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**Guidelines for the Planning and Conduct of Accreditation Survey Visits**

**Published April 2022**

LCME® *Guidelines for the Planning and Conduct of Accreditation Survey Visits*

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# General Information

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the LCME accreditation process for full, provisional, preliminary, and limited surveys and summarize the roles and responsibilities of survey teams and medical schools in preparing for and conducting an LCME survey visit.

## Accreditation and the LCME

Accreditation serves the important general purpose of assuring the public, current students and applicants, government agencies, and professional groups that educational programs and institutions meet or exceed nationally accepted standards of quality for educational process and student outcomes. Accreditation by the LCME serves two specific purposes: (1) to determine if a medical education program is in compliance with accreditation standards and associated elements and (2) to promote programmatic improvement.

The LCME is sponsored by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and the American Medical Association (AMA). The LCME accredits MD-granting medical education programs in the U.S. The LCME is recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the World Federation for Medical Education as the reliable authority for the accreditation of medical education programs leading to the MD degree in the United States. LCME accreditation provides medical students with access to the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE), eligibility for entry into graduate medical education programs accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), and eligibility for state medical licensure.

Members of the LCME Secretariat welcome the opportunity to respond to questions and comments. Email communications may be sent to the LCME Co-Secretaries or to [lcme@aamc.org](mailto:lcme@aamc.org).

# Accreditation Reviews

## Overview of the Steps in a Full Accreditation Review

Full accreditation reviews, culminating in a full survey visit, typically occur on an eight-year cycle and consist of the following steps:

1. Completion of the data collection instrument (DCI) and the independent student analysis (ISA), and compilation of other supporting documents
2. Analysis of the DCI and other information sources, including the ISA, by an institutional self-study task force and development of the self-study summary report based on this analysis
3. Visit by an ad hoc survey team and preparation by the survey team of the survey report for review by the LCME
4. Action on full accreditation by the LCME

An example timeline of steps prior to and following a full accreditation survey visit is included as [Appendix A.](#_Appendix_A:_Typical_1)

## Overview of the Steps in a Provisional Accreditation Review

Provisional accreditation reviews, culminating in a provisional survey visit, consist of the following steps:

1. Completion of the data collection instrument (DCI) on elements the LCME has determined to be relevant to a review for provisional accreditation and completion of the independent student analysis (ISA)
2. Visit by an ad hoc survey team and preparation by the survey team of the survey report for review by the LCME
3. Action on provisional accreditation by the LCME

## Overview of the Steps in a Preliminary Accreditation Review

The general steps in the process for schools seeking preliminary accreditation are as follows:

1. Completion of the DCI (data collection instrument) and compilation of supporting documents
2. Analysis of the DCI and other information sources by a planning self-study task force and its subcommittees, development of planning self-study reports in each area, and synthesis of the individual reports into a planning self-study summary report
3. Review by the LCME of the DCI for Preliminary Accreditation and the Planning Self-study of the applicant program to determine if a survey visit for preliminary accreditation should be conducted
4. If the survey visit is granted, optional updating of the DCI and planning self-study with new information
5. Visit by an ad hoc survey team and preparation by the survey team of the survey report for review by the LCME
6. Action on preliminary accreditation by the LCME

## Overview of the Steps in a Limited Accreditation Review

Limited accreditation reviews consist of the following steps:

1. The LCME sets the date when the report of the limited survey will be reviewed. The virtual limited visit is scheduled by the LCME Secretariat in time for the report to be reviewed at the LCME-specified meeting.
2. The school develops a plan with descriptions of the actions it will take to address each cited area of unsatisfactory or satisfactory with a need for monitoring performance. The “action plan” is submitted to the LCME Secretariat, which reviews and provides feedback on the plan during a virtual consultation. The action plan is not submitted to or reviewed by the LCME or the limited survey team.
3. By six months before the virtual limited visit, the dean is sent a focused letter with information on each of the cited elements to compile as a briefing book for the survey team.
4. The briefing book is due by six weeks before the first day of the limited visit.
5. The survey team conducts a virtual survey visit and prepares a survey report for review by the LCME.
6. Action on accreditation by the LCME.

# Documents Related to the Accreditation Process

## Documents for Schools

Schools should review the following publications located on the LCME website ([lcme.org/publications](http://lcme.org/publications/)). Since many of the documents are revised annually, review the documents for the year in which the survey visit will occur.

* The ***Functions and Structure of a Medical School***contains the accreditation standards and elements that will be used to review a program in that academic year.
* The ***Data Collection Instrument*** **(DCI)** contains the data and information that the school must provide for each element. There are versions of this publication for full, provisional, and preliminary surveys.
* ***The Role of Students in the Accreditation of U.S. Medical Education Programs*** outlines the roles and responsibilities of students in the accreditation process and provides expectations for topics to be covered in the student-prepared questionnaire that contributes to the independent student analysis (ISA). The school should ensure that the student leaders entrusted with responsibility for managing the ISA have access to and use the model survey questions and report the survey data as instructed in this publication. There are versions of this publication for full and provisional surveys.
* The ***Checklist of Requirements for Completing the Independent Student Analysis*** should be consulted as a quick summary of the requirements for preparing the independent student analysis (ISA). There are versions of the checklist for full and provisional surveys.
* The ***Guide to the Development of the Institutional Self-study Summary Report*** describes the process for preparing the self-study report for a full accreditation survey.
* The ***Guide to the Planning Self-study*** describes the process for conducting the self-study for preliminary accreditation and includes the questions that must be considered and answered by the medical school in the self-study summary report*.*
* The ***Guide to the Survey Process for Provisional Accreditation*** describes the process for schools preparing for provisional accreditation.

