

Guide to Writing a Chair's Report

Guide to Preparing and Writing an Examining Committee Chair's Report

This Guide for Chair's of Accrediting Commission Examining Committees provides information on the organization and preparation of the Examining Committee Chair's Report. **A sample report is included.**

A template for writing a Chair's Report (in Microsoft Word 7.0) may be downloaded from the DETC web site at <http://www.detc.org>. Select "Member Services" and "Templates." Type "guest" for both the user name and the password.

Purpose of the Chair's Report

The purpose of the Chair's Report is to present to the Accrediting Commission a clear, succinct, and accurate statement of the findings of an Examining Committee visiting an applicant school. It should present a **composite** view of Committee findings on the policies, conditions, and practices of the school as measured against the published standards for accredited schools.

A copy of the Report is forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer of the applicant school by the Executive Director of the Accrediting Commission for comment and response before Accrediting Commission action. This procedure provides the institution with the opportunity to respond to the factual elements in the Committee's findings, as well as to report on corrective actions taken.

Instructions for Preparation of the Chair's Report

The following points should be observed when preparing a Report:

1. The Report should include a "Purpose and Summary of Visit" introduction. This summary should cover a brief history of the institution, along with a description of its courses/programs, enrollments, operations, and any major changes to the institution and/or its programs/courses. **The Summary should include a paragraph with an assessment of the overall quality of the institution's Self-Evaluation Report and its preparedness for the on-site visit. [added June 2008]**
2. The "Twelve Summary Statements of Findings" at the beginning of the Report are of vital importance, and special attention should be given to this section. Summary statements should indicate whether an institution **meets, partially meets, or does not meet a Standard**. Summary statements **must** be supported and documented by the findings presented in the body of the report.
3. The Report should cover **each** of the applicable standards. The Report should be a concise, factual, and thorough presentation of Committee findings. Where appropriate, specific examples should be provided to support these findings. The Report should be written in the third person.
4. The special attributes and the deficiencies of the school should be noted, using the wording of the standards where possible. Deficiencies should be documented.

5. The Report should present major points covered in the individual examiner’s reports and relate these points to specific standards. Above all, the Report must be accurate.
6. Relevant comments of findings from the reports of Subject Specialists, as well as comments from state/federal agencies and student surveys, should be incorporated into the Report where appropriate.
7. Emphasis in the Report should be placed on whether the institution **meets, partially meets** or **does not meet** specific standards. It should use declarative sentences and simple verbs. Where possible, the Report should avoid broad generalities and speculative views.
8. To ensure that Committee findings, required actions, comments, and suggestions are accurately presented, the Chair should use direct quotations, references, data, and examples from the individual reports of Committee members in the Report, but such citations should not identify or refer to individual committee members by name or committee position. The Chair may re-word or edit language from committee members’ reports to make the Report coherent.
9. The Report should present Committee details on what action an institution must make bring present policies, practices, materials, or services into accord with specific standards. The Report may also present Committee suggestions that assist the institution in their quest for excellence. The Report **should not** make any recommendation to the Accrediting Commission on the action it should take concerning the overall accreditation of the institution.
10. One electronic copy of the Chair’s Report must be sent to the Director of Accreditation (Nan Bayster Ridgeway at nan@detc.org) and one copy to the Chair of the on-site evaluation team. Each Commissioner is given a copy of the Report to review at the time the institution is being considered. The Commissioners do not, however, receive copies of the individual examiner’s report or the subject specialists’ reports. Since the Chair’s Report is forwarded to the institution’s Chief Executive Officer, it should be self-contained and should **not** make reference to individual reports or make use of such reports as enclosures.
11. Members of the Examining Committee are required to destroy copies of all materials pertaining to the examination, including Self-Evaluation Reports, notes, and other items when receipt of their reports are acknowledged by the Director of Accreditation. The Chair should ensure, however, that the Commission has a copy of all relevant materials for its permanent file before such materials are destroyed.

(Sample Chair's Report)

**Examining Committee Chair's Report
on the Examination of**

**XYZ UNIVERSITY
222 East Street
San Diego, CA 91724
www.xyz.edu**

Visitation Date:
April 1, 2009

Submitted By:
John Doe, Ph.D.

