

ABET

Suggested Interview Guide for Team Chairs

As a Team Chair (TC), it is your responsibility to meet with the administrators and support staff at the institutional and college levels. As there are significant differences in the nature of these individual visits, especially as one gets (administratively) further away from the programs under review, this Guide was developed to outline some of these differences and provide a set of sample questions to ask.

Please note that this Guide is not meant to be a list of all the administrators that a TC must visit, nor are the questions herein meant to be the questions a TC must ask. Use your experience and judgment to decide with whom you need to meet, what information you need to convey, and what specific questions need to be asked. Consider which supporting offices to visit based on the team's review of the SSRs and pre-visit discussions with the programs.

Most administrative personnel, unless new in their positions, have met with many teams from various accreditation agencies. ABET is just another such team to them, so please plan accordingly. Also, note that program specifics are almost never known at these levels. However, it is fine to talk about various aspects of the programs being reviewed if the administrator wants to do that. Avoid asking questions that make it look as if you haven't read the self-study reports. Sometimes an administrator will have a copy of the reports, and may have read at least the parts that pertain to the administrator's functions.

It is important for the TC to stress that the visiting team is only looking at specific degree programs, not departments or schools, or colleges. Also, depending on the visit and the experience of the Program Evaluators (PEV), some PEVs might be involved in some of these visits as well. The TC should use appropriate judgment regarding whether or not a PEV could benefit from attending one or more of these meetings. Among other things, it helps prepare an exceptional PEV to be a TC.

This document contains more questions than one will be able to ask in a 20 to 30 minute interview. Your primary goal is to listen, and secondarily to get answers to pressing issues if any exist. Prioritize the questions for your situation.

General

An interview may be scheduled where you are not sure of this person's contribution/role in the educational process. These questions may be helpful also with interviews where the person's title is known but where the job may encompass many things. These may supplement the questions below that are identified by role.

- What is your role at this university?
- How does what you do impact the programs being visited?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- Can I answer any questions on the ABET process for you?

President / Chancellor / Rector

Normally this is a short courtesy visit to explain ABET and the visit schedule. This meeting also provides the chief executive officer (CEO) an opportunity to provide CEO's views and ask questions about the accreditation process.

Your primary focus should be on explaining the purpose of the visit, reviewing the format and ground rules for the Exit Meeting, and making sure that the head administrator has no questions about the ABET accreditation process. Regarding the process, the key item to convey is that the visit is only one step in the process; any issues found and reported at the exit meeting can be addressed and corrected over the next several months, prior to the final accreditation decision being made.

Suggested questions:

- What distinguishes the institution's graduates and what is unique about its mission?
- What are the key challenges and opportunities for the institution?
- How do the programs being visited fit into the institution and its vision?
- Is there an overall strategic plan for the institution?
- How do the individual programs contribute to the development and implementation of the strategic plan?
- What will be the impact of the strategic plan on the programs under review (e.g., program offerings, student enrollment, faculty growth and retention, capital expenditures)?
- What are the major institution-wide initiatives planned for the next five years and how do the programs under review fit into these initiatives?

Provost or Academic Vice President

This may also be primarily a courtesy visit, but a discussion of topics may occur similar to those discussed with the dean, as well as curricular issues in the programs that relate

to overall academic policies. This meeting pertains to the subset of topics within the purview of the provost/VP. At a minimum, it is important to convey that the visit is but one step in the process and any issues found can be addressed further prior to the final accreditation decision being made. It is also an appropriate time to ask if the provost/VP has any areas of concern that the team might pay particular attention to and/or any questions about the accreditation process.

Suggested questions:

- What are the strengths of the programs being visited?
- What are the challenges and opportunities that you see for the programs being visited?
- How is continuous improvement implemented across the whole institution? Are there particular strengths or weaknesses in the continuous improvement activities of the programs being visited?
- How do the various academic units interact and respond to the needs or requests of other units?
- How does the institution support excellence in teaching?
- If you could get the programs being visited to focus on one activity they are currently not doing, what would that be?
- Do you see the programs being visited as growing larger or smaller in five years? Do you anticipate any other changes?
- What are your major academic priorities and issues (growth, faculty retention, research, etc.)?
- Assessment of student outcomes is an important part of the ABET evaluation process. How do institution-wide continuous improvement activities relate to assessment activities?
- What are the institutional retention rates (student and faculty)? Are you satisfied with these rates?
- What is the process for evaluation of faculty, department chairs/heads and deans? Is this process conducted on an annual basis?

Deans

You will normally meet with the dean immediately following the dean's meeting with the team. Your primary focus will be on the administration's support, resource allocation, and any other administrative aspects of the programs. If you have questions, regarding the presentation, this is the time to ask. You will also update dean on preliminary findings for programs.