In addition to the below publications, it is recommended schools review the ***Survey Report Template*** for their specific type of visit.

## Documents for Survey Teams

Survey teams will use the following publications located on the LCME website ([lcme.org/publications](http://lcme.org/publications/)). Since many of the documents are revised annually, review the documents for the year in which the survey visit will occur.

* The ***Functions and Structure of a Medical School***contains the accreditation standards and elements that will be used to review a program in that academic year.
* The ***Survey Report and Team Findings Guide*** contains the instructions for completing, reviewing, and submitting the survey report for full, provisional, preliminary, and limited surveys.
* The ***Survey Report Template*** contains the specific questions that survey team members are expected to answer for each element for each type of survey. Survey team members complete their writing assignments by answering each question and providing the requested information within the template. The template also contains the tables that serve as background for the narrative portions of each element. Medical schools also may find the template useful to understand what a team is expected to document for each element. There are versions of this template for full, provisional, preliminary, and limited surveys.
* The ***Exit Report Template*** is used by survey teams in preparing the report of team findings. There are versions of this template for full, provisional, preliminary, and limited surveys.
* The ***Survey******Team Findings Template*** should be used to prepare the final list of survey team findings for review by the LCME Secretariat and the dean and for final submission to the LCME.
* The ***Visit Schedule Template*** contains a model schedule for the survey visit. This likely will be adapted based on discussions between the survey team and the school.

# Survey Visit Structure and Survey Team Composition

## Visit Structure for Full, Provisional, and Preliminary Surveys

The visit schedule template for full, provisional, and preliminary surveys provides a guide for survey visit planning. The survey team secretary and the school’s faculty accreditation lead (FAL) should modify the template schedule, as necessary, to accommodate the distinctive characteristics of the school being visited. Sessions may be expanded, shortened, or combined, or new sessions created, but all topics that must be addressed in the survey report must be reviewed through discussions with school personnel and/or review of the DCI and other materials submitted by the school.

Prior to the survey visit and after receipt and review of the materials submitted by the school in its survey package, the survey team meets to discuss areas of focus during the visit and additional information to be obtained prior to and/or during the visit. The formal visit begins with a private entrance conference with the dean. During the visit, the survey team meets with faculty, students, administrators, staff and, if relevant, residents and representatives of clinical affiliates who can provide or clarify information related to the accreditation elements. While meetings with faculty members and students typically take place without the presence of institutional leaders, the dean’s participation is appropriate during some of the team’s meetings, especially those regarding finances. The survey team develops and refines a list of summary findings, and creates an exit report that will be provided to the dean within one week of the conclusion of the visit. The exit report includes the survey team’s findings of areas where the team believes that there is evidence that performance in elements is unsatisfactory or satisfactory with a need for monitoring. These findings are preliminary and may be altered during the review of the draft report by the LCME Secretariat and by the LCME based on the information in the final survey report. The team’s findings, therefore, are not for widespread dissemination at this point and should be held confidentially by the school leadership.

After the final survey report and team findings are sent to the LCME Secretariat, the dean receives an evaluation form emailed from [lcme@aamc.org](mailto:lcme@aamc.org) and has the optional opportunity to evaluate and provide feedback on the survey team and survey visit. The survey team chair and team secretary also receive an evaluation form emailed from [lcme@aamc.org](mailto:lcme@aamc.org) to provide feedback on survey team members.

## Visit Structure for Limited Surveys

Limited survey visits focus on issues related to performance in specific elements that previously were identified by the LCME as unsatisfactory or satisfactory with a need for monitoring. Therefore, the visit is typically shorter in duration than a full survey visit. The limited survey visit may include meetings with institutional administrators, faculty members, students, and representatives of affiliated institutions and programs, as relevant to the elements being reviewed during the survey visit. The survey report prepared following a limited survey is focused on the elements that were reviewed and conveys the survey team’s findings and recommendations regarding the status of those elements, although new areas that come to the attention of the survey team during the visit may be included. As with other survey types, an exit report is sent to the dean by one week following the conclusion of the visit.

## Survey Team Size and Composition

**For full accreditation surveys**

For programs undergoing a full accreditation survey, the survey team will normally consist of five or six members. The team often includes at least one member of the LCME or the LCME Secretariat, at least one physician who holds an active medical license and who is or recently has been actively engaged in medical practice (“practitioner”), and at least one medical educator who possesses a doctoral-level graduate or professional degree and holds or has held a faculty appointment at an LCME-accredited medical education program (“educator”).

One of the team members is designated as the team chair, whose role is to serve as the official voice of the team and to lead its deliberations. Another member is designated as team secretary and is responsible for coordinating visit preparations and visit schedule development for the survey team and for compiling the survey report. The remaining team members will often include a faculty fellow, who functions as a regular team member. In appointing full survey teams, the LCME Secretariat will make all reasonable efforts to balance the team in terms of accreditation experience, gender, race, ethnicity, professional expertise, practitioner/educator status, and familiarity with the type of institution being surveyed.

