

# **First Professional Degree Programs in Forestry**



## **Accreditation Visiting Team Manual**

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## SAF and the Accreditation Process

The Society of American Foresters (SAF) has evaluated and accredited forestry education in the United States since 1935. The Society's continuing effort to improve the quality of forestry instruction could not be accomplished without tremendous volunteer effort provided by Visiting Team members in the peer-review process. We acknowledge our members' professional service and thank them for their contribution.

SAF is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), a private, nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening higher education through strengthening accreditation. SAF has filed a letter of intent to seek a change of recognized scope of accreditation to include accreditation of educational programs in forest technology. Until final action by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation Board of Directors, SAF is recognized only for its current scope of accreditation of curricula leading to the first professional degree in forestry at the bachelor's or masters' level approved in May 2001.

SAF adheres to the CHEA Recognition Standards to:

- **Advance academic quality.** Accreditors are required to have a clear definition of quality and clear expectations that the institutions or programs they accredit have processes to determine whether quality standards are being met.
- **Demonstrate accountability.** Accreditors are required to have standards that call for institutions and programs to provide consistent, reliable information about academic quality and student achievement to foster continuing public confidence and investment.
- **Encourage purposeful change and needed improvement.** Accreditors are required to encourage planning for purposeful change and scrutiny for needed improvement through ongoing self-examination in institutions and programs.
- **Employ appropriate and fair procedures in decision-making.** Accreditors are required to maintain appropriate and fair organizational policies and procedures that include effective checks and balances.
- **Continually reassess accreditation practices.** Accreditors are required to undertake self-scrutiny of their accrediting activities.

For further descriptive information on the role and value of accreditation, and for background on the rights and responsibilities of the participants in the educational evaluation process, you may request policy statements from CHEA, One Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 955-612 or from SAF.

This publication is provided to SAF accreditation Visiting Team members and to forestry education program heads to explain the on-site visit process.

Any questions on its contents should be addressed to:

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**FIRST PROFESSIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMS IN FORESTRY  
ACCREDITATION VISITING TEAM MANUAL**

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## **SAF Accreditation Overview**

The purpose of an accreditation evaluation is to provide public assurance of an institution's effectiveness and a stimulus to improve the quality of instruction. The SAF standards require an educational program to demonstrate clarity and purpose with stated educational goals and objectives; and show that it has a professional curriculum, a functioning organization and administrative structure, procedures to maintain faculty and students, and the physical resources and facilities to carry out the educational objectives. In addition, SAF standards seek to confirm that the parent institution provides the support to allow the program to continue to offer a quality education to the student, and, where appropriate, to conduct research, extension, continuing education, and public service functions for the graduate, the profession, and greater society.

The members of an SAF Visiting Team perform a critical service in a lengthy and complex accreditation process. A brief review of the process will help to explain your role as a team member; however, this review should not substitute for a thorough reading and understanding of parts one and two of the Accreditation Handbook.

The first stage in initial or continued SAF accreditation is the program's self-evaluation. Conducting the self-evaluation requires significant effort and resources. The self-evaluation report is a comprehensive statement of the program's objectives as viewed by its own faculty, students, and administrators; and how it meets accreditation criteria that have been established by the Society of American Foresters to guide educational programs in forest technology. Your first responsibility is to understand the SAF Standards for accreditation. Then to apply these standards as you read the self-evaluation report and supplemental material carefully and critically.

The second stage is the on-site visit. The Visiting Team's functions are to verify that the program is accomplishing what its written goals, objectives, and policies claim, and to substantiate compliance with SAF Standards. Your on-site observations will supplement and interpret the program's self-evaluation report. Approach the visit as a professional. Minimize your tendency to provide personal opinions on aspects of a program or to make comparisons to other programs, but offer constructive comments where appropriate. The ultimate objective is to measure educational effectiveness, assess student achievement, and to assist the program in improving the quality of forestry education.

The third stage of the process is a carefully written Visiting Team report, which outlines your findings on the program's compliance with SAF accreditation Standards. Fairness and accuracy are essential. It is not the team's purpose to state or to imply that SAF Standards have, or have not been met. This is the Committee on Accreditation's responsibility.

The Visiting Team should analyze the program and resources in light of the program's stated compliance with SAF Standards. Your role in writing the report is to describe and to assess. "Strengths" are emphasized to commend a program and to encourage its continued diligence in an area. "Opportunities for improvement" are noted where either immediate or future concern is warranted. Both areas of comment should be related to accreditation Standards. Pay particular attention to the instructions included herein for writing a team report.

The fourth stage is the SAF Committee on Accreditation deliberation. The Committee depends on your verification of what the program provides in its report and actually delivers to the student to make an informed decision. The Visiting Team chair and the head of the forestry program will meet with the

Committee before the final decision. This gives the Visiting Team chair the opportunity to report to the Committee orally and the program head to answer questions and comment on the team's assessment.

