

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF THEATRE

Procedures for Institutions

**Membership Procedures
September 2016 Edition**

**Applicable for Visits:
2016-2017 through 2024-2025**

National Office

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In addition to the NAST *Procedures for Institutions* (this document), the following are necessary to apply for accredited institutional Membership: (1) NAST *Procedures for the Self-Study Document – Format A, or Format B, or Format C*; (2) *Instructions for Preparing Curricular Tables in the NAST Format*; and (3) the latest edition of the NAST *Handbook* and any current addenda. These texts are available on the NAST Web site.

Information contained herein concerning programs, procedures, requirements, standards, and fees is subject to change without notice by the appropriate body of NAST.

Permission is hereby granted to copy this document for use in the accreditation process.

NAST Procedures for Institutions

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Procedures for Institutions

I. INTRODUCTION

A. NAST Membership and Accreditation

NAST institutional Membership in any category is obtained and continued through comprehensive reviews consistent with the principles and protocols of peer-review accreditation. Institutional Membership signifies accreditation.

B. Accreditation Purposes

The first purpose of the accreditation process is to provide a mechanism that assists institutions and programs to analyze their operations, work, and aspirations. The results encourage artistic and educational improvements. The review is placed in the context of nationally-developed standards and facilitated by using consistent procedures that ensure fairness and objectivity. NAST's focus is service and assistance.

Since each institution is unique, the accreditation process balances two concerns: (1) an institution's ability to fulfill NAST standards for programs offered; and (2) evaluation of institutional achievements based on the purposes and aspirations determined by specific institutions and for specific curricula.

C. Self-Study Purposes

Self-study is the core of the accreditation review. Users of this text should devote considerable thought to specific purposes for their self-study process beyond the preparation of a document for NAST. Whatever the purposes, the focus should be on self-evaluation rather than reporting. The self-study process and the written document can have a profound impact on cohesion of purpose, common understanding of challenges and opportunities, strategic thinking, and operational planning. The specific emphases, however, are developed by each institution.

D. Procedural Flexibility

Users of the *Procedures for Institutions* and *Procedures for the Self-Study Document* are encouraged to take full advantage of the flexibilities offered by NAST to design an accreditation review that meets their specific needs. NAST works with institutions to bring high levels of intellectual energy and artistic purpose to the accreditation process. The accreditation process is a means for working productively to build and strengthen relationships among theatre, education, and professional preparation. The process should not be considered an end in itself.

E. Questions

As faculty and administrators develop their accreditation agenda and schedule, questions may arise. If answers do not seem evident in these texts or on the Association's Web site, please contact the NAST National Office. The staff looks forward to working with you.

F. Web Site

NAST maintains a comprehensive Web site at <http://nast.arts-accredit.org>. This Web site will be an important resource throughout the accreditation process and beyond. NAST [contact information](#) and a [staff directory](#) can be found within the NAST Web site.

II. PREPARATIONS FOR APPLICATION

A. NAST Documents

All forms and materials should be obtained from the NAST Web site. See the main heading “Procedures for Comprehensive Reviews.”

The NAST [Handbook and all current addenda](#), the NAST accreditation materials, and other resources provided by the Association contain complete information about NAST and the accreditation process and should be studied carefully before application is made, then referenced regularly during the application process.

B. NAST *Handbook* Content

1. The *Handbook* contains the legal organizational documents of the Association, including the Constitution, Bylaws, Code of Ethics, and Rules of Practice and Procedure. Of particular interest to institutions applying for Membership are the sections of the Bylaws describing the categories of Membership, the dues and fee structure, the organization and function of the Commission, and the portions of the Rules of Practice and Procedure concerning evaluation.
2. The standards for institutional Membership, and thus, for accreditation, also are found in the *Handbook*. These include Basic Criteria for Membership, Purposes and Operations, Theatre Program Components, Standards and Guidelines for specific curricular programs, and applicable appendices.

C. Individual Membership

Individual Membership is optional. During preparation for application for Membership, the theatre executive is encouraged to become an individual member of NAST in order to remain current with the work of the Association.

Individual Membership is an avenue for establishing and maintaining contact with the Association and its activities, and includes electronic and hard copy notifications from the Association (as applicable; inclusion of the individual’s name and contact information within the list of Individual Members on the Association’s Web site and also in the mailing list database; unrestricted access, by use of a login and password, to the advanced search tool for accredited institutional members of NAST; and an electronic copy of the NAST *Handbook*. Individual members are welcome to register and attend any Annual Meeting and/or Pre-Meeting Workshop. However, Individual Membership carries no voting rights or responsibilities.

D. Definition of Membership and Membership Categories

1. Institutional Membership in any category signifies accreditation. Institutions eligible to apply for Membership include colleges, universities, and free-standing (independent) schools of theatre. The Standards and Guidelines for Institutional Membership are published in the NAST *Handbook* and any current addenda.
2. Associate Membership is granted to baccalaureate and/or graduate degree-granting institutions, community/junior colleges, and non-degree-granting institutions applying for the first time that meet all curricular standards and all other applicable standards of the Association, and which are developing in areas related to purposes or operations. Accreditation with Associate Membership is valid for up to five years. At the end of this

period, such institutions will be required to demonstrate substantial progress in areas under development and to satisfy all criteria for Membership in the Association.

3. Membership is granted to baccalaureate and graduate degree-granting institutions, community/junior colleges, and postsecondary non-degree-granting institutions meeting all standards of the Association. Institutions approved for Membership are granted five-year periods of accreditation. At the end of five years, the institution is expected to apply for renewal of Membership.
4. Institutions approved for renewal of Membership are normally granted ten-year periods of accreditation.

E. Consultative Visits

During preparation of an application, particularly a first-time application, an institution may wish to have a consultative visit by an NAST-trained consultant who is not a member of the NAST staff.

1. The consultative visit is not a prerequisite for NAST Membership or renewal of Membership. An institution may apply for Membership and have as its first visit an official NAST evaluation. Hosting a consultant does not guarantee accreditation.
2. With regard to the application process, the two purposes of a consultative visit are to (a) provide an objective analysis of an institution's program, and (b) make recommendations based on NAST Standards and Guidelines.
3. When acting as a consultant, the individual may not act as an NAST evaluator. The recommendations of consultants are, therefore, purely advisory in nature. Official action concerning Membership is taken only after the NAST Commission receives and acts upon a complete, documented application, including the report of official NAST evaluators. It is NAST policy that an individual who serves as consultant to an institution will not later be invited or serve as an official evaluator in connection with a subsequent application for Membership or renewal of Membership.
4. Consultants are hired by, and work for, institutions. NAST merely assists institutions in securing consultants and consultative advice.
5. For further information regarding [consultative visits](#), please visit the Web site or contact the NAST National Office staff.

F. Staff Consultation

1. The NAST National Office staff is available by phone at (703) 437-0700 on weekdays from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Eastern time. The staff consults regularly at the request of institutions and theatre units engaged in the accreditation process.
2. There is no charge for staff consultation. However, travel-related expenses of staff associated with development and operation of joint visits, concurrent visits, custom Self-Studies, or similar services must be reimbursed by the institution.
3. The NAST Web site contains a [Staff Directory](#) indicating appropriate staff contacts for various accreditation functions. Use of this list will facilitate responses to inquiries.

G. Facsimile and E-Mail

1. The NAST facsimile number (703-437-6312) is provided to facilitate communication about the accreditation process. E-mail addresses for staff members may be found on the [NAST Web site](#).
2. NAST does not accept official comprehensive accreditation submissions through e-mail or by facsimile. Please do not transmit by e-mail or facsimile completed submissions to the Commission. Copies of materials in appropriate number and format must be forwarded to NAST by mail or courier service.

H. Joint or Concurrent Accreditation Visits

1. If the institution wishes the NAST visit to be joint or concurrent with that of another accrediting agency, the NAST National Office should be so informed on the Notice of Intention to Apply form. This notice should be preceded by a telephone call to the National Office.
2. When applicable, joint visits are encouraged for free-standing (independent) schools of theatre. If the institution wishes the NAST evaluators to visit jointly for NAST and other accrediting agencies, the NAST National Office should be advised at the same time as the national office of the other accrediting body, prior to commencement of self-study writing, and at least two to three years before the scheduled visit. Normally, at least one on-site NAST staff consultation and NAST staff presence during the visit are required for joint visits.

I. Consolidation and Coordination with Other Reviews

1. NAST encourages institutions to consolidate, coordinate, or correlate accreditation reviews with other internal or external reviews of the theatre unit. NAST will do everything possible to help institutions and programs maintain a reasonable evaluation load and avoid duplication of effort.
2. When more than one arts discipline is in the same college or department as the theatre unit, procedures are available to review the other units at the same time.
3. The National Office staff will facilitate consolidation or coordination consistent with NAST procedures. Requests in this regard should be made as early as possible in the application process, prior to commencement of self-study writing, and at least two years in advance of the on-site visit. Specific protocols for each consolidation or coordination must be approved in advance of the visit by the NAST Executive Director.

J. Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS)

1. Separate HEADS data surveys are available for degree-granting and non-degree-granting institutions.
2. Institutions preparing to apply to NAST for the first time are encouraged to participate in the HEADS project annually. However, institutions applying to NAST for the first time must include the latest HEADS Data Survey in its Self-Study as part of the *Management Documents Portfolio*.

3. The NAST Bylaws require accredited member institutions to file annual reports. The HEADS Data Survey serves as one of the NAST Annual Report forms required of each accredited institution. As part of its application for reaccreditation, each accredited member institution also must include the three most recent HEADS Data Surveys in its Self-Study as part of the *Management Documents Portfolio*.

K. Curricular Requirements

1. NAST will grant Membership or renewal of Membership only when *every* curricular program in theatre of the applicant institution (including graduate work, if offered) meets the standards of the Association. The particular administrative structure used to manage or house theatre curricula in multipurpose institutions has no effect on the applicability of this rule.
2. Some institutions have degree-granting and non-degree-granting units. The most common example is a postsecondary degree-granting unit with an affiliated community education program or unit that does not grant degrees. Such institutions may seek Membership for either or both of these units. In such cases, in applying the above curricular requirements, NAST distinguishes between degree-granting and non-degree-granting units.

For further information, see “Special Instructions for Postsecondary Institutions that Operate Community Education Programs in Theatre” in the various Self-Study formats.

L. Terminology

The term *unit* is used to designate the entire theatre program being reviewed for accreditation. Thus, *unit* may refer to free-standing institutions or to departments or schools that are part of larger institutions, or to theatre programs administered by two or more administrative units.

III. FUNDAMENTAL POLICIES

A. NAST *Handbook* – Accreditation Function

1. The NAST *Handbook* and any current addenda contain all Standards and Guidelines used in the accreditation process. It is the only statement of operational and curricular requirements for accreditation. NAST Standards and Guidelines are established by vote of the entire membership of the Association.
2. The *Handbook* is published every year; addenda reflecting membership action will be published as necessary. *Handbook* and addenda archives are available on the Web site.
3. Commission decisions are made using the *Handbook* and any addenda current at the time of each Commission meeting with due consideration to avoid *ex post facto* actions.
4. The Self-Study, Visitors’ Report, Optional Response, and other accreditation documents are best prepared with careful reference to the current *Handbook* and any current addenda.

B. Confidentiality

1. Members of the Commission, visitors, and staff treat as confidential all information about programs reviewed and all discussions and decisions made in connection with the review.

2. NAST also considers all material generated for the accreditation review by the program and by NAST as confidential. However, NAST encourages appropriate dissemination within the institution. The Self-Study document is considered to be the property of the institution.
3. For further information, see *NAST Handbook*, “Rules of Practice and Procedure.”

C. The Accreditation Role of the NAST Staff

1. The NAST staff manages the accreditation process, and ensures that all procedures, policies, and operations established by the membership, the Board of Directors, and the Commission are carried out fairly and in accordance with Association practice.
2. The staff does not engage in accreditation evaluations of institutions or programs, nor does the staff take overt responsibility for operating the accreditation process at specific institutions. However, the staff is responsible for providing consultative services when requested to do so. The staff is also involved extensively in the development of literature, workshops, and other services to assist institutions in structuring their own uses of requisite accreditation standards and procedures.
3. Each member of the NAST staff avoids conflicts of interest in the accreditation process by declining to (a) act inconsistently among member and applicant institutions; (b) make unilateral accreditation personnel decisions affecting any institution where the staff member was a student or employee; (c) direct institutions and programs concerning internal policy decisions; (d) make definitive judgments or promises concerning acceptability of the content of documents submitted for Commission review; (e) accept positions on boards, councils, or development groups associated with specific institutions of higher education; or (f) accept personal remuneration, gratuities, or favors of any kind for services associated with the accreditation process.

D. Focus

While accreditation is a process with numerous procedural elements, the focus should be on the content and substance of the art of theatre as addressed by each institution’s specific set of missions, goals, and objectives for teaching, learning, creative work, performance, research, scholarship, service, and so forth.

E. Accreditation and Institutional Autonomy

1. NAST has established standards for accreditation that are applied only at the invitation of institutions. These standards are developed and approved by accredited member institutions acting autonomously. The standards provide benchmarks for reviewing the extent to which operational, curricular, and evaluative functions associated with particular degree programs and areas of study are being fulfilled.
2. As they evolve continuously, NAST standards for accreditation are designed to allow considerable variation within broad principles applicable to degree programs and areas of study. Failure to follow the specific approaches indicated or implied by a standard will not necessarily preclude accreditation; however, if deviations exist, the institution must provide an acceptable rationale documenting how functions required by the standard are being fulfilled, or how required competencies are being developed.
3. NAST standards are applied with profound respect for the rights, responsibilities, and aspirations of institutions and programs to identify, designate, and control (a) their purposes – missions,

goals, and objectives; (b) artistic, educational, and philosophical principles and methodologies used to pursue functions implicit in their various purposes – missions, goals, and objectives; (c) specific repertoires, texts, and other teaching materials used for study and presentation; (d) agendas and areas of study pursued through scholarship, research, criticism, and policy development; (e) specific personnel choices, staffing configurations, and other operational decisions; and (f) content and methodologies of tests, evaluations, and assessments.

F. Third-Party Comment

Consistent with national accreditation practice and U.S. Department of Education regulations, a notice indicating opportunity for third-party comment is published on the NAST [Web site](#) for a specific period during the application process for NAST Membership or renewal of Membership. To be considered as part of an NAST accreditation review, third-party comment must be in written form and signed, meet all NAST written eligibility and all other requirements for third-party comment, and be subject to review and written response by the institution being reviewed prior to initial action regarding the Membership or renewal of Membership by the Commission on Accreditation. Consistent with the principles and requirements of Part II., Article XIII. of the Rules of Practice and Procedure, NAST will not make publicly available any information provided in third-party comment or an institution's response to third-party comment or any correspondence related to third-party comment.

Governing statements and requirements regarding rules and processes for third-party comment are approved by the Board of Directors and are located on the NAST [Web site](#) among the publications outlining various procedures associated with NAST accreditation reviews. *Please note: Overall procedures are available in perpetuity; detailed procedures are published during each specific period prior to Commission meetings when third-party comment may be submitted.*

The third-party comment process and the Association's complaint procedure outlined in Part II., Article VIII. of the NAST Rules of Practice and Procedure are not the same, and neither one is a substitute for the other.

G. Observers with Visiting Teams

On rare occasions, observers will be permitted to accompany NAST visiting teams, but only if (a) a required governmental or educational function is being served by the observer(s), or (b) the presence of the observer(s) has been agreed upon by the institution and the NAST Executive Director, and (c) there is a written protocol establishing purposes and conditions for the presence of the observer(s). All observers must agree in writing to protect the confidentiality required in NAST policies and procedures and to observe the Association's policies regarding conflict of interest. Observers are not official members of an NAST visiting team, and therefore have no role in the discussion of an institution's apparent compliance or noncompliance with NAST Standards or the preparation of any part of the NAST Visitors' Report.

H. Questions, Concerns, Malfunctions

The NAST National Office staff should be contacted without delay whenever information is needed or if a concern exists about any aspect of the accreditation effort. With teamwork, the vast majority of problems can be resolved quickly and simply.

IV. THE NAST COMMISSION AND ITS JURISDICTIONS

The NAST Commission on Accreditation reviews applications of degree-granting institutions, community/junior colleges, and non-degree-granting institutions. See item IV.A. through F. It is important that applicant institutions follow the instructions noted below when preparing the Self-Study.

In the text below, *institution* means the entire entity. For example, for colleges and universities offering degrees in multiple disciplines, it is the total institution, not just the theatre unit.

- A. Associate degree programs offered by community/junior colleges
- B. Associate, baccalaureate, and graduate degree programs offered by four-year baccalaureate and/or graduate degree-granting institutions
- C. Postsecondary non-degree-granting programs offered by associate degree-granting institutions organized as community/junior colleges
- D. Postsecondary non-degree-granting programs offered by baccalaureate and graduate degree-granting institutions
- E. Free-standing, postsecondary, professional non-degree-granting institutions at all levels
- F. Community education non-degree-granting programs under certain circumstances. See “Special Instructions for Postsecondary Institutions that Operate Community Education Programs in Theatre” section within the *Procedures for the Self-Study Document* for each format.

V. THE NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPLY FORM

- A. The Notice of Intention to Apply form may be downloaded from the [NAST Web site](#) under “Accreditation,” “Accreditation Materials,” and “Forms.”
- B. In order for the institution to be assured of an evaluation during the preferred or required time period, one copy of this form should be submitted at least two years before the projected date of the NAST on-site visit. However, the Notice of Intention to Apply form must be received by the NAST National Office no later than one year prior to the on-site visit date. For recommended visitation periods, please see “Selection of the Visit Dates.”

