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Middle East Association for Theological Education
رابطة الشرق الأوسط للتعليم اللاهوتي

Visiting Evaluation Team Handbook

***A practical guide for MENATE
Visiting Evaluation Teams (VETs)
and for MENATE institutions
who are preparing for
an accreditation evaluation visit
and in hosting a MENATE VET***

September 2018

*This is a screen version of the VET Handbook;
A print version is available for booklet printing on A4 paper*

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For further, up-to-date copies of this VET Handbook, please contact
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1. GENERAL REMARKS

1.1 THE PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

The MENATE *Visiting Evaluation Team Handbook* or *VET Handbook* is designed for three primary purposes:

- (i) To assist MENATE institutions who are preparing to host a Visiting Evaluation Team, and to help them to understand what to expect before, during, and following a MENATE accreditation evaluation visit;
- (ii) To help the MENATE Accrediting Commission and Accreditation Officer in appointing Visiting Evaluation Teams and VET Leaders; and in supervising the accreditation evaluation process.
- (iii) To guide MENATE Visiting Evaluation Teams in preparing for and conducting a MENATE accreditation visit, evaluating a MENATE institution and its programs for accreditation purposes, and writing and presenting its VET Report.

The *VET Handbook* and VET procedures revolve around the MENATE *Manual for Accreditation* and its general accreditation procedures, and MENATE's educational values and performance standards, which form the basis for its evaluation of institutions and their programs for MENATE accreditation purposes. As such, the *VET Handbook* must be read in conjunction with the *Manual for Accreditation*.

As this *Handbook* represents predominantly procedural matters, the MENATE Accrediting Commission may from time to time (when deemed necessary) modify and/or add to these procedures, without recourse to the MENATE General Assembly. However, major changes will first be ratified by the MENATE Executive Committee. Institutions currently in preparation for a MENATE accreditation evaluation visit will be advised if any changes to this *Handbook* may affect them as they prepare to host the MENATE VET.

1.2 AN OVERVIEW OF MENATE VISITING EVALUATION TEAMS

An essential part of objective evaluation and program improvement is peer review. The MENATE Visiting Evaluation Team (VET) fulfills the peer review function.

The purpose of a MENATE Evaluation Team is to conduct evaluations of MENATE member institutions, implementing MENATE's accreditation processes. This includes:

- (i) Thorough review of an institution's *Self-Study Report* (both the *Institutional Impact Survey* and *Self-Study Questionnaire* and supporting documentation);
- (ii) An on-site review of the institution to verify these reports and the statements and claims made therein, and to evaluate various aspects of the institution and its program(s) in relation to MENATE's educational values and performance standards, thus determining the academic credibility of the program(s) being assessed; and
- (iii) Submitting a report to the MENATE Accrediting Commission on an institution's readiness for accreditation, including recommended or required areas for institutional and program improvement, though also commending the institution for its strengths where appropriate, and coming to some initial conclusions and recommendations regarding whether or not accreditation should be granted by the Accrediting Commission for the program(s) being evaluated.

To assist institutions in successful VET appointments, MENATE has provided the following guidelines for the preparations required to receive a VET.

For VET team members to clearly understand the scope of their role, instructions and guidelines are given for VET work, before, during and after the visit.

The summative report of the VET, the *Visiting Evaluation Team Report* (or *VET Report*), is the primary document produced by the team together, but edited by the team leader. This document, written in simple but clear language, should give the institution and the MENATE Accrediting Commission an adequate summary of the institution's accomplishments and directions for further growth. Guidelines for developing this report are given below to help the VET succeed in its mission.

2. INSTITUTIONAL PREPARATION FOR A MENATE VISIT

A full outline of the steps required in the accreditation process is provided in the MENATE *Manual for Accreditation*. This *Handbook* focuses on the specific preparation required for a MENATE accreditation evaluation visit and should be read alongside the *Manual for Accreditation* for the larger accreditation framework. It is important to note that preparation for an accreditation evaluation visit must begin approximately one year (12 months) before the proposed visit.

2.1 DOCUMENTS THAT MUST BE SUBMITTED TO MENATE THREE MONTHS BEFORE THE VISIT

Three months prior to the scheduled evaluation visit, the institution should send electronically the following required documents (A4 size, in PDF file format) to the MENATE Accreditation Officer, who will forward them to the appointed Visiting Evaluation Team (VET). Language note: in most cases, and *always* for joint-accreditation visits, these documents are expected to be in English; however, if MENATE has chosen a VET who are all competent in reading Arabic, this expectation may be relaxed at the discretion of the Accreditation Officer.