**For limited, preliminary, and provisional accreditation surveys, and Secretariat fact-finding visits**

For programs undergoing limited, preliminary, and provisional accreditation surveys, the survey team will typically consist of three or four members, including one or more medical educators who possess a doctoral-level graduate or professional degree and who hold or have held a faculty appointment at an LCME-accredited medical school, and at least one practitioner. One of the team members will be designated as team chair and another as team secretary. When circumstances allow, the members of limited survey teams will include a member of the LCME or LCME Secretariat. A Secretariat fact-finding visit is a type of limited visit conducted by two or more members of the LCME Secretariat at the direction of the LCME.

# Role of the Medical School in the Accreditation Process

The faculty accreditation lead (FAL) and the survey visit coordinator (SVC) fill two critical roles and should be appointed by the dean prior to the school beginning its data gathering.

**Faculty Accreditation Lead (FAL)**

The FAL should be a senior faculty member who may also hold an administrative position and who is knowledgeable about the medical school and its educational program. This individual should be able to identify institutional policies and information sources and ensure participation by members of the administration, faculty, and student body before and during the survey visit. Ideally, the FAL will be familiar with LCME survey visit processes and the intent of accreditation elements and may previously have served on a survey team or as their school’s faculty fellow.

The school must ensure that the FAL has appropriate administrative support, financial resources, and release time from other duties to accomplish the responsibilities associated with this role. The FAL has the following responsibilities:

* Answer questions during DCI preparation
* Assign specific questions/sections of the DCI to individuals with the appropriate institutional knowledge
* Coordinate and ensure adequate support for the ISA
* Synthesize all narrative DCI responses into a cohesive, factually, and stylistically consistent document with each question answered clearly and completely
* Ensure factual accuracy, consistency among the sections, and typographical/grammatical consistency with LCME DCI requirements s
* Coordinate the activities of the self-study task force
* Ensure the self-study executive summary report addresses institutional strengths, areas of concern related to accreditation elements, and strategies to address identified problems
* Develop the survey visit agenda in collaboration with the survey team secretary
* Serve as the school’s primary point of contact for the LCME Secretariat and survey team secretary

**Survey Visit Coordinator (SVC)**

The SVC should be an experienced senior staff member who will manage the logistics prior to and during the survey visit and may perform other administrative functions such as formatting and submitting the survey package. The SVC is not responsible for developing or reviewing the content of the DCI. For on-site visits, the SVC will typically make hotel reservations for the team, coordinate ground transportation for the visit, schedule meeting rooms for the survey visit, and schedule/remind the necessary faculty and staff identified for sessions during the survey visit.

The dean will receive a request via email to complete the [Survey Personnel Designation Form](https://www.jotform.com/lcme/lcme-survey-personnel-form) to appoint the FAL and SVC for full, provisional, limited, and preliminary visits. This form also asks for contact information of the dean and the senior administrative official of the sponsoring organization (e.g., university president or chancellor, health system chief executive officer) which is used for formal LCME correspondence about LCME decisions.

## Survey Visit Preparation and Logistics

**Reviewing Survey Team Membership**

A draft list of survey team members is sent to the dean about four months prior to the survey visit. The dean should inform the LCME Secretariat promptly if there are concerns about any team member due to a perceived conflict of interest or other valid reasons. A final team list, with member’s titles and contact information, is sent to the dean via SEFT about three months before the visit.

**In-Person Full, Provisional, and Preliminary Survey Visits**

Effective in AY 2022-23, all full, provisional, and preliminary survey visits will be conducted in-person, and limited survey visits will be conducted virtually.

Hotel Arrangements

The SVC is responsible for hotel reservations for each member of the survey team and should obtain an institutional or educational discount, if available. The SVC should inform the hotel that guests will be paying for their own rooms, even if a school credit card is used to make the reservation. The school should select a full-service hotel, preferably near the campus and convenient to restaurants and taxi service. The hotel should be of appropriate quality, but not extravagant in cost. If costs of team rooms or the suite for the survey team chair appear out of the norm, the SVC or the FAL should consult with the LCME Secretariat before finalizing arrangements.

The number of hotel nights needed should be discussed with the FAL and the survey team secretary. The school should guarantee the rooms for late arrival and have the hotel send a reservation confirmation directly to each survey team member. Each survey team member needs a single room, with either a suite for the survey team chair large enough for team meetings or a conference room for the survey team to use during the evenings of the visit.

Ground Transportation

Survey team members make their own airline reservations. The school should provide instructions about transportation options from airport to hotel. In cases where the airport is a substantial distance from the medical school or where taxis are not readily available at the airport, it may be necessary for the SVC to arrange ground transportation between the airport and hotel. If so, these arrangements should be coordinated with the survey team secretary.

The SVC should arrange transportation for the survey team each day between the hotel and the medical school and to any instructional sites (e.g., affiliated hospitals, regional campuses) they will visit. The survey team secretary and SVC should determine where and when the team will be picked up or met at the hotel. This information should be included in the survey visit schedule.

Meals

The school should provide meals (i.e., breakfast, lunch), beverages, and snacks during the time the survey team is at the school. The SVC should check with the survey team secretary or the individual team members about food allergies or dietary restrictions. The costs of other meals (i.e., dinners) are the responsibility of the survey team (typically the survey team secretary or chair). The school’s suggestions for restaurants for survey team dinners are appreciated. Restaurant suggestions may be provided to the survey team secretary prior to the visit.

