

Initial Visit Procedures

ACS WASC Initial Visit Procedures for:

- **International Schools**



2024 Edition

All rights reserved. ACS WASC retains full copyright ownership, rights and protection of all material contained in this document. ACS WASC authorizes the electronic copy and download of documents for ACS WASC accreditation purposes only. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval systems, for all other purposes without written permission from ACS WASC.

CONTENTS

Preface	iii
Background	1
WASC Philosophy	1
WASC Mission	1
International WASC Accreditation Process.....	5
Conditions of Eligibility	7
Specific Initial Visit Procedures.....	8
Initial Visit Status Options.....	9
WASC International Criteria.....	11
Category A: Organization for Student Learning and Well-Being	12
Category B: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	19
Category C: Support for Student Social-Emotional and Academic Growth	24
Category D: School Culture, Child Protection, and Parent/Community Involvement	25
Category E: Residential Life	28

Preface

If educational organizations are to concentrate all their energies and resources on successful student learning, a holistic, honest examination of the actual program for students is required. Through the use of empowering criteria, new communication patterns, evidence gathering techniques, and insight from fellow educators, the appropriate accreditation process can serve as a vehicle to move school community members into meaningful schoolwide improvement and accountability. The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC), utilizes a protocol for accrediting schools entitled *Focus on Learning* for this cycle of continuous improvement.

The *Focus on Learning* process has been widely accepted throughout the WASC region as integral to the “heart” of education-successful student learning. This has been demonstrated through a variety of *Focus on Learning* adaptations as WASC works jointly with numerous educational associations. Public, independent and church-related private K-12 and adult schools value the “basic components” of *Focus on Learning* that can be “institutionalized” as the schools address growth areas that impact student learning. These include: (1) the defining of quality achievement of schoolwide learner outcomes for every student by all stakeholders; (2) schoolwide interdisciplinary dialogue based on evidence gathering and analysis about what students are doing and producing; and (3) the development, implementation, and accomplishment of a schoolwide action plan focusing on high-quality student learning and well-being.

This document, *ACS WASC Initial Visit Procedures Manual for International Schools*, provides information on the accreditation process and explains the initial steps toward WASC accreditation.

Background

The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC), a world-renowned accrediting association and a regional accrediting agency in the United States, works closely with the Office of Overseas Schools under the U.S. Department of State. WASC extends its services to over 5,500 public, independent, church-related, and proprietary pre-K-12, adult schools, and supplementary education programs. WASC provides assistance to schools located in California, Hawaii, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, Fiji, Asia, and other parts of the world. WASC works with over 20 associations in joint accreditation processes and collaborates with other international educational organizations.

WASC Philosophy

WASC believes that the goal of any school or supplementary education program is to provide for successful student learning. Programs encompassing both the cognitive and affective components of learning should foster human growth and development and enable students to become responsible, productive members of the school community and of society. Each school should develop a purpose to reflect its beliefs. For continuous program improvement, each school is expected to engage in objective and subjective internal and external evaluations to assess progress in achieving its purpose.

The primary goals of accreditation are:

- Certification to the public that the school is a trustworthy institution of learning
- The continuous improvement of the school's program and operations to support student learning.

The school or supplementary education program's self-study and the visiting committee's report provide compelling evidence that:

- The school is substantially accomplishing its stated purposes and functions identified as appropriate for an institution or program of its type
- The school is meeting an acceptable level of quality in accordance with the WASC criteria adopted by the Accrediting Commission for Schools.

WASC Mission

WASC advances and validates quality ongoing school improvement by supporting its private and public elementary, secondary, and postsecondary member institutions to engage in a rigorous and relevant self-evaluation and peer review process that focuses on student learning. The overarching concept questions are:

- How well are students learning and achieving?
- Is the school doing everything possible to support high achievement and well-being for all students through a continuous improvement process?

WASC Guiding Principles

The WASC Guiding Principles are embedded within the *Focus on Learning (FOL)* accreditation cycle of quality. Through this process, a school demonstrates:

- Total involvement and collaboration of all stakeholders
- A culture that nurtures and supports the well-being of all students
- Accomplishment of its vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes
- High achievement of all students in relation to district goals, schoolwide learner outcomes and academic standards
- Use of multiple ways to analyze data about student achievement, including student and staff perceptions/interviews, examining student work, and observing students engaged in learning
- Evaluation of the program effectiveness in relation to (1) impact on student learning based on schoolwide learner outcomes, critical student learning needs, and academic standards; and (2) meeting an acceptable level of quality in accordance with the WASC criteria
- Alignment of prioritized findings to a schoolwide action plan focusing on student achievement
- Ongoing improvement/accountability.

School's Vision, Mission, Schoolwide Learner Outcomes, Global Competencies, Academic Standards, and Major Learner Needs

An essential element of systemic school improvement is the collective vision on the part of the school's stakeholders for all students. The school's vision and mission provide the school's foundation for establishing identified outcomes: schoolwide learner outcomes, academic standards, and major learner needs which drive the instructional program and the support operations. **Schoolwide Learner Outcomes** are what all students should know, understand, and be able to do to be globally competent citizens. Examples of schoolwide learner outcomes are:

- Every student will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of diverse cultures that foster tolerance for individual differences
- Every student will be a collaborative worker
- Every student will demonstrate higher order thinking skills of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

International schools integrate global competencies within the schoolwide learner outcomes. These include:

- The use of concepts, knowledge, skills and languages of various disciplines to research current global issues

- The understanding of the interdependence of economic, political, technological, environmental, and social systems worldwide
- The understanding of multiple perspectives
- The valuing of diversity
- The ability to communicate with multilingual skills, through fluency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening and through the use of technologies
- Engaging responsibly in action and service to improve conditions both locally and globally
- The ability to function effectively in an interdependent world.