(i) Accreditation reports

- The institution's new *Self-Study Report*, fully indexed (and page numbered), including:
 - Part I: The Institutional Impact Survey
 - Part II: The Self-Study Questionnaire

For these, the *Manual for Accreditation* must be consulted.

- A detailed *MENATE Index* to the *Self-Study Report* [*required only for the case of joint-evaluation visits when the Self-Study Report has been based on the template of another agency*]
- The previous *MENATE VET Report* or *Accrediting Commission Report*
- The institution's *Final Compliance Report*, summarizing actions taken with respect to the recommendations made during the previous evaluation visit, and intentions regarding any as-yet-unfulfilled recommendations (and attaching any previous *Notation Compliance Reports*)
- A compilation of the institution's Annual Reports to MENATE (since the previous accreditation visit)

(ii) Administration-related documents

- The institution's Strategic Plan document, if any
- The Constitution and By-Laws of the institution

- The most recent Annual Report to the institution's Board, Stakeholders or Supporters
- Audited accounts for the previous three financial years
- Budget summaries for the current and previous two years
- Job descriptions for staff positions
- Staff evaluation forms and procedures

(iii) Faculty-related documents

- List of full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty members and their qualifications
- Faculty Handbook (or equivalent)
- Job descriptions for faculty members
- Faculty evaluation forms and procedures

(iv) Facilities-related documents

- A site-plan of the institution's buildings
- A list of extension centers and center instructors and senior staff
- Summary of library holdings

(v) Educational program documents

- The Academic Catalog of the institution
- A detailed description of each award program (including those for which accreditation is not sought)
- A representative selection of course syllabi for each award program (note: some VETs may request to see *all* course syllabi, especially for first time accreditation of a program)
- The institution's Graduate Profile for each award program (if not already in the Self-Study Report)

(v) Student-related documents

- Student Handbook, if available
- Admissions forms
- Student evaluation and assessment forms
- Sample student transcripts and award certificates

(vi) Other documents

- Copies of promotional literature
- Other accompanying documentation or Appendices to the Self-Study Report

To reduce the number of electronic files submitted, wherever possible, the accompanying documents should be compiled into a smaller number of *indexed* PDF documents (A4 size whenever possible). MENATE evaluators should not be required to open large numbers of documents nor to deal with multiple document formats. Exceptions to this are possible for already lengthy, self-contained documents, such as the academic catalog.

Important: If the institution realizes it will not be able to submit these reports three months prior to the scheduled visit, it should contact the MENATE Accreditation Officer immediately. If an unsatisfactory delay looks likely MENATE may choose to postpone the evaluation visit. In this case any postponement expenses, including VET member flight alterations, will be the responsibility of the institution.

2.2 GUIDELINES FOR INSTITUTIONS RECEIVING A MENATE VISITING EVALUATION TEAM

2.2.1 Preliminary Visit Schedule

A preliminary visit schedule will be developed by the appointed VET leader for the visit and the evaluation coordinator of the institution, in communication with the MENATE Accreditation Officer.

A typical MENATE evaluation visit will take place over three full days. The visit may be extended if extension sites in other locations need to be visited. It may be reduced in length for new program evaluations taking place within three years of a comprehensive accreditation visit.

2.2.2 Visit Meetings and Appointments

Visit meetings and appointments will be arranged according to the purpose of the evaluation visit. For first time accreditation or the renewal of accreditation, a comprehensive whole-institution evaluation will be carried out and this means that the VET will need access to most institutional and departmental leaders, and exposure, as far as possible, to the full range of institutional activities. The VET leader and institution's evaluation coordinator should consider including some or all of the following possibilities and meetings (where applicable):

- President of the institution
 - Academic Dean
 - Dean of Students
 - Academic department heads
 - Faculty members or educators (including course writers/developers, and tutors)
 - Registrar (student records officer)
 - Field ministry coordinator
 - Spiritual life coordinator or chaplain
 - Church liaison officer
 - Librarian
 - Board chairperson and selected Board members
 - Key stakeholders, such as pastors of graduates, denominational heads, or community leaders with whom the school maintains relationships
 - Current students, including student leaders and final year students
 - Graduates (preferably from the previous five years)
 - Facilities manager
 - Financial/business manager
 - Personnel manager
 - Fundraising and communications director
 - Selected administrative staff
-
- Observation of program classes (at multiple levels if multiple awards are offered)
 - A tour of all facilities
 - Visits to extension sites
 - Regular rest breaks throughout the visit days
 - Space for additional or follow-up interviews
 - VET team meetings and report-writing time
 - A concluding (and now usually oral) report to the President and chosen leaders.
 - Pre- or post-visit site seeing (after checking with VET leader)

Once the schedule for the team's visit has been agreed by the VET leader, the institution's coordinator is responsible to arrange and finalize meetings with the various parties within the institution. The institution's coordinator is also responsible to arrange for the in-country transportation, accommodation and hospitality of the VET members, noting any dietary needs or requests.