VI. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PLAN

Before the accreditation process begins, theatre executives are strongly encouraged to ensure that a plan for inter-institutional communication about the review and its various aspects is developed and understood by all appropriate parties. This includes establishing a local distribution list and system for written communications from NAST. NAST sends Commission Action Reports to the applicant institution’s theatre executive, with copies to the president or chancellor, and provost, dean, and other upper administrators if requested by the institution. All other communication decisions are the prerogative of the institution. For assistance, see “[Internal Communications](#)” in the “Brochures and Advisory Papers” section of the NAST Web site under the main heading “Publications.”

VII. SELECTION OF THE VISITING EVALUATORS

A. NAST Nomination and Institutional Preference

1. Upon receipt of the Notice of Intention to Apply form, the Executive Director of NAST nominates a proposed slate of visiting evaluators who have completed intensive orientation and training conducted by the Association.
2. Nominations are based on the backgrounds and experience of the evaluators in relation to the stated objectives and characteristics of the institution. Normally, the slate includes nominees affiliated with institutions of various types and sizes. This practice is based on the interrelationship that exists among all programs. It reflects NAST policies requiring that all evaluators base their judgments on NAST standards as related to the visited institution's mission, not on a comparison of the visited institution with the evaluators' institutions or against any other criteria.
3. The Executive Director will consider institutional requests of a general nature such as areas of specialization, but will not consider requests for specific individuals to comprise the evaluation team. The suggestion of a specific individual by institutional representatives will cause that individual to be disqualified.
4. The slate shall include separate nominations for team chair and member(s) of the visitation team.
5. Following receipt of this slate, the institution responds promptly—no later than two weeks—indicating a numerical order of preference and whether any suggested evaluators are unacceptable, taking special note of NAST policies concerning conflict of interest.

B. Numbers of Visitors and Length of Visit

1. Within NAST procedures, the institution may determine the size of the visiting team and the length of the on-site visit. Institutions wishing to expand the number of visitors or the number of days beyond NAST minimum requirements should contact the NAST Executive Director when the Notice of Intention to Apply form is submitted.
2. At least two evaluators for two full days of program review are required for all institutions. However, this normally produces a three- or four-day visit schedule in order to accommodate orientation activities, two days of program review, and concluding and report-drafting activities.
3. Institutions that offer many programs/degrees and/or degrees at the baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral level may request a team of more than two visiting evaluators. This is optional. Any request should be made at the time the institution's Notice of Intention to Apply form is submitted to NAST.
4. Three or more visitors may be required for free-standing theatre institutions of higher education. For the purpose of evaluating the financial stability and business policies of the institution, at least one member will be added to each NAST visiting team. This member shall have expertise and experience in the management, operation, and assessment of financial practices, and in cooperation with other members of the team, shall be responsible for reviewing the practices and sufficiency of financial resources of the institution. If an institution administers its own general studies program, at least one member will be added to each team. This member shall have expertise and experience in the operation and assessment

of undergraduate general studies programs, and in cooperation with other members of the team, shall be responsible for reviewing the general studies program at the institution. Such evaluators may have training and evaluation experience with another nationally recognized accrediting organization.

5. The number of visitors and the number of visitation days may be increased as requested or required for community education units with large programs, or multicampus programs, or large/complex programs. In these cases, the number of visiting evaluators or the number of days for the visitation shall be determined in consultation with the Executive Director of NAST.

C. Conflict of Interest Policies

1. Institutional representatives and NAST visiting evaluators are expected to avoid even the slightest potential for conflict of interest. Conflicts that arise may be based on personal association, past or projected affiliations, past or current financial relationships, geographic proximity, or other causes.
2. Questions concerning conflicts of interest should be referred to the NAST Executive Director.
3. To illustrate NAST's conflict of interest approach, the Executive Director will not knowingly nominate or assign as a visiting evaluator any person:
 - a. Who is from the same state or the immediate region of the institution to be visited;
 - b. Who has expressed public opinions about the accreditability of the theatre unit, or ideological views about the institutional type;
 - c. Who was or is a potential employee of the institution;
 - d. Who was or is a student at the institution;
 - e. Who has a family member with a student, faculty, administrative, trustee, or similar relationship with the institution; or
 - f. Who has served or will serve as an independent consultant to the institution during the last or next accreditation cycle.
4. Visitors and institutional representatives are formally required to avoid conflict of interest in the formation of NAST visiting teams.

D. Invitation of Visiting Evaluators

1. After receiving the institution's order of preference of a slate provided by the National Office, the Executive Director of NAST will invite specific preferenced visiting evaluators and inform the institution of the visitors invited. The process of invitation and response is continued until the team is finalized.
2. At least one member of each assigned visiting team shall not be a member of the NAST Commission that will review the application. The number of team members may be increased to ensure compliance with this requirement.

VIII. SELECTION OF THE VISIT DATES

A. Setting the Date

1. After the team is confirmed, the dates of the visit are arranged by the visiting evaluators and the theatre executive of the applicant institution. See Sections XII. and XIII. below for outlines of visit expectations.
2. Visits shall not be scheduled during examination periods.
3. The minimum visit period is two full working days. Evaluators are requested to arrive the evening before the first day of the visit and to leave no sooner than the morning following the second day of the visit. Time may be extended due to the size and scope of the theatre program. Whatever schedule is determined, all team members are to be present and focused on the institution and review process the entire time.
4. Visitors shall not schedule, attend, or conduct any other business engagements or personal activities during the period of an on-site review.
5. Visitations may be scheduled concurrently with those of other accrediting agencies if applicable and if requested.

B. Visit Schedules and Commission Review

1. The following visitation periods are recommended:
 - September 1 – December 1 for Commission action in March of the same academic year.
 - January 1 – June 1 for Commission action in March of the next academic year.
2. Institutions wishing to use other schedules should contact the NAST National Office staff.

C. Notifying NAST

When specific dates for the visit have been fixed, the institution shall notify the NAST National Office of the visit dates.

IX. SELF-STUDY

Self-study is often regarded as the most important part of the accreditation or reaccreditation process. The institution looks at its programs, components, and their relationships with regard to its purposes and aspirations, as well as in relation to NAST standards. Well conducted self-studies serve as useful tools for theatre units well beyond their purposes for NAST accreditation. Often they result in a renewed common effort to develop and improve.

A. Fundamentals

1. The Self-Study Process

The process is the review that the institution conducts. It includes evaluative methods, procedures, timetables, and various ways personnel are engaged. The institution has primary responsibility for determining the specific process it will use.

2. The Self-Study Document

The document is a written summary of the results of the process. It provides descriptions, evaluations, and projections that advance the work of the theatre unit and demonstrate fulfillment of all applicable NAST standards. The institution produces one document following NAST procedures.

3. Institutional Responsibilities

The NAST standards, *Procedures for Institutions*, and Self-Study document formats provide frameworks. Within one or more of these frameworks, the institution makes specific self-study decisions about such matters as purposes, scope, depth, intensity, content, time allocations, and wording. Each institution is responsible for the efficiency, approach, working patterns, productivity, and documentation of its own Self-Study.

4. Essential Resource Documents

- a. The Standards portion of the current NAST *Handbook*, including appendices applicable to programs offered by the institution. The NAST standards are found only in the current NAST *Handbook* and any current addenda. It is essential to use a current *Handbook* in conjunction with the NAST self-study process.
- b. NAST *Procedures for Institutions*.
- c. NAST *Procedures for the Self-Study Document* for the format chosen. See Section IX.D. below.
- d. *Instructions for Preparing Curricular Tables in the NAST Format*.

5. Basic Considerations

Decisions about the following are related to each other:

- a. Purposes – What do you want the self-study to achieve?
- b. Document Format – What evaluative approach and format outline will best serve your needs? See Section IX.D. below.
- c. Processes and Resources – Are your processes and resources adequate to achieve the purposes and produce the Self-Study document in the format you have chosen?

B. Self-Study Purposes and Specific Theatre Unit Aspirations

1. Typical Purposes

Self-Studies typically exhibit one or more of the following purposes. Other purposes may be chosen.

- a. Conduct a comprehensive periodic review.
- b. Evaluate what exists or is projected using NAST standards.
- c. Examine the effectiveness of parts and wholes, and especially the relationships of parts to wholes.
- d. Develop common perspectives on conditions and issues by involving constituencies in analysis, forecasting, or policy-making.

- e. Focus personnel on futures issues.
- f. Orient new administrators and faculty.
- g. Consider program deletions and additions.
- h. Generate lists of concerns and needs.
- i. Develop a planning document.
- j. Create priorities.
- k. Prepare for specific evaluations.
- l. Produce a reference document for the theatre unit.
- m. Produce a detailed explanatory document for others.
- n. Look at specific challenges for the future.
- o. Determine readiness to address challenges and opportunities.
- p. Focus on one or more components or programs.

