



Virtual Validation Team Visit Proposal NAC 2020 Recommendation

The following is a proposal to the National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) National Accreditation Commission (NAC) concerning potential virtual Validation Team Visits to address the impacts of COVID-19. While a virtual Validation Team Visit does not adequately replace an on-site visit, circumstances may necessitate that this is the only viable option for specific schools in the foreseeable future. As such, it is essential that NLSA be positioned to address this potential need for our Lutheran schools.

The document on the following pages is intended to be distributed to school administrators who would be potentially seeking to utilize the Virtual Validation Team Visit process. It is not meant to be all-inclusive of the needs of the process. As such, the following documentation would be prepared alongside the Policy and Procedure document (included below) to inform and equip all individuals involved in the use of the Virtual Validation Team Visit:

1. NLSA Application for Virtual Validation Team Visit
2. Virtual Validation Team Visit Manual

Note: Chapters will be included addressing the role and responsibilities of, as well as best practices for the following groups:

- District Office Staff (Education Executive, NLSA Commissioner, etc.)
- School Consultant
- Virtual Validation Team Captain
- Virtual Validation Team Members

The NLSA national office staff and Executive Committee members have worked diligently through the creation of this process and spent considerable time reviewing the proposal to ensure that this will meet the rigorous standards of the NLSA process. While we have a full understanding of how this will look and work in practice, we understand that there will be numerous “procedural” questions from the members of the NAC. Thus, due to the limited time available for discussion during the live virtual NAC, and in order to address as many of these questions as possible prior to the meeting, please contact any members of the national office staff or the Executive Committee between now and the start of the virtual NAC meeting.

National Lutheran School Accreditation Virtual Validation Team Visit Policy and Procedure

To address the impacts of COVID-19 on Lutheran schools, the National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) leadership has developed the following policy and procedures for a virtual site visit to fulfil the requirements of an NLSA Validation Team Visit. All questions regarding this policy and its procedures are to be addressed to the NLSA Director, Dr. Rebecca Schmidt (Rebecca.Schmidt@lcms.org).

A Lutheran school is eligible to apply for a Virtual Validation Team Visit only if **all** of the following conditions are met:

1. The school is currently Accredited in Good Standing.
2. The school has been Accredited for more than one, 5-year Accreditation cycle (no first-renewal schools).
3. The school must use NLSA Options A, B, C, or D (see *NLSA Routes to Accreditation*) and not an accreditation process from another accrediting agency (COGNIA, WASC, Middle States or CCLE).

If a school is **unable** to meet all of the required conditions, the school must continue to apply for a pandemic extension until they are able to hold an on-site Validation Team Visit.

If **eligible** to apply for a Virtual Validation Team Visit, the school must comply with the following requirements:

1. The school must complete and submit to their district office the *NLSA Application for Virtual Validation Team Visit* no later than thirty (30) days prior to the scheduled Virtual Validation Team Visit date.
 - As part of the *NLSA Application for Virtual Validation Team Visit* the school will be required to submit a request, in writing, detailing the specific need resulting in the request for a virtual visit.
2. The school must complete the regular requirements as established for an on-site Validation Team Visit (Self-Study Report, collection of evidence and documentation, solicitation of surveys, and preliminary School Action Plan) no later than thirty (30) days prior to the scheduled Virtual Validation Team Visit. Written verification that all accreditation materials have been reviewed and are complete is required of the NLSA consultant and communicated to the district education executive and/or NLSA Commissioner and the Validation Team Captain.

Once these requirements are met, the following procedure for a Virtual Validation Team Visit is to be followed:

1. The following documents must be made available in a digital format or repository (Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.) for all members of the Validation Team to review no later than fourteen (14) days prior to the scheduled virtual Visit:
 - a. Self-Study Report
 - b. All evidence and required documentation as referenced in the Self-Study Report
 - c. Stakeholder survey results (teacher, parents, students, etc.)

- d. Preliminary School Action Plan
2. A two-day Virtual Validation Team Visit must be scheduled with all Validation Team members, school and church administration, and school staff. This must include (but not be limited to) a virtual tour of the school campus, time for Validation Team members to interact with school administration and other individuals as necessary, and a virtual “room” for Team members to collaborate during the virtual Visit.
 - a. Virtual live interviews must take place with the following groups of stakeholders:
 - i. Classroom Teachers
 - ii. Selected School Parents
 - iii. Pastor(s) (*as appropriate*)
 - iv. Governing Board (*or appropriate individuals*)
 - v. Students (*as appropriate*)
 - b. Schools should make classroom “observation” available to Team members for the review of live instruction (not required if technical or other limitations prevent such “observations”).
3. The Validation Team will complete the Validation Team Report electronically and submit it to the school as per the normal NLSA requirements.
4. A live virtual exit report session must be scheduled and made available to the school at the completion of the work of the Validation Team.

Once the Virtual Validation Team Visit process is complete, the school has one calendar year (365 days) to complete the following:

1. A one-day, on-site review consisting of:
 - a. Virtual Validation Team Captain
 - b. **One** of the following two individuals:
 - i. District Education Executive
 - ii. NLSA District Commissioner
2. Submission of an updated final School Action Plan to the District Accreditation Commission containing the recommendations of both the Virtual Validation Team Visit and the on-site review.

If the on-site review is not completed prior to the next regularly-scheduled National Accreditation Commission (NAC) meeting, the school will be recommended for the accreditation status of Provisional Accreditation pending the completion of the on-site review.

Upon completion of the on-site review, the responsible District Accreditation Commission will report their findings in written format to the National Accreditation Commission (NAC) for review and subsequent recommendation for Accreditation in Good Standing at the next regularly scheduled NAC meeting for the remainder of the school’s accreditation cycle.

Failure to complete these steps within one calendar year will result in the invalidation of the Virtual Validation Team Visit and the Provisional Accreditation will be revoked at the next regularly-scheduled National Accreditation Commission (NAC) meeting.