When the team's visit includes a Sunday, the day will be observed as a day of worship and rest; no visit activities will be scheduled on Sunday.

2.2.3 Visit Travel and Expenses

The institution is responsible to cover all travel expenses (economy flights and transfers), and the food and accommodation expenses of the visitors, reimbursing them before the end of the visit.

While the institution is responsible for arranging meals and lodging for the visitors during their stay, the latter may prefer to make their own travel arrangements. If a visitor requires an overnight transfer in an intermediate country, the additional accommodation and transfer expenses should also be reimbursed by the institution. Similarly, if the VET leader requests (in advance) an additional day or two on site for report writing, any additional food and lodging expenses are likewise considered as the responsibility of the institution; report writing is an integral part of the accreditation process.

The institution is expected to cover the above-mentioned expenses for up to three MENATE evaluators; but should a fourth VET member ever be requested by MENATE, his/her expenses will be paid for by MENATE. Similarly, if MENATE requests the presence of an evaluator from outside the region, MENATE will contribute to the flight expenses when that person lives more than four hours direct flight away from the institution's capital city.

However, MENATE evaluators are expected to contribute their own time and services free of charge.

2.2.4 Visit Workroom and On-Site Documentation

A suitable and private workroom within the institution's main offices should be provided for use by the visiting team throughout the period of the visit.

Any necessary office and IT equipment to the work of the VET should be provided, including internet, printer, data projector, and photocopier access.

The workroom should also be provided with printed (or electronic) copies of:

- The final visit schedule and meeting locations
- Contact phone extensions for VET accommodation and meeting rooms
- Full names of faculty and senior staff and their contact phone numbers or extensions
- **All required reports that were submitted electronically three months prior to the visit** (see the list of these provided above).
- One complete, indexed, printout of the institution's *Self-Study Report* (Parts I and II) and accompanying documentation and appendices (and, where required, a *MENATE Index* to the SSR).
- Raw data for the *Institutional Impact Survey*
- A printed copy of the institution's *Final Compliance Report* and any previous *Notation Compliance Reports*, together with the previous *MENATE VET Report* or *Accrediting Commission Report*.

And the following additional documents:

- Course syllabi for *all* courses (if only samples were previously provided)
- Library usage statistics
- Student enrollment data for the previous six years
- Graduate placement facts
- Strategic planning materials and reports, if available
- Copies of recent audits, annual financial statements and budgets
- Annual reports to the Board and stakeholders
- Minutes of Board and Executive Committee meetings
- Publicity brochures, magazines, and booklets
- Any other information the college feels would be helpful to the Visiting Team

2.2.5 Practical Assistance and Availability of the Leadership Team

Members of the institution's administration and staff should be available to assist the team as requested. The President and Academic Dean should be available onsite throughout most of the visit.

Institution staff members should be available to transport and accompany members of the team in local travel, including any airport pick-ups or drop-offs.

3. SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR MENATE VISITING EVALUATION TEAMS

3.1 SELECTION OF MENATE EVALUATORS

After tentatively confirming dates for a proposed Evaluation Visit, the MENATE Accreditation Officer will work with the Accrediting Commission Chair to select external peer reviewers (firstly confirming their availability and commitment to be present for the entirety of the visit) to form a MENATE Visiting Evaluation Team (VET). Whenever possible, recommendations for VET members will be sought during an AC meeting. An institution may also make a general request for at least one evaluator who understands well their educational delivery method(s), but without suggesting any specific persons. Where possible, MENATE might agree to the request, but it is entirely at MENATE's discretion if it can do so or not.

The evaluation team shall normally be composed of three persons, one of whom must be a member of the Accrediting Commission. MENATE evaluators should be qualified educators who are respected within their country of service. A MENATE VET should include a balance of educational and institutional leadership experience and expertise, and ideally have at least one member who is familiar with the educational delivery method(s) of the institution applying for accreditation. Should any newer evaluators be chosen, the team should include at least one experienced evaluator to guide and train the newer ones. The MENATE AC may recommend experienced evaluators from outside the region to be included in a VET.