The fifth and final stage of the process is SAF Committee on Accreditation action. The Committee's decision may be to accredit, withhold accreditation, continue accreditation, withdraw accreditation, or place on probation. The Committee may recommend accreditation for less than the maximum period and/or schedule an interim visit or request a Progress Report as a condition for continued accreditation.

### **Visiting Team Organization**

The Visiting Team consists of at least three persons who are SAF members or hold SAF committee appointments as public representatives. The chair must have had forestry school administrative experience. At least one member must be a non-academic practitioner. A member of the Committee on Accreditation, who may or may not be one of the foregoing, will also be a member of the team. The program head may request a team consisting of more than three members and suggest general specialty areas to be represented by these additional members.

Visiting team members cannot be a alumni, past faculty or staff; cannot have a current affiliation with the institution that would even appear to be in conflict with an objective review; and cannot reside within the institution's state or within contiguous states, or possess any other conflicts of interest that would impair their judgment. A member of the SAF staff may accompany the team and serve in a support capacity.

### **Visiting Team Chair Responsibilities**

The team's chair is in charge of the visit and final report. The chair is the team's official spokesperson during the visit. The team chair will organize the team, consult with the program head to confirm the final agenda, and assure that important procedures are covered, that necessary individuals are consulted, that all participants thoroughly understand one another, that they persist until certain of the facts, and that all assessment is conducted in accordance with SAF Standards and Procedures.

The chair should insure that coverage is as broad as feasible and especially that no major administrator or faculty member is overlooked. It is usually possible and desirable to arrange conferences with one or more members of the institution's administration. Keep in mind that the team visits at the invitation of the institution. The hosts have their daily work while the team is on campus. Adjust the team's schedule to the host's convenience wherever possible. If one person is tied up at a given moment, there are probably others to see or places to visit. In all cases, arrangements should be made in advance to establish times and places where team members can easily be visited by any who wish to do so.

## **Visiting Team Responsibilities**

A detailed set of operating procedures for team members is not possible because no two programs are alike. You must be flexible and observant, adapt yourself to the circumstances, and use techniques that suit a particular situation. Your effectiveness is directly proportional to your ability to work as a team.

Some of the most helpful contributions the Visiting Team can make to a program are to acknowledge the effort that went into the self-evaluation and affirm or challenge the information and conclusions, as appropriate. Keep the focus of the on-site evaluation on assessment and results, rather than processes and structure. The Visiting Team may make suggestions or recommendations that reflect an understanding of the program's current activities and ongoing efforts.

You should be prepared to do a great deal of sympathetic listening, but at the same time you must take special care not to get involved in personal problems or inter-mural politics. The Visiting Team must not take sides in conflicts between programs and administration, nor anticipate the Committee on Accreditation's action in these areas. All information from unhappy informants that seems pertinent should be most carefully and thoroughly checked for accuracy. Only serious concerns of this nature are included in the Visiting Team report.

In addition to the various conferences and interviews, team members must remember to follow through on all aspects of their responsibilities. This includes checking facilities, reviewing student files, and interviewing program constituents.

Documentary materials, such as admission and registrar's records, library order lists, course syllabi, tests, term papers, and graduate employment reports are valuable because they are often prepared for in-house consumption rather than explicitly for outside use. Departmental faculty, committee, and advisory body minutes usually offer a means of discovering whether these bodies understand and exercise their proper functions.

Each member should have particular assignments to ensure coverage of all accreditation areas, but everyone will have equal responsibility for the report as a whole. You need to confer with each other frequently and to remember that each of you shares responsibility for the outcome of the visit.

An extended meeting of the whole team is needed near the conclusion of the visit to agree upon findings and to reach a consensus on the content of the team report. This meeting will normally occur the evening before departure, and will result in a rough draft of the final report. Generally, it is a rigorous session requiring lengthy discussion, consensus, and writing.

## **Team Member Preparation**

Careful and comprehensive preparation for the on-campus visit will sharpen your ability to define constructively the apparent strengths and opportunities for improvement of the program once on campus. The materials provided are your primary source of advanced information about the institution you will visit, and about the accreditation objectives and procedures.

Laying an adequate foundation as a Visiting Team fact-finder involves the careful review of:

1. The Society's **Accreditation Handbook**. The **Handbook** was revised in 2004 to include a focus on educational outcomes. This requires the Visiting Team to be familiar with the curriculum and the program's assessment methods.
2. The forestry institution's self-evaluation report and associated documentation. To make your onsite time more productive, take comprehensive notes on apparent strengths and opportunities for improvement for each of the report's sections. The Visiting Team will look for consistency between what the program says and what it does, as well as, how the program has developed procedures to evaluate whether its goals and objectives are being met.
3. The reports of the previous SAF Visiting Team and Committee on Accreditation. These will help provide a perspective on the program's development.
4. This document, the Visiting Team Manual. The Visiting Team should evaluate the program's educational goals and objectives and how it proposes to evaluate whether these goals have been attained. In addition to material provided by the program in the self-evaluation report, team members should consult the **Educational Outcomes Assessment** section.