2. Self-Study Purposes and Priorities Among Them

- a. What are the most productive choices now? Among purposes chosen, what is the order of priority?
- b. Given the purposes chosen, what goals or specific aspirations are already known or determined as you begin? For example: We have a mandate to enlarge our graduate program by 20%, or to determine whether we should continue a certain program.

3. Consistency of Institutional, Theatre Unit, and Self-Study Purposes

- a. Are current institutional and theatre unit statements of purposes sufficient to serve as fundamental reference points for self-evaluation and projection?
- b. Is the self-study process expected to influence the creation or alteration of all or some of the unit's purposes?
- c. How will the purposes and goals for the institution, theatre unit, and Self-Study relate to each other and the self-study process and document?

C. Basic Influences on Self-Study Decisions

In addition to institutional, theatre unit, and self-study purposes, the following normally influence specific decisions about process:

- 1. Size of the unit and institution.
- 2. Number of degrees and programs offered or projected.
- 3. Current speed, nature, and content of changes present within the unit, institution, and within larger state systems, if applicable.
- 4. Current issues of importance to the field, faculty, students, unit, and/or institution.
- 5. Depth and breadth of self-study specific goals.
- 6. New or projected initiatives.

7. Time.
8. Financial support.
9. Experience, attitudes, and involvement of administrators and faculty.
10. Patterns for review already in place.
11. Review and planning documents recently completed.
12. Relationships between the self-study process and document.

D. Choosing Among Document Formats

NAST provides four format options: three (*Formats A, B, and C*) under the title *Procedures for the Self-Study Document*, and the option of creating a custom format. Within the eligibility requirements below, each institution determines which format will best serve its needs at the time of the self-study. Each format provides a framework. Using this framework as a basis, the institution summarizes the results of its self-study process, and documents its fulfillment of NAST standards.

The formats have common elements and address the same types of issues, but provide different ways to consider present conditions and future plans. For example: In *Format A*, the framework does not emphasize one evaluation perspective over any other; *Format B* emphasizes situational analysis and planning for the theatre unit as a whole; and *Format C*, analysis and planning for component programs. For custom formats, the theatre unit creates its own evaluation perspectives and emphases. Before choosing a format, please review items D.1., 2., 3., 4., 5., and 6. below.

1. Procedures for the Self Study Document: Format A

a. Eligibility for *Format A*

All institutions applying for NAST Membership or renewal of Membership.

b. Structure for *Format A*

- (1) This format poses specific questions derived from requirements presented in operational and curricular Standards and Guidelines in the *NAST Handbook*.
- (2) It is imperative that the outline presented in *Procedures: Format A* be used, rather than the outline of the *NAST Handbook*.
- (3) *Format A*, for the most part, follows the order but not the outline letters and numbers of first the operational, and then the curricular Standards and Guidelines in the *NAST Handbook*. One section of the operational standards – “Evaluation, Planning and Projections” – is taken completely out of order and addressed in Section III. of *Format A*.

c. Several considerations among many regarding *Format A*

- (1) *Format A* may be most appropriate if the theatre unit:
 - (a) Is applying for NAST Membership for the first time;
 - (b) Seeks to focus most on evaluating what exists or is projected in terms of fulfilling NAST standards;

- (c) Seeks to develop or update a baseline reference document about operations, curricula, and future needs, including updating a Self-Study document in *Format A* of the 2008 NAST *Membership Procedures*.

(2) *Format A* may not be appropriate if the theatre unit:

- (a) Wishes to focus on an integrated analysis of component parts;
- (b) Seeks to conduct a comprehensive futures study of all specific program areas;
- (c) Has demonstrated fulfillment of NAST standards in many previous reviews and seeks a Self-Study focused more on improvement, next steps, strategic planning, concentrated review of a particular area, or similar objectives.

d. *Format A* Instructions and Templates

To review and print a complete set of requirements and instructions for this format, see "[Procedures for Self-Study](#)" on the NAST Web site (under "Procedures for Comprehensive Reviews" within "Accreditation"). Versions of the same documents are provided in both MS Word (.doc) and Adobe Acrobat (.pdf). The .doc version may be used and adapted by the institution for the creation of templates.

2. *Procedures for the Self Study Document: Format B*

a. Eligibility for *Format B*

- Institutions applying for NAST Membership after Associate Membership;
- Institutions applying for renewal of Membership;
- Institutions applying for Membership for the first time, with the advice and consent of the NAST Executive Director.

b. Structure for *Format B*

- (1) This format poses a set of related planning questions about the operational aspects of the theatre unit as addressed by NAST standards, followed by a descriptive evaluation of each curricular program and a projection regarding the theatre unit's future.
- (2) It concludes with a summary section on challenges, opportunities, and prioritization of work for improvement in operational and curricular areas.
- (3) In sections dealing with theatre unit operations and/or projections and futures, it seeks evaluative essays rather than answers to specific questions.

c. Several considerations among many regarding *Format B*

(1) *Format B* may be appropriate if the theatre unit:

- (a) Seeks to document fulfillment of NAST standards but wishes to focus most on the strategic issues and opportunities facing the unit as a whole;
- (b) Wishes to consider in some depth the relationships among various program elements such as purposes, size and scope, finances, faculty, facilities and equipment, etc., using NAST standards as a reference point;

- (c) Plans to use the Self-Study as a futures or strategic planning document in contexts other than NAST review; or
 - (d) Seeks to update a Self-Study text written in *Format B* of the 2008 NAST *Membership Procedures*.
- (2) *Format B* is probably not appropriate if the theatre unit:
- (a) Wishes to focus the Self-Study on specific curricular areas or programs more than on the theatre unit as a whole;
 - (b) Wants to conduct the NAST review primarily in terms of standards compliance; or
 - (c) Would be challenged to allocate administrative and faculty time necessary for the organizational, analytical, and writing requirements of the format.
- d. *Format B* Instructions and Templates

To review and print a complete set of requirements and instructions for this format, see "[Procedures for Self-Study](#)" on the NAST Web site (under "Procedures for Comprehensive Reviews" within "Accreditation"). Versions of the same documents are provided in both MS Word (.doc) and Adobe Acrobat (.pdf). The .doc version may be used and adapted by the institution for the creation of templates.

3. *Procedures for the Self Study Document: Format C*

- a. Eligibility for *Format C*
 - Institutions holding NAST Membership for five (5) years or more, with the advice and consent of the Executive Director;
 - Institutions for which NAST is not the designated institutional accreditor.
- b. Structure for *Format C*
 - (1) This format begins with informational and evaluative questions regarding each curriculum and area of emphasis.
 - (2) Its core feature poses strategic questions regarding programs within the theatre unit. These questions may be answered separately or in an integrated way. To determine programs, the unit divides its entire set of offerings into groupings, usually by specialization—acting, directing, theoretical and historical studies, etc., and/or by function—undergraduate theatre history, library, performance, etc. These questions provide a means for connecting program futures issues with operational and curricular issues—purposes, size and scope, finances, etc. that are found in the NAST standards.
 - (3) It concludes with a summary list of theatre unit goals and objectives for future development, based on a synthesis of the findings regarding the programs, and plans and prospects for realizing those goals and objectives.

- c. Several considerations among many regarding *Format C*
 - (1) *Format C* may be appropriate if the theatre unit:
 - (a) Has degree programs at more than one degree level in the same area of specialization – e.g., B.F.A., M.F.A. in Directing; B.F.A., M.F.A. in Sound Design and Technology, etc.;
 - (b) Has specific programs such as undergraduate theoretical studies, library, outreach, etc. that it wishes to review;
 - (c) Wishes to engage the faculty in looking at the future of the programs that constitute their areas of specialization and responsibility;
 - (d) Wishes to take an operational or curricular component (sometimes referred to as a “cross-cutting” issue) and have it reviewed from the perspectives of various programs; or
 - (e) Seeks to update a Self-Study text written in *Format C* of the 2008 NAST *Membership Procedures*.
 - (2) *Format C* may not be appropriate if the theatre unit:
 - (a) Wishes the theatre unit as a whole to be the main perspective from which the Self-Study is conducted;
 - (b) Is concerned that separate program reviews would adversely affect a sense of common purpose or future cooperation;
 - (c) Wants to conduct the NAST review primarily in terms of standards compliance;
 - (d) Would be challenged to allocate administrative and faculty time, resources and skills to organizing, coordinating, reporting, and synthesizing the separate program studies; or
 - (e) Has just completed or has other regular evaluative procedures that accomplish specialized program reviews that focus on strategic futures analysis.
- d. *Format C* Instructions and Templates

To review and print a complete set of requirements and instructions for this format, see “[Procedures for Self-Study](#)” on the NAST Web site (under “Procedures for Comprehensive Reviews” within “Accreditation”). Versions of the same documents are provided in both MS Word (.doc) and Adobe Acrobat (.pdf). The .doc version may be used and adapted by the institution for the creation of templates.