It is expected that any individuals chosen for their first evaluation visit will undergo MENATE training for Visiting Evaluation Teams prior to the evaluation visit. However, MENATE places a high value upon on-the-job training during an evaluation visit as well. A familiarity with the MENATE *Manual for Accreditation* and MENATE educational values and performance standards is expected of all.

The Accreditation Officer will then try to ensure that there is agreement with the candidate institution on the VET composition. Should there be any substantive objections, the AC Chair and Accreditation Officer will seek to resolve the matter, but MENATE will have the final decision. It is not appropriate for the institution in any way to suggest or propose specific persons to become alternative evaluators.

The AC Chair is then responsible for appointing a MENATE VET leader from the selected team members, after checking first with the proposed leader. It is important to note that the team leader might be required to make available one to two extra days after the formal visit to complete the VET Report. And in the case of joint accreditation visits, the AC Chair is responsible for negotiating overall VET leadership with the other participating agency (or agencies).

Once appointed to a VET, MENATE evaluators must block out the visit dates (plus a day for travelling either side) in their calendars and keep the visit strictly free from any other commitments.

3.2 TEAM LEADER RESPONSIBILITIES

A MENATE team leader's responsibilities include the following, sometimes in conjunction with the MENATE Accreditation Officer, and sometimes in communication with the MENATE AC Chair:

(a) Before the visit:

1. Regular communications with the institution's evaluation visit coordinator, always copying to the MENATE Accreditation Officer.
2. Finalization of the visit schedule and precise dates.
3. Ensuring that all documentation is supplied and complete and requesting remedy for any inadequacies or failure to follow MENATE procedures (where necessary through the Accreditation Officer).
4. Requesting further documentation when necessary to follow-up pre-visit reading and preliminary evaluation tasks.
5. Allocation of evaluation responsibilities to VET members prior to the visit.
6. Ensuring that team members know their responsibilities for the evaluation process.

(b) During the visit:

1. Leadership of the team during the visit, delegating responsibilities and specific tasks as necessary, allowing team member expertise to be well used.
2. Leading, while not dominating, interviews with members of the institution.
3. Being a time-keeper (or delegating this task to another team member) to keep the team on task and on schedule as much as possible.
4. Being the representative of the team to the institution's leaders, educators and students, and available to explain MENATE procedures and standards.
5. Having on hand printed and electronic copies of the MENATE Manual for Accreditation, MENATE VET Report template, and the MENATE Performance Standard Grading template.
6. Leading evaluation discussions during team meetings, including the team's completion of the MENATE Performance Standard Grading document, and helping the team to work together to draw up lists of observations, commendations, potential notations, recommendations and suggestions that will form the basis of the VET Report.
7. Being the primary writer and editor of the VET Report, though assisted in the task by team members, who may be asked to draft selected parts of the Report.
8. Being the main person who will present orally the main observations, commendations and recommendations to the institution's leadership at the end of the visit.

(c) After the visit:

1. Finalizing the draft VET Report after the conclusion of the formal part of the visit. It is strongly recommended that this be done on site over one or two days immediately after the visit, since the visit details will be fresh in the mind, access for follow-up information or clarification remains possible, and back at home the busyness and distractions of regular work and life will make completion of the report much more difficult.

2. Sharing the draft with the other team members for comment, additions, and change.
3. Finalizing the VET Report after receiving team feedback, and then sending it to the MENATE Accreditation Officer.
4. Being available to answer Accrediting Commission queries concerning the visit and VET Report.

3.3 TEAM MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

(a) Before the visit:

1. It is essential that all members of the Visiting Team carefully read the Self-study Report and all supporting documentation prior to the accreditation visit. The reader should make notes of all points of interest, whether for commendation, clarification, recommendation, or concern.
2. The VET leader may wish to assign evaluative responsibilities to team members prior to the visit.
3. It is also essential that VET members are present on-site for the entire duration of the visit and do not schedule any appointments or speaking engagements during the days or evenings of the visit. Such appointments should be scheduled either before or after the formal visit dates.
4. VET members who live in the city of the institution being evaluated may return home at night but must plan without fail to be available on-site all day, and in the early evening each night. Wherever possible VET members should consider staying on-site alongside the other VET members.

(b) During the visit:

1. The first item on the Visiting Team's agenda, upon arrival at the visitation site, is an organizational meeting at which members of the team must identify aspects of the institution which appear to require greater attention. An initial identification of key commendation and recommendation areas may be made at this meeting.

