General Instructions

This addendum is designed to supplement the *Inspire* protocol, providing information specific to schools seeking Exemplary accreditation for their K-12 program. This Addendum will identify:

- **Modifications** to *Inspire* indicators that are required for Exemplary programs
- **Additional Indicators** that are not found in *Inspire* and are unique to Exemplary programs
- **Evidence** that is required for Exemplary programs (beyond that which is indicated by the Evidence Guide)

Schools desiring to use this addendum to attain Exemplary accreditation must first be approved by the Office of Academic Services (this does not apply to schools renewing Exemplary accreditation). Approval requires:

1. Submission of the Exemplary accreditation application and fee (which includes the school's preliminary self-assessment with the addendum components as well as the school's most recent accreditation visiting team report(s))
2. Recommendation by the divisional accreditation director for the school to pursue Exemplary accreditation (the Office of Academic Services will obtain this recommendation upon receipt of the application)
3. A meeting with the Office of Academic Services to review and approve the school's application

Introduction

Exemplary accreditation was designed for high performing schools who are seeking to be held to higher standards for all programs and operations. Exemplary schools are expected to effectively meet the *Inspire* standards and indicators at a high level as well as the **modified** and **additional** indicators contained within this document. In addition to simply meeting the indicators at an effective or highly effective level, the school must have a demonstrable history of exemplary programs and practices in governance, executive leadership, school viability, academic instruction, student learning, spiritual formation, and overall school culture (a vibrant, Christ-centered ethos among students, faculty, and leadership). The school must demonstrate a commitment to ongoing school improvement, evidenced by stakeholder feedback, multiple forms of data, and past accreditation reports to drive successful school improvement initiatives. Schools that are approved for Exemplary status will have an additional annual fee in conjunction with the regular accreditation annual fee. For any additional questions, contact your accreditation director or accreditation@acsi.org.

Self-Study

Once the school is approved to pursue Exemplary accreditation, the school's steering committee, or subcommittee(s) for the Exemplary addendum, will need to adequately evaluate the school with the items contained within this Exemplary Addendum as part of the self-study. Additional sections will be made active in the online platform. *Additional* and *modified* indicators will be included, along with a text box for each domain. There will also be an area for the additional evidence suggested for the Exemplary Addendum with each indicator listed.

Each domain will have a textbox similar to those for the main *Inspire* protocol, allowing the steering committee or Exemplary subcommittee to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Included in the text box should be a general reflection that helps explain any distinctives, challenges, and/or context for the visiting team. Those who are working on the Exemplary Addendum will identify improvement goals resulting specifically from the Exemplary Addendum and share those with the steering committee for consideration among the school's prioritized goals for improvement.

Evidence

The school will need to provide evidence for all indicators that are *additional*, *modified*, or marked for specific evidence. The visiting team member(s) for Exemplary will review the evidence to determine if the
school is effectively meeting that indicator for the Exemplary Addendum. This is in addition to any evidence gathered for the *Inspire* self-study.

**Readiness Checklist for the Exemplary Addendum**

Approximately eight weeks prior to the team visit, the chair and, if necessary, the co-chair or an additional Exemplary team member, will perform a visit readiness check to determine if the visit can go forward and if the school is thoroughly prepared with the Exemplary addendum as well. That check may be virtual or in-person.

Evidence that the school is effectively meeting at least 90% (27) of the *additional and modified* indicators within this addendum must be in place for the Exemplary portion of the visit to go forward. If the school is not ready to host the visit with the Exemplary addendum, the ACSI *Inspire* visit may still be able to move forward without the use of the Exemplary addendum.

**Composition of the Team**

The chair of the visit will be appointed approximately 12-18 months prior to the team visit. That person will be an expert in the *Inspire* standards and indicators and have experience with ACSI Exemplary accreditation. (If the chairperson does not have direct experience with ACSI Exemplary accreditation, then a co-chair with ACSI Exemplary accreditation experience will be assigned as part of the visiting team.) The size of the team will follow ACSI’s guidelines based on the school’s total enrollment, and an additional team member (or members, based on size of the program) who has experience with ACSI Exemplary accreditation will be appointed to serve on the team.

