INITIAL ACCOUNTING ACCREDITATION HANDBOOK

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This handbook is one in a series of three handbooks covering all aspects of the AACSB Accounting Accreditation Process. It should be read in conjunction with the other two handbooks covering “The Business Accreditation Process” and “The Continuous Improvement Review Process.”

This handbook focuses on the Initial Accreditation phase of the accounting accreditation process. It provides a clear understanding of the philosophy, procedures and guidelines for the Initial Accounting Accreditation Process, which includes: the submission of the Eligibility Application, the determination of the scope of accreditation, the self-evaluation and alignment with standards, and an initial accreditation visit. Where possible, the Schools / Accounting Academic Units should follow these directions. However, Mentors and Peer Reviewers should remain somewhat flexible in conducting reviews to achieve the conceptual aims that (1) bring value to the School / Unit, (2) maintain the integrity of AACSB International accreditation, and (3) provides the type and level of learning experiences that mark an effective accreditation process. Where the Units, Mentors or Peer Reviewers find they must improvise to accomplish the purposes of the review, documentation of any deviations must be provided.

The online peer review training, accessible via the AACSB website, provides additional information and guidance for all areas of the accreditation process. The training is accessible at: http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/volunteers/training/.

Another useful source of information is the Accreditation Staff Liaison. Each institution has an assigned Accreditation Staff Liaison to assist with the business and accounting review process. This individual serves as the designated AACSB staff member for all accreditation related questions and is the liaison between the institution leadership and the volunteer network (mentors, peer review team members, accreditation committee, etc.). The staff liaison is available to assist with any questions regarding the Initial Accounting Accreditation Process. The institution’s staff liaison can be found by logging onto the myAACSB section of the website (www.aacsb.edu) and viewing the institution in the organization directory.

Throughout the rest of this document the accredited academic accounting academic unit is referred to as the Accounting Accreditation Unit or Unit. The term Accounting Accreditation Unit or Unit is used to describe the entity that offers programs and is not meant to imply any particular organizational structure.
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I. THE INITIAL ACCOUNTING ACCREDITATION PROCESS
OVERVIEW

Purpose of the Initial Accreditation Process

The purpose of the Initial Accreditation Process is to establish stable, constructive, ongoing, and helpful partnerships between AACSB International and Schools working toward AACSB accreditation. To assure the quality of this assistance program, policies and procedures have been developed that outline the expectations and commitments for each partner.

Benefits of the Initial Accreditation Process for the School

Schools and Accounting Academic Units participating in the process are strongly committed to the goal of quality enhancement and continuous improvement. They possess the desire to secure accreditation. Schools benefit from the Initial Accreditation Process by receiving ongoing assistance that fosters continuous improvement and minimizes non-productive or misdirected efforts. Schools receive experienced counsel from a trained Mentor during the period and feedback through interactions with the Accounting Accreditation Committee (AAC). The process culminates with an on-site visit in which the School is evaluated on its alignment with the accreditation standards and receives consultative advice from experienced Peer Reviewers.

Importance of Commitment

Overall responsibility for meeting the standards for accounting accreditation lies with the School. Strong commitment by the central administration and the dean, and accounting academic unit head is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for success; stakeholder involvement is essential. Accountability for execution of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) lies with the School and is a critical element for success.

II. THE ELIGIBILITY APPLICATION PROCESS

Eligibility Application Process

AACSB International membership is a pre-requisite for entering the accreditation process. AACSB International members are eligible for the following types of accreditation:

- Business Accreditation
- Business Accreditation concurrent with Accounting Accreditation
- Accounting Accreditation for Schools already holding Business Accreditation

What is Required?

The School submits one set of each of the following items (written in English):

- Accounting Eligibility Application
- An organizational chart specifying the structure of both the institution (if applicable), as well as the business School and accounting academic units
• Current documents that show the financial condition of the institution and the absolute and relative amount of monetary resources allocated to its business programs
• Strategic plan of the accounting academic unit
• A non-refundable Eligibility Application fee of $1,000 USD

Note that a separate application for business accreditation is required if applying for both business and accounting accreditation concurrently.

When to Submit?

Accounting Eligibility Applications can be submitted at any time during the year. Following an optional preliminary review by staff, and if found complete and appropriate, the application is forwarded to the first regular scheduled Accounting Accreditation Committee (AAC) meeting for consideration by the full committee. Accounting Accreditation Units are encouraged to provide a draft of their Accounting Eligibility Application to AACSB staff for review prior to the official submission.

How to Submit?

The School / Accounting Accreditation Unit submits one hard-copy set of the above mentioned items to the Accounting Accreditation Committee Chair in care of the AACSB International headquarters:

    Chair, Accounting Accreditation Committee
    AACSB International
    777 S. Harbour Island Boulevard
    Suite 750
    Tampa, FL 33602-5730
    USA

The School / Accounting Accreditation Unit also submits the set of items electronically to the Accounting Accreditation Committee Chair at aac@aacsb.edu. The electronic file(s) should be in Adobe PDF or Microsoft Word format.

III. ASSIGNMENT OF THE ACCOUNTING MENTOR

Assignment of the Mentor

Upon acceptance of the Accounting Eligibility Application, the AAC appoints a Mentor. The Mentor is generally a Dean, Associate Dean or accounting chair from a similar School and/or familiar with the type of School and/or education system in the country. These individuals may continue to be assigned as mentors for five years after leaving their position (i.e. retirement, change in role, etc). It is a requirement that the proposed Mentor is familiar with AACSB standards and processes. The proposed Mentor needs to be approved and accepted by the School / Accounting Academic Unit. AACSB will continue to work with the School / Academic Unit until a suitable Mentor has been confirmed.
The Mentor’s Term
The Mentor assists the Accounting Academic Unit for up to two years with the
development of an initial Self-Evaluation Report (iSER). Should the iSER not be
completed two years after acceptance of the Accounting Eligibility Application the Unit
can submit a request for an extension of time to the AAC. This request needs to have
the support of the Mentor and will only be granted when the delay is caused by
extremely exceptional circumstances (such as natural disasters). Once the iSER is
accepted by the AAC, the Mentor continues to work with the Unit for up to three years
as the Unit works towards full alignment with the standards.

