

GAC Guidance to Programs Hosting an Accreditation Visit

Objective

The objective of the visit is to substantiate the evidence and information presented in the Self-Assessment Report through the peer review process and in accordance with the GAC accreditation standards.

Preparation

It is incumbent on the program to be well prepared for the visit including making information and program representatives available to the team. This requires effective preparation.

Timeline

Pre-Visit	
60 to 90 days before the Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The potential visit team, comprising a Team Lead and two Team Members is selected by GAC Accreditation Specialist. The proposed Team Members' CVs are sent to the program for approval. Once approved, the Team Lead participates in the review of the Self-Assessment Report with the GAC Directors. Upon acceptance of the Self-Assessment Report by the GAC Directors, the planning process for the visit begins.
30 to 60 days before the Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Team Lead, the primary point of contact between the Visit Team and the program, plans the visit with the program's designated representative including the visit dates and preparation of the visit agenda and logistics, such as travel, lodging, and meals.
2 weeks before the Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two weeks before the visit, the program makes available to the team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> access to information for every required and elective course and/or subject containing relevant management of projects content included in the evaluation of the program (for example, syllabi, Microsoft PowerPoint slides, samples of student work, including capstone projects, textbooks, readings, evaluations, etc.). any additional requested materials in advance of the visit. virtual meeting links for any virtual team members (hybrid or virtual visits only). a confirmed visit schedule including appropriate and knowledgeable participants for all meetings. Names should be included. The program contact also provides an overview of the curriculum documents & student work repository to the Visit Team, to ensure they understand the design and where to access needed documentation.

Post-Visit	
Up to 30 days after the Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within two weeks of the completion of the visit, the Team Lead sends the draft Visit Report to the program, which is allowed a 2-week period to correct any factual errors. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>The Visit Report does NOT include the visit team's accreditation recommendation. The recommendation is confidential and is only communicated to the GAC.</i> • The Visit Team's final report and its accreditation recommendation are required to be submitted to the GAC no later than 30 days after the completion of the visit.
30 to 60 days after the Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Visit final report is reviewed and sent by GAC Accreditation Specialist to the program for its records. The program is allowed 10 days from receipt of the Visit Report to submit an optional Program Response. • The GAC Directors evaluate the Visit Report and Recommendation and any Program Response at the next available meeting. The GAC Directors' accreditation decision is based on the collective evidence provided by the Letter of Intent, the Self-Assessment Report, the Visit Report, the Visit Recommendation, and the optional Program Response. • The program is notified of the GAC Directors' accreditation decision.

Visit Checklist
___ 1. The Visit Fee has been submitted to the GAC Offices.
___ 2. Access to samples of student work have been provided to the team.
___ 3. Any virtual team member has been provided with meeting links.
___ 4. All travel logistical requirements (flights/lodging/transportation arrangements, etc.) for each member of the Team have been arranged and confirmed.
___ 5. All on-site logistics for the Team (transporting team to and from campus, lockable conference room, equipment, etc.) have been arranged.
___ 6. All required personnel are available for interviews, as scheduled in the Visit Agenda.

The Visit Team

GAC maintains a list of qualified evaluators constituting the visit teams. These evaluators have been recommended by institution and program heads, colleagues who have participated in an evaluation process, GAC directors, and GAC team members. GAC relies on the personal and professional integrity of individuals to refuse any assignment where even the slightest potential for a conflict of interest exists. A conflict of interest might include any relationship the Team Member has with the program, either as a former student, or a current or previous role as a faculty member or lecturer within the program. All team members sign and submit a Confidentiality Agreement and a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Agreement.

The team typically consists of the Team Lead and one or two Team Members. Additional team members are added for programs with multiple awards, degrees, or locations. At least one member of the team will be from the project management academic community and one will be a project management practitioner. The final composition of the team is determined by GAC. Additionally, GAC may invite a representative from the governmental or nongovernmental quality assurance entity to observe the visit as a courtesy.

When assigning Team Members, GAC considers the experience of the prospective Team Member to ensure that the team has appropriate background in the discipline of the applicant program. Other factors considered during team development are the modality of the program, whether face-to-face or online, and the physical location of the program regarding the proximity of the Team Members. In all cases the GAC matches the degree being reviewed with Team Members who have appropriate experience and/or knowledge.

❖ Visit Team Lead

The GAC appoints a Team Lead for each visit. The Team Lead is the primary liaison with the program, and all questions regarding planning the visit should be funneled through them

The Lead possesses relevant experience to understand team objectives, coordinate team effort, and represent the GAC effectively. A Team Lead has participated in previous visits and has been recommended for the role.