2. Evaluative assignments for VET members shall be made before the organizational meeting, but specific assignments might be adjusted during the initial meeting. If any member of the team is especially qualified or has a special interest in any aspect of the institution's administration or instruction, it will be helpful to notify the team leader in advance of the visit.
3. The period of the team's visit, and the intensity of the visit itself, usually fills up all waking hours. As noted in the previous section, team members should thus plan to make personal time and visits prior to or after the visit schedule.
4. Some of the work of the Visiting Team might be done individually, allowing each member of the team to pursue a different aspect of observation, interview, or investigation, with frequent reporting back to and coordination with other members of the team.
5. The team will work its way progressively through the visit schedule and arranged meetings, taking time aside as necessary each day to summarize and identify key areas for commendation or recommendation. Travel and meal times may also be utilized for team dialogue and collective assessment.
6. Although developing the Visiting Team's report will require a collective effort, possibly including an allocation of section writing tasks, the team leader will serve as editor of the team's overall report. Some of this process might be completed after the visit has formally concluded.
7. The team will be present during the concluding oral report to the institution's leadership, assisting the team leader in that task as requested.

(c) After the visit:

1. VET members continue to have a role in assisting the team leader to finalize the VET Report after the formal visit has concluded. They will be asked to share their comments, additions and changes very promptly after the team leader has sent them the draft Report. The VET is allowed up to two weeks following the visit to complete its Report.

2. Because the Visiting Team will have access to every aspect of the institution visited, it is essential that team members respect the confidentiality of the information shared. However, it is appropriate to share information about the visited institution which is available in the institution's own publications or to identify aspects of the institution which merit special commendation. Areas of institutional weakness, on the other hand, should be considered strictly confidential. It is the purpose of the MENATE and the Visiting Team to encourage and strengthen the visited institution, not to deprecate the institution or undercut its effectiveness.

4. GUIDELINES FOR THE MENATE V.E.T. REPORT

4.1 PREPARING THE VET REPORT

4.1.1 An Overview of the Writing Process

The VET Report can be prepared before and especially during the formal visit dates. It is a time-consuming, intensive task. Where possible some of the introductory parts of the report might be written before the visit. In addition, at least the VET leader should consider spending an additional one to two days on site to complete the writing up of the VET Report after the formal conclusion of the visit, allowing for focused writing-up while the visit details remain fresh and for access to institutional staff should any clarifications be necessary.

As mentioned above, the Report writing process is a collective one, involving the whole evaluation team. While the VET leader has overall responsibility for writing the VET Report, he/she may delegate sections to other VET members to write up.

Ideally, a VET leader will stay on site for one or two days after the visit to do this, rather than seek to complete the Report back at home. Other team members will also need time to comment on the draft Report and suggest changes and improvements following the visit and so the VET leader should send the draft Report to the other VET members for comment before finalizing it. Nevertheless, the VET Report should normally be fully completed within two weeks of the end of the Visit.

The expected content and structure of the Report are described in detail in Section 4.2 below.

4.1.2 The Ultimate Objective of the VET Report

The ultimate objective of the Visiting Team's review of an institution will be to frame a recommendation to the MENATE Accrediting Commission regarding action on the institution's application for MENATE accreditation. The Visiting Team's report should clearly state the team's recommendation to grant or to deny the institution's application, and if to grant it, whether full or provisional accreditation should be offered.

4.1.3 Performance Standards Grading

The MENATE Performance Standards Grading template represents a useful tool for the team to help it identify strength areas worthy of commendation, or areas of institutional weakness needing improvement. Yet it also provides focused feedback to the institution to help it measure its achievement against specific MENATE performance standards.

4.1.4 Areas for Evaluative Comment in the VET Report

Before and during the visit, members of the Visiting Team should take special notice of areas in which the visited institution evidences strengths or weaknesses, especially when those areas are specifically addressed by the MENATE accreditation standards. Areas of institutional strength and weakness should be focused on in the Visiting Team's Report.

The Visiting Team's report should record observations and commendations, and notations, recommendations and suggestions, which have been identified by the team prior to and during the visit:

Observations are narrative explanations designed to help Accrediting Commission members better understand aspects of the institution which frame the subsequent notations and recommendations.

Commendations represent praise for the institution where it exhibits certain strengths, and appears to demonstrate standards of excellence, which are higher than or go beyond MENATE expectations.