The **Schoolwide Learner Outcomes** are collaboratively developed and represent the focus of the entire school community based on the current and future learning needs to prepare students to be globally competent. Questions schools need to ask include: What are the current and future learning needs of the students? What does it mean to be an educated person? What is the most effective preparation of students for their future?

The **Major Learner Needs** are identified gaps in student learning. Examples include expository writing, reading, critical thinking skills and mental health. These needs are identified through the examination of student work, observations, achievement data, teacher's experience and collective understanding, etc.

Academic standards define the concepts, skills, and knowledge that students should know and be able to do in each curricular area, the level at which students are expected to demonstrate this knowledge, and grade-level expectations for performance. In a standards-based educational system, schools determine the benchmarks for student work that meet these standards, provide appropriate instruction, and use multiple assessment measures to identify the level of achievement for all students. This approach assists the schools in defining the quality accomplishment of the complementary schoolwide learner outcomes and the degree to which all students are achieving them.

WASC International Criteria

The criteria are research-based guidelines for school improvement that focus on student achievement of the desired outcomes: schoolwide learner outcomes, global competencies, academic standards, and major student learner needs. A school will examine all aspects of its program against these categories:

- A. Organization for Student Learning and Well-Being
- B. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- C. Support for Student Social-Emotional and Academic Growth
- D. School Culture, Child Protection, and Parent/Community Involvement
- E. Residential Life, if applicable.

International WASC Accreditation Process

Initial Visit Process (may include pre-initial visit and training)

- An initial visit by a two-member visiting committee to understand the school's purpose, the program, and operations based upon the Guiding Principles and WASC criteria and the detailed information/evidence provided through the initial visit report.
- Completion of an initial visiting committee report that will include strengths and areas for improvement with emphasis upon continuous improvement and assessment of the school's readiness for moving into candidacy or initial accreditation.
- Commission action on candidacy or initial accreditation.
- Refinement, implementation, and monitoring of the schoolwide action based on the identified areas for improvement impacting student and school needs, including an annual progress report, including support by WASC international staff.
- Completion of the first self-study within three years.