Role of the Mentor
The Mentor serves as a key resource in advising the Accounting Academic Unit on its self-
assessment and alignment with the standards. The Mentor may ask questions that will
stimulate a School and Unit to define its processes, activities and outcomes, as well as
present various options to help develop a better understanding of the standards and what
they mean for an individual School / Unit. The Mentor is a volunteer who receives no
compensation from the School or from AACSB International.

Mentor Responsibilities to the School / Accounting Academic Unit
- Provides clarification of the philosophy and intent of the standards and their
  interpretations
- Is fully informed about AACSB International accreditation standards, and the
  accreditation process
- Commits time and availability for on-site visits and regular communication
- Provide feedback relating to the self-assessment, the development of the iSER and
  progress towards alignment with the standards
- Is encouraging, but also honest and realistic
- Advises the School and Unit about possible culture change and the length of time
  required to accomplish the improvements envisioned by the School and Unit
- Assists the School and Unit to develop an understanding of the intent of the
  standards within the context of its mission
- Asks questions that stimulate the School and Unit to define its processes,
  activities and outcomes

Mentor Responsibilities to AACSB /Accounting Accreditation Committee
- Consults with the AAC/AACSB International when issues or processes need
  clarification
- Identifies opportunities for continuous improvement in the overall Accounting
  Accreditation Process
- Provides the AAC liaison with periodic reports on the progress of the development
  of the iSER
• Identifies and resolves all eligibility issues surrounding the scope of accreditation, diversity and expectations for ethical behavior

• Provides an iSER critique that discusses feasibility of actions to be implemented to align with the standards and the commitment of resources necessary to achieve the goals. If challenges arise that delays the School's / Unit’s progress in the Initial Accounting Accreditation Process the mentor informs the Accounting Accreditation Committee (or AACSB Accreditation Staff Liaison) in a timely manner

• Provides a recommendation on accepting the iSER in the form of the iSER Review Template

School / Accounting Academic Unit Responsibilities to the Mentor and AACSB/Accounting Accreditation Committee

• Is sincere about the institutional commitment of resources, time, money, energy, and change required for Initial Accreditation

• Reviews the accreditation standards and identifies areas of strengths and weaknesses prior to the Mentor’s campus visit

• Identifies items in the standards that need clarification

• Provides accurate data and information about the School and Unit, its aspirations, commitment, systems, and processes; exhibits complete honesty and openness; provides information on options that could be applied in meeting the standards

• Regards the Mentor as a source of advice; take responsibility for conducting the self-assessment and preparing the iSER

• Works with the Mentor to prepare a campus visit agenda

• Takes consultation seriously and be considerate of the Mentor’s time

• Provides feedback on the quality of the mentoring and mentoring process

• Makes timely payment of appropriate expenses (including airfare, hotel accommodations, meals, transportation, etc.) for the Mentor’s campus visit

• Provides the Mentor with periodic reports on progress toward developing the iSER

• Submits the iSER to the AAC within two years after approval of the Accounting Eligibility Application

IV. THE MENTOR VISIT

After the Mentor has been confirmed, it is the School’s / Accounting Academic Unit’s responsibility to contact the mentor to schedule the first on-site visit. Materials that can be shared with the mentor at that time are: course catalog(s), web site addresses, curricula, budget, faculty vitae, and other descriptive materials are helpful. The School / Unit should also provide materials that are related to the concerns and recommendations specified in the correspondence of the Accounting Accreditation Committee.

Although the visit should be scheduled early on in the accreditation process, it is advisable to schedule the visit after the School / Unit has conducted a preliminary self-assessment.
Generally, the visit occurs in the third month after the Accounting Eligibility Application was accepted.

**Purpose of the Mentor Visit**

Once appointed, the Mentor will conduct an initial on-site visit to:

- Gain familiarity with the School and Accounting Academic Unit
- Identify and resolve eligibility issues (i.e., scope of accreditation, diversity, expectations for ethical behavior)
- Provide clarification regarding the philosophy and intent of the standards
- Ensure consistent application of standards among faculty, staff and administration
- Analyze the School’s / Unit’s achievement relative to the standards
- Identify issues that may help or hinder potential accreditation
- Confirm the existence of functioning processes and controls that ensure continuous improvement and accomplishment of the mission
- Assist the School / Unit in responding to issues identified during the review of the application
- Review measurable outcomes of achievement and functioning of processes designed to produce stated outcomes
- Begin formulating recommendations for quality enhancement and continuous improvement
- Provide insight to the AAC concerning the School and Unit’s perceived timetable for development of the iSER

**Preparation for the Mentor Visit**

The School / Accounting Academic Unit should:

- Initiate contact with the Mentor
- Plan an agenda for the Mentor to review
- Provide the Mentor, prior to the visit, information about the campus and School. Suggested information:
  - Eligibility Application
  - Reports (including annual reports)
  - Electronic links to program information
  - Program exclusion data (if appropriate)
  - Brochures
  - Drafts of materials for iSER, if available
  - Planning documents
  - Faculty vitae
  - Budget documents
  - Assessment activities
  - Web site addresses
  - Institutional and departmental organizational charts
  - Internal processes

**During the Visit**

The School / Accounting Academic Unit should:

- Provide an opportunity for the Mentor to become familiar with the School's facilities
• Provide opportunities for the Mentor to talk with stakeholder groups (faculty, students, central administration, employers, alumni) about mission and objectives, processes, and resources
• Allow for open discussion of strengths and areas for improvement, role of faculty, and preparation for the iSER

Following the Visit
The School / Accounting Academic Unit should:
• Prepare a draft of the iSER
• Forward appropriate additional information to the Mentor
• Process Mentor’s visit expenses in a timely manner

Mentor Reporting Requirements
Once appointed by the AAC, the Mentor conducts an initial on-site advising visit. During the on-site review, the Mentor identifies, clarifies and resolves eligibility issues, challenges, and opportunities concerning continuous improvement and the likelihood of achievement of initial accreditation within the maximum time allowed (normally 7 years). The Mentor’s review of Eligibility Criteria, feedback and recommendations are included in a Mentor Summary Report that is provided to the AAC. Within 10 days of each visit, the Mentor drafts the report and indicates a timetable for completion of the iSER. The summary report consists of three distinct sections: the standard-by-standard summary report, the eligibility criteria recommendation report, and the Mentor visit schedule.

V. MISSION CONSENSUS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Relationship to the iSER
Developing an iSER begins with the preparation of a clear statement of the School's / accounting academic unit's mission, vision, and objectives. The mission should:
• Include a commitment to high quality and continuous improvement.
• Identify the level of programs (e.g., undergraduate, master’s, and/or doctoral).
• Include the objectives of each degree program offered and should describe the characteristics of the constituents for whom the programs are designed.
• Indicate clearly the School / Unit’s commitment to and relative emphasis on impact, engagement and innovation.
• Be consistent with the overall mission of the institution of which it is a part.

A strategic planning process for review and revision of mission and goals should be in place. This process should include inputs from relevant stakeholders and adequate resources should be budgeted for its attainment.
How should the School / Accounting Academic Unit go about preparing the initial statement of mission, vision, and objectives?

Most Schools / Units will have existing documents (catalog copy, internal documents, etc.) that already identify aspects of its mission. Statements need to be reviewed to assure they are presented in a fashion that facilitates self-evaluation and peer review.

Determining the accounting academic unit’s mission and strategic management objectives should be a dynamic process that periodically, if not constantly, is subject to review and leads to consensus among stakeholders.

VI. SELF-ASSESSMENT

The Accounting Self-Assessment Process

The preliminary self-assessment process is the most critical step in assessing the Accounting Academic Unit’s readiness to pursue AACSB International accounting accreditation. It is a gap analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Unit relative to each of the accreditation standards and relative to the Unit’s unique mission and strategic management objectives. As a result, this systematic gap analysis of the Unit’s mission, strategic management objectives, faculty, students, curriculum, instructional resources, operations, intellectual contributions, and processes provides the basis upon which a realistic and comprehensive iSER can be written.

Conducting the Self-Assessment and Involving Appropriate Stakeholders

The self-assessment process involves all stakeholders of the Accounting Academic Unit including faculty, administration, students, alumni, and business constituencies. There is no prescribed single approach to conducting the self-assessment. A Unit must develop a plan that meets its specific needs and guides it through a rigorous self-assessment process.

The plan for conducting the self-assessment should be developed within the first three months of the Initial Accreditation Process. It is not expected that the gap analysis will be completed within this three-month time frame. However, the plan of study should be established noting key questions to be answered, key participants, responsible parties, time frames, and appropriate study methods. Data collection should be conducted to support the objectives of the self-assessment and to assist in answering the self-assessment questions.

Sources of Information to Guide the Self-Assessment

Once the self-assessment plan has been developed, all data should be collected, organized, and analyzed. Possible sources of information that can be used to evaluate the Unit's programs and processes include:

- Regional/National/International accreditation reports
- Internal reports (e.g., program evaluations, outcomes reports, assessment results, exit surveys)
- External reports
Characteristics of an Effective Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis

Systematic
The accounting self-assessment should be systematic and well planned to ensure that it is thorough and comprehensive. The Accounting Academic Unit should avoid the temptation to use whatever data is already available and force answers to a set of pre-determined questions. Clearly identify the areas to be addressed, the questions to be answered, and the best ways to secure the most valid and reliable information.

Objective
Avoid overstating the results of the gap analysis or focusing only on the weaknesses or limitations that are identified. The weaknesses need to be remedied and the strengths need to be maintained or enhanced.

Multiple sources of input
The standards should provide guidance, but should not be used as a laundry list against which to answer "Yes, we do" or "No, we don't". Use multiple sources of input. Consider which groups are in the best position to provide input on key issues.

Multiple data collection devices
Use multiple data collection devices. Using only reports or the results of one survey will not provide the scope and depth of input that is needed. Use data collection methods best suited to the questions needing answers. For example, the quality of student services, teaching, and interaction with the business community should all be addressed in different ways by different groups.

Multiple reviewers to provide objectivity
Use multiple reviewers to provide a "reality check". Once the self-assessment data is consolidated, the results should be reviewed by various groups to ensure accurate interpretation. These groups might include: the faculty, a planning committee, a student advisory committee, or members of a business advisory council.

Realistic representation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- Conduct a realistic assessment of strengths, areas for improvement, opportunities, and threats.
- Continue to realistically assess these within the context of the AACSB International standards (i.e. What gaps need to be closed to meet AACSB standards expectations as well as what AACSB standards expectations are currently met and how.)
• Determine the changes, additions, or modifications that may need to be made in programs and processes.

**Communicating the Outcomes of the Self-Assessment Process**

During the self-assessment, communication should be ongoing with all stakeholders and participants. These include the faculty, staff, students, alumni, and business constituencies. All parties need to understand the Initial Accreditation Process and the responsibilities of the School and Accounting Academic Unit.

The results of the gap analysis should be shared with the Mentor and should become the basis for the iSER.

**VII. INITIAL SELF-EVALUATION REPORT (iSER)**

**Philosophy and Expectations**

The best iSER is accompanied by a strategic management plan that is also attentive to satisfaction of accreditation standards. The process of creating the iSER should naturally flow from, and be part of, the ongoing strategic management process.

A long-standing problem with many iSERs is that they focus solely on closing gaps between current conditions and the conditions necessary to satisfy accreditation standards. An internally generated iSER that is built on the Unit's particular circumstances is most likely to yield sustained continuous improvement. One goal of the accounting accreditation process is establishing a differentiated mission which drives the accounting academic unit’s strategic planning process. The iSER should include plans for implementing the accounting academic unit’s mission and also plans for closing existing gaps with respect to the accreditation standards.

There is a 100 page limit for the iSER excluding Tables and Appendices.

**Objectives and Content**

The iSER is an action plan showing how the Accounting Academic Unit will address its areas for improvement during the period of initial accreditation and how the Unit will maintain continuous improvements in its program. The iSER outlines what gaps need to be closed to meet expectations of AACSB standards and how current activities meet the expectations of the standards, which ones, and how. The Unit will continually update the iSER during the Initial Accreditation process until alignment can be demonstrated. The iSER is an evolving document and ultimately transfers into the final SER used as the basis for the on-site peer review team visit.

The iSER should:

- Lead to a performance level that satisfies AACSB International accreditation standards.
- Demonstrate that the resources necessary to satisfy the standards will be available.
- Show how these resources will be managed to reach that performance level.
The iSER should reflect two levels of analysis. The first level should identify areas of strength and areas for improvement in each standard.

The second level should formulate an action plan for addressing weaknesses during the period of initial accreditation and for maintaining continuous improvement of strengths. The action plan must identify specific improvement activities and establish a timetable for the completion of each of these activities. The iSER should also address the resources, the individual(s) responsible for each activity, and an anticipated completion date.

In general, most iSERs contain four separate and distinct sections:

1. **Background information on the institution and the business and accounting academic units:**
   - Location of the Institution, including all non-main campus programs offered by the School
   - Institution's Mission and Mission of the Accounting Academic Unit
   - Structure of the accounting academic unit
   - Special Activities of the accounting academic unit
   - Types of Degrees Awarded
   - Number of Students
   - Number of Faculty and Qualifications

2. **The mission statement:**
   The iSER should contain the accounting academic unit's mission/vision statement. This section should include a discussion of the process(es) utilized for mission development and the process(es) that will be utilized for ongoing review and refinement of the mission. Opportunities for stakeholder involvement in these processes should be noted.

3. **A gap analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement of the School:**
   The iSER should include a gap analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Accounting Academic Unit in relationship to each of the standards. This section should begin with a description of the processes that were used in the development of the self-assessment and that will be used for monitoring and assessing continuous improvement with regard to the standards. The gap analysis should also identify which expectations of AACSB standards are currently satisfied and which expectations of the standards remain to be met.

4. **An action plan:**
   The fourth section of the iSER should outline the plan for continuous improvement, especially those improvements needed to satisfy the accreditation standards. The above referenced self-assessment is translated into detailed actions necessary to satisfy the standard and to ensure continuous improvement. The person(s) and/or group(s) who will be responsible for implementing the actions, the measures for
assessing the implementation, the processes involved, the timetable for the completion, and the required resources should be presented in a summary table.

**Relationship to the Strategic Management Plan**

The iSER naturally represents a facet of the Accounting Academic Unit’s overall strategic management planning processes. As such, the Unit’s Strategic Management Plan should either be presented as an appendix to the iSER, or the iSER should be depicted as a part of the Strategic Management Plan.

**Submission of the iSER**

iSERs are considered by the AAC three times during the year. Contact your AACSB Accreditation Staff Liaison or check the AACSB website for submission deadlines. Submitted iSERs should be signed by the institution’s chief executive officer, chief academic officer, head of the School, and accounting academic unit head indicating their approval and commitment. iSERs should be submitted electronically and in hard copy format (one complete set). Please check the AACSB website for the submission guidelines. The page limit for the iSER is 100 pages not including tables and appendices.

A copy of the iSER should be provided to the Mentor prior to submission to the AAC. The Mentor will submit a recommendation to the AAC. Involvement of the Mentor as drafts of the SER are developed facilitates this evaluation and, more importantly, provides the School with an ongoing benefit from review and comment. Once completed, the SER and Mentor recommendation will be presented to the AAC for review.

**VIII. REVIEW OF THE INITIAL SELF-EVALUATION REPORT**

**Role of the Mentor**

The Mentor thoroughly reviews the Accounting Academic Unit’s iSER and submits a written recommendation to the AAC. The Mentor’s recommendation should address:

- commitment to achieving AACSB International accounting accreditation; evidence of stakeholder (e.g., students, faculty, staff, community, university administrators) commitment to the Initial Accreditation Process and AACSB International accreditation
- the Accounting Academic Unit’s understanding of both the Initial Accreditation Process and AACSB International standards for accounting accreditation
- mission consensus demonstrated through stakeholder involvement (e.g., students, faculty, staff, community, university administrators)
- whether the mission is realistic, visionary, and detailed enough to serve as a guide for selection of alternatives and opportunities
- the likelihood that the Accounting Academic Unit will meet AACSB International standards and attain accreditation; the Mentor may recommend that the Unit should withdraw since it has no reasonable chance to achieve accreditation
- internal and external assessment processes for achieving quality and continuous improvement
• evidence that the School’s iSER accurately projects the current situation and future direction and activities to be taken by the Accounting Academic Unit, that the action steps listed and the corresponding completion dates and assigned responsibilities for each step appear to be realistic, and that the plans enable the Unit to align with accreditation standards
• any unique strengths or weaknesses that need to be observed and tracked during the Initial Accreditation Process and addressed in the iSER updates.

The Mentor’s review of the iSER must, besides a recommendation, also include the completion of the iSER Review Template.

Criteria for Evaluating the iSER

1) To what extent will achievement of the actions outlined in the iSER result in attaining a level of quality appropriate for accreditation?

2) Does it include these important elements?
• Clearly identified objectives and outcomes
• A schedule for progress checkpoints and completion
• Measurements of progress
• Accountable individuals or functions

3) Is it?
• Specific: does it focus on the issues, outcomes, and processes identified in the self-assessment?
• Quantifiable: can progress and achievement be tracked and measured?
• Realistic: are overall and specific outcomes and objectives consistent with the mission and level of resources? Is the targeted year for the initial accreditation visit realistic? The School / Unit should be aware that programs in accounting shall satisfy the standards during the final self-evaluation year.
• Comprehensive: does it cover all standards? Is the emphasis on overall quality and continuous improvement?

4) Does it explain which AACSB standards expectations are currently met and how?

Initial Accreditation Committee Review of the iSER

Each iSER will be presented and reviewed by the AAC. The AAC will take one of the following actions:
• Accept the iSER and invite the School / Accounting Academic Unit to apply for the initial accreditation visit
• Accept the iSER, with comments outlining concerns of the Committee to be addressed by the School / Unit in its annual iSER update
• Request that the iSER be revised and resubmitted to address specific issues and concerns identified by the Committee
IX. ACCEPTANCE OF THE iSER

When the iSER has been approved by the AAC, the School and Accounting Academic Unit are on track to achievement of accreditation. The Unit is allowed up to five years to align with the standards, with the final two years of alignment corresponding to the development of the final Self-Evaluation report and the visit year. During this period, the Accounting Academic Unit must submit iSER updates (at least one per year) to the AAC. The AAC reviews the updates and provides its comments in the form of a decision letter to the School and Accounting Academic Unit with a copy to the Mentor.

Initial Self-Evaluation Report Implementation

Central to the Standards Alignment phase is the ongoing assistance available to the Accounting Academic Unit. This ongoing assistance includes:

- Networking (feedback sessions at the Annual Meeting)
- Review of the Accounting Academic Unit’s iSER updates
- Education (AACSB International seminars)
- Consultation involving a continuing relationship with the Mentor for up to three years during implementation of the iSER
- AACSB Staff Liaison to provide assistance with questions

With ongoing assistance, the Accounting Academic Unit implements the goals and actions outlined in its iSER and communicates with the AAC on progress through the submission of iSER updates. The Unit is free to adjust its iSER as appropriate during this period; such adjustments must be described in the next update.

Role of the Mentor

Once the iSER is accepted, the formal relationship between the Mentor and the School and Accounting Academic Unit continues for up to three additional years until a Peer Review Team Chair is appointed. The mentor will submit annually, or more frequently if necessary, feedback to the AAC on the progress the Accounting Academic Unit is making towards alignment with the standards.

How Do We Know We Are on Track?

The iSER update is the only formal contact with AACSB International, aside from the Mentor, Accreditation Staff Liaison and eventually the Chair, while preparing for accounting accreditation. Accounting Academic Units are encouraged to seek advice and evaluation of their progress from the Mentor and the Accreditation Staff Liaison.

X. iSER UPDATES

Each year or sooner, the Accounting Academic Unit will make a report to the AAC on the progress it is making towards meeting the objectives documented in the iSER.
original action plan summary table of the iSER should be included, indicating the status of each action item. Action items that have fallen behind their scheduled completion dates should be discussed in the text of the iSER update. Those action items that are no longer relevant, due to changes in either the internal or external environments of the Unit, also should be highlighted for discussion in the text of the update.

The AAC will review the iSER update to determine if acceptable progress is apparent.

The iSER update should:

1. Include tables A2-1, A9-1, and A9-2.
2. Not exceed twenty pages excluding tables.
3. Respond to concerns, issues, and/or recommendations requested by the AAC in its last review of the program, if any.
4. Explain how the Accounting Academic Unit has met the objectives established for the past year of the plan. If the objectives have not been met, provide details (attach a copy of the action plan time frame originally submitted and any subsequent revised time frames). When outcomes or milestones are reported, Units should support that these outcomes are the result of a continuous improvement process with appropriate stakeholder input. AAC review of iSER updates will focus on process development, implementation, and outcomes.
5. Report any changes in the environment (internal or external) that affect the planned alignment with the standards (e.g., a new mission, new president, new dean, changes in enrollment, or deviations from the projected number of faculty as described in the iSER).
6. Explain how existing strengths have been maintained or improved.
7. Report any new areas of necessary improvement that have emerged.
8. Report any other adjustments to the actions described in the iSER (e.g., changes in the time frame leading to the initial accounting accreditation visit).
9. Explain how the Academic Unit will have the necessary continuing support and resources from the administration to meet the objectives outlined in the iSER.
10. Include the signed approvals of the institution’s chief executive officer, chief academic officer, head of the business School, and accounting academic unit head indicating their certification and continuing commitment.

iSER updates should be submitted electronically (AAC@aacsb.edu); please contact AACSB International for applicable guidelines.