**Team Visit**

The chair, accreditation team, and additional Exemplary team member(s) will function as one team on the visit. The visit process will be completed in much the same way that is outlined in the *School Coordinator Handbook* and the *Chair and Team Member Handbook*. The visiting team may have more detailed questions for certain aspects of the program, such as governance, leadership, finance, academics, and spiritual formation, based on the Exemplary Addendum.

Exemplary team member(s) will rate the *additional and modified* indicators, evaluate the additional evidence, and draft their additional portions of the team report during the visit. The team will complete a reflection for each domain in which they will comment on their observations and additional evidence. A school may receive commendations or recommendations that pertain specifically to the items contained within the Exemplary Addendum. The visiting team will conclude its visit with a meeting at which it reviews major commendations and Accreditation Action Items which will make up the Accreditation Action Plan. This meeting will take place with the chairperson (and any selected team members) and the head of school (with any selected members of school leadership).

**Maintenance of ACSI Exemplary Accreditation**

ACSI Exemplary Accredited schools are expected to effectively meet the *Inspire* standards and indicators continuously at a high level. Additionally, Exemplary Accredited schools must continue to effectively meet at least 90% (27) of the *additional and modified* indicators within this document to maintain Exemplary Accreditation. If at any point in the accreditation cycle, or at the time of a renewal visit, an Exemplary Accredited school is not effectively meeting one or more *Inspire* indicators or at least 90% of the *additional and modified* indicators for Exemplary schools, the Commission on Accreditation will establish a timeline by which the school must demonstrate effectiveness in the identified areas in order to maintain Exemplary Accreditation. If an Exemplary Accredited school seeking renewal of accreditation is effectively meeting fewer than 80% (24) of the *additional and modified* indicators within this document, or fewer than 50% of the indicators within any *Inspire* standard, the Commission on Accreditation may consider removal of the school’s Exemplary status.
Icons used throughout this Addendum

Please Note: The school will need to rate all additional and modified indicators contained within this Exemplary Addendum. When there is a specific modified indicator in the Exemplary Addendum, the school should rate the modified indicator and not the original Inspire indicator.

Modifications to Inspire for Exemplary schools
Additional indicators required for Exemplary schools
Additional Evidence needed for Exemplary schools

This Exemplary Addendum is intended to be used as a side-by-side document with Inspire.
Additional Evidence

Indicator 1.4: The school provides clear documentation reflecting a multi-year history of systematically assessing academic and non-academic ESOs. Additionally, the school produces multiple examples of how the assessment of ESOs have been used for improvement of school programs and/or operations.

Indicator 3.1: The school provides evidence that all members of the governing body participate in an annual, formal, and written governing body self-evaluation. There is evidence of a deliberate selection and screening process for new governing body members and full participation of new and continuing governing body members in annual professional development training.

Indicator 3.2: The school provides evidence that governing body policies are documented and maintained at a highly effective level and rigorously followed, reviewed, and updated.

Indicator 3.3: The school provides evidence that the governing body has an extended history of functioning at a highly effective level within their role, demonstrating best practices in their relationship and functioning with the head of school. The head of school functions as the sole employee of the governing body and is given executive authority over (and accountability for) all programs and operations of the school.

Indicator 3.5: The school provides evidence that the head of school establishes and supports a clear leadership structure and clearly communicates roles and responsibilities of leaders to all employees. School policies, systems, and structures are clearly understood by employees.

Modified Indicator

Indicator 3.4: In addition to the wording in Inspire 3.4, the annual evaluation of the head of school is focused on achievement of annual goals that have been mutually established by the board and head of school.

Additional Indicators

Exemplary Indicator 2.4: The school conducts internal and external spiritual formation assessments of students, including both formative and summative assessments. External summative student spiritual formation assessments occur at least every other year. The school utilizes this data to adjust its programs and policies to impact the lives of students and provide a culture where faith development flourishes.

Exemplary Indicator 2.5: The school provides formal training to staff on how to nurture the spiritual formation of students (such as how to act as role models and formal or informal mentors). The teacher’s responsibility to serve as a role model and mentor is assessed as part of the annual performance review.

Exemplary Indicator 2.6: The school has at least one staff member (i.e., chaplain or director of spiritual formation) whose job description gives significant time and attention to the spiritual formation and nurture of students, including supporting the staff in discipleship and mentoring opportunities and the integration of faith and learning in the curriculum.