4. Custom Formats

- a. Should an institution find that NAST Self-Study *Formats A, B, and C* do not allow for sufficient flexibility at the time of review, a custom format may be developed in consultation with the NAST Executive Director.
- b. Custom formats may be particularly appropriate when the NAST review is combined with an internal review or strategic planning process, or if the institution wishes to combine features of the NAST formats.

- c. The Executive Director of NAST should be contacted prior to the commencement of self-study writing, and at least two years in advance of the projected site visit to discuss the creation of a custom format.
- d. The NAST Executive Director or a staff designee will work with the theatre unit to develop a Self-Study that meets the needs of the institution and satisfies the needs of the Commission.
- e. One or more on-site staff consultations may be required.

5. Optional Supplemental Questions

NAST provides optional sets of questions for self-study that can be used to orient any self-study process, format, document, or section in particular ways. For more information, see Section IX.F. “Aids to Self-Study” below. These questions are available on the NAST Web site. The Association encourages institutions to develop sets of questions that meet their needs for self-evaluation.

6. Common Elements of All Formats

All of the Self-Study formats include a *Management Documents Portfolio* and an *Instructional Programs Portfolio*. Requirements are outlined in their entirety when the complete text of a format is obtained from the Web site. To review separate texts of these portfolios, please see “[Procedures for Self-Study](#)” on the NAST Web site (under “Procedures for Comprehensive Reviews” within “Accreditation”). For member institutions, information requested in these portfolios can often be updated from previous Self-Study documents.

E. Organization of the Process

Only general principles for conducting the self-study can be provided here, since the detailed organization and application must fit the purposes, document format chosen, circumstances, and personnel of the institution.

1. To the fullest extent possible, focus the process on results of the educational program in theatre and the implications of these results for the future work of the theatre unit. In this way, the evidence of institutional effectiveness is used to improve the institution’s programs and processes on a continuing basis.
2. Develop effective and efficient patterns of review and consultation. Because a self-study is an evaluative project that addresses the responsibilities of faculty, administration, students, the governing board, and so forth, each constituency should be involved as appropriate to the goals for self-study and the process chosen. In addition to individuals and groups, consider ways to gain perspectives from collaborating units, constituencies beyond the institution, the theatre unit as a whole, and the institution as a whole.
3. Determine how your procedures for gathering ideas and information will be related to evaluation or analysis, compilation or synthesis of results, and development of next steps.
4. Organize the self-study so that the work represents the entire theatre unit. It is important that the self-study bring the theatre unit into focus, emphasize relationships among as well as results within various sub-units, and instigate healthy cross-fertilization of ideas. NAST standards should serve as references and departure points for this process.

5. Select an approach that uses recent or current institutional research or self-evaluation materials.
6. Respect the current order of institutional or theatre unit priorities. To the extent possible, important internal priorities and problems should not be set aside while the accreditation review is underway.
7. Make the authority and office of the chief theatre executive an essential component of the success of the whole project.
 - a. The executive's role is to keep maximum emphasis on the project, to stimulate the project without dominating it, and to see that the results are translated into immediate action and/or long-range plans.
 - b. In most cases, the chief theatre executive will serve as the principal coordinator of the project with responsibilities for planning the work, holding it in balance, suggesting new approaches, and editing the final report.
 - c. Many institutions will find it useful to develop a steering committee with the theatre executive or a designee serving as the chair.
 - d. In any case, the principal coordinator is the key person in the enterprise. In larger institutions, the task of the coordinator—with its demands on time, energy, intelligence, and tact—is a major assignment, possibly calling for special recognition and load allowance.
8. Adopt a definite timetable. This timetable should be realistic, and the coordinator of the self-study should insist on maintaining it.
 - a. Accompanying this document is a checklist to be used in the planning and execution of the self-study. NAST strongly encourages that this checklist be used as a departure point, and for ensuring all necessary steps and deadlines are accomplished.

For example, after considering the NAST evaluation calendar, set a publication date for the Self-Study of at least five weeks before the evaluation team is due to arrive so that the text can be in the hands of the visiting evaluators four weeks before the visit. Having determined the finish date, allow two weeks preceding that for final editing and duplicating. Then work back toward the beginning, allowing the necessary intervals for each stage.
 - b. In estimating time allowances, remember the scope and depth of the self-study process and how many people will be involved. The self-study must deal with the separate aspects of the theatre unit's life, but it must go beyond them in its concern with their relationships. It must deal with overall educational impact as well as with the efficiency of each of the component parts. If this procedure is to be carried out effectively, an appropriate amount of time must be budgeted.
9. Use the approach chosen to produce a concise, readable, substantive Self-Study document that can be used as a basis for (a) the internal use of faculty members, administrators, trustees, and others; (b) the informational use of NAST visiting evaluators and Commissioners; and (c) future action. The Self-Study document should go beyond mere description and dwell primarily on evaluation, interpretation, and projection.

F. Aids to Self-Study

1. The *Sourcebook for Futures Planning – Supplement IV: Creating Your Self-Study* is especially recommended. This text may be downloaded from the NAST Web site. See “Publications,” “Assessment and Policy Studies,” “[Sourcebook for Futures Planning and Supplements](#).”
2. NAST holds a workshop on self-study at each Annual Meeting.
3. The following documents contain sets of assessment or planning questions and may be useful:
 - *Optional Supplemental Questions for Self-Study*;
 - *Assessment of Undergraduate Programs in Theatre*;
 - *Assessment of Graduate Programs in Theatre*;
 - *Local Assessment of Evaluation and Reward Systems for Arts Faculties in Higher Education*;
 - *NAST Sourcebook for Futures Planning*.

All titles above are available for download from the NAST Web site; see “Publications,” “[Assessment and Policy Studies](#).”

4. The Achievement and Quality section on the NAST Web site (see “Publications,” “[Achievement and Quality](#)”) has additional resources and sets of questions concerning evaluation of individual and institutional work.

G. Electronic Storage and Future Revisions

The NAST Self-Study formats are designed to facilitate electronic storage and updating. Institutions are encouraged to keep these possibilities in mind as the specific text is created. Use of excerpts for other purposes and keeping an updated version can save time and energy in both NAST and other contexts.

H. The Text of the Self-Study Document

Use the instructions for the Self-Study format you have chosen to produce the Self-Study document. See one of the following: *Procedures for the Self-Study Document: Format A*, or *Format B*, or *Format C* on the “[Procedures for Self-Study](#)” page of the NAST Web site.

X. FILING APPLICATION MATERIALS

A. Send to NAST

1. The Application Fee

- a. Use the NAST fee schedule current at the time of evaluation. A current fee schedule may be found on the [NAST Web site](#).
- b. All member institutions will be invoiced for the application fee during the month of August of the academic year in which they are to be reviewed.
- c. All potential member institutions should forward the application fee with the copies of the Self-Study and Application Form.

2. The Application Form, Self-Study Document, and Supportive Materials

- a. Three complete hard copies of the institution's application form and Self-Study narrative, and three complete copies of all accreditation documentation including the *Management Documents Portfolio* (MDP) and appendices (if any) preferably in electronic format which may include an electronic copy of the Self-Study narrative and catalog, are due in the NAST National Office at least four weeks before the visit.
- b. NAST will notify the institution in writing regarding receipt of materials and, if applicable, any additional materials that are due.
- c. For complete information regarding the preparation of materials, see *Procedures for the Self-Study Document* for the format you are using.

B. Send to Each Visitor

The Self-Study Document and Supportive Materials

One hard copy of the institution's Self-Study narrative, and one complete copy of all accreditation documentation including the *Management Documents Portfolio* (MDP) and appendices (if any) preferably in electronic format which may include an electronic copy of the Self-Study narrative and catalog should be sent as early as possible, and must arrive at least four weeks before the visit so that the visitors have ample time for study and reflection before arrival.

C. Late Submission/Incomplete Materials

Visits may be postponed or cancelled by the NAST Executive Director after consultation with the visiting team if satisfactory materials are not available to the visiting team at least four weeks before the visit.

XI. PREPARATIONS FOR THE VISIT

A. Operating Principles

Working together, the visiting team and representatives of the institution develop the overall visit schedule, including lists of interviews, auditions, rehearsals, and appointments. Normally, primary contact is between the team chair and the theatre executive. Social engagements for team members or the team as a whole are to be avoided.

B. Sample Agenda

A typical visit agenda is provided below as a basis for developing specific schedules tailored to the needs of each institution.

