A Guide to the Reaccreditation Process

The core architecture of the reaccreditation process consists of an online Self-Study, a site visit from peer reviewers, and review by the Accreditation Commission. This process was streamlined in 2014 with the assistance of the museum field, utilizing shifts in policy, process, and technology to:

- Reduce the time needed to complete a reaccreditation review by 50% or more
- Place more emphasis on institutional impact and less on process/policy
- Focus on what has changed at the institution, in the field, and in the standards since the museum's last accreditation review.
- Change the Self-Study to a paperless online format

These changes have made the reaccreditation process simpler without diluting the standards.

The Self-Study

- Is about 75% shorter than the previous paper-based version.

- Is an online form comprised of the following sections:

  - **Organizational Data** – Simple demographic questions, such as museum type, governance, budget, and staff size.
  - **Museum Overview** – Questions that gather more detailed information about the museum's mission, collections, and other certifications; and special questions if the museum is (or part of) a museum system.
  - **Operational Data** – Questions that gather detailed data on finances, facilities, human resources, attendance, and types of collections. This section accounts for about 50% of the reaccreditation Self-Study.
  - **Changes Since Last Review** – A mix of question types (checkboxes, short answer, and essay) about the types of changes at the museum, and how the museum has responded to or been impacted by them.
  - **Attachments** – A list of documents to upload: 8 required; 2 if applicable; 4 optional.
  - **Help** – Definitions, resources, information on standards, and guidance on how to answer selected questions.

- There are three Self-Study submission deadlines each year (see chart below). Every accredited museum has already been assigned a due date for its next reaccreditation review.

- A review fee based on the museum's Alliance membership status is due at the time of submission. Tier 3 Members receive a significant discount.

- We may select some Self-Study attachments for inclusion in our Sample Documents Library (excluding financial attachments), redacting proprietary security details or personally identifiable information. Unless you withdraw permission in writing, you are granting permission to the Alliance to distribute the remaining documents, in whole or in part, to Tier 3 Alliance members in electronic format via its website.

The Site Visit

- The site visit occurs during a predetermined window based on the museum's Self-Study due date (see chart below).
- The museum vets a list of potential peer reviewers sent by its Accreditation Program Officer; the Program Officer ultimately selects the reviewers.
- The museum and the peer reviewers work together to set the specific dates for the 2-day visit (large museums and museum systems may add a 3rd day).

Schedule

Self-Study Due	Site Visit	Accreditation Commission Review
March 1	July 15 - Aug. 30	October
July 1	Nov. 1 - Dec. 15	February
November 1	March 1 - April 15	June

- The time from Self-Study submission to Commission decision is about 7 months. Museums required to remedy any issues during the process may require more time. See next page for a detailed timeline.
- Requests from the museum for extensions to the Self-Study due date or site visit period will be approved only in rare cases due to highly unusual extenuating circumstances. Additional time granted may be deducted from the museum's next 10-year accreditation period.
- Museums must undergo reaccreditation every ten years. In select cases the Commission may designate a shorter award period.

Preparing for Your Museum's Next Reaccreditation Review

- Contact the accreditation staff (accreditation@aam-us.org) if you do not know the schedule for the museum's next reaccreditation review.

- Review the museum's last Self-Study, Visiting Committee report, and Accreditation Commission decision letter (contact the accreditation staff if you need copies of these materials). Determine if the museum has resolved or made significant progress on any issues cited in the documents.

- Create a staff workplan for completion of the Self-Study, review and potential revision of the attachments required with the Self-Study, planning the site visit, etc.

- Budget for the costs associated with the reaccreditation review (the Self-Study review fee is $2875-$6900 based on member Tier; estimate site visit expenses to total $2,000-$3,000).

- Ensure the museum's five Core Documents meet standards and reflect current practice. The standards and resources to strengthen the documents are available on the AAM website. Consider purchasing *Mastering Your Museum's Core Documents*. This AAM toolkit offers guidance and resources to successfully revise or draft your museum's core documents.

  The five Core Documents will get particular scrutiny as part of the reaccreditation process:
  - Mission Statement
  - Institutional Code of Ethics
  - Strategic Institutional Plan
  - Disaster Preparedness/Emergency Response Plan
  - Collections Management Policy (or Borrowing Policy if the museum does not own collections)

Reaccreditation Timeline

	TIME for this phase (months)	CUMULATIVE TIME for the review* (months)
SELF-STUDY • Museum is assigned a due date for its next reaccreditation Self-Study at the time of its accreditation award. • AAM staff emails link to online Self-Study to museum director at least one year before date due. • Museum submits Self-Study and attachments by assigned due date. • AAM staff reviews materials for completeness and adherence to standards. • AAM staff sends results of review to museum. • Museum responds to review within one month by completing any requested edits to the Self-Study and/or submitting any missing documents.	**2**	**2**
SITE VISIT • Site visit preparation process begins when museum submits Self-Study (Self-Study review and site visit preparation run concurrently for two months). • Accreditation Program Officer sends museum list of potential Peer Reviewers. Within one week, museum tells Program Officer if any reviewers pose conflict of interest. • Program Officer secures two of the reviewers on the list to serve as the Visiting Committee. • The museum and Visiting Committee select specific visit dates within the pre-assigned six-week window. • Museum prepares for site visit. • Visit occurs. • Visiting Committee writes and submits report to Accreditation Commission. • Museum placed on pre-assigned Commission meeting agenda.	**4-6**	**6-8**
ACCREDITATION COMMISSION REVIEW & DECISION • Accreditation Commission reviews Self-Study and Visiting Committee report. • Commission grants accreditation, denies accreditation, or tables its decision for up to one year so museum can address specific concerns. • Museum receives Commission decision letter and a copy of the Visiting Committee report. • When accreditation is granted, the next Self-Study due date is stated in the decision letter. Accreditation is usually granted for 10 years; in select cases the Commission may designate a shorter award period.	**2-4**	**8-12**

*Times given are approximate and do not factor in additional time the museum must take to remedy incomplete items or tabling actions by the Commission at final decision stage.