Survey Team's "Home Room" at the Medical School

The survey team requires a “home room” at the school with wireless access. IT support should be available in case survey team members have difficulty with internet connections. The home room should have a conference table large enough to accommodate survey team meetings with school personnel. A second meeting room is needed for sessions in the case that the survey team divides.

The SVC should provide access to a set of materials in the survey team home room, in hard or electronic copy as requested by the team secretary. This may include a copy of the DCI, updates provided to the survey team before and during the visit, and any other documents requested by the survey team, such as course evaluations or syllabi.

Provide tent cards for each survey team member and for those persons with whom the team will meet. Survey team members should also have name tags that clip on or hang from a neck chain.

Gifts to Survey Team Members

The school must not provide gifts to survey team members (e.g., food baskets at the hotel, school memorabilia). The school should not order snacks or beverages for the survey team in the survey team chair’s suite.

**Virtual Limited Survey Visits**For virtual limited survey visits, the SVC coordinates with campus IT to ensure that the survey team and school participants can access the visit sessions. This should be discussed with the survey team secretary, and information on how to log into the visit should be sent to the team prior to the visit. The SVC could schedule a practice run for the survey team (and for school participants, if desired) to ensure that all are familiar with the selected platform (e.g., Zoom) and comfortable with its use. It is helpful to have IT “on-call” during the visit to troubleshoot any problems. For efficiency during the visit, it is helpful to have a lead for each session, who coordinates which participant will answer specific team member questions.

## Submission of the Survey Package/Briefing Book

**Survey Package Submission for Full, Provisional, and Preliminary Surveys**

Twelve weeks prior to the date of the first day of the survey visit, the dean's office should submit the survey package, relevant to the specific type of visit, using the SEFT account and instructions provided by the LCME Secretariat. The dean and FAL will receive an email from LCME Secretariat staff four weeks before the survey package is due with SEFT account access and instructions for uploading files.

A complete survey package consists of the following:

* Completed DCI
* DCI Appendix (supporting documents for each section of the DCI)
* Institutional Self-study Summary Report [full and preliminary surveys only]
* Independent Student Analysis (ISA) [full and provisional surveys only]
* AAMC Medical School Graduation Questionnaire (AAMC GQ) Individual School Report [full surveys only].

**Briefing Book Submission for Limited Surveys**

Six weeks prior to the date of the first day of the survey visit, the dean’s office should submit the briefing book using the SEFT account and instructions provided by the LCME Secretariat. The dean and FAL will receive an email from LCME Secretariat staff four weeks before the briefing book is due with SEFT account access and instructions for uploading files.

## Survey Package Updates

**Updates to the Survey Package for Full, Provisional, and Preliminary Surveys**

Both the survey team members and the LCME Secretariat review the documents in the survey package. If any updating is required prior to the survey visit, the LCME Secretariat or the survey team secretary communicates the details to the FAL. Updated materials can usually be provided in one batched submission up to 30 calendar days before the visit, as needed. Unrequested (unsolicited) updates may not be provided later than 30 calendar days before the start of the survey visit. Information requested by the survey team may be provided until the close of the visit.

Updates to the survey package should be emailed to each member of the survey team. At the conclusion of the visit, all updates, including those provided to the survey team on site, should be compiled onto a USB (thumb) drive and given to each team member. No additional information will be accepted by the team or the LCME Secretariat after the conclusion of the visit.

Schools are also required to submit one end-of-visit update to the LCME Secretariat. That update should consist of all updates and other information provided to the survey team from the time of the initial survey package/briefing book submission until the conclusion of the survey visit (i.e., the content is identical to the USB provided to team members on the last day of an on-site visit). At the conclusion of the final day of the survey visit, the complete batch of updates should be emailed to the LCME Secretariat via [lcmesubmissions@aamc.org](mailto:lcmesubmissions@aamc.org). If the updates are too large to be emailed, use the SEFT account from the original submission. and notify the LCME via [lcmesubmissions@aamc.org](mailto:lcmesubmissions@aamc.org) that the updates have been submitted.

**Common Data Updates**

The following data sources may need to be updated either prior to submission of the survey package or as part of the updates to the survey team:

* MCAT scores and GPAs of the most recent matriculating class
* USMLE Step 1 pass rates and Step 2 CK pass rates and scores
* Admissions Data
* Most recent LCME Part I-A Annual Financial Questionnaire (AFQ) and Overview of Organization and Financial Characteristics document

**General Update Guidelines for Full, Provisional, and Preliminary Surveys**

The overall goal when providing post-submission updates is to make the new information easy for the survey team to identify and integrate into the existing survey package. Survey team members often copy and paste relevant data from the survey package into the survey report. To facilitate this process, updated documents should be submitted in Microsoft Word.

All updates should be tracked and recorded in an update summary document that provides a one or two sentence description of each update, along with the relevant sections and page number(s) that were affected by the update. When updating portions of the DCI, add the word “UPDATED” along with the submission date and the relevant element at the top of the relevant pages. Submit the updated pages, updating pagination as needed.

Updates to narrative responses in the DCI should be made using “track changes” so that the original text is visible, and the corrected text is in a red font. Updates to data tables should be made equally clear with highlighting or red text. Follow the same procedures when updating the appendix. In addition, be sure to update the table of contents. Only send updated pages, not the complete DCI.