Travel and Preparation Day

- Team arrival
- Initial team meeting
- Orientation meeting with theatre executive and/or institutional representatives
- Detailed planning session — logistics and content

First Day

- Review of facilities, equipment, and technology (or previous day, if possible)
- Interviews, classes, auditions, rehearsals, and appointments

- Reviews of student work
- Review on-site documentation
- Team meeting (review, discuss, plan)

Second Day

- Interviews, classes, auditions, rehearsals, and appointments
- Reviews of student work
- Review on-site documentation
- Team meeting (review findings, reach consensus, prepare for exit interviews)

Late Afternoon of the Second Day or Morning of the Third Day

- Outline contents of Visitors' Report
- Agree on arrangements and schedules to complete the Visitors' Report
- Exit interviews with theatre executive and other appropriate administrators and representatives
- Team departure

C. Institutional Arrangements for Visitors

1. After completion of Section XI.A. above, designated representatives of the institution schedule all aspects of the visit with institutional personnel.
2. The theatre executive ensures that arrangements have been made to provide all that is required in Section XII. below and in the "Required On-Site" portion of the Self-Study format chosen.
3. Designated representatives of the institution make appropriate logistical arrangements such as hotel accommodations and on-site travel arrangements. They advise the team of these arrangements in advance of arrival. Team members must have (a) single rooms, all at one location, and (b) secure, on-campus facilities for meeting in conference.
4. If available, a dedicated workspace on-site in close proximity to the theatre unit should be provided for the visitors. Documentation not provided in the Self-Study may be offered in this room for the convenience of the institution and visitors.

D. Local Orientation

The theatre executive orients all involved regarding the purpose, scope, and character of the NAST visit and distributes to theatre faculty and appropriate administrators copies of the documents entitled (a) *NAST Information*, (b) *A Philosophy for Accreditation in the Arts Disciplines*, and (c) *NAST Accreditation Information for Faculty*, all available from the NAST Web site in the Publications section under the heading "[Brochures and Advisory Papers](#)." The theatre executive is responsible for keeping appropriate administrators, faculty, students, and staff informed of the accreditation process and its progress.

E. Visitors' Preparation Responsibilities

1. All members of the team are responsible for (a) making their own transportation arrangements to and from the institution and (b) advising the team chair and institutional representatives of their schedule. Team members travel as inexpensively as possible and, when feasible, schedule travel on days that allow the greatest savings. Weekend stay-overs intended to reduce costs should be discussed in advance with the theatre executive.

2. The team chair makes specific observation, interview, and writing assignments in consultation with other team members.
3. All team members gain comprehensive understanding of the theatre unit through in-depth analysis of the Self-Study and supportive materials. Team members must also refamiliarize themselves with the *NAST Handbook* including any current addenda, and the *NAST Membership Procedures Documents (September 2016 Edition)*.
4. The team informs the NAST National Office if the Self-Study and other materials have not been received at least four weeks before the visit, or if at any time it appears that the institution is not or will not be prepared for the visit.

XII. THE VISIT

Further Information: The NAST Procedures for Visiting Evaluators (September 2016 Edition), available online on the [“Procedures for Visiting Evaluators”](#) page of the NAST Web site under “Procedures for Comprehensive Reviews.”

A. Purpose

The primary purpose of the visit is to develop an external perspective on the work of the theatre unit. This perspective is considered by the Commission along with (1) materials submitted by the institution and (2) NAST standards as published in the *Handbook* and any current addenda. The visitors must be able to review student work at all degree and program levels.

B. Protocols

Individuals involved in the visit are expected to (1) maintain a professional, collegial, peer-review approach, (2) keep the process focused on the institution, its programs, and its effectiveness, (3) contribute to the factual accuracy of the Visitors’ Report, and (4) cause as little disruption as possible to the artistic and educational routine of the theatre unit.

C. Local Arrangements

Local arrangements must be made that enable the evaluators to do the following:

1. Content

- a. Undertake a thorough review of all theatre major programs (i.e., non-degree, undergraduate, graduate) irrespective of where the programs are administered.
- b. Observe classes, studios, lessons, shops, rehearsals, and other theatre activities. The evaluators should select at random certain classes and lessons to visit. As applicable, all levels of instruction must be reviewed. If possible, include at least one in each of the following categories: (1) lower division performance program, (2) studio and performance classes, (3) theatre history, theory, and literature, (4) teacher preparation, and (5) theatre and drama for the general college student.
- c. Review items such as performance tapes, playscripts, and other materials demonstrating the quality of student work in each degree or program offered, including documentation supportive of final projects required for degree completion.
- d. As necessary, consider course syllabi, compilations of performance and event programs, etc.

- e. Observe a sampling of student performers. Attend performance(s) or dress rehearsal(s) including several representative students at various levels. If the institution offers professional degrees or programs in performance at one or more levels (i.e., baccalaureate, initial graduate, terminal graduate), observe a sampling of performers at each level, either in person or on video.
- f. Consider the effectiveness of institutional policies and procedures for ensuring that student competencies are met.
- g. Attend a full production or dress rehearsal of a full production. If this is not possible, videos may suffice.
- h. Consider the total performance program (student, faculty, guest) and its quality and comprehensiveness in relationship to the goals and objectives of (1) the theatre unit or a whole area, (2) specific curricular programs.
- i. Verify transcripts. Paper or electronic access to transcripts or copies thereof for graduates from each undergraduate or graduate degree or postsecondary non-degree-granting program for the past three years must be available to the visiting evaluators.

If a program has had no graduates in the past three years, transcript access for the past five years must be provided.

Transcripts or copies must be arranged or clearly identified by program title.

Visitors must be able to select and review at random from among all or a selection of transcripts from each degree or postsecondary non-degree-granting program offered. Ideally, two or three transcripts for each program are chosen and considered by the visitors.

If the institution requires that permission be granted by each graduate for the review of transcripts, this must be accomplished prior to the visit.

Section 438(b)(1)(G) of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 stipulates that institutions may release without threat of loss of federal funding, student records to “accrediting organizations in order to carry out their accrediting functions.”

The institution should provide on-site assistance to the visitors in comparing transcripts with NAST standards and the institution’s program requirements.

Note for Current Member Institutions Only:

Member institutions requesting in the Self-Study (1) Final Approval for Listing (FAL) for one or more programs that currently hold Plan Approval (PA) and are listed in italics by NAST, or (2) Plan Approval and Final Approval For Listing (PA/FAL) for one or more programs that have not been previously reviewed by NAST, must do the following:

Provide as requested in Section II.B.16 of Format A or Section II.B.16 of Format B or Section I.B.16 of Format C two transcripts for each graduate program, and/or three transcripts for each program in any other category. The Commission cannot take action on requests for Final Approval for Listing unless it reviews the requisite number of transcripts in person.

For such programs, separate on-site review of transcripts beyond those contained in the Self-Study would be helpful but is not required.

Member institutions submitting continuing programs listed in regular type by NAST for renewal of Plan Approval and Final Approval for Listing, and in all other categories except FAL and PA/FAL mentioned above, need not provide transcripts for those programs with the Self-Study.

- j. Evaluate the institution's student complaint policy and the institution's effectiveness with regard to its application and effectiveness, including the institution's ability to address and rectify issues that arise as a result of any review. Review any record of student complaints with regard to a specific issue which, offered in substantial number over an extended period of time, indicate concern with regard to an institution's stated purposes, ongoing operations, and/or curricular programs.
- k. Observe student intern teachers, and other internships when possible.
- l. Consider community education programs according to NAST procedures and as presented in the Self-Study. (See "Special Instructions for Postsecondary Institutions that Operate Community Education Programs in Theatre" in the "General Instructions" section of the *Procedures for the Self-Study Document* for the format chosen.)

2. Operations

- a. Inspect libraries (books, periodicals, audiotapes/recordings, videos and films, scripts, images, information technologies, etc.), and consider collection development in relation to the size, scope, and objectives of the theatre unit.
- b. Consider financial support for the theatre unit.
- c. Inspect physical plant and equipment and consider repair, maintenance, and replacement policies and plans.
- d. Consider documentation and conditions associated with health and safety, including (1) policies and practices regarding the provision of information to students, faculty and staff including injury prevention, and (2) compliance with local health and safety codes.
- e. As necessary, consider documentation concerning appointment, promotion, and tenure; and governance.
- f. Review policies and procedures for evaluation, planning, and making projections, and review the extent to which they influence thoughtful exchange.

3. Meetings

- a. Meet with the theatre executive at the beginning of and during the visit to discuss the visit plans, share issues, and gain perspective.
- b. Meet with the chief executive (or a designee) of the institution. This provides an opportunity to gain insight into his/her views of (1) the theatre unit's role in the institution; (2) general institutional philosophy, goals, objectives, resource issues; and (3) future plans. Visitors to free-standing schools of theatre also meet with the chair of the board to review these matters.
- c. Interview faculty members, professional staff, and students, both individually and in groups, in pre-arranged meetings and, if requested, in appointments arranged on-site. Ideally, independent meetings should be scheduled with each group, with representatives from no

other group present. In large programs where it may be impossible to meet with all faculty, visitors should ensure contact with a representative cross-section.