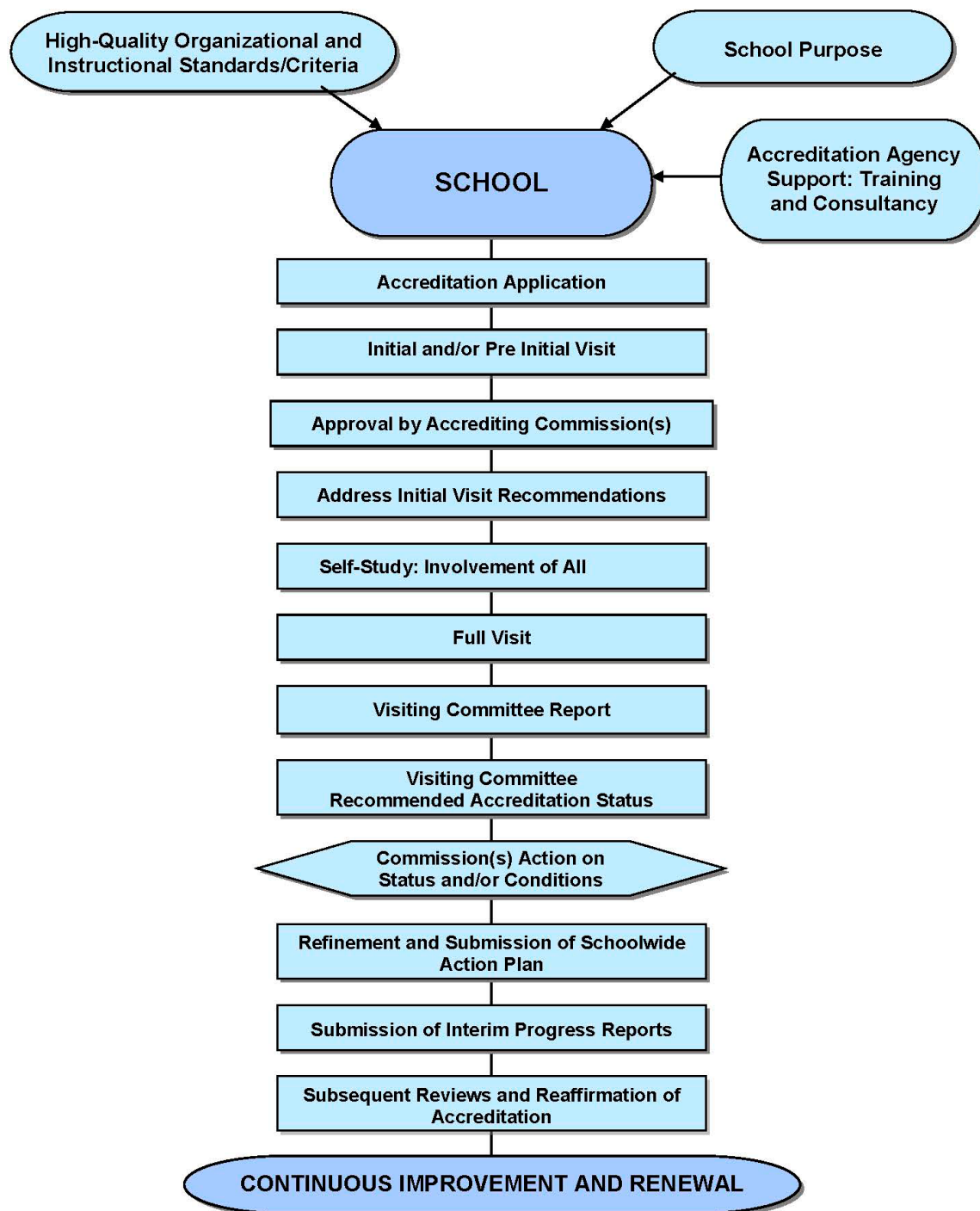
Self-Study Process

- Involvement of all stakeholders in the self-study process.
- Clarification of the school's purpose and the schoolwide learner outcomes.
- Assessment of student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the WASC criteria.
- Development of a schoolwide action plan that addresses identified areas for improvement.
- Visiting committee validation and enhancement based on accreditation criteria/standards, self-study, and findings from the visit.

Follow-Up Process

- Annual assessment of schoolwide action plan progress, including impact on student learning, and refinement of the action plan as needed.
- Completion of progress reports and/or reviews, e.g., annual reports.
- Celebration of success.

ACCREDITATION: A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS



Conditions of Eligibility

To be considered for WASC accreditation, the applicant school must meet the following conditions:

Legal Requirements

- International schools must meet the legal requirements of the jurisdiction for an international school [i.e., country (local and nationwide)] in which they are located in order for their application for WASC accreditation to be considered. Based on the country, there may be restrictions to the type of passport held by the students enrolled. The legal authority which approves the school as an international school must be listed. A copy must be submitted with an English translation if necessary.

Note: WASC does not accredit programs or divisions within a school; there must be evidence that a school located within a school has separate operations, leadership, budget, curriculum, etc. in order to be eligible for WASC accreditation.

Student Well-Being

- The school utilizes policies and procedures that protect students from abuse and neglect and afford a safe and secure environment in which to grow and develop.

Student Learning: School Purpose and Program

- English is a major part of the instruction even though the school may be bilingual.
- The school has developed and published a clear statement of purpose (beliefs, core values, vision, mission, schoolwide learner outcomes) that reflect defined global competencies and form the basis of the educational program for every student.
- The school has an admissions policy compatible with the school's stated purpose.
- The school has a written well-developed curriculum appropriate to the organization's purpose as an internationally focused school preparing students to be globally competent.
- The course of study, as well as marking, grading and reporting procedures, facilitates student and faculty transfer to other schools of a similar type in other countries and within the United States. The international curriculum meets the minimum requirements for admission to North America and other worldwide English-speaking programs in colleges and universities.
- The student body is oriented toward programs commonly found in the United States and other English-speaking countries, including those of an extra-curricular or co-curricular nature.
- Programs of studies include courses dealing with the history, culture, and language of the host country and region, in addition to those that cover other parts of the world.

School Governance, Leadership, and Staff

- The governing body is not subordinated solely to a national government or a central ministry, but is a local entity responsive to the needs of the users of the school, i.e., students, parents, faculty.
- The school has employed a chief administrative and instructional leader, who is qualified for the position.
- The school has qualified instructional staff for all the subject and program/grade levels. The majority of teachers are fluent in English and potentially other languages. In addition, the qualified staff members have had training and experience in the facilitation of English language acquisition in the areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
- The school has an overall schoolwide action plan that includes strategies and approaches to measure student progress toward meeting the schoolwide learner outcomes and the academic standards in order to ensure students are globally competent.
- The school has developed an adequate financial base to give reasonable assurance of continuing financial stability.

School Operating Minimum Requirements

- The school must be in at least the second semester of operation, with students, teachers, and administration in place.
- School enrollment must reach a minimum of 6 full-time students.
- The school's program must include at least two grade levels. **Note:** An exception would be a new high school that begins with only grade 9 or grade 10.

Specific Initial Visit Procedures

The WASC initial visit procedures are as follows:

- An international school seeking accreditation must complete the "WASC International Application" and submit a \$500 nonrefundable application fee.
- WASC will process the application and inform the school whether it is eligible to continue the accreditation process.
- If needed, WASC international staff may require the school to attend a pre-initial visit/training.
- Once approved, the school will be granted access to the WASC School Portal.
- In the School Portal, the school can access the initial visit materials and initial visit report template.
- The school will submit the completed initial visit report via the Action Card on the Portal's 'Reviews/Visits' page.
- The report should describe the school's purpose and operation and include evidence showing the school meets the WASC international criteria. See below for the prompts for each criterion.