Exemplary Indicator 3.7: The head of school has a proven track record of leadership at the school, and there is not a pattern of head of school turnover.

Exemplary Indicator 3.8: The head of school is well-respected within the school community and is recognized as a model of spiritual and organizational leadership.
RELATIONSHIPS DOMAIN

Additional Evidence

Indicator 5.2: The school provides evidence of systematically gathering feedback from all stakeholder groups to assess attitudes toward the school and perceived effectiveness of school policy, programs, and services. There is substantial evidence of analyzing and utilizing stakeholder feedback for school improvement.

Indicator 6.2: The school provides evidence of intentionality in providing a variety of opportunities for students to be engaged in ministry, especially within the local church, the community, and abroad.

Additional Indicators

Exemplary Indicator 4.4: Student leadership is evident in the cultivation of a Christlike culture and a compassionate, caring, and respectful environment. Students take an active role in spiritual leadership on campus under the direction and training of adult advocates.

Exemplary Indicator 6.4: The head of school is a recognized participant in the local educational, church, and civic community.

Exemplary Indicator 6.5: The head of school and school staff actively support the broader Christian education movement by sharing expertise and resources in helping other schools. The school, being blessed, seeks to be a blessing to other Christian schools.

TEACHING AND LEARNING DOMAIN

Additional Evidence

Indicator 7.2: The school provides evidence that the instructional program is designed to ensure the development of higher order thinking and deep understanding of content by students.

Indicator 8.1: The school provides evidence that it organizes, maintains, and adjusts all subject areas of its curriculum, containing all required components, via an electronic curriculum mapping program. The electronic curriculum mapping program is easily accessible to all faculty for the purpose of review, collaboration, and real time adjustments, and it establishes links of various elements across the curriculum (such as topics, objectives, resources, etc.) with the ability to search and sort key elements. (See Curriculum Documentation Requirements appendix in the Inspire Standards Manual.)

Indicator 9.1: The school provides evidence that the variety of assessments the school utilizes includes formative assessments to measure achievement of curricular goals and norm-based nationally recognized achievement tests with annual benchmarking and reporting.

Indicator 9.3: The school provides evidence that it has a formal process to make regular adjustments to curricula based on assessment data.

Indicator 10.1: The school provides evidence that professional development in Bible, biblical integration, and Christian philosophy of education is ongoing.

Modified Indicators

Indicator 7.4: In addition to Inspire indicator 7.4, technology is well-integrated into the curriculum for various types of high-level student engagement, and it is well-resourced to include data management, instructional media, and reporting. There is a wide variety of instructional support,
including instructional planning, lesson delivery, and assessment. Student and staff use of technology is evident and supported by appropriate training.

**Indicator 10.1:** In addition to *Inspire 10.1*, the school staff functions as a professional learning community. The school’s professional development program includes strong, ongoing, and internally led professional development activities, collaboration, mentoring, data-informed professional development planning, and adequate time and financial resources allocated for professional development activities.

**Indicator 10.2:** In addition to *Inspire 10.2*, the evaluation process is rigorous and clearly documented. Marginally performing employees have an opportunity to improve before being released.

### Additional Indicators

**Exemplary Indicator 7.7:** The school provides opportunities for students to develop online learning skills as part of their educational experience.

**Exemplary Indicator 7.8:** The students meet the school’s well-defined, school-wide, and subject-specific expectations for learning, academic achievement, and content skill mastery.

**Exemplary Indicator 9.4:** The school has external validation of academic achievement, with a pattern of students who are recognized as National Merit Scholars, AP Scholars, have strong SAT/ACT scores, have strong AP scores, etc.

**Exemplary Indicator 10.4:** School leadership is engaged in ongoing professional development that is based on collaboratively developed goals that are utilized in a leadership development plan. The head of school remains current on educational issues at the local, state, and national levels.

### EXPERTISE DOMAIN

**Modified Indicator**

**Indicator 12.2:** The school documents the quality and qualifications of all faculty members and school leadership in experience and training, ensuring that the type and level of qualifications and training for faculty and school leaders are a match for their assignments.

