



Virtual Validation Team Visit Eligibility Proposal NAC 2021 Recommendation

The following is a proposal to the National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) National Accreditation Commission (NAC) concerning the eligibility of a school to utilize the Virtual Validation Team Visit process:

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact of school building closures on the NLSA self-study and Validation Team Visit processes, at the 2020 NAC meeting, a proposal was adopted to establish a process for Virtual Validation Team Visits. Through this modified format, fifteen schools were able to conduct Validation Team Visits virtually during the 2020-2021 school year.

As a result of the generally improved situation of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lessening of external visitor restrictions impacting Lutheran schools, as well as numerous interviews and statements collected by the National office regarding the challenges of a Virtual Visit, the NLSA national office and Executive Committee are proposing an update to the eligibility of schools to utilize the Virtual Validation Team Visit option as follows:

- The existing Virtual Validation Team Visit eligibility requirements established in the *National Lutheran School Accreditation Virtual Validation Team Visit Policy and Procedure* document (included below) are still in effect with the addition that:
 - Only schools with demonstrable extenuating circumstances will be considered for a Virtual Validation Team Visit, and;
 - The NLSA Executive Committee will review the application of a school with documented evidence of extenuating circumstances of need to host a Virtual Validation Team Visit on a case-by-case basis.

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.