Further insight may be obtained by speaking with individuals about their past experiences as Visiting Team members.

### **The Entrance Meeting**

Early in the on-site visit schedule, the team will meet with the chief administrative officer of the institution, the chief academic officer, and perhaps, other administrators if the forestry school is not autonomous. Initially, the chair should make introductions of team members and state briefly the function of the visit, its process on campus, and the institution's right to comment and to respond to the Visiting Team report. However, the team should participate in this meeting as a whole and not be dominated by the chair. Team members may be assigned specific topics to address during the meeting as appropriate.

A searching discussion should take place to determine:

- the administration's level of interest in the forestry program;
- whether they administer and regard the forestry program in a manner at least commensurate with other professional programs on campus;
- whether they fully recognize the professional aspects of forestry and make efforts to meet the special needs of forestry education; and
- whether the forestry program, its students, faculty and leadership are held in high esteem.

These are busy people so the meeting will be short and there is a danger of it becoming perfunctory. Guard against this and resolve to get the information and attitudes you want in the few minutes available.

### **Evaluating the Program**

In the section, Team Member Preparation, you were advised to take comprehensive notes on apparent strengths and opportunities for improvement from the forestry institution's self-evaluation report and associated documentation. Doing so will make your onsite time more productive as the team looks for consistency between the report and your observations.

Each team member will focus on a particular standard. You should prepare questions in advance of the interviews and visits to the facilities. This will help insure that you will have the opportunity to see and hear what you need for your report. In addition, questions will come up during the visit that may not have occurred to you during your preparation or you may find that certain statements require further explanation.

Even though Visiting Team members are given assignments, this is truly a team evaluation. Each of you was chosen for your particular background and experience to provide a balanced review of the program. The entire team should actively participate in the review to generate an active dialogue through skillful questioning. A separate section of this manual, Educational Outcomes Assessment, is designed to assist with the development of your questions.

Preparing as a team will make the site visit more valuable. The site visit is quite demanding and provides only limited time for independent team interaction. That time should be relaxed and informal but productive. Review the agenda for the next day and discuss your key findings, the questions that were not answered, and what new questions have arisen.

Take good notes. They will be invaluable as you go through the process and, especially, when you write your sections of the report. Some team members find that beginning to draft their sections at the end of the first full day helps spread out the work and generates questions for the following day.

### **Writing the Visiting Team Report**

The Visiting Team written report is an essential component of the accreditation process. The Committee on Accreditation relies on a definitive report that clearly and concisely presents the Visiting Team's significant findings when assessing a program's compliance with SAF standards.

The basic format of the Visiting Team Report includes an Executive Summary, Introduction, and Body with a subsection devoted to each of the six Accreditation Standards. The Executive Summary should be a concise digest consisting of six paragraphs paralleling the body of the report and stating the team's major observed strengths and concerns with each of the Standards. A final section, such as Other Opportunities, dealing with team observations outside of the literal interpretation of accreditation standards, may or may not be appropriate. The report does not contain recommendations as to accreditation nor specific recommendations for correction of weakness. The report should not formally state whether or not the Standards have been met.

Within the body, the section devoted to curriculum must contain a description of each curriculum, option, program, or concentration for which accreditation is sought. Discussion should be sufficiently thorough to provide the Committee on Accreditation a basis for deciding those curricula, options, or programs that will be approved.

The Visiting Team chair is responsible for preparing the introduction and summary. In addition, the chair usually writes the section devoted to the organization and administration of the forestry program (Standard III). The team members will write remaining sections of the report for their assigned area of responsibility.

The chair will use the team members' draft sections to prepare a summary of the findings for presentation during the exit meetings. The team, as a whole, bears responsibility for every part of the report. Therefore, it is important that the section drafts be completed and reviewed with the team before the exit meeting.

The team chair must submit the final report to the chief administrative officer of the institution within 45 days of the visit. In consultation with the team members, the chair will set the deadline for submitting revisions. The chair will assemble the final report but should not be required to spend a great deal of time in editing and rewriting the individual sections. A fundamental aim is for the final report to present all relevant topics discussed during the visit but to avoid surprise comments that were not raised during exit interviews. Remember, the best final report is written during or immediately after the visit.

