conservation. The primary purpose of this duty is to protect lives and property.			
4.3.1 *			
Extinguish an aircraft fuel spill fire, given approved PPE, an assignment, agent application procedures, a fire-fighting vehicle hand line flowing a minimum of 95 gpm (359 L/min) of approved foam extinguishing agent, and a fire sized to the flow rate used, so that the agent is applied using the prescribed techniques and the fire is extinguished as required by the AHJ.			
(A) Requisite Knowledge.			
The fire behavior of aircraft fuels in pools			
Physical properties and characteristics of aircraft fuel			
Agent application rates and densities			

APPENDIX E - SITE VISIT REPORT EXAMPLE

Site visit team leaders may request the site visit report template from IFSAC Administration by emailing admin@ifsac.org or calling (405) 744-8303.

The following model site visit report was compiled using reports from past site visits. This site visit report was developed, not to portray a negative picture of a site visit, but to provide site visit personnel with enough information to allow for an honest and fair evaluation. It is offered both as a model on which site visit teams may wish to base their own reports and as an example of how findings and recommendations may be reported precisely. The coverage and span of this example should be seen as being the minimum required if the following two critical objectives are to be achieved. The report **must** provide:

1. A clear, accurate picture of the entity's program for the CABOG to review and subsequently make a final accreditation decision.

2. The site visit team leader with the information necessary to accurately remember the events that transpired during the site visit as he/she presents this information to the CABOG.

There may be a lengthy period of time between the close of the site visit and the actual time when the site visit team leader presents this information to the CABOG. Rather than the team leader trying to remember site visit events that took place several months earlier, the report will serve to refresh his/her memory.

It may only be necessary for the CABOG to read the "Summary of Site Visit" to make a decision on whether to accredit. On the other hand, accompanying documents may be necessary to support the site visit team's recommendations.

INTERNATIONAL FIRE SERVICE ACCREDITATION CONGRESS
ACCREDITATION SITE VISIT FINAL REPORT

Entity Name: Nova Fire Academy

Dates of Visit: February 12 – 14, 2017

Accreditation Site Team Members		
Name	*Title*	*Representing*
Mike Russell	Instructor Supervisor	Missinova Fire Academy
Sherry Brooks	Program Coordinator	Utinova Fire and Rescue Academy
Greg Grizzly	Instructor Supervisor	Michinova Fire Academy

Entity Representatives		
Name	*Title*	*Representing*
Tim Fenley	Commissioner	Nova Fire Academy
Bob Hix	Director	Nova Fire Academy
Sylvia Johnson	Program Coordinator	Nova Fire Academy
Ben Will	Test Administrator	Nova Fire Academy

Other Representatives		
Name	*Title*	*Representing*
Joe Allen	Fire Chief	City of Nova
Will Doe	President	Nova Instructors Association
Ernie Wood	President	Nova Fire Fighters Association

Model IFSAC Site Visit Report (10/2017) - 1

Entity Name: Nova Fire Academy

Report Prepared by:

Signed _____ *Date* _____

Signed _____ *Date* _____

Signed _____ *Date* _____

ACCREDITATION SITE VISIT FINAL SUMMARY REPORT

Recommendation to Board of Governors:	Unconditional reaccreditation for levels listed.

(This Summary Report should contain the following information: a narrative report of the findings including positive aspects and issues requiring adjustment to comply with the "Criteria for Certificate Accreditation;" any voluntary recommendations that are in order for the applicant, but not required for accreditation; a summary of the site visit activities including interviews with entity staff and constituents, testing procedures and test bank reviews; and any other pertinent information from the site team.)

An IFSAC Site Visit was conducted at the Nova Fire Academy February 12 – 14, 2017. The charter of the site team was to review the Fire Fighter I level in accordance with *National Fire Protection Association Professional Qualifications Standards*, and *Criteria for Certificate*. The site team reviewed the following aspects of the certification system:

      a. Certification Administration
      b. Nova Fire Fighter I Certification Manual
      c. Nova Certification Program Procedures Manual
      d. Written and manipulative skills tests
      e. Test Management and Security

The site visit team also participated in the following:

      a. Observed manipulative skills testing session
      b. Observed a written test session
      c. Interviewed staff, faculty, and students

Model IFSAC Site Visit Report (10/2017) - 2

Entity Name: Nova Fire Academy

It is obvious that a lot of hard work went into this program and the Nova staff should be commended on the work they have completed. The staff of the Nova Fire Academy were very open to recommendations and comments concerning their program and were eager to seek new ideas for improvements.