- In addition to the report, the school must prepare other supporting documents to be available during the visit.
- WASC will arrange a two-member, two-day visit to the school after receiving the report.
- Initial visits for newly established schools will not occur before the second semester of operation.
- After the visit, the visiting committee will prepare a report that highlights the school's strengths and areas for improvement.
- The visiting committee will submit its report to the WASC Commission for review and accreditation status determination.
- The school will be informed of the Commission's decision.
- Candidate schools must submit a candidacy report at the end of the first year.
- Schools must conduct a self-study and participate in an accreditation visit by the third year.

Information about initial visit and annual membership visit fees can be found on the [ACS WASC Fees](#) page of the WASC website.

Initial Visit Status Options

After a school completes the necessary documentation in their application with WASC and an on-site visit is conducted, one of three possible accreditation status outcomes will be granted:

1. **Initial** accreditation is granted to schools that meet the organizational and support criteria for full accreditation and have a history and support system which indicates a high-quality program that can be sustained into the foreseeable future. The maximum time period is for three years, before the end of which schools must conduct a self-study and participate in an accreditation visit.
2. **Candidacy for accreditation** is a status which indicates that an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward, but does not assume, accreditation. The candidate for accreditation classification is designed for institutions which are not yet ready for the full evaluation based on the WASC criteria for accreditation. The institution must provide evidence of sound planning, provide evidence of resources to implement these plans, and appear to have the potential for attaining its goals within a reasonable time.

A candidate school is required to complete the first self-study by the third year of candidacy. Candidacy status shall expire at the end of three years. By the end of three years, the school in candidacy status should conduct a self-study or host a second one-day visit to determine if the school should remain in candidacy for accreditation.

An extension of candidacy status may be given once for one additional year pending a positive one-day visit or when deemed necessary by the President of the Commission. In some limited circumstances, the President is authorized to change a school's "Candidacy" status to "Initial Accreditation" when conditions at the school have been sufficiently enhanced to justify such a change. While an initial visit decision on candidacy may not be appealed, the Commission's decision to later withhold candidacy status following the granting of such status may be appealed in accordance with Policy A4.

3. **Accreditation status may be withheld** if it is determined that the school does not fully meet WASC criteria with the Accrediting Commission for Schools, WASC. A school may reapply after deficiencies have been remedied.

Schools that have been approved for initial accreditation may use the following phrase in advertising and/or on student transcripts.

**Accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Schools,
Western Association of Schools and Colleges.**

Schools that are approved as candidates for accreditation may use the following phrase in advertising and/or on student transcripts.

Candidate for Accreditation. Approved by the Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

Candidate schools are NOT authorized to use the word “accredited” or “accredited by” until full accreditation has been granted by the Commission. Candidate schools MAY NOT use the ACS WASC logo or accreditation stamp on transcripts or school advertising.

WASC International Criteria

The WASC international criteria are organized into five categories:

- A. Organization for Student Learning and Well-Being
- B. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
- C. Support for Social-Emotional and Academic Growth
- D. School Culture, Child Protection, and Parent/Community Involvement
- E. Residential Life.

The criteria and indicators organized by categories are provided on the following pages. Schools respond to questions regarding the criteria and provide supporting information. A report template is provided to the school for completion.

Category A:

Organization for Student Learning and Well-Being

A1. School Purpose Criterion

The school has established a clear purpose statement that reflects the school's beliefs and philosophy. The purpose is defined further by adopted schoolwide learner outcomes that reflect defined global competencies for all students and form the basis of the educational program for all students. (Note: School purpose is a general term used by schools that can include core beliefs, vision, mission, philosophy, and objectives.)

Initial Report Prompts:

- Explain the process for the development of the school's mission, vision and schoolwide learner outcomes.
- How do you plan to involve the community in the regular review of these foundational statements?
- How well does the school's purpose statement align with the idea that all students can learn, show global skills, and are ready for life after school?
- How well do the school's programs, policies, and practices match the mission and vision, making sure they guide daily actions and decisions?
- How effectively does the school communicate its mission and vision to all members of the school community?
- How is the understanding and commitment to these statements assessed among students, staff, and parents?

<Enter text here>

A2. Governance Criterion

The governing authority (a) adopts policies which are consistent with the school's mission and vision and support the achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes, i.e., global competencies, (b) delegates implementation of these policies to the professional staff, and (c) monitors results.

Initial Report Prompts

- Explain the process of governing authority's policy development and adoption.
- How well do the governing authority's policies help the school achieve its mission, vision, and student learning goals?
- In what ways does the governing authority delegate implementation of its policies to the professional staff? Evaluate the effectiveness of these processes.
- In what ways does the governing authority monitor the results of this implementation? Evaluate the effectiveness of these processes?

<Enter text here>

A3. School Leadership Criterion

The school leadership (a) makes decisions to facilitate actions that focus the energies of the school on student achievement of the schoolwide learner outcomes, i.e., global competencies, (b) empowers the staff, and (c) encourages commitment, participation, and shared accountability for student learning in a global environment.

Initial Report Prompts

- How does the school leadership ensure that its decisions are aligned with the school purpose and the schoolwide learner outcomes? Provide one or two recent examples.
- How are staff members involved in decision-making processes?
- How does the school leadership ensure that staff members are given adequate opportunities to contribute their insights and expertise? Provide one or two recent examples.
- How does the school promote and encourage a focus on global competencies within the school community?
- What specific programs or initiatives support this goal, and how are their effectiveness evaluated?