Here are several characteristics of a well-written report:

- It analyzes, interprets, gives perspective, evaluates, and verifies that the information in the self-evaluation report is, in fact, taking place.
- It weighs the quality of program and student achievements.
- It is fair and accurate. Unverified information is omitted rather than cited. Assumptions and unsupported generalizations are not made. Quantitative assessment is provided where appropriate.
- It provides a detached and impersonal point of view without reference to individuals. Even commendation of individuals risks injustice by omission of others.
- It provides a balanced analysis, recognizing accomplishments as well as problems. It concentrates on matters of continuing significance.
- It is concise. Discusses each significant item in enough detail to be useful yet minimizes restatement of information already found in the program's self-evaluation report.

When completed, the report is transmitted to the institution's chief administrative officer under an appropriate cover letter (an example is attached). The report is considered confidential. Copies of the report are submitted to the program head, team members, and the SAF Director of Science and Education. Additional copies may be sent to the institution's and program's administrators as deemed appropriate by the team chair. In the cover letter, the institution's chief administrative officer is requested to comment on the report's factual accuracy, and is informed that these comments will be included as part of the team's final report to the Committee on Accreditation.

### **The Exit Meeting**

In contrast to the entrance meeting, the Visiting Team chair should take and keep control of the exit meeting. The purpose is to thank the chief administrator for the courtesies extended and to present a summary of the team's findings.

The Chair should emphasize the fact-finding function of the team and refrain from any temptation to predict the decision of the Committee on Accreditation. It is necessary to point out that the team neither makes a decision nor recommends final accreditation actions. It is imperative that the exit meeting reflects the findings that will be in the Visiting Team Report.

The process and procedure following the visit should again be reviewed briefly: the team's written report, the institution's opportunity to comment on its factual accuracy and add supplemental materials, the action of the Committee on Accreditation, and the institution's right to participate throughout and to appeal a decision to the SAF Council, should that become necessary.

Within these guidelines, the team chair should try to respond appropriately to any questions or comments from the administrators present. In this function, other members of the team may wish to expand briefly on the comments of the chair, but such comments should be brief, factual, to the point, and non-argumentative.

### **Process after the Visit**

The Committee on Accreditation normally meets immediately before the SAF National Convention. All materials relating to the reaccreditation of the institution are provided to the Committee approximately 60 days before the meeting. Materials will include the institution's self-report, the Visiting Team Report, the institution's response to the report and the Committee's last action. The Visiting Team chair and the program administrator will be invited to meet with the Committee and to respond to questions and provide additional oral information. The Committee will consider all information during its independent evaluation and deliberations.

Upon review, evaluation, and deliberation, the Committee will formulate a final decision and transmit its action to the institution in correspondence from the Executive Vice President of the Society of American Foresters.

### **Combined Accreditation On-site Visits**

Where appropriate, SAF offers the accredited institution the opportunity to coordinate the on-site visits with regional accreditation, internal reviews, or other similar activities. The organization of the combined review team will be established as appropriate for the review. However, the SAF review team must insure that the SAF accreditation standards are addressed to its satisfaction.

SAF on-site visits are frequently coordinated with the Society of Wood Science and Technology (SWST). Some procedures are very similar, however, each society maintains independent standards and approval processes. Consequently, the SAF and SWST have developed a mutual agreement to facilitate the process for joint review of professional education programs. Under the agreement, SAF serves as the coordinating agency

and SWST as the cooperating agency for all joint on-site visits and the SAF Visiting Team chair is the chair of the combined team. SWST names at least two members to the visiting team, one of whom will serve as the lead for the SWST on-site review.

A common self-evaluation report is used for the joint review unless circumstances, such as program size and complexity, make separate reports more practical. Some of the SWST standards parallel those of SAF while others are specific to the professional requirements of wood science and technology. Thus, some of the information in the self-evaluation report will be germane to both societies while other information will be program specific.

A single visiting team report will be prepared under the supervision of the visiting team chair. Sections of the report that deal with the various standards may, as deemed necessary by a representative of either society, address specific concerns of SAF or SWST and will be prepared separately. However, each society will independently evaluate the visiting team report and other items relating to the accreditation process and make its own accreditation decision.

### **Educational Outcomes Assessment**

Accreditation has moved from an evaluation of conforming to minimum, quantitative standards to an assessment of how well programs are meeting their stated goals and educational objectives. One measure of quality evaluates how well programs conduct their own assessment to determine the competency of their graduates, and the rigor of this process. This is not entirely new, but has received increasing emphasis. Learning is now described in terms of outcomes, the evaluation of achievements, and not just the inventory of resources and procedures. Accreditation cannot rest its case on assurances that resources alone are available. It must ensure and evaluate accomplishments.

