

Guidelines for BAETE Program Evaluators

1. Introduction

Program evaluators are the primary representatives of BAETE, and they interact directly with the institution under evaluation. Therefore, the program evaluators' conduct, attitude, and professionalism during an evaluation have a direct bearing on the credibility and reputation of the accreditation process and decision, as well as of BAETE itself. The purpose of this document is to provide a guideline to the program evaluators to highlight the best practices.

2. Conflicts of interest

BAETE treats conflicts of interest with utmost seriousness. This issue is discussed in Section 16 of ACC-MAN-01. Each evaluation team member is required to disclose any real or perceived conflict of interest at the earliest opportunity. Examples of conflicts of interest include but are not limited to the following scenarios, within the last ten years:

- A current or former full-time or part-time faculty or staff member of the concerned institution
- Present or past member of any committee in the concerned institution
- Current or past involvement in any for-profit activity in the concerned institution
- Dependent studying in the concerned institution

3. Confidentiality

All information provided by the institution, in the SAR or elsewhere, and all findings by the evaluation team members during the on-site visit, are confidential. These may be used only for evaluation of the program. The information or findings may not be revealed to any unauthorized persons without written permission of the concerned institution. Section 15 of ACC-MAN-01 stipulates that confidentiality must be maintained at every stage of the accreditation evaluation.

4. Conduct

- Composure: Being composed means that the person can communicate effectively in all situations. No team member should lose temper for any reason at any stage of the accreditation evaluation. The discussions with different groups/persons of the concerned university should remain focused on the topic at hand and should not wander/digress to subjects not related to the accreditation evaluation. This is particularly important for the team chair and members when dealing with the top management of the concerned institution, e.g., the Vice-chancellor.
- Collegiality: The nature of the behavior of the evaluators with officials, faculty members, and students of the concerned institution is extremely important. Accreditation evaluation is a peer-level task, and the evaluators' behavior needs to communicate that sentiment. Under no circumstances should an evaluator feel superior to his/her counterpart from the concerned institution. An evaluator should not appear as

intimidating or threatening to the institution. He/she should be gracious, polite, and patient when dealing with people from the concerned institution. Cynical, demeaning, or sarcastic language or attitudes must always be avoided.

- Diligence: Prior preparation is essential to perform effectively as an evaluator. He/she should study the SAR in detail in advance and identify the gaps or the issues that need further exploration. Evaluators should also exchange their views during the pre-visit meeting(s). During stakeholder meetings, the evaluators should know what to look for and guide the questions or the discussions accordingly.
- Gifts, favors, and meals: Institutions often give mementos or other valuable gifts to the members of the evaluation team. Such practice should be strongly discouraged, and the message should be conveyed to the institution in advance. Similarly, an evaluator should also not ask anyone from the institution for any favor or anything personal before, during, or after the onsite visit. The requirements of the evaluators during the visit should be communicated beforehand by the Team Chair and should not include anything of personal nature. All the meals served to the evaluation team should be working meals. Meals should not be elaborate and should not be turned into a social or formal event. No one from the institution should join the evaluators during any lunch/dinner.

5. Professionalism

- Teamwork: An evaluation is effective and credible only if the team members' behaviors are coherent, cooperative, and collaborative. Evaluators should be cordial with one another. This is particularly important during the onsite visit. An evaluator should set aside any negative personal feelings towards another member, and act professionally towards the common goal of fair and evidence-based evaluation of the concerned program for accreditation.
- Formality: Accreditation is a formal, professional activity. Evaluators should dress appropriately and act accordingly. Moreover, when friends, former colleagues or students of a team member are among the officials or faculty members of the concerned institution, overtly friendly and overtly personal behavior is to be avoided as such behavior may give others a perception of compromise of a fair and unbiased evaluation. Such behavior by anyone from the institution should not be entertained either.
- Decorum: An evaluator is expected to attend the entire onsite visit without missing any part of the visit. Evaluators should refrain from using the mobile phone during the visit. This is particularly important when meetings/discussions with stakeholders of the institution are in session.
- Punctuality: The importance of punctuality cannot be over-emphasized. Time management plays a central role in establishing the credibility and professionalism of the accreditation. All meetings, discussions, and visits should start and end on time. This message should be communicated to the institution with all seriousness in advance. The visit schedule should be carefully prepared considering contingencies including traffic congestion. Punctuality is important during the onsite visit and before and after the visit. As per Section 5.2 of ACC-MAN-04, the onsite visit should be held within 12 weeks of the formation of the evaluation team, and the evaluation team report should be submitted within three weeks

of the visit.