The Team Lead provides leadership for the evaluation process and team during the visit preparation, during the visit, and after the completion of the visit. They possess an in-depth understanding of the GAC Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards.

The Team Lead responsibilities are as follows:

- Coordinate the visit dates in conjunction with the program's designated representatives and the team members
- Plan the visit in conjunction with the program's designated representative.
 - Coordinate attendance of representatives from all program locations and degrees
- Develop the visit agenda ensuring that each GAC Accreditation Standard described in the *GAC Accreditation Handbook (5.0)* is addressed.
- In coordination with the program, plan logistics including travel arrangements and hotel accommodations for team.
- Communicate team's status on a regular basis to the GAC Accreditation Specialist.
- Review Self-Assessment Report and identify areas to be addressed for visit evaluation.
- Prepare Team Members for the visit evaluation.
- Participate in the visit evaluation.
- Facilitate the exit debrief with the program.
- Ensure submission of the final visit evaluation report and recommendation to the GAC within 30 days of the visit.

❖ Visit Team Members

Each Team Member possesses sufficient relevant experience to understand team objectives and to represent the GAC effectively. They also possess a detailed understanding of the GAC Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards.

The Team Member responsibilities are as follows:

- Review the Self-Assessment Report, utilizing the GAC Accreditation Standards described in the *GAC Accreditation Handbook (5.0)*.
- Participate in team preparation session(s) conducted prior to the visit.
- Identify areas to be addressed during the visit evaluation.
- Participate in the visit, through interviewing key stakeholders and verifying information in the Self-Assessment Report.
- Assist in drafting the Visit Report and Visit Recommendation.

Logistics

❖ Expenses

The program is responsible for the travel expenses of the Visit Team in accordance with PMI's Volunteer Travel and Expense Policy. Specifically, the program shall pay for the following:

- Airfare
- Hotel accommodations
- Meals
- Ground transportation during the visit, and to and from the Visit Team Member's office or home to airport, including tolls and airport parking fees

In most cases, the program will pay expenses at the time they are incurred. In an instance where the expense is not pre-paid, the following guidelines would be followed:

- The program provides clear instructions to the Team Lead regarding submission of

- reimbursable expenses.
- The instructions should include forms, procedures, necessary documentation according to the policies of the program.
 - Information will be provided prior to the visit evaluation so that the team can maintain and submit the proper documentation in a timely manner.
 - NOTE: visitors should be regarded as guests of the program and are not vendors or contractors. No forms, contracts, or paperwork that imply a relationship other than as a guest visitor can be required.

Expenses not covered by the program include discretionary spending, such as personal phone calls and entertainment.

❖ **Agenda/Schedule**

The visit is typically 2 to 3 days.

The Team Lead will develop the agenda for the visit in coordination with the program's primary contact. The agenda should be organized to give the team the opportunity interview people at all levels of the organization/program individually and/or in groups including institutional leaders, program leaders, administrative personnel, faculty members, students, alumni, advisory board members, and industry representatives, if relevant. Time should be set aside daily for the team to review institutional and program policies, processes, and procedures; the program's curriculum and examples of student work, and the physical, financial, and/or digital resources supporting the program. It can also be used to explore any area needing further inquiry. They may choose to sit in on selected classes or lectures.

See the Visit Agenda Template on the GAC website.

❖ **Workroom/Materials**

- Each program must dedicate a lockable conference room for the use of the team for the duration of the visit.
- The following materials must be made available to the Team during the Visit:

Materials to be Reviewed During Visit	
Type of Materials (Records and Documents)	Inspection of Documents and Records Details:
Current Course Syllabi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Syllabi from all courses or subjects relevant to the management of projects • With attention directed to learning outcomes and topical outlines
Course Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbooks • Lecture Notes • Handouts • Examinations • Etc.
Sample Student Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assignments ○ Presentations ○ Case Study Analysis ○ Online forums/discussions/blogs ○ Thesis ○ Research papers ○ Capstone projects ○ Other items which provide evidence of alignment with achievement of the program's learning outcomes • From all locations and delivery modalities, and demonstrating a range of achievement. For example, the Team would expect to see student work demonstrating what constitutes a grade of "A" versus a grade of "C."
Other Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other items the Team will inspect include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Evidence that assessment data is being used for program improvement ○ Evidence that student feedback is considered in program improvement ○ Externally available program information via website or other material ○ Internship-related materials ○ Faculty CV's
Key Guidelines for Inspection Sample Materials	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbooks are recent editions. • Learning outcomes must be stated in each syllabus. • Course syllabi can differ from section to section, but the same learning outcomes are addressed across all sections of the same course. • Syllabus or learning management system contain assignments that measure student achievement of course learning outcomes. 	