**Updates to the School’s Submission for Limited Surveys**

A limited survey visit does not include updates to the briefing book; however, updates may be provided by the school at the request of the survey team. Note that updates that are not requested by the survey team (unsolicited updates) will not be accepted. If updates are requested, the school’s FAL should confirm with the survey team secretary how any updates should be transmitted to the team. Information requested by the survey team may be provided until the close of the visit.

## Student Involvement

A well-conducted student survey with a high response rate and a thoughtful analysis of the data (together termed the independent student analysis) is a necessary component of many elements in the DCI and useful information for the survey team for full and provisional survey visits. For limited survey visits, students may be asked to participate in a survey of students in all or specific classes, as determined by the elements that are being reviewed. While no student narrative is required in the case of student surveys for limited visits, the data tables are included in the information provided to survey teams and in the survey team reports.

For information about the role students play in the survey process, see *The Role of Students in the Accreditation of U.S. Medical Education Programs* for the relevant year and survey type, found on the LCME website ([lcme.org/publications](http://lcme.org/publications/)). Students should be provided access to this document and to the *Checklist of Requirements for Completing the ISA*. In addition to developing the ISA, student participation can contribute an important perspective to the self-study task force.

All full and provisional survey teams and many limited survey teams meet with students. Students should be selected well in advance of the survey so they may provide meaningful input from their own perspectives and from the student body as a whole. For full and provisional surveys, students should receive a copy of the ISA. A broad range of students should meet with survey team members to ensure that the team has access to truly representative information and perspectives. The survey team will seek student opinions about a variety of topics related to the medical education program, student services, and the learning environment, including student counseling services, health services, financial aid services and debt counseling, and the role of students in institutional policy-making and educational program evaluation. Students also should serve as guides for survey team tours during on-site visits.

## The Survey Visit

**Developing the Survey Visit Schedule**

Shortly after receiving the survey package, the survey team secretary contacts the FAL about the visit schedule, which can use the survey visit schedule template for the type of visit posted on the LCME website as a reference. The visit schedule should be customized for the characteristics of the institution, for example, the presence of a regional campus, and based on a pre-review by the survey team to identify areas requiring more information/explanation. For limited visits, the survey team and FAL consider how best to “package” the elements to be covered. When the schedule is finalized, the school should send a copy to each member of the survey team or to the team secretary for distribution to the team.

The entrance conference with the dean should be scheduled well in advance (around the time that the date of the survey visit has been set), so that the dates and times can be locked into the dean’s schedule. Other individuals with whom the survey team will meet should also be informed about the visit dates and told that their availability and participation are expected for the duration of the visit.

The SVC should ensure that individuals participating in the visit know the time and location of their meeting(s) with the survey team. Tours of education facilities and, if scheduled, of one or more clinical affiliates should be led by student guides. The administrators of affiliated clinical facilities should be advised that survey team members may be visiting patient care units but will not be viewing patient records or other confidential information. The survey team will not be meeting with the directors of these facilities during the tours unless the survey team secretary agrees to such meetings as part of the visit schedule. Such meetings may occur as part of another scheduled session during the visit.

**The Exit Report**

The dean will receive a written copy of the survey team findings by one week after the conclusion of the visit. The dean should be informed that initial survey team findings are subject to potential revision during the review of the survey report and should be held confidential by the school leadership.

**Survey Report Review and Action on Accreditation**

School representatives should review the *Survey Report and Team Findings Guide* on the LCME website ([lcme.org/publications](http://lcme.org/publications/)) for details on the process of survey report development and review.

After initial review by the LCME Secretariat and the survey team, the survey team secretary will send the dean the draft survey report and survey team findings. It is the dean’s responsibility to ensure that the draft report is carefully reviewed and that written corrections of errors of fact are sent to the survey team secretary. Comments related to the team findings should not be included. The dean’s response can only include information that was contained in the survey package or provided to the team on site. The survey team secretary, in consultation with the survey team chair, considers the dean’s comments and makes those changes they consider to be appropriate. The team secretary then notifies the dean of the changes that have been made. If the dean has remaining concerns about the process of the visit, he or she may send a letter to the LCME. The dean’s letter is reviewed by the LCME when it considers the survey report. No information related to survey report content or survey team findings may be included in the dean’s letter to the LCME.

The survey team findings do not necessarily represent the final findings of the LCME. In its review of the survey report, the LCME may add, delete, or modify findings of performance in elements. The LCME also will decide on the program’s compliance with each accreditation standard, on accreditation status, and any required follow-up.

The dean and the sponsoring organization’s chief executive will receive a communication about how to access the final survey report and the LCME’s letter of accreditation through SEFT. The letter of accreditation contains the final LCME findings related to performance in elements and compliance with standards, the accreditation status of the medical education program, and any request for follow-up. Once the letter of accreditation arrives, the dean and the chief executive may release the survey report and the letter of accreditation at their discretion.

# Role of the Survey Team in the Accreditation Process

## Duties of the Survey Team Chair

**Overview**

The survey team chair serves as the official voice of the team and leads its deliberations during the survey visit. During the survey visit, the survey team chair makes introductions and explains the purpose of the survey visit during meetings with school representatives. The survey team chair leads the survey team’s discussions as the team works to develop its findings. During the visit, the survey team chair should see that the team paces its work and consolidates its observations and findings at the end of each day so that the team’s findings are refined each evening and each of the elements is discussed by the team by the conclusion of the visit. The team likely will meet again after the visit to review the findings before the exit report is sent to the dean.

**Review of the Survey Package**

As soon as the survey package or briefing book for a limited visit become available, the survey team chair should review the school’s materials. Any potential problem areas (i.e., elements that could be unsatisfactory or satisfactory with a need for monitoring) or areas requiring more information/explanation should be communicated to the survey team secretary before the survey visit begins so that they can contribute to the visit schedule and be compiled into an initial set of summary findings to be discussed at the initial team meeting.

**The Survey Visit Schedule**

The survey team chair works with the survey team secretary to finalize the visit schedule. The survey team chair should review the draft visit schedule with the survey team secretary to ensure that accreditation standards and elements are discussed with relevant school personnel, and that attention is given to potential problem areas. If the survey team is divided into groups during the visit, the survey team chair should lead one group and the survey team secretary the other.

**The Survey Report**

The survey team chair is responsible for drafting sections of the survey report. Survey report sections should address the questions in the survey report template. When the survey report and summary team findings have been compiled, the survey team chair should carefully review them to confirm that the summary team findings are sufficiently documented and supported in the survey report narrative and appendices. If the school’s dean objects to the factual content of the survey report, the survey team secretary should review the objections with the survey team chair.

## Duties of the Survey Team Secretary

**Overview**

The survey team secretary works with the school’s FAL and SVC to plan and finalize the survey visit arrangements, including the survey visit schedule and logistics, and assigns team members to review specific standards/elements. The survey team secretary is responsible for oral and written communication with the school and other team members, and for communication with the two LCME Co-Secretaries. All contact between the school and the survey team should be through the survey team secretary. The survey team secretary is responsible for synthesizing and finalizing the survey report from the written findings and narratives prepared by survey team members.

**Review of the Survey Package**

The survey team secretary reviews the school’s DCI to ensure that it is complete and up to date; if important omissions are discovered, the survey team secretary asks the school’s FAL to supply the missing materials. The LCME Secretariat also screens the survey package but does not review these materials in detail. The survey team secretary should be familiar with the major findings of the DCI, self-study summary report, ISA, and the school’s accreditation history since the previous survey visit. If members of the survey team identify gaps in the pre-survey materials or request additional information, the survey team secretary works with the FAL to obtain the requested information.

**Survey Visit Schedule**

The survey team secretary works with the FAL to develop a draft schedule after initial review of the survey package by the survey team members. The survey team secretary reviews the draft survey visit schedule with the survey team chair. Once the final schedule has been established, the survey team secretary asks the FAL to distribute copies of the survey visit schedule to all survey team members.

**Survey Report Writing Assignments, Initial Meeting, and Findings**

Directly after receiving the survey package from the school, the team secretary assigns specific elements to be the responsibility of each survey team member and asks the members to review the information for each of their assigned elements. Within four to five weeks of receiving their assignments, the survey team meets for the first time to identify any elements that potentially are satisfactory with a need for monitoring or unsatisfactory, or for which there is insufficient information. This review informs development of the survey visit schedule by the survey team secretary and the FAL. The team secretary should inform team members that during the survey visit they will be responsible for leading the questioning for their assigned elements.

Survey team members write a narrative on each assigned area under the relevant question in the *Survey Report Template*. The survey team secretary should ensure that survey team members are familiar with the *Survey Report Template* they will use to draft their sections of the survey report.

If it is necessary to divide the team into two groups during the visit to cover all subject areas, each group should be led either by the survey team chair or survey team secretary. Team writing assignments should consider divided team sessions to ensure that a survey team member is not assigned any topics for which he or she will not be present at a session.

**Contacting the LCME Secretariat**

The survey team secretary should feel free to contact the LCME Secretariat before and during the survey visit with questions on the status of the DCI, the institutional self-study summary report, the visit arrangements, or the role of an observer (if applicable).Any problems arising during the survey visit that cannot be resolved by the survey team chair and survey team secretary should be communicated immediately to the LCME Secretariat by phone or email.

**Faculty Fellows and Inexperienced Team Members**

Full survey teams usually include an LCME Faculty Fellow and/or others who may be new team members. The survey team secretary should contact such members prior to the survey visit to provide a briefing about expectations and assignments. Like regular survey team members, faculty fellows and new team members are given responsibility for writing sections of the survey report. During and following the survey visit, the team secretary should provide mentoring and constructive feedback.

**Finalizing Survey Team Findings**

The goal of the survey visit is to determine the status of each element, including identifying those elements where performance is satisfactory with a need for monitoring or unsatisfactory. These findings will form the content of the exit report and the set of team findings. The preferred practice is for the survey team to progressively develop and refine its summary findings prior to the visit and at work sessions each evening during the visit and shortly afterward. The survey team secretary is responsible for ensuring that the survey team makes a judgment about each element and for drafting the team’s findings (or for assigning team members to develop drafts) to be included in the exit report.

**The Survey Report**

The survey team secretary informs team members of the timetable for preparing their sections of the survey report. Survey team members submit their narratives, using the *Survey Report Template* and following instructions in the *Survey Report and Team Findings Guide*.

The survey team secretary submits the survey report draft narrative and accompanying team findings document to the LCME Secretariat at both [lcmesubmissions@aamc.org](mailto:lcmesubmissions@aamc.org) and [dwaechter@aamc.org](mailto:dwaechter@aamc.org). After receiving comments from the LCME Secretariat and making needed changes, the survey team secretary sends the draft survey report and the findings document to team members and allows them five business days for a review. After incorporating any team comments, the team secretary sends the draft survey report to the medical school dean. The dean returns comments on and suggested corrections to the draft survey report to the survey team secretary within ten business days of receipt. If the dean finds errors of fact in the draft survey report, the survey team secretary reviews the issues with the survey team chair and communicates the outcome to the dean, specifically referring to each of the dean’s comments. The dean is informed electronically of the factual corrections that were made and any comments that were not incorporated in the survey report.

The survey team secretary submits the final survey report narrative, appendix, survey team findings, and associated communications to the LCME Secretariat via the team’s SEFT account. The associated communications include all correspondence to and from the dean related to the review of the survey report. The survey team secretary emails [lcmesubmissions@aamc.org](mailto:lcmesubmissions@aamc.org) to confirm that all materials are final and submitted.

**Opportunity for a Conference Call with LCME Members Reviewing the Survey Report**

Should the LCME members reviewing a survey report require clarification of a specific aspect of the report content while preparing their review for the LCME, the LCME Secretariat will arrange a conference call between the reviewers and the survey team secretary. A member of the LCME Secretariat will participate in the call if the team secretary is not a member of the Secretariat.

## Duties of Survey Team Members/Faculty Fellows

**Review of Survey Package**

All survey team members review the school’s survey package in their areas of responsibility soon after receiving their assignments from the team secretary, including the specific documents and information contained and referenced in the informational mailing through SEFT, (e.g., the school’s accreditation history). If there are any notable omissions or inconsistencies in the DCI or self-study summary report, the survey team member informs the survey team secretary as soon as possible so that the survey team secretary can request additional information or clarification from the school. According to the process and timeline set by the survey team secretary, each team member notifies the team secretary where performance in elements appears to be satisfactory with a need for monitoring and unsatisfactory and where there is insufficient information to make a performance judgment. This information is compiled by the survey team secretary and discussed at the initial team meeting. Team members should not communicate directly with the school for any reason.

**Main Responsibilities During and After the Survey Visit**

Survey team members are expected to evaluate the educational program and the resources supporting it, leading to an assessment of the school’s performance in the elements contained in the *Functions and Structure of a Medical School.* Survey team members:

* Collect and record additional data and impressions during the visit based on meetings with school personnel and review of additional documentation
* Contribute to development of the consensus list of elements where performance is satisfactory with a need for monitoring and unsatisfactory
* Provide the survey team secretary with the assigned written sections of the survey report by the time requested by the team secretary (for example, within approximately two weeks from the conclusion of the survey visit. The *Survey Report and Team Findings Guide* should be used to inform the process of survey report development, and the *Survey Report Template* should be used to write your sections of the survey report narrative. Information should be provided under the relevant question in the template.
* Review and correct the draft survey report prepared by the team secretary by the deadline set so that the team’s final survey report and accompanying survey team findings can be formatted and forwarded to the LCME Secretariat.

## LCME Travel Reimbursement Policy and Expense Survey Report Processing

The LCME, via its sponsoring organizations, covers the cost of LCME full surveys, except for the first full survey of a developing medical school. The medical school covers expenses for limited, provisional, and preliminary survey visits according to a predefined formula (see the expense recovery section of the LCME website for details, [lcme.org/about/expense](http://lcme.org/about/expense/)).

Before the visit, survey team members receive a copy of the LCME travel reimbursement policy, information on making travel arrangements, and instructions on submitting requests for reimbursement. Survey team chairs, secretaries, and members are reimbursed for all reasonable out-of-pocket expenses (in accordance with LCME travel policies) incurred during the survey visit.

All participants are expected to arrange their own (coach) air travel, either independently or through the AMA BCD Travel booking process. Instructions for accessing BCD Travel is included the information sent to survey teams. To obtain the most economical fare, reservations should be made well in advance of the visit. If a discount fare or the limited availability of flights requires staying over an extra night, the LCME reimburses the participant for the additional hotel and meal expenditures. The school reserves hotel accommodations for survey team members, but the survey team members are responsible for paying all hotel charges upon check-out. Survey team members should provide the hotel with a credit card at check-in and obtain receipts for all applicable expenses.

Requests for reimbursement must be submitted within 30 days of a survey visit using the electronic expense reimbursement form provided to the survey team. While it is understood that strict adherence to the reimbursement policy will not always be possible, significant departures from the LCME travel polices must be justified before reimbursement will be made. The Chicago (AMA) LCME office handles requests for reimbursement. Any questions regarding reimbursable expenses should be directed to Felicia Walker at [felicia.walker@ama-assn.org](mailto:felicia.walker@ama-assn.org). Travel expenses for faculty fellows and observers are the responsibility of their own institutions or agencies and will not be reimbursed by the LCME.