Student learning outcomes are the knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired through the student's education experience. Outcomes are evaluated in terms of the relevant quantitative and qualitative "evidence" that may be used in making and supporting a case for what is being claimed and is potentially verifiable through third-party inspection.

Evidence of student learning can take many forms but should involve direct examination of student performance. Good evidence should evaluate the full range of learning outcomes using several sources of information. Evidence may include employment and increased career mobility, enhanced income and lifestyles, the opportunity to enroll for additional education, or simply a more fulfilled and reflective life. These are important but should not be confused with student learning itself. Information generated by methods such as student satisfaction surveys, focus groups, or interviews is useful in the accreditation process but does not constitute direct evidence of student learning.

Assessment refers to the many means that programs use to collect and interpret evidence of their educational effectiveness. The aims of assessment are typically broader than simply gathering direct evidence of student learning outcomes. It includes the level of attainment of program goals and the process the program uses to apply what is learned to make improvements in teaching and learning. Effectiveness includes important organizational capacities that can enable a program to continue to fulfill its purposes, such as an adequate resource base and organizational structure, as well as, mechanisms to evaluate its own performance, respond to changing conditions, and improve overall performance. Direct evidence of student learning outcomes is an important dimension of program effectiveness but is not enough to make the broader case for effectiveness.

SAF does not prescribe a specific approach to assessment of educational quality or of student outcomes. Goal setting and outcomes assessment must come from the institution itself. Many institutions actively promote outcomes assessment and the sharing of ideas between departments in order to make informed programmatic changes. The guidelines for the self-evaluation report allow forestry programs the flexibility to establish their own, specific educational goals and objectives, as well as, the methods used to determine whether these goals and objectives are, in fact, being met.

Forest resources educational programs serve a myriad of constituencies including students, alumni, employers, private and public sponsors, and more general societal needs. These stakeholders in forestry education represent diverse perspectives that influence the goals and objectives of a program. Their feedback is needed to make improvements and begin a new cycle of assessment.

The complex process of devising reasonable, professionally responsible measures of educational outcomes is compounded by the variability among forest resources education programs. Assessment should represent these various interests, while understanding that no one method of assessment can effectively evaluate the success of these, often, divergent interests. Assessment measures will seldom have a single "correct" answer, just as simple, uniform assessment methods often do not recognize or encourage the diversity that is a source of strength in forestry education. The use of multiple assessment methods may reveal patterns that will then provide a basis for programmatic changes.

Benefits derived from the educational and research products that universities produce necessarily occur over the long term. On the other hand, many quantitative measurements of educational outcomes (e.g., enrollment figures, research products, and performance of graduates in the workforce) provide a short-term measure of success.

Evidence of a quality education and that Society's standards are met can take many forms. Rather than concentrating exclusively upon "input" measures of the accreditation standards as reported in the program's self-evaluation, i.e., the number of faculty or size of the program budget, the Visiting Team should seek to assess whether these inputs produce a quality program and a quality graduate.

### **Suggestions for the Interviewer**

Program responses to the following suggestions may reveal the measure of professional excellence exhibited by the program and its students. This listing is only a guide, and does not substitute for an evaluation of all elements of the SAF standards, nor does it represent an exhaustive source of outcomes assessments methods.

## ***STANDARD I: FORESTRY PROGRAM MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES***

The appropriateness of educational objectives and the degree to which the objectives are achieved are two generally accepted indicators of the quality of the educational process. An educational program must clearly articulate what it wants to achieve before it can determine that it is reaching its goals. The forestry program must be clearly defined and publicly state its mission, goals, and objectives, provide the rationale and purpose for its existence, and show how the goals and objectives of its current program meet the mission statement.

The Visiting Team should compare the program's mission, goals, and objectives to the SAF Standards for Accreditation, professionalism, and ethical conduct; and the concept of forestry as an interdisciplinary profession that incorporates diverse and changing social, cultural, economic, and environmental needs and values. Dynamic forestry programs change with time. Periodic self-evaluation and revision of the program's mission, goals, and objectives are expected and must be documented.

Evidence that a program is meeting its goals and objectives would include statements of how it responds to the needs of its constituencies, the methods it uses to confirm its responsiveness, and the results of applying those methods. It is important to keep in mind that a program's assessment method is not an end in itself, but rather is a means of gathering information that the program can use to determine whether, or not, it is accomplishing its purpose.

## ***STANDARD II: CURRICULUM***

General Education  
Professional Education  
Distance Learning

A program's curriculum is derived from its educational objectives. General and professional education should be balanced, and guided by the program's stated purpose and institutional requirements. Attention to coverage of professional areas of study should be based upon comprehensive planning and direction by the educational objectives. Topics should not be absent simply because the "curriculum is full."

