The Accreditation Process from the Site Visitor Perspective

*These notes were taken by staff of the Office of Program Consultation and Accreditation. They are not intended as official documentation of the presentation; rather they represent a broad summary of the presentation and discussion.*

Kathy Borden – Doctoral Site Visitor

*Overall the accreditations system is fair and useful – Concerns noted in this presentation are meant as a means to self-assess.*

The Site Visitor Role:

- The site visitor (SV) role has changed and evolved. At one time SV’s made recommendations, now they are simply asked to address each Domain letter by letter. Is this a form of ‘policing’? Is this a desirable method of review?

- Some SV’s would call it impossible and unrealistic to only be the eyes and ears for the CoA. SV’s are the ‘heart and soul’ of the review process.

- SV’s must relate and be empathetic. They should provide feedback and consult through the questions that they ask. Good SV’s must consult so that the program is able to convey the information necessary.

- SV’s can be advocates - especially when dealing with administrators.

- Currently, SV’s are basically ‘truth checkers.’ Is the expense of a site visit worth just being the eyes and ears of the CoA? If the role is restricted to investigation, do we need 3 professionals on site to determine if standards are being met?

How do we maximize the SV role?

- SV’s need feedback from the CoA to determine what kind of information is useful. Providing such feedback would ultimately decrease the burden on the CoA and improve the overall process.

- The SV role will become more problematic if we don’t better define the function of the site visitor.

Bob Robinson – Internship Site Visitor

*The site visit is the cornerstone of the accreditation process.*

Site visit methodologies:

- Ask the head of the psychology department and the DOT ‘What are your goals?’ – both programmatic and pertaining to quality enhancement.
• Use English versus ‘Domain-ese’ as you gather information.

• The site visit report is a living document. Following the site visit, translate what was seen as well as the information from the self-study into a cohesive report.

Positive reasons to be a site visitor:
• Learning/seeing how other programs function
• Reciprocal relationships

Cautions:
• CoA can be a ‘black hole’ (no feedback provided to SV’s)
• Participating on a site visit is a lot of work.

Intrinsic motivation has limits – As such the following recommendations were stated as a means to recruit and maintain talented site visitors:

• Provide honorariums
• Give written feedback
• Institute service awards

Kenneth Adams – Postdoctoral Site Visitor

*The role of the site visitor needs to grow.*

PostDoctoral programs are the ‘new kid on the block’. Problems arise such as:
• Terminology being inconsistent;
• No program parallels in other health professions at this level;
• No consensus on business models to dedicate resources

We need to use patience in configuring philosophy and methods to fit postdocs into the accreditation framework

The site visitor role:
• Old wisdom: Eyes and ears - New wisdom: Trust, but verify
• SV’s need to focus more attention on program functioning and less attention on verifying the information in the self-study report.

Generalists/Specialists:
• Whether it’s called general or specialty training, all postdoc students come with expectancy to learn a certain set of skills.
• Tension between master-apprentice model vs. multi-supervisor model.
Site visitors and the CoA need to change the way we look at Postdoctoral programs – they are not ‘big people internships’.

**Ed Sheridan - Discussant**

*As a site visitor you are a representative of the profession – a colleague assessing the match between the program and the G&P.*