Committee review of iSER updates

The Accounting Academic Unit’s iSER update should be sent to the AAC for review. Prior to the AAC meeting, the liaison and reader, along with mentor input, develop perceptions and compare notes. If there are differences or if clarification is needed, the liaison will contact the Mentor for more information. At the AAC meeting, both the liaison and reader will present their impressions. A discussion will focus on what the Accounting Academic Unit has accomplished, as well as areas of concern. The key focus is on whether the Unit is making acceptable progress toward the accomplishment of alignment with the standards.
and preparation for accreditation. If a Unit is not making acceptable progress, the AAC will recommend that it withdraw from the process. This review process is depicted below.

The AAC decision will be one of four options:

1. Acceptance of the iSER update without issues or concerns.
2. Acceptance of the iSER update with issues to be addressed in the next update.
3. Non-acceptance of the iSER update due to inadequacy of information provided or a determination that evidence of acceptable progress toward accreditation is not apparent. In such cases, the AAC will outline its concerns and will request a supplemental update.
4. Rejection of the iSER update with a decision to remove the Accounting Academic Unit from the process. This option would follow a prior warning that acceptable progress had not been made with the specific concerns to be addressed.

Validation of Progress

iSER updates provide feedback to the AAC on the Accounting Academic Unit's progress. Units should be clear and forthright so that the AAC can advise and assist. Representations of compliance by the Unit with the accreditation standards can be verified by the Mentor with subsequent on-site visits during the standards alignment phase. The Mentor submits his/her report/feedback to the AAC to be reviewed simultaneously with the Unit's update. This practice ensures a continuous dialogue and facilitates the flow of accurate information between the Accounting Academic Unit and AAC.

The accreditation decision will be based upon a direct assessment of continuous improvement and overall high quality. Therefore, the School must be in a position to justify its representations at the time of its Peer Review Team visit. Only by gaining confidence that the standards are being met, obtaining continuous Mentor input on questions and concerns, and being as realistic as possible when preparing its update will the School be best prepared for the initial accreditation peer review visit.

XI. TRANSITION TO INITIAL ACCREDITATION PROCESS

When the action items described in the iSER are implemented and adequate progress has been demonstrated, the AAC will direct the Accounting Academic Unit to file a letter of application for the initial accounting accreditation visit. The letter of application will include the following:

- The list of degree programs offered by the Accounting Academic Unit.
- The list of degree programs that have been approved for exclusion from review (if applicable)
- The list of Comparison Groups, including Comparable Peer Group, Competitive Group, and Aspirant Group.
- The timeframe requested for the on-site review to take place, and the corresponding date that the Unit plans to submit its final SER (at least 4-6 months before the tentatively scheduled visit date).
The letter of application for initial accreditation should be signed by the Chief Executive Officer, the Chief Academic Officer, the Head of the Business School (Dean) and the head of the Accounting Academic Unit.

Upon receipt of the letter of application for initial accreditation, the School will be invoiced for the Initial Accreditation Fee.

**Handoff to the Peer Review Team**

Upon receipt of the letter of application for the initial accreditation visit and full payment of the Initial Accreditation Fee, the AAC will appoint a Team Chair. The Chair is generally a Dean, Associate Dean or accounting chair from a similar School and/or familiar with the type of School and/or education system in the country, experienced in Accounting accreditation reviews. The Chair replaces the Mentor to assist the Accounting Academic Unit with the development of the final SER and the schedule for the initial accreditation visit. The transition from Mentor to the Chair should be facilitated by:

- The passing of relevant documents (iSER, Strategic Management Plan, iSER Updates, School, Accounting Academic Unit and AAC correspondence, and other relevant materials).
- A conversation between the Mentor and Chair to discuss issues and concerns.
- If possible, an introductory conversation between the Mentor, Chair, host School Dean, and Accounting Academic Unit Head (may be at an AACSB function).

Following assignment of the Chair, two additional team members will be selected based upon eligibility, experience, mission fit and availability. These individuals may continue to be assigned on peer review teams for three years after leaving their position (i.e. retirement, change in role, etc). Potential conflicts of interest are also considered. Suggestions for team members will be considered but are not guaranteed. The AAC Chair will select the team member(s) who may or may not appear on the list of comparable Schools submitted by the School.

**Initial Accreditation Visit Overview**

The Accounting Academic Unit should begin to work with the Chair to finalize its SER. The Unit must submit the final SER to the PRT and the AAC for review at least 4-6 months prior to the on-site review visit. After the Peer Review Team reviews the final SER, the team drafts a pre-visit letter outlining the issues and concerns identified by the Team. The draft letter includes a “visit” or “no-visit” recommendation. The draft is forwarded to the AAC for review. In the interest of time this review can be facilitated offline involving the reader, liaison and chair and vice chair of the committee. If the AAC approves of the letter and agrees with the team’s recommendation concerning the continuation of the visit, the chair finalizes the letter and forwards it to the School and Accounting Academic Unit, along with confirmation of the on-site visit dates.

While the SER and other written materials provide the foundation for the visit, the PRT achieves greater understanding of the Accounting Academic Unit through the on-site review. The pre-visit letter will point out specific issues to be addressed either before or
during the visit. In addition, the pre-visit letter will also indicate areas of focus and requests for data and documents to be made available for the team during the visit.

Within 10 days following the on-site visit, the Peer Review Team submits to the School and Accounting Academic Unit and the AAC a team visit report with the Team’s accreditation recommendation. The School and Accounting Academic Unit have the option of submitting a response to the PRT report. The AAC reviews the following:

- Team visit report.
- The team’s accreditation recommendation.
- The School / Accounting Academic Unit written response, if one is submitted.