Specific educational objectives for each curriculum should be reviewed and used to determine how the coursework was developed, how it is evaluated for continued adequacy, and how revisions are accomplished. The program should explain how the curriculum exists as an integrated series of classes; how students pull together concepts from previous subjects; and how student problem-solving and decision-making skills are assessed.

Evaluation of curriculum includes faculty assessment of student achievement and the evaluation of student preparedness by those constituents served by the program. The program should explain how it determines whether learning objectives are met and provide evidence of ongoing appraisal, improvements, and plans for the future.

SAF does not dictate assessment methods, nor does it suggest a single indicator to be used in the evaluation process. The following represent several potential outcomes assessment methods that may be used effectively in combination:

- enrollment/graduation records
- alumni surveys (5 and 10 years)\*
- employer surveys\*

- student evaluations
- program advisory body suggestions\*
- non-returning student surveys
- performance on in-house examinations
- performance on licensure exams
- employment placement records\*
- review of “senior projects”\*
- comprehensive, “capstone-course” performance\*
- course syllabi review by faculty, employers\*
- external recognition of students, graduates, or the program
- acceptance and performance, if known, for those who continue in graduate school

\* If any of these involve review by “outside clients,” the program should show how each is assessed by the clients.

***STANDARD III: FORESTRY PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION:***

Administrator  
 Student Recruitment, Admissions, and Transfers  
 Teaching  
 Administrative Support  
 Program Planning and Outcomes Assessment

The self-assessment of administration support in combination with your interviews will help to determine if the program administrator is equivalent in title and authority and the program is of comparable autonomy with other related units on campus.

The program should demonstrate that its standards for admissions reflect those of the institution, and are applied consistently within institutional framework. The program should demonstrate that its admissions policy ensures applicants who possess sufficient interest, aptitude, and ability to graduate.

The administration must document that high priority is given to quality instruction through faculty appointments, evaluation, and recognition of performance.

The program should provide evidence and evaluation of short- and long-range planning efforts and linkages between program and administration in institutional planning. The role of students, alumni, and other stakeholders in decision-making and in recommending program direction should be taken into consideration.

***STANDARD IV: FACULTY:***

Academic and Professional Competency  
 Teaching Skills

The faculty should have the benefit of a variety of professional forestry experiences and education as well as cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity. They should maintain close communication with the forestry profession and have the opportunity for external consulting or other professional development and scholarly activities. Faculty from other departments or outside agencies can provide additional expertise and breadth of experience.

The program should document faculty expertise, competence, and interest in their assigned areas of teaching. Reported teaching and research appointments should reflect actual conditions.

The faculty must provide a high quality of instruction, keep the curriculum current, and provide effective guidance for students. Course content, grading, exams, and projects should support student achievement and standards of professionalism. Faculty members should demonstrate an aptitude for working closely with students, the ability to stimulate independent thinking and provide intellectual leadership that will lead to student success.

***STANDARD V: STUDENTS:***

Recruitment and Retention  
Advising

An important index of a program's commitment to its students is a well-planned effort to provide a broad range of academic and extracurricular offerings extending from recruitment to placement activities. The composition of student body should reflect a learning environment consistent with program and institution mission, goals, and objectives to recruit and retain motivated, responsible, and academically qualified students who reflect cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity. There should be a commitment to quality advising regarding the student's academic, professional, and career opportunities, and advisors must be readily available to the students.

The following represent several potential assessment tools:

- employer reports from internships
- graduate school performance
- student demographic surveys
- transfer surveys
- adequacy of advising services
- evidence of academic counseling
- student and alumni evaluations
- retention/attrition studies
- students' ability to apply knowledge to problem solving
- students' understanding of professional ethics

***STANDARD VI: PARENT INSTITUTION SUPPORT:***

Forestry Program Support  
Supporting Programs  
Physical Resources and Facilities

The parent institution must provide adequate funding and other institutional support to allow the program to attract and retain highly qualified faculty, staff, and administrators. Faculty development and continuing education should be encouraged.

Compare support for the forestry program to other academic units in the parent institution and indicate changes that have occurred or are anticipated in the educational budget. Review the forestry program budget and how it has changed in relation to the overall institutional budget.

The parent institution must provide strong, well-staffed student support programs such as placement, financial aid, and counseling that are readily accessible for forestry students. Library facilities, holdings, electronic access to information, and related services must be adequate. Student assessment of student and administrative services and of library, adequacy and use, should be considered.

Adequate resources must also be provided for elements critical to the learning environment for professional foresters such as computers, spatial information technologies, specialized laboratories, and field instruction.

The parent institution, in collaboration with the unit housing the program, must provide a physical environment that is safe, healthful, and conducive to learning.

The program should conduct regular assessment of adequacy of resources/facilities, which should be integrated with the institution's campus assessment process and procedures for monitoring program progress in meeting objectives.