Suggested questions:

- How is engineering/engineering technology viewed within the institution?
- What are the strengths of the programs? If the team is considering strengths in the statement, having affirmation by more than one source can be helpful.

- How does your college and the institution support excellence in teaching?
- What support is available for scholarly and professional development (travel, etc.) of faculty members?
- Are faculty encouraged to engage in professional and community service (internal and external to the university)?
- What is the promotion and tenure process for the institution?
- What is the importance of research-funded projects in the departments?
- What is the budgeting process within the institution, college, and programs?
What is the budget model for the college?
- What are the budgets of the programs being visited? Are they stationary or do they fluctuate annually?
- Where does the college and programs get their discretionary money?
- Where do student tuition and fees go (what is the model)? If the students pay supplemental fees, how are those fees used?
- What are the opportunities offered by the college to ensure student success?
- What resources do student have for learning about career opportunities?
- What are the assessment processes within the institution, college, and programs?
- What is being done to promote units working together on ABET issues?
- How does the college interact with other academic units on campus?
- What is the process for procuring funds for equipment purchase and maintenance?
- Do you anticipate an increase or decrease in the number of faculty members in the college?
If so, explain.
- How do salary levels for faculty and staff compare with your peer institutions?
- Do you anticipate any significant changes in the near future?
- Inform the dean as to any issues being followed up by evaluators for individual programs.

Program Leaders (Department Chair / Program Head)

Interviewing the program heads of the programs evaluated is the primary responsibility of the PEVs. However, if only one program is being visited and/or the visit is an Interim Visit or a Show Cause Visit, the team chair should plan to interview the program head as well. It is recommended that the team chair conduct this interview separate from the PEVs. The discussion should focus on topics to be clarified and/or verified based upon the pre-visit material review.

Suggested questions:

- What are the strengths of the program? If the PEV is considering strengths in the statement, having affirmation by more than one source can be helpful.
- How does the department support excellence in teaching?

- What support is available for scholarly and professional development (travel, etc.) of faculty members?
- What is the promotion and tenure process for faculty in the program?
- What is the importance of research-funded projects in your department?
- What is the budgeting process, within the institution, college, and program?
- What is the budget of the program? Is that stationary or has it increased lately?
- Where does your program get its discretionary money?
- If the students pay supplemental fees, does the department received any of the funds?
- What are the opportunities offered by the department to ensure student success?
- What resources do students have for learning about career opportunities?
- What are the assessment processes within the program?
- What is being done to promote programs working together on ABET issues?
- How does your department interact with other academic units on campus?
- What is the process for procuring funds for equipment purchase and maintenance?
- Do you anticipate an increase or decrease in the number of faculty members in the department? If so, explain.
- How do salary levels for faculty and staff compare with your peer programs?
- Do you anticipate any significant changes in the near future?
- Inform chair as to any issues being followed up by the evaluator for program.

Student Recruitment/Admissions Officer

This interview will primarily be focused on questions related to the recruiting and admissions processes to recruit and admit sufficient numbers of qualified students.

Suggested questions:

- What are the institutional admission standards?
- Are the admission standards different for students intending to major in the programs being visited?
- Looking at admissions numbers, is enrollment at the institution (and within the programs) growing or stable or shrinking?
- Where do the programs typically draw students from?
- Will incoming student demographics change in the next five years?
- If the number of students in the program is low, what is the reason, and are there plans for increasing the numbers?
- If the numbers of the students in the programs are high, what is the reason?
- What new initiatives (such as online delivery of courses) is the institution enacting?
- How do you make admission decisions? What are your strategies for attracting minorities or underrepresented applicants?
- What is the retention rate for the programs under review? Is it a priority to increase the rate and what is your strategy to make that happen?

- What percentage of students receive financial aid? What impact does that have in recruiting students?

Registrar / Registration/Records Officer

This interview will primarily be focused on questions related to transcripts and verification of graduation requirements.

Suggested questions:

- Describe the procedures used to ensure that students meet all graduation requirements. What software is used? Who has access to the information to 1) change it and 2) in a read only capacity? How often are degree audits reviewed with students and by whom?
- How is transfer credit awarded and tracked (with and without articulation agreements)?
- How are course substitutions approved and recorded?
- How are waivers of prerequisites handled? Are there any checks performed after registration to ensure students don't drop co-requisite classes?
- Is there a move to restrict the number of hours in the degree? (Some states are still pushing for 120 hours max in any discipline.)
- What are the policies for experience-based course waivers, if there are any?
- What is the process for scheduling of courses?
- Do you have any issues with availability of classrooms?
- How are current and historical student records maintained?
- What are some of the main issues you face relating to curriculum and academic policies?
- Discuss with the Registrar any specific issues identified by PEVs in the review of transcripts.