6. Activities

- Pre-visit activities – The evaluation process starts with the study of the SAR. If any additional information is required from the concerned institution, the request should be made through the team chair giving the institution sufficient time to respond. Preliminary evaluation of each criterion should be done based on the SAR and the issues which need further investigation during the onsite visit should be identified. During the pre-visit meeting(s), the observations of each evaluator should be exchanged so that all the evaluators are on the same page. The team chair should distribute the criteria for evaluation among the team members. The strategy for the visit and the draft plan should be finalized during the pre-visit meeting(s). The tentative visit schedule should be communicated to the program before the pre-visit meeting(s) and the visit schedule needs to be finalized in the pre-visit meeting.
- Place of accommodation during the onsite visit - the evaluation team members must stay in the place of accommodation provided by the program during the onsite visit.
- Activities during the onsite visit – The evaluation team is expected to do the following. Assess the issues that could not resolved from the SAR, examine and verify in detail the information provided by the institution, review the infrastructure and the facilities, and provide a preliminary assessment of the program in terms of compliance, concerns, weaknesses, and deficiencies in each criterion. The activities to be conducted for this purpose include but are not limited to (i) meeting the institution and the program heads, (ii) meeting with the faculty members, (iii) meeting with the students, (iv) meeting with the non-teaching staff of the program, (v) examine course materials including exam questions, answers, project reports and other examples of student works, (vi) examine transcripts, (vii) examine documents demonstrating evidence of achievement of outcomes and objectives, (viii) examine documents demonstrating CQI, visit the labs, classrooms, library, placement center, and other support facilities, and conduct the exit meeting.
 - Exit meeting is one of the most important activities of the onsite meeting. The Chair of the evaluation team chairs the exit meeting. The assessment of the evaluation team is verbally communicated to the concerned institution in terms of compliance, concern, weakness, or deficiency in each of the criteria. The evaluation team should not prescribe any specific remedial to address any particular non-compliance. Justification for each choice should be briefly provided. The evaluation team should debrief the program head in a pre-exit meeting to ensure that there is no gap between the evaluation team and the institution. The institution is not expected to respond to the presentation of the assessment of the evaluation team in the exit meeting except to correct factual errors.

All meetings during the visit shall be chaired by the Chair of the Evaluation Team (or one of the Evaluators for split meetings where the ET Chair is not present)

- Analysis of observations and findings – The evaluators' observations should be categorized under the

appropriate BAETE criterion. During this process, a holistic approach should be adopted. The findings should be consolidated to get the big picture. Evaluators should not be nitpicking when preparing a long list of minor concerns and weaknesses. Rather the issues that impact the outcomes should be highlighted. The evaluators should also not analyze each criterion and sub-criterion in isolation. On the contrary, they should focus on the relationships and interdependencies among different criteria.

- Collection of evidence to support conclusions: The conclusions that the evaluators reach from their evaluation should be evidence-based. Conclusions must be made in accordance with the criteria stipulated in the Accreditation manual. Moreover, the definition of concern, weakness, or deficiency may not be arbitrarily made or interpreted. The use of these terms must be consistent with the descriptions provided in the Accreditation Manual. Personal bias or perception should not be the basis of any conclusion. Quantitative and prescriptive evaluations should also be avoided. Evaluators need to recognize that there may be multiple ways to do something right. Consequently, the absence of evidence for their preferred method may not automatically imply non-compliance. Instead, an issue may be regarded as non-compliant when evidence demonstrates that the desired outcome is not achieved or the process is absent.
- Preparation of the evaluation team report: The report should also be evidence-based and specific. The justifications for each conclusion should be adequately provided. Although a brief statement of compliance should highlight areas where the program far exceeds the minimum requirement, a detailed subjective narration of the observations should be avoided. The report may contain general recommendations to assist the program in addressing a non-compliant issue, but the evaluators should refrain from writing prescriptive recommendations. Annex III of the BAETE Manual provides the report template to be used by the ET.