Notations represent compulsory actions that the institution must fulfil to keep its accreditation. They identify areas in which an otherwise strong institution does not meet accrediting standards and must improve in those areas. In some cases, compliance with notations is necessary in order to upgrade from provisional accreditation to full accreditation. Notations usually have a specific, limited, but reasonable, time-frame for compliance, and a Compliance Report is expected at the end of the specified period. They usually imply a status of provisional accreditation until compliance is demonstrated and verified, but sometimes notations can be made alongside a recommendation for full accreditation. In either case, however, non-compliance can result in the institution losing its accreditation status.

(For accreditation *procedures* concerning notations, see Section 3.3 [Notations] in the *Manual for Accreditation*.)

Recommendations represent non-compulsory actions that must nevertheless be seriously considered by the institution. They refer to areas that are important to holistic institutional health and future growth, in particular remedying weaknesses in areas that may meet minimum accreditation standards but can or should be improved upon. Recommendations carry the expectation that most or all of them will be worked on and, as much as possible, implemented by the institution, during the six-year accreditation period. They also carry reporting obligations with them, and progress updates can be included in Annual Reports.

On the other hand, **Suggestions** constitute advice that is offered by the Visiting Team for optional enhancement or improvement of an area in which the institution already meets the MENATE accrediting standards. No other MENATE expectations are tied to the category of suggestions. MENATE VET Reports may sometimes omit this category of evaluation, elevating all improvement items to the status of either notations or recommendations.

4.1.5 Finalizing Notations

An institutional area cited for a notation should reflect a consensus opinion of the Visiting Team. If the team members are unable to reach a consensus regarding an institutional area perceived by one or more members of the team to constitute a significant weakness, a notation should not be recorded. Rather, majority and minority opinions should be recorded, with a rationale provided for each.

When a notation is recorded, the team report should suggest appropriate means for verifying improvements that are needed. Means of verification may consist of: (i) a documented report on steps taken to bring the institution into full conformity with MENATE accreditation standards; (ii) a follow-up visit by the MENATE Accreditation Officer, a member of the original VET, or otherwise by a member of the Accrediting Commission; or (iii) a re-visit by a Visiting Team after a stated interval.

4.1.6 The VET Report and the MENATE Accrediting Commission

In framing its report, the Visiting Team should be aware of its advisory role to the Accrediting Commission. Actions recommended by the Visiting Team, including the awarding or withholding of accreditation, the assignment of notations and means of verification of needed improvements, may go through changes prior to action and approval by the Accrediting Commission.

The final Visiting Evaluation Team Report (VET Report) will be addressed to the MENATE Accrediting Commission but forwarded through the MENATE Accreditation Officer. The VET Report records and constitutes its recommendation(s) to the MENATE Accrediting Commission. However, action on the visited institution's application for accreditation or the renewal of accreditation is the sole prerogative of the Accrediting Commission.

As mentioned, the MENATE VET are allowed two weeks following the visit to complete the VET Report and submit it to the MENATE Accreditation Officer.

4.2 THE MENATE VISITING EVALUATION TEAM (VET) REPORT

A MENATE VET Report comprises two main parts or documents:

- * Part I is a Descriptive Evaluation and Recommendations; and
- * Part II is a Performance Standard Grading.

Part I of the MENATE VET Report – Descriptive Evaluation and Recommendations

This represents predominantly narrative reporting, including the following major report sections and sub-sections:

Section 1: Evaluation Overview

- **Requested Accreditation Evaluation**
Institution name and list of the academic awards for which accreditation is sought, clearly indicating which ones are for first time accreditation and which for accreditation renewal
- **Introduction to *[Institution Name]***
An introduction to the institution, including a brief history, and quotation of the mission and vision statements of the institution
- **Awards Being Evaluated for Accreditation Renewal** (if any)
A summary of overall aims/objectives and graduation requirements for each award program, including credit-hours, plus a very brief history of each award program, and graduate statistics
- **Awards Being Evaluated for New Accreditation** (if any)
A summary of overall aims/objectives and graduation requirements for each award program, including credit-hours, plus a very brief history of each award program, and graduate statistics
- **MENATE Evaluation Team**
A list of the names and titles of the MENATE VET members, their country of residence, and identification of the MENATE VET leader; in the case of joint accreditation visits, the names of the other evaluators may be included
- **Summary of the Evaluation Visit**
A narrative summary of the arrangements for the visit, and a list of meetings held with institutional office holders, students, alumni, board members and others

- **Documentation**

A summary of the documentation provided to the VET beforehand and during the evaluation visit

Section 2: MENATE Evaluation

- **Observations and Commendations**

Major observations and commendations concerning the institution, arranged according to the following structure:

- I. Administration
- II. Faculty
- III. Facilities
- IV. Educational Program
- V. Students

If helpful this section could be split into two, separating the observations from the commendations.