Note: The school has two options for meeting compliance with indicator 12.2. One is to document the qualifications of each faculty member and their participation in ongoing professional development. (ACSI has a School-based Professional Development Plan that may be used as a model.) The other option is to use the ACSI teacher/administrator certification system with its requirement that 80% of faculty are ACSI or state certified and 100% of administrators are ACSI or state certified.

### Additional Indicators

**Exemplary Indicator 12.7:** The head of school has a graduate degree (or higher) in educational administration, business, law, organizational leadership, or a related field and has a continued and documented pattern of both formal and informal professional development. (If the head of school’s expertise is in an area other than educational leadership, the school has a designated academic leader with appropriate qualifications.)

**Exemplary Indicator 13.4:** For students with exceptional learning needs, support, accommodations, and/or differentiation is evident in pedagogy, programs, and services.
Additional Evidence

Indicator 14.1: The school provides evidence that business operations, including admissions, student records, and personnel practices, function at a highly effective level.

Indicator 15.1: The school provides evidence that the strategic planning process reflects careful thought regarding marketing, fund development, curricular and co-curricular programs, personnel, facilities, and multi-year financial planning.

Indicator 17.1: The school provides evidence that physical and digital instructional resources are exemplary in support of the instructional program and are readily available to faculty and students.

Modified Indicators

Indicator 14.3: The school is a member of the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability or provides artifacts and evidence that it meets all ECFA standards for their business/fiscal operations. Additionally, schools with an annual budget over $3 million conduct an annual audit of business practices by an independent CPA. Schools with an annual budget under $3 million conduct an audit at least once during the accreditation cycle, with financial reviews the other years.

Indicator 15.2: The school compensates its staff appropriately based on geographically suitable, documented benchmarks, including comparisons to local public and comparable private schools. The school’s compensation packages demonstrate integrity, clear criteria, conformity with relevant legal/HR law, and the best interest of the organization. Compensation is not likely to be perceived as preferential.

Additional Indicators

Exemplary Indicator 14.4: The school has a demonstrable history of financial viability and strength with a tuition and fees structure that covers 90% or more of annual operational expenses. The school demonstrates limited dependence on annual fundraising events.

Exemplary Indicator 14.5: The school operates from a position of financial health and strength. The school has an appropriate unrestricted operating reserve fund of at least 5% of the annual operating budget, and it demonstrates a consistent practice of building reserves annually most years. This cash is clearly available in the operating budget. Debt service requires 5% or less of the annual operating budget (OR if slightly over 5%, must be combined with other significant indicators of financial health).

Exemplary Indicator 14.6: The school provides some level of mission driven tuition assistance and/or merit scholarships and adheres to written school policies in the implementation of tuition assistance and/or merit scholarships.

Exemplary Indicator 15.3: The school has a written admissions/marketing plan that effectively communicates with all stakeholder groups, includes internal marketing, and provides focused attention to prospective families.

Exemplary Indicator 15.4: The school has a written development plan that includes donor development and effectively raises strategic and capital funds.
Exemplary Indicator 16.3: The school utilizes quality facilities throughout that provide strong support for the instructional program and the needs of students and staff, including specialized facilities for instruction such as laboratories, fine arts, physical education and athletics, as well as large and small group instructional spaces.

WELL-BEING DOMAIN

Additional Evidence

Indicator 19.3: The school provides evidence that the professional preparation and number of staff allows for manageable workloads and meets the needs of admitted students.

Indicator 20.3: The school provides evidence that student activities are well-rounded in variety, conducted at highly effective levels, and well-integrated into the school program.

Additional Indicators

Exemplary Indicator 19.5 The school obtains regular feedback from faculty and staff on the working environment, expectations, and work-life balance. The school utilizes that feedback to improve the policies and practices related to employee well-being.

Exemplary 20.4: The school obtains regular feedback from students on the instructional program, non-instructional programs, student support services, and overall culture of the school. This includes feedback from high school students about individual courses. The school utilizes student feedback to improve policies, programs, and practices in order to better care for students.

Exemplary Indicator 20.5: The school engages in focused efforts to address the mental, social, and emotional well-being of students from a biblical perspective. This support may come in the form of a well-resourced counseling program, a well-defined and utilized support system of faculty mentors, regularly scheduled outside speakers, and/or alternative ways of addressing student well-being. The school ensures that any program it provides meets applicable legal requirements, and there is appropriate referral to outside agencies, as necessary.