<Enter text here>

A4. Staff Criterion

Qualified staff and leadership facilitate student achievement of the identified outcomes. There is a systematic approach to continuous improvement through orientation and ongoing professional learning on student performance data, student needs and research.

Initial Report Prompts

- Explain the process of recruiting and hiring staff and leaders.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of this process to ensure that teaching staff are qualified and are morally fit to work with young people.
- Describe the supervision and evaluation procedures to promote professional growth of staff.
- How effective are these procedures in supporting high-quality learning and teaching?
- Describe the professional development and coaching programs that help teachers improve their teaching skills.
- Comment on the impact of professional development on student learning.

<Enter text here>

A5. School Improvement Process Criterion

The school leadership facilitates continuous and innovative school improvement to guide the work of the school through (a) implementation of a schoolwide action plan focused on quality learning for all students; (b) involvement of the school community; and (c) collective accountability for implementing and monitoring the schoolwide action plan.

Initial Report Prompts

- Describe how stakeholders are involved in creating and carrying out the school's action plan.
- How are the major goals within the plan determined?
- To what extent is the schoolwide action plan aligned to the student and school needs?
- In what ways does the schoolwide action plan guide the work of the school community?
- Explain how the school community ensures collective accountability for implementing and monitoring the schoolwide action plan.

<Enter text here>

A6. Resources Criterion:

The resources available to the school are sufficient to sustain the school program and are effectively used to carry out the school's purpose and identified outcomes. The school has developed policies, procedures, and internal and external controls for managing the financial operations and for long term financial planning that meet local laws, accepted international practices, and ethical standards.

Initial Report Prompts

- Describe how the school's budget is planned to make sure programs, goals, and both short- and long-term action plans are properly supported.
- Evaluate these processes.
- Explain faculty involvement in the budgeting process.
- How well does this process make sure there are enough resources to meet the needs of the school and students?
- Describe the policies and systems in place to ensure good business and accounting practices, and to protect the school's money from being misused.
- How effective is the school in adhering to these policies?
- What is the process for ensuring that a long-range resource and financial plan is in place?
- How effective are the processes for the ongoing monitoring of this plan?

<Enter text here>

A7. Systems Management for Data Protection and Cyber Security Criterion

The school leadership takes a risk-based approach in the identification, management and mitigation of data privacy and protection concerns. The school follows an ethical approach to the collection, use of and security of all personal data, ensuring a rigorous privacy management program.

Initial Report Prompts

- What technical and organizational systems are in place to ensure the security of personal data?
- Explain how the school handles data breaches, including how they are found, reported, and dealt with.
- How does the school check if these methods are working well?
- What ethical guidelines does the school follow when collecting and using personal data?
- Provide examples of how these guidelines are implemented in daily operations.
- How does the school ensure compliance with relevant data protection laws and regulations?
- How does the school identify and assess potential risks related to data privacy and protection?
- How well do these risk management strategies handle the biggest data protection concerns at your school?

<Enter text here>

Category B:
Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

B1. What Students Learn Criterion

The school provides a challenging, coherent, and relevant international curriculum for each student that fulfills the school's purpose and results in student achievement of the identified outcomes.

Initial Report Prompts

- Describe the curriculum development and review process, including the involvement of teachers.
- How effective is this process to ensure the school's curriculum remains challenging, coherent and relevant for each student?
- List the academic standards used for each subject area.
- In what ways does the school ensure that the written curriculum is aligned to academic standards?
- Explain the extent to which the schoolwide learner outcomes are embedded into the written curriculum.
- Evaluate the status of this work.

<Enter text here>

B2. How Students Learn: Student Engagement

All students are engaged in challenging and relevant learning experiences to achieve the desired outcomes: schoolwide learner outcomes, global competencies, academic standards, and major student learner needs. Students become advocates for their own needs and interests.

Initial Report Prompts

- Describe how teachers and leaders help students understand and work towards the standards and performance levels in each subject.
- Comment on the degree to which this is successful at different levels of the school.
- How well do students show advanced learning, like critical and creative thinking, and problem-solving in all subjects? Support the response through examination of student work, observation of students working and other evidence.
- How well does the school provide age-appropriate opportunities for all students to express their ideas and opinions in flexible, effective, and culturally sensitive ways, both in and outside the classroom? Give examples and evaluate their effectiveness.

<Enter text here>

B3. How Students Learn: Student-Centered Instruction Criterion

The professional staff (a) applies current research-based knowledge about teaching and learning; and (b) designs and implements a variety of learning experiences, including technology, that actively engage students at a high level of learning consistent with the identified outcomes.

Initial Report Prompts

- Describe the teaching methods used by teachers to involve students in advanced learning, such as critical and creative thinking, and problem-solving.
- How effective are these strategies?
- Describe and assess the professional development and coaching programs that help teachers improve their teaching skills.
- How do students analyze, evaluate, and combine information from different sources, like texts, digital tools, community resources, group work, and library materials?
- Evaluate the teaching of these skills.

<Enter text here>

B4. How Assessment Is Used Criterion: Reporting and Accountability Processes

The school leadership and staff continuously use effective and valid assessment processes to collect, disaggregate, and analyze assessment results. School and student performance data is regularly reported to all stakeholders including student progress toward accomplishing the identified outcomes.