The following reflects the findings and recommendations of the site-team. Thank you for the privilege of allowing us to conduct this visit and reviewing Nova's programs.

The site team observed a written and a practical skills evaluation in progress at the Nova Fire Academy and were satisfied that they are in conformance with IFSAC Certificate Assembly (CA) criteria. The site team observed and got a firsthand insight into the exam generation and record keeping process at the Academy's administrative office and these processes were in conformance with the IFSAC Certificate Assembly criteria. The site visit team interviewed students, staff, and evaluators.

From the interviews, it appears there is only one person who is assigned for generation of master exams. It is strongly recommended that a backup person be trained and assigned for this task, who could do the work under the supervision of a senior official in case of the primary person is unavailable or incapable of doing the task. The Nova Fire Academy has taken this recommendation under advisement and will consider implementation if it meets their needs.

Fire Inspector levels applied for were withdrawn by the Nova Fire Academy during the site visit. The Academy was previously accredited to an earlier edition of NFPA 1031. It was not possible to make required changes to the programs to meet the new standard in a timely manner, and the Nova Fire Academy has indicated they will apply for accreditation to these levels through administrative review at a future date.

All deficiencies or errors found by the site visit team and brought to the attention of the staff of Nova Fire Academy were noted and attended to prior to conclusion of the site visit or directly after the site visit. The site visit team commends the Academy staff for their quick actions.

Specific Entity Action Items

The site visit team identified the following deficiencies which were corrected by the Nova Fire Academy staff during the site visit. The entity was given thirty (30) days to complete these requirements and the site visit team has reviewed submitted materials and confirmed the deficiencies have been corrected.

Certification Program Administration

1. Develop a written policy that specifies how persons previously certified or holding a position will be allowed to participate in the certification system.

2. Develop a written policy that states your intent and procedures for reciprocity.

The site visit team identified the following deficiencies which were corrected by the entity following the site visit. The entity was given thirty (30) days to complete these requirements. The entity made

Model IFSAC Site Visit Report (10/2017) - 3

corrections and submitted required materials to the site visit team for review. The site visit team reviewed the submitted materials and has confirmed the deficiencies have been corrected.

Written Test Banks

1. Fire Fighter II, NFPA 1001
   Develop a test bank that contains a sufficient amount of questions to test the entire standard.
   (15 cognitive objectives currently not tested)

Site Team Recommendations for Levels Presented by Entity

NFPA Level	Edition	Accreditation Type	Recommendation
NFPA 472: Haz-Mat Awareness	2013	Reaccreditation	Reaccredit
NFPA 472: Haz-Mat Operations - Chapter 5 Core	2013	Reaccreditation	Reaccredit
NFPA 472: Haz-Mat Operations - 6.2 PPE	2013	Reaccreditation	Reaccredit
NFPA 472: Haz-Mat Operations - 6.6 Product Control	2013	Reaccreditation	Reaccredit
NFPA 1001: Firefighter I	2013	Reaccreditation	Reaccredit
NFPA 1001: Firefighter II	2013	Reaccreditation	Reaccredit
NFPA 1002: Driver/Operator	2014	Reaccreditation	Reaccredit

Model IFSAC Site Visit Report (10/2017) - 4

ENDNOTES

1 Adapted from the American Medical Association's Accreditation Manual, Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation, 1991.

2 Portions adapted from the "Site Visitors in the Accreditation Process: A Guide to Issues and Practical Concerns, Council on Postsecondary Education, October 1988.

3 Adapted from the American Medical Association's Accreditation Manual, Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation, 1991.

4 Adapted from "A Decalogue for the Accreditation Team," Hector Lee (COPA Agenda, February 5, 1976 and the American Medical Association Accreditation Manual from the Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation.

5 Adapted from "A Decalogue for the Accreditation Team," Hector Lee (COPA Agenda, February 5, 1976 and the American Medical Association Accreditation Manual from the Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation.