

Writing the AAA Report

Before Writing

1. **Consider context:** Although there are certain core expectations of all accredited Seventh-day Adventist institutions, the institution should be evaluated according to its own mission.
2. **Triangulate:** Confirm your assessments by checking at least 2 or 3 data sources. Crosscheck your conclusion with at least one other team member before writing it as a recommendation.
3. **Differentiate:** Avoid including every issue as a possible recommendation. Focus should be on the key areas that will assist the institution in moving forward as a quality SDA institution. Minor aspects can be included as suggestions.
4. **Set limits:** As a team, define the approximate number of recommendations overall. Recommendations should focus on major issues and should be limited to a number reasonable for the institution to manage in the period before the next full evaluation visit. From among these, 10-12 recommendations will be designated as major recommendations, those on which the institution should focus with some urgency.
5. **Seek balance:** All institutions have strengths and it is important that these be recognized. Identify these areas of strength and incorporate them as commendations. Commendations, however, should be given only for outstanding achievements or tasks performed in a superior manner, not for the normal fulfillment of a duty.

The Writing

1. **Identify an entity:** Each commendation or recommendation should be addressed to a specific group, department, or unit in the institution; but never to individuals by name.
2. **Indicate effect:** For a *commendation*, include not only what is being, and also the effect. This helps explain why what is being done is of merit.
3. **Make it measurable:** A *recommendation* should be concise and specific, with measurable ingredients. Think, how will an observer know if a specific recommendation has been fulfilled?
4. **Avoid problem solving:** A *recommendation* should identify what needs to change, but should not specify how that change should be brought about. "Giving solutions" preempts the governance role of the board or the administrative authority of the administrators.
5. **Consider explanations:** For a key *recommendation*, a lead paragraph explaining the context of the recommendation can be very appropriate. This is particularly important for controversial or sensitive issues, and helps underscore the reasonableness of the recommendation.
6. **Include sources:** Commendations and recommendations must be based on at least two sources. These can include:
 - The *Self-study* or another pertinent document
 - A direct observation
 - An interview with a board member, administrator, faculty, staff, or students (no names)
 - Or, preferably, a combination of these.

The sources that substantiate the statement are to be enclosed in parentheses following the statement. Page numbers for documents should be included.

Sample Commendations

The visiting team commends:

- The administration for their high level of positive communication with the local church community which has resulted in a series of collaborative evangelistic endeavors (*Self-study*, p. 32, interview with administrators).
- The administration, faculty, staff and students for their active involvement in the development of a spiritual master plan that is making an appreciable difference in the spiritual programming and ethos of the campus (*Self-study*, pp. 17, 47, student interviews).

Sample Recommendations

The visiting team recommends:

- That the administration reconsider its plans to build a new classroom block until the debt on the library construction has been fully paid (*Self-study*, p. 35, audited financial statement, interviews with administrators).
- That the Academic Committee develop a process for more structured evaluation of courses and teaching, that will involve feedback from students as well as from peers and administration (*Self-study*, p. 63, interviews with teachers and administrators).

Assembling the Report

1. **Eliminate redundancy:** Since team members may be submitting individual items without consultation with the whole group, it is possible that some items will be duplicated in various sections of the report. Eliminating duplication will be one of the responsibilities of the team in its final meetings.
2. **Make a fair distribution:** It is important to ensure that recommendations are widely distributed and that while they may focus on particular areas where needs are clear, lack of balance should not be the result of over-preoccupation of the team with one particular area.
3. **Identify the majors:** An important section of the report is the one identifying major recommendations. These should be those items that most impact the whole institution and are most essential to the institution's continuing quality and Seventh-day Adventist ethos. This helps the institution identify where they should place their immediate focus.
4. **Arrive at consensus:** The AAA visit is a team effort.
It is important that all members of the team be willing to support the conclusions of the group. Items that are not supported by the group should not be included in the final report.
5. **Determine the outcome:** The team must decide and fully support the final accreditation recommendation. The team should vote this action. It is also important that all members sign the signature page in the report that shows their agreement with both the major accreditation recommendation and the report that will follow it. Options include:
 - a. A five-year institutional accreditation with no interim revisit (may include reports)
 - b. A five-year institutional accreditation with an interim visit (may include reports)
 - c. Three- or four-year institutional accreditation (interim reports or visits may be included)
 - d. Probationary status, with a time limit of two years or less
 - e. Suspension of accreditation