Initial Report Prompts

- Describe how the school currently assesses and tracks student progress on meeting schoolwide learning goals and academic standards, including how data is collected, broken down, and analyzed.
- How does the school use these assessment results to make changes in the program, professional development activities, and resource allocations?
- How effective are these processes?
- How consistently do teachers follow procedures to report students' performance and progress toward learning goals within and across grade levels?

<Enter text here>

B5. How Assessment Is Used Criterion: Continuous Assessment by Students and Teachers

Teachers and students frequently integrate a variety of continuous assessment strategies into the ongoing learning/teaching process. As a result, students understand what they know and what they need to know; and teachers are able to modify instruction to improve student progress toward the identified outcomes.

Initial Report Prompts

- List the various methods by which student learning is assessed, based on content standards and the schoolwide learning outcomes.
- How are these methods reviewed for effectiveness?
- Explain how teachers choose appropriate assessment methods based on the learning goals for students.
- In what ways do teachers and the school's leadership engage in reflection on the appropriateness of assessment strategies used?
- Describe how teachers currently give feedback that is timely, specific, and clear, helping students manage and track their own learning and progress toward goals.
- How effective are these processes?

<Enter text here>

Category C:
Support for Student Social-Emotional and Academic Growth

C1. Student Social-Emotional and Academic Support Criterion

All students are provided with a system of support services that meet their academic and social-emotional needs. All students are also provided with activities, opportunities, and/or programs within the school and community that further accomplish the identified outcomes.

Initial Report Prompts

- What services are available to support students' social-emotional needs?
- How do relevant personnel ensure that these services are sufficient and effective?
- Describe the services in place to support students with diverse learning needs.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of these services.
- How are students who are still learning English supported?
- Use student performance data to discuss the progress of students who receive English learning support.
- If applicable, describe the provision of university/career and academic counseling.
- To what extent do these services meet the needs of all students?
- Describe co-curricular activities that are available to students.
- Evaluate the degree to which these activities support the school's purpose and schoolwide learner outcomes.

<Enter text here>

Category D:
School Culture, Child Protection, and Parent/Community Involvement

D1. School Environment Criterion

The school has a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that reflects the school's purpose and is characterized by respect for differences, equity, and a commitment to child protection, trust, caring, professionalism, support, and high expectations for all students.

Initial Report Prompts

- How much do all members of the school community show care, concern, and high expectations for students each day?
- How does the leadership reflect on the school's culture and make sure it is safe and supportive for all students?
- How well do the school's current policies and procedures keep the environment safe, clean, and orderly for learning, including internet safety measures?
- How does the school support students' social-emotional well-being to build positive relationships and emotional connections in learning?

<Enter text here>

D2. Child Protection Criterion

The school has an effective child protection program that includes a clear definition of child abuse, policies and practices, training for stakeholders, and reporting procedures within the legal and cultural context of the host country.

Initial Report Prompts

- How confident is the leadership team that all adults would follow the designated reporting procedures in the case of a disclosure?
- How effective are the processes for the regular review and revision of these policies and practices?
- How does the school ensure compliance with the local, legal requirements regarding child abuse?
- How does the school ensure that it is meeting international standards where these exceed local standards?
- To what extent do the school's policies and practices address the safety of students outside the classroom and while off campus?
- Describe the school's curriculum for child protection.
- How does school ensure that this curriculum is age-appropriate, covers all relevant topics and is reviewed regularly?

<Enter text here>

D3. Parent/Community Involvement Criterion

The school leadership employs a wide range of strategies to ensure that parental and community engagement and involvement is integral to the school's culture and established support system for all students.

Initial Report Prompts

- Comment on how the school educates and involves parents and community members in understanding the school's purpose and the identified outcomes.
- Describe the ways in which parents are involved in the school's programs, events and activities.
- How effective are the strategies and processes used by school personnel to involve parents at an appropriate level?
- How effective are these strategies and processes for involving non-English speaking and/or online parents?
- Describe how the school uses community resources and volunteers, like professionals, partnerships, service learning, and speakers, from the host country and beyond to support student learning.
- How effective are these processes?

<Enter text here>

Category E: Residential Life

E1. Residential Program Criterion

The school offers a residential program aligned to the school's purpose. Residential program leadership and staff are qualified for their assigned responsibilities, are committed to the school's mission, vision and schoolwide learner outcomes and engage in ongoing guidance and support to students.

Initial Report Prompts

- To what extent are the residential program policies and procedures aligned with the school's purpose? Provide examples.
- Describe the process for hiring qualified staff for the residential program.
- How well does the school ensure that residential staff are qualified for their roles and committed to the school's mission, vision, and identified outcomes?
- Describe the processes for ongoing supervision, evaluation, and professional development for all residential staff?
- How effective are these processes?

<Enter text here>

E2. A Culture of Care Criterion

The school residential program is a safe, healthy, nurturing environment that honors individual and cultural differences. Staff understands and communicates clear expectations and responsibilities for students and ensures the physical and emotional well-being and personal safety of all students.

Initial Report Prompts

- How well does the culture of the residential program respond to and respect the diversity of all students?
- How does the residential program provide for the personal and academic support needs of students?
- How effective are these processes?
- How well does the residential staff work closely and communicate regularly with students, parents, and guardians to support the students in their care?
- How does the school monitor the effectiveness of these lines of communication?
- How effective is the evening and overnight medical provision for students, including those who may be in distress?