Career Services Officer/Alumni Relations

This interview will primarily be focused on questions related to services provided to students seeking employment – full-time or internship, graduate tracking, and employer satisfaction.

Suggested questions:

- What services are available for students and graduates? Do you provide writing services for resume and cover letter preparation? How about mock interviews?
- What types of events/workshops do you typically hold?
- What are the historical employment rates for graduates from the programs being visited?
- What recruiters come to campus for majors from the program? Is the number of recruiters growing or stable or shrinking?

- What opportunities exist with respect to internships and cooperative education?
- What percentage of students take advantage of your services?
- How do you reach out to alumni and potential employers?
- How active is your alumni association?
- Do you track alumni employment? How long? How do you keep contact information current? Do you assist the programs with alumni surveys?

Co-op/Internship Officer

This interview will primarily be focused on questions related to the cooperative education program goals, policies, and procedures as they relate to academic credit for co-op and/or internship work experience. It may also include questions on how the cooperative education office and personnel work with the programs to assist students in obtaining co-ops and internships, evaluate the students' performance, and build relationships with employers.

Suggested questions:

- What are the co-op and internship employment rates of past and current majors?
- Do you provide services to prepare the students to apply for co-op and internship?
- As part of the program, what are the requirements for students/employers/program?
- Is writing a report part of this program?
- Do the students receive academic credit for their work? Are they paid?

Institutional Assessment Officer/Quality Assurance/Educational Quality

This interview will primarily focus on questions related to the support provided by the institutional assessment office to the assessment processes of the programs.

Suggested questions:

- What instruments are used for institutional-level assessment and with what frequency are they administered?
- How are the data collected and analyzed?
- How do you save and maintain the data?
- Who is responsible for assessment and data evaluation?
- Is the assessment process integrated across programs/schools/institution?
- How do you view the ABET assessment requirements, and how well do they integrate and overlap with university requirements?
- How do institutional level assessment practices relate to student outcomes?
- Do faculty/administrators in the programs work with your office on assessment?
- How would you categorize the assessment efforts in the programs being visited when compared to other programs on your campus?
- Do you have a schedule for the program-level assessment tasks and deliverables?

Chief Information/Technology Officer

Institutions have information technology services managing the computing and software related tasks of the programs visited. A number of services provided this division are for the success of faculty and students.

Suggested questions:

- What is your Risk Management Planning regarding information security and inevitable breeches?
- Describe future plans regarding use of technology and cybersecurity.
- What standards does your institution follow to help ensure protection of student and employee information and privacy concerns?
- Do you provide any training and information sessions to students and faculty?
- In what ways are you leveraging new technologies to improve effectiveness of the academic programs?
- What is the agenda or timeframe to upgrade the software tools and computing systems?

Student Success Officer

Typically, institutions provide services to recruit and retain the student body of their programs. They are engaged in a number of activities in outreach, recruitment and retainment.

Suggested questions:

- What specific policies are there for identifying at-risk students, both when applying and once enrolled?
- How does the institution work with at-risk students?
- How do faculty refer students that they believe need retention-oriented services?
- Does the program provide extra-curricular/outreach activities? Provide examples.

Safety Officer

Some institutions employ a safety officer to oversee policies and regulations related to laboratories and other facilities on campus. This individual (or an additional individual) might reside at the college level.

Suggested questions:

- What actions do you take to ensure that facilities, tools, and equipment used in the programs are safe for their intended purposes?
- How often are laboratories inspected and by whom?
- What procedures and policies are in place to ensure the safety of students, staff, and faculty?

- What safety training is required for students? Are they tested to ensure comprehension? Who is responsible for enforcement?
- What involvement do you have with outside organizations (to comply with state and/or local safety and environmental regulations)?
- At international institutions, ask safety personnel about local safety regulations for educational institutions.

Chief Financial Officer

This interview will primarily focus on institutional funding priorities, sources, and processes.

Suggested questions:

- What are the main sources of funding for the institution?
- How are institutional priorities funded?
- What is the budget model for the institution/colleges?
- What is the model for using student tuitions and fees?
- Where do colleges get their discretionary money?
- What is your responsibility for the design and implementation of new construction and renovation projects in support of the campus master plan? Are there plans for new construction/renovation projects for the college and/or programs?
- How are budget requests handled through the system? What is the primary source of funds to equip and maintain labs for the programs? Is this budgeted or must it be requested by the program head?
- How are institutional endowment funds used?
- What types of fund raising do you do? Are deans involved in fund raising?
- What are your recent fund-raising campaigns and goals?

Site Director (for universities with multiple campuses awarding the same degree)

Suggested questions:

- How is communication handled between campuses?
- How is the budget set up to ensure equal educational quality on all campuses?
- What structure assures consistency of education across the campuses?