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## Check List for Evaluation of Library and Related Facilities (Forestry)

### Books and Related Materials

- Identity:** Is there discrimination among subject fields and attention paid to needs of individual topics?
- Scope:** Is the full scope of course and research interests covered by current books, both as to geographic distribution and degrees of subject specificity, including primary and secondary works, and a fair quantity of collateral and even minor works in the major fields?
- Quantity:** Is there a reasonable quantity of books, including duplicate copies of heavily used titles, and is it relevant to the range and level of the curricula offered?
- Currency:** Is the collection kept up to date. Is there evidence of a substantial and continuing infusion of new books discriminately selected in the major fields?
- Condition:** Is the physical condition of the collection adequate to assure its availability for the next generation of students, especially in bibliographies, reference works, primary sources, and journals?

### Facilities and Related Staff Services

- Location/Use:** Are students taking advantage of personal, career, and other available services? Are methods/procedures evident to describe these services?
- Hours:** Are hours of related facilities (library, computer, placement...etc.) conducive to meeting student needs?
- Computer Search Capabilities:** If available, are these services explained and utilized by the students? What is the availability for student and faculty use of inter-library loans, CD-ROM, and other electronic searches?
- Staff:** Are there qualified and effective professional staff to assist the student in these areas?
- Orientation:** Is a formal orientation program in library, computer, placement, financial aid, and other services provided or otherwise available?
- Budget:** How do the faculty assess the adequacy of the annual appropriation for acquisition of forestry books and periodicals, for maintaining educational supplies, and to maintain facilities and field locations? Is there comparison with other similar services in other academic units on campus?

### Evaluation Method

Personal observation and direct discussion with both faculty members and students on the above points is usually most helpful.

Representative Agenda for SAF Reaccreditation Visit  
(Provided as a guide; programs may suggest alternatives to the Visiting Team chair)

**Arrival Day**

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- Afternoon      Team arrives, checks in
- 7:00 p.m.      Dinner with program head  
Review agenda, logistics, discuss program
- 9:00 p.m.      Team meeting  
Review assignments, documentation, and areas of concentration

**Day 1**

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- 7:00 a.m.      Breakfast, usually with program head
- Morning      Meetings with the following as applicable  
Unless specified, the forestry program head should not attend the meetings.  
A. Chief executive officer of institution (optional)  
B. Chief academic officer and others (may wish to combine with A)  
C. College administration (if other than forestry)  
D. Forestry school administration (program head and others)
- Late a.m.      Tour relevant campus facilities
- 12:00 Noon    Working luncheon with small group of employers or recent graduates  
It is imperative that the team meets with a small, representative group of employers of graduates to assess competencies. It is suggested that alumni employers be kept to a minimum. Alumni or advisory groups are welcome to meet with the team at other, appropriate functions.
- 2:00 p.m.      Begin faculty interviews  
Scheduling is critical; groups should be kept small and may be composed by subject area, need at least 45 minutes per session. Interviews with forestry faculty should be given top priority.
- 4:00 p.m.      Meet with representative undergraduates  
This should be an "open" undergraduate meeting scheduled at a time to permit the greatest representation from the student body (all years, all majors under review...etc.). Those not available should be invited to present comments to the team.
- 5:00 p.m.      Return to hotel
- 6:30 p.m.      Dinner  
This will be an opportunity for team to meet informally with small group of administrators, faculty, students, alumni, etc.
- 8:30 p.m.      Team meeting

## **Day 2**

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- 7:00 a.m. Breakfast  
The team can meet with program head or other program administrators.
- 8:00 a.m. Continue faculty interviews or other scheduled meetings
- 11:30 a.m. Working luncheon with any group not represented on first day's lunch  
Alumni, employers, faculty from supporting areas or other groups, as appropriate
- 1:30 p.m. Meeting with representative graduate students
- 2:30 p.m. Visit supporting facilities: library, computer, field, research, etc.
- 3:30 p.m. Scheduled special meeting(s), if required
- 4:30 p.m. Return to hotel; team begins work on report as soon as possible
- 6:30 p.m. Dinner - Team only
- Work on report; no other activities scheduled

## **Day 3**

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- 7:00 a.m. Breakfast with program head
- 8:00 a.m. Team checks out of hotel; luggage ready for transport to airport
- 8:30 a.m. Exit meeting with chief executive and other administrators, as appropriate  
This is a team reporting process; discussion will be minimal—30 to 45 minutes.
- 9:30 a.m. OPTIONAL—A separate, additional exit meeting may be appropriate with institution administration, if different from forestry program administration.
- 10:30 a.m. Exit meeting with program faculty and staff  
This is a team reporting process; discussion will be minimal—30 to 45 minutes.
- 11:30 a.m. Team departs for airport
- OR**
- 11:30 a.m. Visiting Team Consultation begins

**Sample Report Transmittal Cover Letter**  
(Sent on Visiting Team chair's institution letterhead)

[Date]

Institution's Chief Executive Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dear [President, Chancellor]\_\_\_\_\_:

[Last Month] I had the pleasure of visiting your institution as Chair of the Society of American Foresters' Accreditation Visiting Team. On behalf of the team, I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the genuine interest and helpfulness shown us by administrators, faculty and students. The cooperation and courtesies extended to us contributed significantly to a pleasant and very constructive visit.