<Enter text here>

E3. Child Protection and Advocacy Criterion

An independent advocate with clear responsibilities and expectations, not under the authority of the residential home or the school administration, is appointed to advocate for students. The residential students understand the role and responsibilities of the advocate and how to contact the person.

Initial Report Prompts

- How well do students and staff understand the policies and processes for reporting abuse or harassment?
- How is this monitored?
- How effective are the confidential ways for students and staff to contact the Child Protection Officer or their designee?
- How effective is the child protection and safeguarding training for residential staff, including preventing and reporting harassment and abuse?

<Enter text here>

E4. Facilities and Environment Criterion

The residential facilities are suitable for the size and purpose of the program, well maintained and regularly assessed to ensure appropriate, enhanced quality care and safe living conditions of the residential students.

Initial Report Prompts

- Describe the budget allocations for facility maintenance and improvements?
- To what extent are these allocations appropriate to the program and to student needs?
- How well do the basic services meet the expected staff-to-student ratio, the number of students per living space, and provide necessary services like medical care, laundry, meals, transport, and technology?
- To what extent does each residential room provide students with suitable levels of personal privacy and modesty?
- What regular processes are in place to check if the facilities are adequate to meet students' needs?

<Enter text here>

WASC Terminology

To ensure common understanding of the language used in the criteria and the WASC Focus on Learning Continuous Improvement Guide, the following explanations are provided for clarity and context.

Academic Standards

Academic standards are the key ideas, skills, and knowledge that students must know in each subject. They describe the level of understanding students should show at each grade level.

Academic Support

Academic support includes services and resources that help students improve their learning and be successful in school. This support can cover many areas, such as helping with language skills, specific subjects, learning difficulties, and overall well-being.

Accreditation

Accreditation is a process that ensures a school is continuously improving and delivering high-quality education. The school reviews all its programs and operations to see how they affect student learning and well-being. This review, called a self-study, is examined by a visiting team of educators, who provide feedback on how well the school is doing. Based on this feedback, the school updates its action plan, monitors progress, and makes changes to keep improving.

Accreditation Status

Accreditation status is granted by the WASC Commission to a school that shows it is capable, committed, and effective in supporting high-quality learning and continuous improvement. This status is based on evidence from the school's report and the visiting team's review. It shows how well the school helps all students achieve and its ability to carry out and monitor its action plan.

Accreditation Factors Based on Accreditation Principles

The important aspects of the accreditation process based on the accreditation principles:

- Accomplishment of the vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes
- High achievement of all students
- Use of multiple ways to analyze data about student progress and achievement
- Evaluation of the program effectiveness
- Alignment of prioritized findings to a schoolwide action plan
- Continuous school improvement/accountability
- Total involvement and collaboration of all stakeholders.

All

In keeping with the WASC equity statement, WASC promotes the belief that all students can learn at high levels and should have sufficient and equitable support to enable them to achieve at high levels of learning and well-being. In addition, WASC promotes fairness, well-being, and inclusion among all members of the school community. "All" includes the concepts of access, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Challenging Relevant Coherent Curriculum

A demanding curriculum is a broad and well-rounded program that focuses on important themes and concepts. It challenges all students to achieve at high levels, think critically, and apply what they learn. This prepares them to be successful and globally competent.

Child Protection

Child protection includes rules and practices that keep children safe and protect their rights in the school community. These measures help prevent and respond to any kind of abuse, neglect, or harm. The goal is to create a safe environment where all children feel physically, emotionally, and mentally secure.

Current Educational Research and Thinking

Educational research is the study of how people learn and what factors affect learning, like human behavior, schools, and society. It helps explain how learning happens throughout life, both inside and outside of school.

This research includes ideas from well-known experts like Carol Ann Tomlinson, Derrick Gay, Doug Reeves, Grant Wiggins, Jay McTighe, John Hattie, Michael Fullan, Robert Marzano, and Yong Zhao, as well as studies on standards and reports from governments and industries.

Co-curricular activities

Co-curricular activities are activities outside of regular classes that support students' overall growth. These activities help students build skills and develop personally. Examples include clubs, sports, arts, leadership programs, and community service.

Cybersecurity

The measures, policies, and practices implemented to safeguard digital assets, information systems, and sensitive data from unauthorized access, cyber threats, and potential breaches.

Data Protection

Data protection involves rules and practices to keep personal information, like student and staff records, safe. This includes getting permission, using security measures, providing training, and following laws to prevent unauthorized access and protect privacy.

Identified Outcomes

A term that refers to schoolwide learner outcomes (which include global competencies), academic standards, and identified major learner needs.

Digital Citizenship

Digital citizenship means using technology responsibly and ethically. It includes behaving respectfully online, thinking critically, and being aware of how to engage safely and positively in digital spaces.

Diversity

Diversity means recognizing, accepting, and valuing the differences between people. This includes characteristics like ethnicity, race, nationality, age, personality, sexual orientation, gender, class, religion, abilities, and languages.

Duty of Care

The legal and ethical responsibility that educators, staff, and administrators have to ensure the safety, well-being, and overall welfare of students under their supervision.