The AAC can either concur with the Team’s accreditation recommendation or remand the recommendation to the PRT for reconsideration.

When concurrence is reached, the PRT and AAC recommendation for accreditation is forwarded for ratification to the AACSB Board of Directors. If the Board concurs, the School and is awarded accounting accreditation and joins the AACSB Accreditation Council, with a continuous improvement review to occur in year five.
XII. INITIAL ACCREDITATION REVIEW PROCESS SCHEDULE

The timeline shown below is a representation of Initial Accreditation Peer Review Visits and corresponding Accounting Accreditation Committee (AAC) activity under normal circumstances. Changes to the normal visit timeline may be made on a case-by-case basis at the AAC’s discretion. All questions regarding your institution’s timeline should be directed to AAC@aacsb.edu.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Deadline:</strong> Send letter of application and team nominations</td>
<td>Upon receipt of AAC decision letter directing School to proceed to self-evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AAC Chair:</strong> Review of Proposed team</td>
<td>Within 45 days of application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AACSB International: Invites individual team members</td>
<td>Following AAC approval of team composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AACSB International: Set review team visit date</td>
<td>Upon confirmation of team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School:</strong> Invite team chair to visit host campus (optional)</td>
<td>Chair visit (if necessary and time allows) generally takes place before submission of SER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School:</strong> Confer with review team (optional)</td>
<td>Annual Meeting or other convenient arrangement (Year of self-evaluation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Deadline:</strong> Submit final SER, executive summary and faculty profile to team and AACSB</td>
<td>4-6 months prior to Visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Chair Deadline:</strong> Submit draft pre-visit letter to AACSB for review by full or subcommittee of AAC recommending visit or no-visit and listing concerns (standard by standard analysis)</td>
<td>Normally 2 months prior to the visit date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Chair Deadline:</strong> Send pre-visit letter to School</td>
<td>Normally 45 days prior to scheduled team visit date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Chair:</strong> Confer with host regarding visit schedule</td>
<td>45 days prior to visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Deadline:</strong> Submit response to pre-visit letter (to team and to AACSB)</td>
<td>As per date listed in previsit letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team Chair:</strong> Send Team Visit Report to School and AAC.</td>
<td>Within 10 days after the visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Deadline:</strong> Send optional response to Team Visit Report</td>
<td>Within 10 days of receiving team’s report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accounting Accreditation Committee:</strong> Review team’s recommendation and send to Board</td>
<td>As per scheduled committee meeting date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board:</strong> Ratifies and sends letters to School</td>
<td>Ratification performed via electronic ballot to the AACSB Board of Directors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Official Recognition</strong></td>
<td>Annual Meeting (Normally, in April following the Visit)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
XIII. SCHOOL COMPARISON GROUPS

Processes to support the accounting accreditation review include the selection of comparison groups to form a relevant context for judgments, inform strategic planning activities, and assist in the selection of Peer Review Team members. Reviewers from comparable institutions are better prepared to make evaluative judgments about the School, to understand the School and its aspirations, and to offer suggestions for the School’s improvement.

What is required?

The School / Accounting Academic Unit submits three comparison groups selected from members of the Accreditation Council and submits this information with the letter of application for the initial accreditation visit. Comparison groups may be selected on the basis of institutional or program comparisons. It is important to note that the same school may be used in all three groups -- peer, competitor, and aspirant -- based upon the characteristics of the school and/or its program. In addition, accounting programs may have a different set of comparison groups than those for business accreditation.

- **Comparable Peers:** A list of schools considered similar in mission and assumed appropriate for performance comparison. A minimum of six comparable schools must be provided. The schools should be chosen carefully to match key characteristics of the School. In addition to mission, some features that might be salient when choosing comparison schools include student populations served, size, degree levels, and primary funding source.

- **Competitive Group:** A list of schools so directly competitive that conflict of interest considerations exclude their personnel from the review process. The competitive school list may be of any number. Only those schools should be included where the direct competition for students, faculty, or resources is so compelling that the appearance of a conflict of interest is present.

- **Aspirant Group:** A list of schools that provides a developmental goal for the School, represents management education programs or features that the School hopes to emulate, and place the vision and strategy of the School in context. The list of aspirant schools may be of any number, though a minimum of three schools is required to compile the statistical data reports. Statistical data reports are be pulled from DataDirect, upon request, to assist the school and Peer Review Team in establishing context of the school relative to its peer and aspirant schools.

Comparison groups do not imply categories or rankings of schools or members accredited by AACSB International. These lists are for the benefit of the School and the Peer Review Team in the accreditation review.

Although comparison groups include only AACSB International accredited schools, Schools are encouraged to look beyond academe for examples of best practices and potential Peer Review Team members. Processes for selecting Peer Review Team members strive to add value and support involvement from corporations and other appropriate persons.
AACSB has developed an on-line system to assist with identification of potential comparison schools. The on-line service, available at https://datadirect.aacsb.edu/public/profiles/search.cfm, offers advanced search functions that produce institution lists based on optionally selected criteria.

The School / Accounting Academic Unit should demonstrate in the review that it relates appropriately to the operational levels of the comparison school set. In some circumstances particular features of the School may make some of the data non-comparable.

**Use of the Comparison Groups**

The Accounting Accreditation Committee chair approves Peer Review Team members from the Peer Review Team Nomination Form. Sometimes for scheduling or other reasons, reviewers who are not on the Comparison Group list may be proposed.