Report Preparation Date:
April 21, 2009

Confidential

**Chair’s Report on the Accrediting Examination
of
XYZ University**

Members of the Examining Committee:

Chair:	Dr. John Doe President University of Nowhere 555 North Street Orlando, FL 32086
Educational Standards Evaluator:	Dr. Pat Smith Director of Education University of Michigan 667 West Street Monroe, MI 49888
Business Standards Evaluator:	Mr. Thomas Lambert President University of New York 91092 18th Street New York, NY 10024
Accrediting Commission Observer:	Ms. Sally Welch Associate Director Distance Education and Training Council 1601 18th St., NW, Suite 2 Washington, DC 20009

Purpose and Summary of Visit

Purpose of Visit: 5-Year Reaccreditation

Summary of Visit: XYZ University (XYZ) is a distance learning institution that offers master's degree programs in acquisition, project, and contract management, and business administration. Graduate-level certificate programs in related areas are also available for students who do not wish to pursue a full master's degree program.

With earlier corporate history in contract management dating to the late 1950's, XYZ was formally organized and licensed in California in 1975. XYZ was acquired by American Publishing Group in 2002 and then resold in 2006 back to its original owners, Management Associates, Inc. XYZ's owners/directors/operators are Michael Bolton (President), Mary Jones (Executive VP), and Terry Welch.

Courses are faculty-delivered through a text-based, web-enabled asynchronous learning module. Its current learning management system is CourseWebs, and XYZ recognizes that its interactions among students and faculty can be enhanced. XYZ is piloting a more interactive learning management system (i.e., Moodle) in the second half of this year.

XYZ's faculty generally lack the terminal degree despite the fact that XYZ operates at the master's degree level, at which the terminal degree is generally required. XYZ believes that its niche course areas prevent hiring of doctorates, and XYZ indicates a willingness to hire doctorates in the future to teach the non-niche business and management courses.

Instructional materials include a substantial number of in-house developed materials due to the lack of generally available materials in XYZ's content areas having been available on the open market. General business and management courses possess standard graduate-level instructional materials available on the open market. Learning support resources include a range of XYZ-funded online services related to its academic disciplines and a unique historical reference library associated with its niche contract, procurement, and acquisition disciplines.

XYZ's marketing channels include a variety of print and web-based mediums directly related to its niche subject areas of contracting, acquisitions, and related areas. XYZ enjoys partnership relationships and recognition among government and private institutions related to its mission.

Assessment on SER and Visit: The institution's SER was well prepared and written. All standards were addressed and adequate information was given on the institution's policies and procedures for documenting compliance with the DETC standards. All key staff were available for interviews during the on-site visit and all were knowledgeable in their areas and were well-informed on the accreditation process.

Twelve Summary Statements of Findings

I. Institution Mission, Goals, and Objectives:

Meets Standard: XYZ clearly knows, states, and publishes its mission as a niche higher education institution focused on graduate-level instruction in very focused program areas. It was refreshing for the evaluation team to experience an institution that knows itself and its market so well. The institution shows a dedication to provide students with an environment that promotes learning.

The team could find no statement of goals in the self study or in the institution’s catalog. This lack of published goals was very likely due to the fact that the DETC standards were revised to include a statement of goals during the time when the institution was preparing its SER. The institution should develop and report to DETC a set of clearly defined goals that support the mission statement and reflect a dedication and a belief in the goals of the institution.

II. Educational Programs Objectives, Curricula and Materials:

Meets Standards: XYZ’s general objectives for the various graduate and certificate programs are clearly defined and simply stated. The design and delivery of the curriculum is comprehensive and adequate for the nature and level of the academic programs being offered.

III. Educational Services:

Meets Standard: XYZ has a competent educational services component, from both a human and technological perspective. Excellent systems are in place for handling student inquiries and working with students who fail to progress through the program in a timely manner. XYZ should be more certain to ensure documentation exists in all student files showing evidence of the work experience requirement that XYZ requires.

IV. Student Services:

Meets Standard: XYZ’s records, counseling, examination, and administrative services are of sound quality, timely, and secure.

V. Student Achievement and Satisfaction:

Meets Standard: XYZ’s assessment plan is sound, and it uses the plan quite actively to continuously evolve the institution in many different ways. Surveys are prominently used and studied for ways to improve. XYZ’s students are quite satisfied with their institution. XYZ’s course and graduation rates are within the DETC’s acceptable standards for XYZ’s type of institution and programs.

