Site Visit Requirements

The primary purpose of the site visit is to provide STARTALK programs formative feedback and recommendations for growth. The site visit team reviews program documentation, interviews program personnel and participants, and observes teaching and learning experiences. The nature of online programs requires some modifications to the traditional site visit schedule, which are outlined below with specific responsibilities for a program director, the team leader, and site visitor.

Site Visit Day

Traditional site visits take place within one calendar day, onsite, and face-to-face with program staff and participants. Because of the nature of online learning, in order for a “snapshot” of a typical learning day to be viewed, members of the site visit team will need to drop into the online learning environment several times prior to the site visit date. Dropping in and observing at different times over the course of a few days will allow the site visit team to observe degrees of engagement, a range of activities, and progress of program participants. It will also provide more opportunities to witness interactions between participants and with instructors. Requesting access to program sites for the site visit team prior to the date of the site visit allows site visit team members to better observe how the program is actually working.

Interviews

Setting up times to interview the instructors and participants may require creativity as well as flexibility. If interviews can be conducted synchronously, please remember the importance of establishing a confidential environment. There is no need for the program director to be a part of the lead instructor or teacher participant interviews, even to facilitate or manage the technology. If technology seems to be an issue, consider alternatives. Coordinating interviews within time zones may be problematic. If it is too difficult or impossible to schedule so that both the team leader and the site visitor can attend, a recommendation would be for the team leader to handle the interview, and with permission from the interviewees, record the conversation. That would allow the site visitor to participate asynchronously. Programs that are setup for asynchronous engagement by teacher participants present another challenge in setting up interviews. If participants are not in synchronous time, interviews via email may be the only solution.

Site Visit Report and Debrief

Because of the unique instructional environment of online programs, creativity and flexibility are also the key words when it comes to preparation of the site visit report and the site visit debrief with the program director. Especially if the program runs asynchronously, it may not be possible to gather the information required for the site visit report by the end of the site visit date, and time zone differences can also make it unfeasible to finalize the site visit report the day of the site visit. Consider setting the time and date for the site visit report debrief a few days after the site visit. This will allow the site visit team to address any technology glitches, complete any interviews, make additional program observations to fill important gaps or answer important questions, and allow the site visit team to confer more thoughtfully.
Program Director Responsibilities

Before the Online Site Visit

- Share with the team leader the URLs for all virtual sites that will host documents, products, audio/video resources, or any other instructional or collaborative sites program instructors and participants will access (i.e., program website, LMS, YouTube channel, etc.).
- Arrange for administrator access to all sites and sessions (synchronous and asynchronous) for the team leader and site visitors beginning three days prior to and the day of the site visit. Example: site visit is July 9. Provide admin access for team leader and site visitors July 6, 7, 8, and 9.
- Alert instructors and participants that the site visit team will be accessing their sessions.
- Respond to the team leader’s request for a brief summary of preliminary information so that the site visit team can put observations in context. The summary should include:
  - Logistics of online program and schedule
  - Participant roster with basic background information (experience and teaching setting)
  - Participant activity requirements and expected products
  - Changes from start of program to this point, if applicable
- In collaboration with the team leader, set up interview times on the site visit day. If possible, create an online meeting room to facilitate interviews for:
  - Program director
  - Instructors
  - Participants (number of participants should be based on collaboration between team leader and program director)
- If participation is asynchronous, work with the team leader to set up other ways that participants and instructors can respond to interview questions.
- Collaborate with the team leader to set a final site visit debrief date and time.

During the Online Site Visit

- Be available for all scheduled calls or virtual meetings.
- Remind instructors and participants of interview schedules; confirm that links and/or conference call information is current.
Team Leader Responsibilities

Before the Online Site Visit

- Collect contact information from the site visitor(s), including time zone.
- Connect with the program director to arrange for access to all instruction/participant sites and sessions for the site visit team, beginning three days prior to the site visit, including the site visit day and beyond if necessary.
- Suggest times, being sensitive to time zones, for site visit team virtual interviews with the program director, instructors, and participants. If program is asynchronous, be flexible and creative in capturing participant and instructor responses to interview questions.
- Request a brief summary of preliminary information in order to put observations in context, including:
  - Logistics of online program and schedule
  - Participant roster with basic background information (experience and teaching setting)
  - Participant activity requirements and expected products
  - Changes from start of program to this point, if applicable
- Collaborate with the program director to set a final site visit debrief date and time.
- Be available to give some time during the three days prior to the site visit to lurk and observe program. Keep the site visit report in mind and make note of elements you observe, including the time and date.
- Review the Online Program Site Visit LookFors and interview questions.

During the Online Site Visit

- Be available the entire day, based on timeline set with the program director. Be flexible based on time zone of program.
- Be in a quiet location with strong and consistent internet access (not in a coffee shop or outdoor area).
- Check virtual connections with the site visit team and with the program.
- Be ready to participate in interviews, observe participant interactions, and take notes to support the development of the site visit report.
- Be flexible in setting up time to collaborate with the site visitor in development of the site visit report.
Site Visitor Responsibilities

Before the Online Site Visit

- Respond to team leader regarding logistics for your virtual participation on the day of the site visit: your time zone, Skype contact, Facetime contact, cell phone and/or landline telephone number, Google+ ID, etc.
- Review the program curriculum, proposal, and program personnel.
- Be available to give some time during the three days prior to the site visit to lurk and observe program. Keep the site visit report in mind and make note of elements you observe, including the time and date.
- Review the Online Program Site Visit LookFors and interview questions.
- Make note of scheduled day and time of the final site visit report debrief as established by the team leader and program director.

During the Online Site Visit

- Be available the entire day, based on the timeline provided by the team leader. Be flexible based on the time zone of the program.
- Be in a quiet location with strong and consistent internet access (not in a coffee shop or outdoor area).
- Be ready to participate in interviews, observe participant interactions, and take notes to support the development of the site visit report.
- Be flexible in setting up time to collaborate with the team leader in development of the site visit report.