- **Notations**

An itemized (numbered) list of any notations - compulsory actions to be carried out by the institution, including a time-frame for compliance and reporting, and stating whether or not they carry an implication of provisional accreditation status; this part should be arranged according to the structure given in the previous section

- **Recommendations**

An itemized (numbered) list of recommendations for institutional improvement, which must be seriously considered by the institution and mostly acted upon during the accreditation period, and which carry reporting obligations; this section should be arranged according to the structure given above for observations and commendations.

- **Suggestions**

An itemized (numbered) list of optional suggestions for institutional improvement, which carry no reporting obligations, arranged as per the structure of the previous sections.

- **Special Notes** (if any)

A place for any additional comments raised in relation to unique aspects of the institution or the evaluation.

- **[Institution Name] Reporting Requirements**

A handy, summary list (and reminder) of the MENATE reporting requirements for the institution, including submission dates, for:

- (i) Notation Compliance Reports (if any);
- (ii) an *Initial Response Report* (usually required within 12 months of the evaluation visit);
- (iii) a reminder (if applicable) of any reporting obligations remaining from any MENATE evaluation visit conducted within the previous four years;
- (iv) a *Final Compliance Report* (expected at the end of the accreditation period, three months prior to the next accreditation evaluation); and
- (v) *Annual Reports*.

Section 3: VET Recommendation(s) to the MENATE Accrediting Commission

- Recommendation(s) of the VET to the MENATE AC concerning the institution's accreditation, listing awards for which accreditation is recommended, and specifying if provisional accreditation is indicated, subject to the removal of any notations.
- Specification of the accreditation period (six years from the year of the visit; e.g. 2018-2024 [assuming the AC's accreditation decision can reasonably be ratified in the same year]).
- Names and signatures of the VET members.

Part II of the MENATE VET Report – Performance Standard Gradings

This represents a grading of the institution against the MENATE performance standards:

- **Performance Standard Gradings**

VET rankings of the institution against the MENATE performance standards, and any related comments, using the MENATE grading template for this purpose. The grading structure is as follows:

4 = Excellent. The school evidences a high degree of quality and operates on a higher level than is required by MENATE Standards.

3 = Good. The school fully satisfies MENATE requirements.

2 = Needs Improvement. The school meets the minimum requirements for accreditation/renewal but must work on recommendations.

1 = Insufficient. The school must improve in this area to satisfy the MENATE standards; insufficient marks usually carry a notation formulated in the statement box, and may necessitate a provisional accreditation status or, in cases of pervasive insufficiency, even the denial of accreditation.

5. PRESENTATION OF THE VET REPORT

5.1 Oral Presentation by the VET to the Institution's Leadership

At the end of the visit, the VET (or Team Leader) may (at its discretion) wish initially to meet privately with the President to share orally its basic findings, before meeting with the institutional representatives who are selected by the President to hear the basic findings of the Team, again to be shared orally. At this stage a written report is not expected to be shared with the institution.

These oral reports should take note of the advisory nature of the Visiting Team's work and the possibility of changes prior to action by the Accrediting Commission, who have the final say in accreditation matters. Given this, the VET should in no way announce any "decision" concerning the institution's application for accreditation or accreditation renewal.

5.2 Report Corrections

The President should also be informed that a copy of the Visiting Team's report, once finalized by the VET, will be sent to the institution by the Accreditation Officer for comments or corrections on factual matters, prior to its distribution to members of the Accrediting Commission.

The Accreditation Officer will remove from the Report the final page(s) containing the VET's final recommendations concerning the accreditation of the institution before sending it for corrections. Until confirmed by the Accrediting Commission and ratified by the MENATE Executive Committee, these accreditation recommendations are not to be shared with the institution, since they do not necessarily represent any final MENATE decision(s).

The institution may not alter any of the recommendations made; the emphasis is upon correction of any factual inaccuracies, and comments concerning areas where the institution feels that the VET may have misunderstood something.

The corrections process is not the time for the institution to express its agreement or disagreement with any report recommendations or notations, nor for it to attempt to defend itself against any explicit or implicit criticisms.

Two weeks are allowed for the corrections process and the suggested corrections are then sent back to the MENATE Accreditation Officer.

The Officer will refer the suggested corrections to the VET leader to double-check (and to discuss with the other members of the VET if necessary), and the VET leader will then finalize the VET Report.

If any concerns about the process or the VET Report do remain, the Head of the institution may write to the AC Chair (with a copy sent to the Accreditation Officer), who may choose to refer the matter to the full AC when it next meets.