Accreditation Visit

The visit team spends approximately three days at the program's campus. The primary task of the team is to validate the contents of the program's Self-Assessment Report and to determine the program's alignment with the GAC Accreditation Standards.

❖ Interview Group Composition

Interviewee	Specific Parameters
CURRENT STUDENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended Group Size: 6-12 • Must Represent: Each program, location, and delivery modality for the program (i.e. face-to-face, online, blended) • Special Instructions: Must be currently enrolled in the program. If unrelated programs are being reviewed, a separate group may be interviewed for each program. Exclude participants that are members of the program's faculty, administration, or staff • Optional: Observe class & randomly interview student
RECENT ALUMNI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended Group Size: 6-7 • Must Represent: Each program, location, and delivery modality for the program (i.e. face-to-face, online, blended) • Special Instructions: The majority of participants should have graduated within the last 3 years. If unrelated programs are being reviewed, a separate group may be interviewed for each program. Exclude participants that are members of the program's faculty, administration, or staff
INDUSTRY REPS (If relevant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended Group Size: 6-8 • Suggestions for Representation: External advisory group; representatives from firms who hire/employ graduates/students; project management professional association local chapter representatives. • Special Instructions: May be alumni other than those participating in alumni session and may be combined with alumni group. Exclude participants that are members of the program's faculty, administration, or staff
FACULTY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended Group Size: Adequate faculty (representing full-time, part-time/adjunct faculty) dependent on size of program • Must Represent: All faculty teaching in the program invited, specific emphasis on those teaching core management of project courses • Special Instructions: Ensure faculty from all sites and delivery modalities represented. If unrelated programs are being reviewed, a separate group may be interviewed for each program. Exclude participants that are members of the program's administration or staff
UNIVERSITY ADMIN/SUPPORT STAFF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended Group Size: No minimum size • Must Represent: People that students interface with regularly • Special Instructions: Based on program

❖ Inspection

The team inspects documents and records indicating the current status of statements made in the Self-Assessment Report. This includes:

- Examination of current course syllabi
- Review of course materials such as textbooks, lecture notes, handouts, and examinations
- Inspection of sample student work such as assignments, theses, research papers, and projects
- Review of program's continuous improvement process and evidence of its use

The team observes the existence of specific items described in the Self-Assessment Report. This includes physical facilities, library materials, and learning environment.

❖ Oral Report

The oral report summarizes the team's findings.

The team's visit concludes with:

- a verbal reading of the Visit Report with the program leadership and program primary contact followed by:
- a verbal reading of the Visit Report to the representatives selected by the program.

The team's Visit Recommendation is not discussed during the final meeting with the program's representatives. The Visit Recommendation is confidential and is only provided to the GAC Directors and Accreditation Specialist.

Post Visit Processes

❖ Visit Evaluation Report

- The Team Lead makes any final edits to the Visit Report and Visit Recommendation.
- The Team Lead sends the Visit Report to the program for factual verification within two weeks of the conclusion of the visit.
- The program returns the corrected draft to the Team Lead.
- The factually corrected Visit Report and the Visit Recommendation are submitted by the Team Lead to the GAC Accreditation Specialist no later than 30 days after the completion of the visit evaluation.
- When the report is received in the GAC Accreditation Specialist, it is reviewed, and the final report is sent to the program.
- The program may submit an optional Program Response to GAC within 10 working days of receiving the final team report from the GAC Accreditation Specialist. The Program Response is in the form of a letter addressed to the Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC) Manager. The program emails the letter to gac@pmi.org. The Program Response should be brief (four pages or less) with a focus on major specific issues or significant differences with perceptions and/or interpretations within the Visit Report, rather than minor points of disagreement. Additional information, or analyses that differ from those of the team, may be helpful to the GAC Directors. If the GAC does not receive the program's response when it is due, the GAC may choose to make its decision without the program's response.

❖ GAC Accreditation Decision

The GAC Directors evaluate the collective information included in the Letter of Intent, the Self-Assessment Report, the Visit Report and Recommendation, and the Program Response at the next available directors' meeting. The accreditation decision regarding the program is made based upon review of all information presented.

Please refer to the *GAC Accreditation Handbook* (5.0) for more details regarding the accreditation process.

Contact GAC Accreditation Specialist with any questions:

- ❖ Email: gac@pmi.org