# Appendix A: Example Full Survey Timeline

| **≈ Months +/- Survey Visit** | **Responsible Individuals/Groups** | **Activities** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| -24/18 | Dean | Use the [Survey Personnel Designation Form](https://www.jotform.com/lcme/lcme-survey-personnel-form) to notify the LCME Secretariat of the [FAL](http://lcme.org/glossary/#faculty-accreditation-lead) and [SVC](http://lcme.org/glossary/#staff-visit-coordinator) |
| -18 | LCME Secretariat and Dean  FAL and SVC | Establish and confirm survey dates  Attend the LCME Survey Prep Workshop |
| -15 | FAL | Access the [DCI](http://lcme.org/publications/#DCI) for the survey year  Appoint members to the institutional [self-study task force](http://lcme.org/glossary/#self-study-task-force)  Assign sections of the DCI for completion by appropriate people/groups  Designate team of students to conduct the student survey and write the ISA |
| -16 | ISA Task Force | Review the questions and instructions in *The Role of Students in the Accreditation of U.S. Medical Education Programs for Full Accreditation* and the *Checklist of Requirements for Completing the Independent Student Analysis* (ISA)  Add questions relevant to the school |
| -15 | ISA Task Force | Distribute survey to student body  Note: Because data from the student survey are needed for completion of the DCI, we suggest that the survey should be open for a maximum of two months |
| -13 | ISA Task Force | Compile student survey data and send to FAL for incorporation into DCI  Begin analysis of data |
| -13 | FAL | Distribute completed DCI sections to the self-study task force |
| -12/8 | Self-study Task Force | Review and analyze relevant sections of completed DCI |
| -9 | ISA Task Force | Provide final ISA report to FAL for distribution to self-study task force members |
| -8/-5 | Self-study Task Force | Review and analyze DCI and ISA reports  Prepare the self-study summary report  Develop plans and implement changes to correct issues identified in self-study process |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| -4 | FAL and Dean | Receive school’s unique Secure Electronic File Transfer (SEFT) account information and survey package submission instructions from LCME Secretariat staff via email; FAL to confirm receipt to [lcmesubmissions@aamc.org](mailto:lcmesubmissions@aamc.org)  Review survey team member roster from LCME Secretariat staff and send email to [dwaechter@aamc.org](mailto:dwaechter@aamc.org) if a potential conflict of interest is identified |
| -3 | FAL and Dean  FAL | Update DCI, DCI appendices, and self-study summary report with current information  Review survey package for consistency and accuracy  Submit survey package via school’s SEFT account and email [lcmesubmissions@aamc.org](mailto:lcmesubmissions@aamc.org) to confirm it contains final version of survey package |
| -3/2.5 | Survey Team | Receive team’s unique SEFT account information and instructions for accessing the submitted survey package from LCME Secretariat staff via email |
| -2.5/-1 | Survey Team Secretary  (for on-site visits) | Upon receipt of the survey package, contact FAL/SVC to:   * Discuss travel and hotel * Coordinate visit logistics, including round-trip daily travel between hotel and school and travel between campus and other sites, as necessary   Email survey team to:   * Provide hotel information * Request travel itineraries * Secure information about any dietary preferences or requirements * Assign individual writing assignments * Confirm that team members received the survey package * Provide travel advice * Offer advice on strategy for reading the survey package and identifying areas to include in the visit * Schedule first team meeting to discuss preliminary findings/questions/request supplemental materials from the school   Contact the FAL/SVC to discuss timeline for the first draft of visit schedule and request supplemental information (as needed)  Review draft schedule and list of session participants and contact team chair to discuss preferences |
| -1 | Dean/FAL | Last date for school to send unsolicited updates to the survey team (must be submitted 30 calendar days before survey visit begins) |
| -1/-.5 | Survey Team Secretary/Survey Team | Finalize visit schedule and participants with school  Possible telephone conference call with survey team |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Survey Visit | Survey Team Secretary  Dean/FAL  Survey Team  Survey Team Secretary | Schedule debrief meetings and a meeting to finalize team findings  Develop team findings and prepare the survey exit report. Send to team for review.  At the conclusion of the survey visit, submit final batch updates to the LCME Secretariat via [lcmesubmissions@aamc.org](mailto:lcmesubmissions@aamc.org) or the school’s SEFT account (depending on the size of the files/zip file)  Submit draft survey report writing assignments as requested by the team secretary following survey visit  Exit report is emailed to the dean one week after the survey visit |
| +1.5/+2.0 | Survey Team Secretary | Send draft survey report and survey team findings document to the LCME Secretariat via [lcmesubmissions@aamc.org](mailto:lcmesubmissions@aamc.org) and [dwaechter@aamc.org](mailto:dwaechter@aamc.org)  Incorporate any LCME Secretariat edits into draft team report as needed |
| +2.5/+3.0 | Survey Team Secretary | Send draft survey report and survey team findings document to the team and then to the dean for review  Request feedback from dean within ten business days on the draft survey report  Incorporate dean’s requested changes to the draft survey report, as needed  Notify dean of the suggested revisions that were and were not incorporated into the survey report  Submit final survey report and associated communications via the team’s SEFT account provided by LCME Secretariat staff prior to the visit:   * Final report narrative and Appendix * Survey Team Findings * All communications TO the dean regarding changes to the survey report * All communications FROM the dean regarding changes to the survey report   For help in logging in or uploading files, email [lcmesubmissions@aamc.org](mailto:lcmesubmissions@aamc.org) |
| +2/+6 | LCME | Take accreditation action at [LCME meeting](http://lcme.org/about/meetings-members/) |

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Within 30 days of LCME meeting | LCME Secretariat | Send school officials the [accreditation letter](http://lcme.org/glossary/#accreditation-letter) containing accreditation action, term, and requested follow-up |
| +1.5 months following LCME meeting | LCME Secretariat | LCME Secretariat provides feedback to team members on the LCME’s action on survey team findings |