7. Modalities for Concurrent Accreditation Visit

For concurrent evaluation of multiple programs of the same institution, the Evaluation Team (Delegation) will consist of $3n$ evaluators (where n is the number of programs under evaluation; the composition of the 3-member team for each program is the same as that for single-program accreditation visit and formed as per Section 5.5 of ACC-MAN-04). One of the Chairs of n evaluation teams shall be appointed as the Head of the Delegation.

For concurrent evaluation of multiple programs of the same institution, the Delegation will perform the following tasks:

- The Head of Delegation will set a deadline for an initial review of the SARs for compliance with eligibility requirements and consistency with the formatting provided in ACC-TMP-04-05.
- Program-specific ETs will review their respective SARs within the deadline given by the Head of Delegation.
- After the deadline, the Head of Delegation will call a joint meeting of all evaluators. If the SAR of any program is found either not in compliance or not as per the template, the Head of Delegation will communicate with the BAETE member-secretary and decide together the next course of action for that

program.

- Program-Specific ETs of the eligible programs with acceptable SARs will evaluate the respective SARs in detail. The evaluations will be discussed in a joint meeting, chaired by the Head of Delegation. The evaluators will decide which criteria are to be evaluated jointly for all programs and which will be evaluated separately.
- All the programs will be visited for onsite evaluation together. The visit dates will be decided by the Head of Delegation in consultation with all ETs and the programs. The dates must comply with the schedule stipulated in ACC-MAN-04.
- All the onsite and combined ET meetings during the accreditation visit shall be chaired by the Head of Delegation.
- The Head of Delegation shall ensure the exchange of findings and joint discussion among the ETs, and consistency in the evaluation of all the programs. The Head of Delegation shall also ensure that the evaluations and decisions pertaining to all the participating programs are taken holistically considering feedback from evaluators of all the programs.
- The Head of Delegation will ensure that the report for each program is prepared and forwarded to the Quality Assurance Cell as per the schedule stipulated in ACC-MAN-04.
- Submission of ET reports will be performed by the Chair of program-specific ETs.
- If immediate action is required during the onsite visit, the Head of Delegation shall make a decision in consultation with the BAETE manual.

8. Revision of the Evaluation Team Report

The report submitted by the Evaluation Team shall be reviewed by the Quality Assurance Cell (QAC). The Quality Assurance Cell is responsible for the moderation of Evaluation Team Reports by checking inconsistencies between the stated findings and the evaluation results in each of the criteria and sub-criteria, checking inconsistencies that may exist among various criteria and sub-criteria within the same report, and checking inconsistencies in findings and evaluations across various Evaluation Team Reports as per benchmark requirements of BAETE.

The QAC may recommend a revision of the Evaluation Team Report. If a revision is recommended, the ETR will be sent back to the Evaluation Team along with the recommendations from the QAC. Upon receiving such a request, the ET Chair shall convene a meeting with the ET members to discuss the QAC recommendations and finalize/revise the report. The revised report must be submitted to BAETE within a week from the date of the QAC report submission.

9. Participation in the Accreditation Decision Meeting

The ET Chair shall be invited to the Accreditation Decision Meeting in which the program's application will be decided. The Board will request the ET Chair to join the meeting to discuss the agenda for the respective program. The ET Chair shall only be answering the queries/clarification requirements made by the Board, and

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shall not provide any comments/suggestions other than that.

In cases where the ET Chair cannot be present, he/she can delegate a member of the ET to represent the evaluation team in the ADM.

Version	Revision Date	Change made to document
3.0	September 2023	Updated the Manual Version