5.3 Post-Visit Actions and Follow-Up

When the MENATE Accreditation Officer has received the final version of the Visiting Team's *Report*, including any factual corrections provided by the institution's administrator, he/she will promptly circulate these materials to members of the Accrediting Commission requesting their review, in preparation for their next meeting.

A VET Report (as the report of the Visiting Evaluation Team) is regarded as final after the corrected version has been sent to the Accrediting Commission for approval. However, as already mentioned, the AC makes final decisions concerning all accreditation matters, not the VET.

AC Members may seek clarification of any matters from the VET Leader prior to the AC meeting, copying in the AC Chair and Accreditation Officer on any correspondence. Member concerns about the *Report* or accreditation recommendations may be shared with the AC Chair and Accreditation Officer prior to the meeting.

The Accrediting Commission in its meeting will decide on the *VET Report* and its recommendations and will take appropriate actions (on this process see the Section entitled "Accrediting Commission Decision and Report" in the *Manual for Accreditation*). The AC is free to supersede any part of the *VET Report* with its own decisions if necessary. On this see the next section of this *Handbook*.

After the team's visit, any follow-up communication from the institution about the evaluation visit or VET Report should be addressed to the MENATE Accreditation Officer, and not to the VET leader or members. In the case of any major concerns, a written letter explaining them should be sent to the MENATE AC Chairperson and copied to the Accreditation Officer.

6. THE ACCREDITING COMMISSION REPORT

After the AC has voted and decided on the accreditation of the institution, its decisions are communicated to the MENATE Executive Committee for ratification. The Executive Committee have the right to request re-consideration by the AC of any arising issues.

However, once the Report is ratified, a formal letter, signed by both the AC Chair and the MENATE Executive Director, summarizing the Accrediting Commission's decisions regarding the accreditation of the institution and its program(s) will be attached to the *VET Report* to form an official *Accrediting Commission Report*.

Thus, the MENATE *Accrediting Commission Report* comprises three main elements:

- (i) A formal, signed letter summarizing the Accrediting Commission's decisions;
- (ii) Part I of the VET Report (the Descriptive Evaluation and Recommendations);
and
- (iii) Part II of the VET Report (the Performance Standards Gradings)

In this way, the VET Report becomes an enlarged Report of the whole MENATE Accrediting Commission, and because the VET recommendations, notations and suggestions have been accepted by the Accrediting Commission, the VET Report implicitly is no longer that of the Visiting Evaluation Team, but a report bearing the authority of the entire Accrediting Commission. Likewise, through the ratification process, the accreditation decision(s) of the Accrediting Commission also carry the explicit endorsement of the MENATE Executive Committee.

The Accreditation Officer will then send the ratified *AC Report* to the institution and advise its President and Academic Dean of the decisions made and actions taken.

The MENATE Accreditation Officer will also be responsible for any follow-up with the institution which is indicated in the AC Report (and VET Report).

7. SUMMARY OF THE VET REPORT TIMETABLE

In summary, the timetable for completing the VET Report is as follows:

Time	Action
At the end of the Visit	VET team shares orally its major commendations and recommendations with the institution's leadership
If possible, during the two days immediately following the Visit	VET leader finalizes a draft of the written Report and sends it to the other VET members for comment, suggested additions, and change
Within two weeks from the end of the Visit	VET Report is finalized by the VET leader and team and sent to the Accreditation Officer. The Officer removes the final page(s) of the VET's recommendation to the AC and forwards the document to the institution asking for factual corrections
Within two weeks of the institution receiving the VET Report (and four weeks from the end of the Visit)	The Institution may suggest factual corrections, and offer comments to clarify anything that may have been misunderstood by the VET; it may not change any recommendations; it then sends the corrections back to the Accreditation Officer

continued ...

Time	Action
Within a week of receiving the corrections	The Officer makes the needed corrections, checking first about them with the VET leader, re-attaches the final accreditation recommendations (to the AC) and forwards the final VET Report to AC members for decision at their next meeting
Ideally within four to six weeks of the evaluation visit	The Accrediting Commission decides on the accreditation of the institution, and issues a letter communicating its decision and any changes to the VET Report it deems necessary
Often within a day of the AC meeting, depending on the scheduling of the Executive Committee in relation to the AC meeting	The AC decision concerning the accreditation of the institution is ratified by the Executive Committee, and once ratified the AC Report is signed by both the AC Chair and the Executive Director, and sent by the Accreditation Officer to the institution, so that it may begin working on the recommendations of the Report