Equity

WASC is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access to high-level, rigorous learning opportunities for all students. Equally important is that all students and adults be treated fairly and with respect for their humanity. Regardless of race, language proficiency, socioeconomic status, gender, religion, and/or other identities, all students at WASC member institutions have a right to expect access to the opportunities and support needed for them to be successful.

Global Competencies

Global competence is the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance. Global competencies are the skills that support this capacity and disposition. Global competencies should be reflected explicitly in a school's schoolwide learner outcomes.

Governance

The system by which the school is directed and controlled. It involves setting strategic direction, establishing policies, and overseeing operations to ensure the school's mission and goals are met. Governance is typically managed by a governing authority and school leadership, ensuring transparency, ethical conduct, and alignment with both local and international standards.

Governing Authority

The governing authority is the group responsible for leading and guiding the school. It helps create school policies, ensures the school follows regulations, and directs the school towards its educational goals without managing day to day operations. This group usually has members with different skills and backgrounds and may be called a board of directors, trustees, or school board.

Guiding Principles

Key aspects that encompass the WASC beliefs and values and drive the Focus on Learning continuous improvement process that centers on high-quality student learning and well-being.

Inclusion

All students have access to and are engaged in the school's education program. The school provides support that enables all learners to experience success in the overall education program.

Major Learner Needs

Based on the analysis of multiple sources of achievement and social emotional data, the school identifies major learner needs, such as expository writing, reading, critical thinking skills, or mental health, to better support student growth and progress.

Qualified Personnel

Qualified personnel are staff members, such as teachers, administrators, and support staff, who have the right degrees, certifications, and experience for their jobs. They should be skilled at working in diverse environments, stay up to date with best practices, and support the school's mission.

School Community

The school community includes: (a) local business and industry, educational institutions, agencies, and service organizations; (b) parents, caregivers, students, governing authority; and (c) all employees and volunteers.

School Purpose

A clarification of the values, vision, mission, and schoolwide learner outcomes, beliefs and philosophy held by members of the school community about what the school can do for all students with respect to knowledge, skills, and understanding.

Schoolwide Action Plan

The schoolwide action plan is a set of improvement strategies developed from the self-study and regular reflections. It is updated based on student progress and well-being. The plan brings together all school initiatives and aligns with the school's main goals. It may also be called a school development plan or strategic plan.

Schoolwide Learner Outcomes

Schoolwide learner outcomes are what all students should know, understand, and be able to do when they graduate or finish their program. These outcomes are developed together by the school community to prepare students to be globally competent, focusing on their current and future learning needs.

Special Needs Students

Students with learning needs who benefit from additional physical, mental, behavioral, or emotional support services to accomplish learning goals to their maximum potential.

Social-Emotional Learning

The educational process of developing students' social and emotional skills essential for well-rounded personal growth and effective interpersonal relationships.

Self-Study Coordinator (SC)

The facilitator/leader of the school's accreditation process in collaboration with the school leadership.

Stakeholders/Educational Partners

A general term referring to all members of a school community: administrators or leadership, governing board, teachers, support staff, students, parents, community, and business partners.

Student Self Advocacy

Student self-advocacy is when students can independently express their learning needs and preferences. It means they take an active role in talking to teachers and school leaders about their learning styles, challenges, and goals.

Student Voice and Agency

Student voice and agency means giving students the power to be involved in decisions about their learning. Schools listen to students and make sure their ideas, needs, and goals shape decisions and actions.

Systemwide Action Plan (For System Accreditation)

The overall systemwide improvement strategies that guide the work of the Central Office. As a result of the self-evaluation process, the systemwide action plan is reviewed and refined regularly based on progress and impact on all student learning and well-being. Schools within the system are generally guided by a systemwide action plan that has integrated all initiatives and aligns with their priorities. Synonyms for an action plan could be development plan or strategic plan.

WASC Criteria, Indicators, and Framing Questions

WASC criteria are research-based guidelines to help schools improve by focusing on student achievement, including schoolwide learner outcomes, academic standards, and student needs. Indicators highlight key parts of the criteria. Framing questions are used to analyze and evaluate the school based on the criteria and indicators, leading to findings backed by evidence and identifying strengths and areas for growth.

Well-being

The overall health, happiness, and prosperity of students, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects. It involves creating a supportive environment that fosters positive relationships, a sense of safety, a sense of belonging and opportunities for personal and academic development.

Online Learning

Definitions applicable to all types of online instruction:

Asynchronous Learning

A learning environment in which everyone participates at different times. Examples are email, online discussion forums, message boards, blogs, podcasts, etc.

Synchronous Learning

A learning environment in which everyone participates at the same time.

Online Instruction

Education in which instruction and content are delivered primarily over the Internet for course completion and earned credit.

Blended/Hybrid Learning

Blended/Hybrid Learning is any time a student learns in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home and learns at least in part through online delivery with some element of student control.

Online Support Materials

Refers to the general use of online resources by teachers in the traditional classroom environment. This use of online materials in classrooms is a supplement to instruction and is not considered online instruction that leads to course completion and the awarding of credit.

**Accrediting Commission for Schools
Western Association of Schools and Colleges**

Dr. Barry R. Groves
President

Dr. Marilyn S. George
Executive Vice President

533 Airport Boulevard, Suite 200
Burlingame, CA 94010-2009
Phone: (650) 696-1060

**www.acswasc.org
mail@acswasc.org**