Enclosed is a copy of the team report which will be submitted to the SAF Committee on Accreditation. In the report we have attempted to identify both the strengths of the undergraduate forestry programs in the [department, school, college, program] and those which present opportunities for improvement.

Our procedure requests that you comment on the factual accuracy of this report. Your response will then be included as part of the final documentation sent to the Society's Committee on Accreditation for their discussion and final action. I would appreciate receiving these comments by [give a date about two months hence].

The Committee on Accreditation will review the Visiting Team Report, your comments, and other relevant material and will consult with [forestry program head] and myself prior to making its final decision. The Committee will meet for final action in [month, year] at the Society's annual convention, where a representative from the forestry program and I will have the opportunity for a final meeting before the Committee. You will be notified of the Committee's decision immediately following that meeting.

Again, we wish to thank you and others at [institution] for making our visit enjoyable and productive.

Sincerely,

[name], Chair  
SAF Accreditation Visiting Team

Enclosure:

cc: (College administration, if appropriate)  
Forestry Program Head  
SAF Director, Science and Education  
Members, SAF Visiting Team

## **Society of American Foresters**

### **General Travel Policy**

#### **Policy**

General travel expenses incurred in the furtherance of SAF business are reimbursable to authorized representatives of SAF. SAF generally follows the IRS guidelines for deductibility of travel and entertainment expenses including eligibility, proper documentation and reporting. Reimbursement is made to the individual following receipt at the national office of a completed SAF Expense Report.

#### **Procedures**

##### I. Travel Expenses:

General travel expenses are ordinary and necessary expenses while traveling away from home on SAF business, or local expenses in connection with SAF business meetings or related activities.

All travel must be approved in advance by the SAF Director of Science and Education for all accreditation activities, or the Executive Vice President or principal contact officer in the case of outside consultants or other agents of SAF.

Travel expenses do not include expense for entertainment.

Travel expenses include:

- A) Air, rail, and bus fares at standard coach or tourist rates
- B) Automobile mileage allowance at \$0.425 per mile
- C) Taxi fares or other costs of transportation between the airport or station and your hotel, or from one place of business to another
- D) Baggage transfer charges and transportation costs for business materials
- E) Meals and lodging when you are away from home on business
- F) Cleaning and laundry expenses if duration of travel is five or more days
- G) Telephone expenses incurred in the conduct of SAF business. Personal calls of a reasonable length at the rate of one per two days are allowed if duration of travel is two or more days
- H) Tips, (food service 15%) that are incidental to any of these expenses
- I) Other similar expenses related to qualifying travel

**Society Of American Foresters General Travel Policy**  
(continued)

**II. Expense Report:**

All requests for reimbursement of travel expenses shall be submitted to SAF's business office, or to the appropriate SAF staff representative, within five working days of completion of the travel in question. Expenses must be recorded in detail on SAF's standard Expense Report, as outlined below. Original receipts and other documentation must be attached to the Expense Report for any expense exceeding \$15.00. Expense reports must be signed by the individual requesting reimbursement and approved by the SAF Director of Science and Education for accreditation activities, or the Executive Vice President or principal contact officer in the case of outside consultants or other agents of SAF.

Any cash advance of travel funds to cover the business activity should be subtracted from the total expense incurred. If the advance exceeded the expenses, payment of the excess advance must accompany the expense report. Balances due will be paid promptly by the SAF business office.

1. Travel expenses, including transportation and lodging, as well as meals are to be entered individually on a daily basis. Information should be entered by date.
2. The destination or the locality of your travel, should be described by name of city, town, or similar designation.
3. The business reason for your travel or the business benefit gained or expected to be gained from your travel should be entered in the "comments" section of the expense report, or accompanying the report as an attachment.

**III. Reasonableness of Expenses:**

For purposes of lodging, meals, tips, transportation fares, baggage charges and other costs submitted for reimbursement, all charges must be reasonable and reflect the non-profit status of SAF.

**IV. Entertainment Expenses:**

Entertainment includes any activity generally considered to provide entertainment, amusement or recreation. Because of the nature of SAF's business activities, entertainment expenses are allowable only under extraordinary circumstances, and only following advance approval by SAF's Executive Vice President.

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