VI. Qualifications of Institution, Owners, Governing Board Members, Administrators, Instructors/Faculty, and Staff:

Partially Meets Standard: XYZ's leadership and staff are sound and morale among all employees is quite high and supportive of the institution. XYZ's faculty are experts in their fields; however, XYZ is significantly deficient in doctoral-credentialed faculty for its general curricular areas offered at the graduate level. It is recognized that XYZ's niche curricular areas may not always be taught by doctoral-level faculty due to lack of availability of such individuals, but its general curricular areas should be taught by doctoral-level faculty. XYZ must address this issue through a formal report to DETC within a 12-month period from its reaccreditation decision by the Commission.

VII. Admission Practices and Enrollment Agreements:

Meets Standard: XYZ's admissions and enrollment processes and contracts are within DETC standards. XYZ goes out of its way to counsel unqualified students away from XYZ if the students do not have the appropriate experiential backgrounds. The XYZ enrollment agreement is an appropriate document that appropriately sets forth the contractual relationship between the institution and student. As noted in response to an earlier standard, XYZ must more carefully file and track its students' work experience documentation.

VIII. Advertising, Promotional Literature and Recruitment Personnel:

Partially Meets Standard: XYZ has an excellent Catalog and administrative layout that accurately portrays the institution to its market and society. Several minor administrative issues were noted by the team for XYZ to correct in its Catalog and advertising so as to be in strict compliance with the DETC standard. The University should submit to DETC a revised Catalog and advertisements with the appropriate administrative corrections made.

IX. Financial Responsibility:

Meets Standard: The University appears to have resources appropriate to its operation and its ability to serve its educational mission and discharge its obligations to students. Since the visit served as Renewal of Accreditation and Change of Ownership, the present owners only had financial statements for one-half fiscal year and one full fiscal year (i.e., 18 months instead of 24 months of financial statements coverage). The team took no issue with the shortened financial reporting period provided by XYZ due to the explanation provided.

X. Tuition Policies, Collection Procedures, and Refunds:

Meets Standard: Tuition policies, collections procedures, and refund policies and processes are acceptable within DETC standards. XYZ's non-refundable \$50 fee (listed on

page 61 of the Catalog) should be clearly noted as subject to the institution’s refund policy if a student drops within the initial five-day period.

XI. Plant, Equipment and Record Protection:

Meets Standard: Plant, equipment, files, and records are all in compliance with DETC requirements.

XII. Research and Self-Improvement:

Meets Standard: XYZ has shown it consistently plans for the future and evolves its institution in ways that benefit its students. XYZ should focus on succession planning due to its thin leadership ranks at the top of the organization.

Findings

I. INSTITUTION MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

I. A. Description of Mission, Goals, and Objectives

Findings: Partially Meets Standard

Comments: XYZ clearly knows, states, and publishes its mission as a niche higher education institution focused on graduate-level instruction in very focused program areas. It was refreshing for the evaluation team to experience an institution that knows itself and its market so well. The institution shows a dedication to provide students with an environment that promotes learning.

Required Actions: The team could find no statement of goals in the self study or in the institution's catalog. This lack of published goals was very likely due to the fact that the DETC standards were revised to include a statement of goals during the time when the institution was preparing its self study. The institution should develop and report to DETC a set of clearly defined goals that support the mission statement and reflect a dedication and a belief in the goals of the institution.

Suggestions: None.

I. B. Review of Publications of the Mission Statement

Findings: Meets Standard

Comments: XYZ, as a small and cohesive institution, retains close oversight over the publication of its mission statement, and its staff are diligent to keep publications current and reflective of XYZ's mission. XYZ's mission statements and objectives are periodically reviewed by administrators and faculty. The processes for assuring that the publications accurately reflect the mission statement are appropriate.

All of the information related to the mission statement is current on the institution's web pages and publications to ensure integrity in all of its representations about its mission, programs, and services (with the exception of a statement of goals as previously indicated). Further, the process is adequate for assuring that the appropriate publications and web site of the institution accurately reflect the mission statement.

Required Actions: After the institution formulates goals they should be published in future catalogs, on web sites, and in other pertinent publications.

Suggestions: None.

I. C. Implementation of the Mission, Goals, and Objectives

Findings: Meets Standard

Comments: XYZ is committed to the successful implementation of its mission. Use of course evaluations, student surveys, graduates and employer surveys are indicated as tools used to measure the accomplishment of mission and objectives. These have resulted in course revisions and improvements to student information services and the learning management system.

Academic and administrator units are kept aware of the institution’s mission and objectives. Educational services, financial resources, and physical facilities are adequate for the implementation and attainment of mission and objectives. The team found through documentation, interviews, and observations that the governing board, faculty administration and staff interact with the academic communities of interest to keep its objectives current. XYZ is also working on the formation of a Board of Advisors who will include members from industry, higher education, and government.

