



**ACTEA GUIDELINES FOR
HYBRID VIRTUAL SITE
ACCREDITATION VISIT**

**The Association for
Christian Theological Education in Africa**

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Introduction

A hybrid virtual site visit shall incorporate an engaged, interactive format of comparable rigor, quality, and process as the fully in-person, on-site visit. A hybrid virtual site visit requires the use of video or web conferencing tools, which allow real-time synchronous communication among participants, both of the institution and ACTEA Visitation Team (VT), and visual display of individuals, groups, documents, and/or physical spaces.

The hybrid or blended virtual site visit comprises an ACTEA full accreditation visit wherein a portion of the VT conducts the visit on-site with the remaining VT members engaging virtually. Specifically, in accordance with mandate from the ACTEA Council a minimum of two of the VT members should be in-person, thus on-site during the entire visitation period, to conduct the accreditation visit. Furthermore, only an institution which ACTEA has previously assessed on-site and in-person is eligible for the hybrid site visit.

These guidelines for hybrid virtual site visits govern resident theological education programmes and complement the general *ACTEA Standards & Guide to Self-Evaluation*, 2011 edition. In addition, these guidelines are also applicable for institutions seeking accreditation for ODeL programmes and complement the *ACTEA Standards and Procedures for Accreditation of Open, Distance, and e-Learning (ODeL) Programmes*, 2020 edition.

The Guidelines

1. The institution should confirm with ACTEA office that the stakeholders of the institution, especially the governing board but also the students represented formally through student leadership offices, agree that the accreditation visit incorporate web-based elements of assessment.
2. The institution should acknowledge that pre-visit detailed preparations of the hybrid virtual visit are highly significant, perhaps more so than with the strictly in-person, on-site visit, by completing the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) appreciably ahead of the visit and by following the stated ACTEA guidelines scrupulously to facilitate the virtual elements of the assessment.
3. ACTEA VT in consultation with the institution determines the type of web-based visit which will be conducted, whether mono-lateral (i.e. all parties of the institution on-site) or bi-lateral (i.e. some parties of the institution on-site while others at home) or hybrid arrangement. Generally, the mono-lateral type is acknowledged to avoid more readily potential hindrances to the successful completion of the accreditation assessment and is preferred.
4. ACTEA VT Leader maintains the prominent role in the hybrid virtual visit, not only conversant with SER and institutional objectives but also comfortable with technology which supports the visit so that (s)he may appropriately set the tone of the visit.
5. ACTEA VT Leader establishes the crucially important schedule of the hybrid virtual visit in consultation with the institution to provide a tight yet manageable schedule for every meeting, whether the meeting comprises group or individual interviews. The schedule should identify all participants in such meetings and/or interviews (note item 7.).

6. ACTEA VT Leader structures the schedule for the hybrid virtual visit to limit the duration of each separate meeting (e.g. not to exceed one hour), to schedule short breaks between meetings, and to manage the number of days for the visitation exercise in consideration of 'Zoom' fatigue. The institution should prepare for a hybrid virtual site visit which may be longer in terms of scheduled days than a strictly in-person, on-site visit (e.g. because of shorter days). The ACTEA VT Leader will schedule at least one meeting, if not several, without an agenda, e.g. an icebreaker session, for relationship building to compensate for the loss of informal times together between the entire VT and institution's faculty and staff normally experienced during the strictly in-person, on-site visitation.
7. The institution receiving the hybrid virtual visit will appoint an Institutional Accreditation Officer (or comparable office), who coordinates the entire schedule and visitation logistics from the institutional side (note item 5). This Coordinator in consultation with the ACTEA VT Leader, makes sure the right people are in the right meetings at the right time, sends links and access passwords as necessary, coordinates technology troubleshooting from the institutional side, arranges virtual video tours and provides documentation where required.
8. The institution (i.e. Institutional Accreditation Officer) will furnish in advance to ACTEA VT the names of all the designated participants of each scheduled virtual meeting, endeavoring to maintain a 10 person limit for each group meeting. The institution thus ensures that no person who is not previously identified to the ACTEA VT participates in a scheduled meeting.
9. The institution will complete in advance, to supplement the SER, a narrated video of key areas of the institution's campus and activities, i.e. including facilities and physical resources, library, offices, classrooms, auditorium, hostels, and grounds. The video could be compiled with the video feature on iPad (or comparable); its duration should not exceed 30 minutes; and its file size should be kept at a manageable level. Still photos could complement the video, if necessary.
10. The institution is responsible for ensuring that its technology infrastructure, facilities, and support services can accommodate a fully engaged, real-time interactive hybrid virtual site visit, for all virtual site visit activities will be scheduled using the real-time synchronous virtual meeting system decided upon by ACTEA and the institution. Furthermore, the institution will ensure that its video conferencing platform (i.e. for virtual meetings) is easily accessible by all who participate virtually and verified for security and privacy.
11. ACTEA VT and the institution both provide a tech person (e.g. IT specialist), who is familiar with the virtual meeting system employed, to direct troubleshooting concerning technology matters, as problems are encountered.
12. The institution must conduct a technology test prior to the hybrid virtual site visit to demonstrate to ACTEA's satisfaction that it has adequate technology infrastructure and support services to conduct a hybrid virtual site visit that meets the requirements.
13. The institution must ensure that there are adequate meeting spaces (facilities) for administration, key faculty and staff to meet with the ACTEA VT members, including separate rooms for simultaneous meetings as needed with either individuals or groups. Thus, the institution must provide virtual access

to all interviewees (simultaneously when needed, in either an individual or group setting), that is comparable with and sufficient to the access normally found during a strictly in-person site visit.

14. The institution must provide virtual access (e.g., through a learning management system) to important written documents, not included within SER (e.g. minutes of meetings, faculty files, student files, various financial records with confirming documentation), that is comparable with and sufficient to the access normally found during a strictly in-person site visit, to demonstrate compliance with the ACTEA Standards.
15. If there is a technology failure that significantly impairs the ability of the VT members, who are participating in the assessment virtually, to conduct or complete successfully an engaged, real-time interactive review, then the ACTEA VT Leader will have the prerogative to modify and reschedule the hybrid virtual site visit if the failure cannot be rectified within a reasonable time. If rescheduling of the hybrid visit should be necessary, then ACTEA office will initiate rescheduling of the hybrid virtual visit.
16. ACTEA VT provides guidelines concerning virtual meeting etiquette for the institution to circulate among participating faculty and staff and relevant stakeholders, including governing board members and student leaders, in advance of the accreditation visit. Guidelines for virtual meeting etiquette when using technology include: beginning each meeting with introduction of participants, muting when not speaking to minimize background noise, raising a virtual “hand” to receive recognition to speak to avoid interrupting others, turning on video during meetings and maintaining eye contact on the camera, not multitasking during meetings, inviting every participant to contribute to the discussion at hand.