- d. Hold an exit interview with the theatre executive, and also concluding conferences with the chief executive and other senior administrators if requested by the institution. (The conferences may be held jointly if requested or if deemed appropriate.) In these conferences, the visiting evaluators ask any final questions, report general observations, review the overall findings that will be included in the Visitors' Report, and describe the next steps in the accreditation process, including the institution's opportunity to provide an Optional Response to the Visitors' Report. In addition to these presentations, the visitors provide opportunities for questions and dialogue. The visitors shall not suggest or attempt to predict the action of the Commission.
- e. During exit interviews, as well as in previous discussions, the visiting evaluators must make clear distinctions between (1) assessments concerning threshold operational and curricular standards for accreditation; (2) analytical results in other categories such as strengths and areas for improvement, short- and long-term futures issues; and (3) if requested, consultative advice that are beyond threshold accreditation standards.
- f. The visiting evaluators should remind the institution's representatives that NAST visitors do not suggest a final accreditation action to the Commission.

4. Synthesis

Consider the extent to which various operational, educational, and programmatic components (a) have an interrelationship sufficiently viable to achieve the theatre unit's purposes both at present and in the future; (b) meet NAST standards; and (c) can continue to meet NAST standards during the projected accreditation period.

XIII. PROCEDURES PRIOR TO COMMISSION ACTION

A. NAST Visitors' Report

1. Immediately following the visit, the visiting evaluators prepare a report for the institution and the Commission according to NAST procedures.
2. The Visitors' Report:
 - a. Compares visitors' impressions of conditions, evaluations, and projections with those described in the Self-Study.
 - b. Identifies the extent to which the institution appears to be compliance with NAST standards.
 - c. Recommends specific improvements.
 - d. Makes suggestions concerning opportunities or problems not yet apparent.
3. The Visitors' Report is expected in the NAST National Office within six weeks of the visit.
4. Upon receipt, the NAST staff reviews the Visitors' Report and consults as necessary with the visitors, which can take several weeks. When the review is complete, the National Office sends to the theatre executive of the applicant institution a copy of the Visitors' Report marked: "NAST Visitors' Report — For Internal Distribution According to Institutional Protocols —

Any Optional Response Due (date).” The theatre executive distributes the report according to the plan developed by the institution (see Section VI., “Internal Communication Plan” above).

B. Optional Response to the Visitors’ Report

1. The institution has the option of responding to the Visitors’ Report with respect to (a) errors of fact, (b) conclusions based upon such errors, and (c) documented changes made in the program since the visit. Submission of an Optional Response is highly recommended.
2. Any Optional Response to the Visitors’ Report should be submitted to the NAST National Office according to the following schedule:

No later than February 15 for Commission action in March.

3. Procedures for filing the Optional Response will be provided with the copy of the Visitors’ Report sent to the institution.

C. Institutional Evaluation of the NAST Review Thus Far

The Visitors’ Report is accompanied by a brief questionnaire that provides the institution with an opportunity to evaluate the process through the site visit and before Commission action. Filing instructions are provided with the questionnaire. NAST appreciates and welcomes constructive and thoughtful feedback.

D. Withdrawal of the Application for Membership

An application for Membership may be withdrawn at any time prior to the decision of the Commission, without refund of fee or release of responsibility to reimburse the Association for applicable expenses, including those of the visiting evaluators.

XIV. COMMISSION ACTION

A. Meeting Dates

The Commission on Accreditation meets annually in March to review application materials, all supporting documentation, Visitors’ Reports, and Optional Responses.

B. Report to the Institution

Following the meetings, a written communication describing Commission action based on the application materials—(1) the institution’s Self-Study, (2) the Visitors’ Report and, if applicable, (3) the institution’s Optional Response—is transmitted to the applicant institution’s theatre executive, president or chancellor, and provost, dean, and other upper administrators if requested by the institution. The communication will contain a clear statement of the official accreditation action and may contain recommendations. However, the text distinguishes between accreditation actions and other matters.

C. Possible Commission Actions on First-Time Applications for Membership

1. The institution is approved for Associate Membership for a period of five years.
2. The institution is approved for Membership for a period of five years.

3. The institution is approved for Associate Membership or Membership for a period of five years with a request for one or more progress reports confirming implementation of plans and/or completion of ongoing issues as outlined by the Commission.
4. Action on the application of the institution is deferred pending one or more of the following:
 - a. Receipt of additional information necessary to determine whether the institution meets NAST standards;
 - b. Response to the stated concerns of the Commission about failure to meet NAST standards;
 - c. Response indicating the correction of deficiencies as outlined by the Commission.

(See next section titled "Further Explanation of Deferral.")

Normally, responses are requested in the form of written submissions.

5. The application for Membership is denied with notice of rights to request reconsideration or to appeal.

D. Possible Commission Actions on Applications for Membership or Renewal of Membership

1. The institution with Associate Membership is granted Membership for a period of five years.
2. The institution with Membership is granted renewal of Membership for a period of ten years.
3. The institution with Associate Membership is granted Membership for a period of five years with a request for one or more progress reports confirming implementation of plans and/or completion of ongoing issues as outlined by the Commission.
4. The institution with Membership is granted renewal of Membership for a period of ten years with a request for one or more progress reports confirming implementation of plans and/or completion of ongoing issues as outlined by the Commission.
5. The current Membership status of the institution is continued, but action on the application of the institution for Membership or renewal of Membership is deferred pending one or more of the following:
 - a. Receipt of additional information necessary to determine whether the institution meets NAST standards;
 - b. Response to the stated concerns of the Commission about failure to meet NAST standards;
 - c. Response indicating the correction of deficiencies as outlined by the Commission.

(See next section titled "Further Explanation of Deferral.")

Normally, responses are requested in the form of written submissions.

6. The institution is issued a show-cause statement with regard to administrative or accreditation warning.
7. The institution is given an administrative or accreditation warning.
8. The institution is placed on probation with notice of right to request reconsideration.
9. The application for Membership or renewal of Membership is denied with notice of rights to request reconsideration or to appeal.

E. Policies and Procedures Applied as Appropriate to Commission Motions Regarding Membership and Renewal of Membership

1. Approval

- a. Notice of Associate Membership, Membership, or renewal of Membership is accompanied by a brief questionnaire that provides the institution with an opportunity to evaluate the entire accreditation process. Filing instructions are provided with the questionnaire. NAST appreciates and welcomes constructive and thoughtful feedback.
- b. Institutions receiving Associate Membership, Membership, or renewal of Membership should review sections of the NAST “Rules of Practice and Procedure” found in the NAST *Handbook* that pertain to publication of accreditation actions, printed recognition of Membership, and disclosure and confidentiality.
- c. Progress reports may be requested at any time or periodically throughout the term of accreditation, and prior to the institution’s next comprehensive review.

2. Deferral, Administrative Warning

(See next section titled “Further Explanation of Deferral” and NAST Handbook, Bylaws, Article I, “Administrative Warning Status” or “Accreditation Warning Status.”)

- a. Deferral actions and reports, and administrative or accreditation warning actions and reports each are structured within specific time periods. Normally, deferral periods are from one to two years. Administrative or accreditation warning periods extend from one to twelve months.
- b. If the application is deferred, the institution responds in writing to the Commission as directed, and the application is reconsidered by the Commission at the specified regular meeting following the response. The same process applies to administrative or accreditation warning.

3. Probation, Denial

- a. In cases of probation or several consecutive deferrals of action on the application, a new Self-Study and/or visit may be required.
- b. If Membership or renewal of Membership is denied, a new Self-Study and visit will be required upon reapplication after the specified time period has elapsed.

4. Personal Appearances

- a. When circumstances arise that cannot be clarified through written communications, the theatre executive of an applicant institution may request of the Executive Director of NAST an appointment with the Commission to discuss pending Commission action.
- b. The Commission may request an appearance by a theatre executive to clarify points relevant to an application.

F. Notifications

Notifications of Commission actions are provided to various constituencies according to provisions of Part II., Article XIII of the NAST Rules of Practice and Procedure titled “Publication of NAST Accreditation Actions.” These include requirements for notifications to the U.S. Secretary of Education.

XV. FURTHER EXPLANATION OF DEFERRAL

In the accreditation process, the accrediting Commission may find a situation in which an institution cannot be granted initial accreditation, renewal of accreditation, Plan Approval, and/or Final Approval for Listing on the basis of evidence presented. This may be because sufficient or complete information has not been provided or, because after the review of all relevant information made available by the institution, it is not clear or apparent that an institution meets applicable standards as outlined in the *NAST Handbook*.

As a result, the Commission defers any action on an institution's application until certain conditions are addressed that clarify the situation or confirm an institution's compliance. Deferral is not a negative action or an indication of lack of support, but rather a mechanism intended to open an intellectual and probing dialogue between the Commission and an institution—a dialogue intended to promote and support further study on the part of an institution—for the benefit of the students served. Such studies typically result in more focused observations, renewed commitments, and new options for an institution to consider.

Member institutions whose applications are deferred continue their current accreditation status and maintain all rights and responsibilities of accreditation. Deferral does not mean that an institution has lost its accreditation, its right to vote during an Annual Meeting, or its listing in the NAST Directory List. Deferral does not mean that an institution's accreditation status is in jeopardy. Deferral simply indicates that an institution has one or more issues that need to be reviewed, explained in further detail, or addressed before the institution's application can be approved.

Should an institution fail to demonstrate compliance with issues articulated in a Commission Action Report and therefore cause a pattern of continuous deferrals, it is possible that action to place an institution on probation, revoke an institution's membership, or deny accreditation could result. This scenario is highly unlikely in cases where institutions are making substantial and timely progress to comply with applicable standards. Institutions are guided to review the Association's *Policy Concerning Commission Action and Timelines* (see *NAST Handbook*, Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II, Article IV., Section 3.).

There is no public notice of deferral. Letters reporting accreditation actions are sent only to the institutionally-designated primary institutional representative to NAST and the chief executive officer of the institution. The NAST National Office staff does not discuss an institution's status or application with any individual other than the theatre executive or appropriate designated administrative officials of the institution.

Should questions pertaining to a Commission Action Report, actions to defer, the application of standards, and/or Association policies arise, institutional representatives are urged to contact the NAST National Office staff. Staff members can provide invaluable assistance to administrators preparing materials for, and in response to, Commission review.

XVI. PROCEDURES REGARDING REVIEW OF ACCREDITATION DECISIONS

When an action of the Commission causes a serious disagreement that cannot be resolved through normal NAST procedures, the institution and the individuals therein follow, as appropriate, one of the following "Rules of Practice and Procedure" in the *NAST Handbook*: "Requests for Reconsideration of Actions by the Commission on Accreditation" or "Appeals of Adverse Decisions Concerning Accredited Institutional Membership."

XVII. THE REEVALUATION CYCLE

After Associate Membership and/or original Membership is granted, reevaluation is scheduled in five years.

For continuing Members, reevaluation normally occurs on a ten-year cycle.

Neither the five-year nor the ten-year review period is extended because of deferred actions or requests for progress reports.

The Commission has the right to require a review and/or visit at any time for cause.

An institution may request and be granted a postponement for cause. The NAST policy on postponements may be found on the Web site under “Accreditation,” then “Accreditation Materials,” then “Protocols.” If postponement seems advisable, contact the [NAST National Office](#).

XVIII. MAINTAINING ACCREDITED STATUS

A. Annual Reports to NAST

Each accredited institution is responsible for submitting annual reports, including: (1) a HEADS Data Survey, (2) an accreditation audit, and (3) an affirmation statement. Free-standing institutions must also submit a Supplemental Annual Report. For further information, see NAST *Handbook*, Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II., Article III., Section 1.

B. Dues

Each accredited institution is responsible for paying annual dues. Dues are billed annually on July 1.

C. Continuing Compliance with NAST Standards

1. Accredited institutions agree to maintain their programs in compliance with NAST standards as they are developed, and participate in the continuing development of Standards and Guidelines.

Continuing compliance and its documentation include fulfillment of annual reporting responsibilities as well as timely submission of applications associated with conditions indicated in items C.2., 3., and 4. below, and timely replies to requests of the Commission on Accreditation or other requests provided for in or associated with the procedures of the Association.

2. If an institution wishes to add a new theatre major or area of emphasis within an existing approved major, a request for Plan Approval must be filed and approved before students are admitted to the new program (see NAST *Handbook*, Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II., Article VI.). Procedures for applications for Plan Approval may be obtained from the NAST Web site.
3. Institutions/theatre units are required to gain prior approval of substantive changes occurring between regular accreditation visits (see NAST *Handbook*, Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II., Article V.). Article V. offers an extensive, although not exhaustive, list of initiatives that are deemed to constitute Substantive Change.

It is recommended that the advice of NAST staff be sought regarding the necessity for a Substantive Change application prior to its submission. Procedures for filing Substantive Change applications may be obtained from the NAST staff.

4. If an accredited theatre unit proposes to (a) become affiliated with or an integral part of another educational institution; (b) implement substantial changes in institutional or collegiate organization and administrative structure; (c) make a change in ownership or a fundamental, comprehensive change of control; (d) establish a branch campus offering degrees or programs eligible for accreditation by NAST; or (e) make arrangements for affiliative use of the institution's or theatre unit's name, the theatre unit must inform the Executive Director of NAST and, prior to implementation, demonstrate to the Commission that changes will not affect compliance with accreditation standards.

XIX. POLICIES AND RULES CONCERNING USDE TITLE IV

Under regulations of the United States Department of Education (USDE) applicable to institutions participating in Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) and therefore to the programs of those institutions, NAST and the U.S. Secretary of Education have responsibilities to each other if either or both of them have reason to believe that any institution or program NAST accredits is failing to meet its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities, or is engaged in fraud or abuse.

NAST policies regarding these reporting responsibilities are found in the NAST *Handbook*, Rules of Practice and Procedure, Part II., Article IV. Commission Policies, Section 4. Policies and Rules Concerning USDE Title IV.

EVALUATION CALENDAR
FOR INSTITUTIONS APPLYING FOR
NAST MEMBERSHIP OR RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP

ACTION	For Consideration at the Commission Meetings in March	
Notice of Intention to Apply form* to the NAST National Office <i>(Please see note below)</i>	At least two years before the projected date of the NAST on-site visit, and not later than one year prior to the visit	
Self-Study Document, Institutional Catalogs, and Supportive Material to the NAST Visiting Evaluators	At least four weeks before the visit	
Application, Self-Study Document, Institutional Catalogs, and Supportive Material to the NAST National Office	At least four weeks before the visit	
Application Fee to the NAST National Office	<i>Members:</i> upon receipt of invoice <i>Nonmembers:</i> with the Self-Study	
Visitation Periods † <i>(Please see note below)</i>	PERIOD 1 <i>for Commission action in the same academic year</i> September 1 – December 1	PERIOD 2 <i>for Commission action in the next academic year</i> January 1 – June 1
Visitors' Report to the NAST National Office	Within six weeks of visit	
Visitors' Report to the Institution	Upon completion of National Office review process, which commences upon receipt and concludes as quickly as possible thereafter	
Institution's Optional Response to the Visitors' Report to the NAST National Office	As early as possible and not later than February 15	
NAST Commission Meets	Third or fourth week in March	
Institution Notified of Commission Action	Within thirty days of Commission meeting	

Please Note:

* In order to be assured of an evaluation during the preferred time period, the institution should submit the Notice of Intention to Apply form at least two years before the projected date of the on-site visit; however, this form must be received in the NAST National Office no later than one year prior to the on-site visit date.

† Evaluations scheduled from January 1 forward will not be reviewed by the Commission until March of the following year.

SAMPLE INSTITUTIONAL SCHEDULE AND CHECKLIST: PREPARATION FOR ON-SITE VISIT

Please feel free to use this sample schedule as a basis for developing an appropriate timeline for your theatre unit.

- MONTH 1:**
- Submit Notice of Intention to Apply Form (should be submitted at least two years prior to the on-site review)
 - Create Internal Communications Plan
 - Receive Slate of Nominations for Evaluators
 - Return Evaluator Preference
- MONTH 2:**
- Finalize Evaluation Team
 - Finalize Visit Dates with the Evaluators
 - Notify the NAST National Office Staff of the Final Visit Dates
 - Formalize Basic Self-Study Format, Purposes, Approach, Design
 - Assign a Self-Study Coordinator / Steering Committee
 - Make Data Collection, Analysis, and Writing Assignments
- MONTH 3:**
- Begin Compiling Information
- MONTH 4:**
- Begin Review and Consideration of Information
- MONTH 6:**
- Begin the Process of Self-Study
- MONTH 12:**
- Create an Outline of the Self-Study Document
- MONTH 14:**
- Begin Writing the Self-Study
- MONTH 18:**
- Make Hotel Reservations for Evaluators
- MONTH 20:**
- Produce Preliminary Draft of Complete Self-Study and Seek Community Review of the Draft
 - Make Arrangements to Present Student Work (*performances, tapes, written work, etc.*)
- MONTH 22:**
- Finalize and Polish Self-Study
 - Establish Basic Schedule with Chair of the Visiting Team
- MONTH 23:**
- Forward Self-Study and Supportive Materials to Evaluators
 - Forward Self-Study, Supportive Materials, Application Form, and Application Fee (*if applicable*) to NAST National Office
 - Confirm All Logistics of Visit with Evaluators
- MONTH 24:**
- Complete All Schedules of Appointments and All Arrangements for Access to Transcripts, Student Work, etc.
 - Host On-Site Visit