Required Actions: None.

Suggestions: None.

II. Educational Program Objectives, Curricula, and Materials

II. A. Description of Program Objectives

Findings: Meets Standard

Comments: The general objectives for the various graduate and certificate programs offered by XYZ are clearly defined and simply stated. The courses and programs are current and relevant. Knowledge outcomes and course outlines are properly described. XYZ keeps program objectives current and relevant by researching professional associations’ standards and by thoroughly comparing its programs to similar programs offered by other institutions.

XYZ provides concise information to aide the student in deciding whether or not XYZ’s program is an appropriate graduate degree or certificate program to pursue. XYZ also counsels students away from its programs if those students’ goals do not align with XYZ’s program objectives.

XYZ’s programs help to prepare students for advanced level jobs in various management positions. The objectives indicate the education offered and the expected outcomes. Employment opportunities are not discussed in the objectives since most of the students are expected to hold positions related to their fields of study at the time that they pursue their studies.

Required Actions: None.

Suggestions: None.

II. B. Appropriate Program Objectives

Findings: Meets Standard

Comments: The team review indicates that the process developed by the institution is adequate for determining and revising program objectives for all of the programs offered. There is no residency requirement in the program; distance education is the required form of instruction. All of the objectives are reasonably attainable through electronically delivered, online methods of distance study. The objectives meet a very defined need in the employment market which requires specialized management skills. The team review indicates that the minimum educational objectives are comparable to those offered by accredited residential institutions for all of the master's degrees offered by XYZ. The team also notes that XYZ programs are not designed to prepare students for a specific position, nor does XYZ tout any job-specific linkages to its curriculum; rather, XYZ programs seek to enhance the students' professional skills.

Required Actions: None.

Suggestions: None.

II. C. Comprehensive Curriculum

Findings: Meets Standard

Comments: The curricula for each of the five master level programs and the four certificate programs offered at XYZ are sufficiently comprehensive for students to achieve the stated program objectives, and all programs are supported by sound research and practice. Since some of the degree programs, such as contract management and acquisitions management, were developed by authorities in the fields of study, the curriculum is application based and therefore right on target.

The more general MBA degree is comparable to state-of-the-art programs in the field. The entire curriculum is at the appropriate graduate level of instruction and equivalent to that imposed by resident institutions that award degrees of the same nature and level. Application lessons and measurements are built into most of the courses to insure that students demonstrate mastery of educational objections and analytical, communicative, and quantitative skills are defined and adequately measured.

While the outcome of the curriculum is sound, the team observed one executive (Mr. Bolton) to control an extraordinary amount of authority and responsibility in the curricular decision making process.

Required Actions: None.

Suggestions: XYZ does not sit on a firm long term foundation for curricular decision making due to its over-reliance on the skills and abilities of one executive. Although XYZ meets minimum DETC criteria in this area of comprehensive curriculum, it is strongly suggested that XYZ develop a curriculum committee

(or mirror such a committee’s functions through XYZ’s planned advisory board) to oversee its curriculum policies, revisions, recommendations, and courses. It is *highly unusual* for a higher education institution that likens its curriculum with that of leading public and private institutions such as the Defense Acquisition University to have curriculum decision making in the hands of only one (albeit very capable) executive (Mr. Bolton). XYZ must be able to answer the question, “What happens to XYZ if Mr. Bolton gets hit by a truck (God forbid)?” There is currently no good answer for XYZ to that question as it seeks its survival and success beyond its current academic leader. The institution should immediately act on and complete the formulation of a curriculum committee (or similarly functioning advisory board) as soon as possible to contribute to the process of developing viable curriculum for each of its degree programs and place XYZ on a strong institutional foundation for the future.

II. D. Up-to-Date Curriculum

Findings: Meets Standard

Comments: The team reviewed evidence that all five of the ongoing master level programs in management contain procedures and schedules for keeping the program curricula up-to-date and to ensure that course and program reviews are conducted on a periodic basis. Further, the institution demonstrated that the curriculum is up-to-date in terms of content and practice. Curriculum currency was partially verified by the team interviewing four members of the faculty and the programs director and coming away with quite positive sentiments concerning the personnel and process used to ensure currency. Other evidence include XYZ’s ongoing comparisons with standards established by professional associations and input from students, faculty, and industry.

Required Actions: None.

Suggestions: None.

REPEAT FOR EACH STANDARD

(revised June 2008)