**XIV. FINALIZING THE SELF-EVALUATION REPORT**

When finalizing the SER, Accounting Academic Units are encouraged to seek the guidance of the Team Chair who can provide the following assistance:

1. Become familiar with the Unit and the institution as a whole, which is best achieved through an on-site campus visit (optional).

2. Identify areas in the existing SER that may be unclear, point out issues where further clarification may be needed, and single out other areas of possible concern. The Chair can provide answers to questions about the Initial Accreditation process, the standards and also assist the Accounting Academic Unit in making a determination on the readiness for accreditation.

3. Encourage the Unit to submit materials as early as possible to allow time for possible modifications.

4. Ensure continuous communication throughout this stage.

5. Provide illustrative guidance, not prescriptive guidance.

6. Work with the Unit to ensure their SER:
   - Tells the institution’s story.
   - Is no more than 100 pages in length, or less, depending on size and complexity of the degree offerings.
   - Is well-written and understandable.
   - Includes faculty vitae as an appendix.
   - Includes a summary for each section of the SER to help guide the reader through the materials.
   - Includes summary data, retaining large information compilations on campus, as opposed to including in the report.
   - Limits appendices to those directly relevant, and includes a table of contents and cross-references.
The SER is due to the team members and the AAC between 4-6 months before the scheduled Peer Review Team visit and should be sent as follows:

- Electronic copies of the SER and appendices to all members of the team with a copy to the Chair of the AAC at AAC@aacsb.edu.
- One hard copy of the SER to each peer review team member.
- One hard copy of the SER to the Chair of the Accounting Accreditation Committee, c/o AACSB International, 777 South Harbor Island Blvd., Suite 750, Tampa, FL, 33602-5730, UNITED STATES.

XV. PRE-VISIT LETTER

After the Peer Review Team reviews the final SER, the team drafts a pre-visit letter outlining the issues and concerns identified by the Team. This draft letter, including a “visit” or “no-visit” recommendation, is forwarded to the AAC for review. If the AAC concurs with the Peer Review Team’s recommendation, the pre-visit letter is sent to the School and Accounting Academic Unit. If the committee does not concur with the peer review team’s recommendation it may remand the recommendation to the team for information, clarification, or similar reconsideration when an apparent inconsistency is noted. A conference call is convened with the committee chair and vice-chair, liaison, reader, Peer Review Team members, and AACSB International staff. The team may submit additional information or a revised pre-visit letter recommendation following this conference call.

If the recommendation is “visit”, the pre-visit letter will point out specific issues to be addressed either before or during the visit. In addition, the pre-visit letter will also indicate areas of focus, requests for data and documents to be made available for the team during the visit, and provides confirmation of the on-site visit dates.

If the recommendation is “no visit” for initial accreditation, and the AAC concurs with the team’s recommendation that a visit would be premature, the school and accounting academic unit has two options:

1. Pursue a visit as originally scheduled. The school and accounting academic unit must provide a written request for a visit within two weeks to the AAC (AAC@aacsb.edu).
2. Withdraw from the initial accreditation process.

XVI. PEER REVIEW TEAM VISIT

The on-site review affords the best opportunity for the team to assess the School and Accounting Academic Unit’s case for initial accreditation. An important aspect of the on-site review is verification of data supporting the information presented in the final SER. Equally important is the team’s assessment of the qualitative dimension of the educational programs that only can be verified through face-to-face interaction.

The Team Chair will structure the on-site review schedule and team member assignments to ensure a reasonable balance between information gathering/verification and information analysis/synthesis. Under certain circumstances the AAC chair may require that, at the
cost of the School, a senior AACSB accreditation staff member accompanies the team during the visit. This is done for the purpose of providing guidance and consistency. The staff member is part of the team, but does not have any voting rights with respect to the accreditation recommendation.

Planning the Visit

1. Prior to the visit, the Team Chair will work with the School and Accounting Academic Unit to clarify the itinerary and appointments for the visit. This step enables the School and Unit to make necessary arrangements and appointments with appropriate representatives.

2. Prior to the visit, the Team Chair will inform the School and Unit of on-campus needs such as housing, workroom, meeting rooms, computers, printers, and word processing support. A workroom should be established on campus for the team to review records and information. The hotel should include a working area for the team.

3. The team meets with the School and Unit early in the visit to confirm schedules and discuss any last minute information needs or itinerary changes.

4. During the initial phase of the visit, the Peer Review Team will be focused on fact gathering/verification. This process will allow the Team to further explore the qualitative implications of the facts and concerns previously identified. Early fact gathering/verification allows the Peer Review Team sufficient time to discuss these concerns with the School / Unit.

5. Generally the Peer Review Team will meet with the President and Provost both at the start of the visit to discuss the purpose of the on-site review and at the conclusion of the visit to provide the team recommendation.

6. The Team Chair will make time each day to speak with the host dean and accounting academic unit head to report on any issues that have been uncovered. The host Dean and accounting academic unit head will then have the opportunity to clarify or provide additional information for accuracy.

7. The School should expect a visit of at least two and a half days. The visit may be shortened or lengthened with the mutual agreement of the School and Team Chair. Team members generally arrive in the late afternoon or early evening prior to the first full day.

8. At the conclusion of the visit, the Team will share its impressions and concerns and make its recommendation first to the host dean and accounting academic unit head then to the president and provost (if appropriate). The Peer Review Team will make every effort to have a draft of the report completed before leaving campus. The final report is due to the School and the AAC (AAC@aacsb.edu) within 10 days of the visit.

Possible document/meeting requests from the Team:
The following records may be requested:
**Students**

- Official graduation lists for the most recent commencement. The team will review the lists and may request a sample of transcripts.
- Records/folders for students enrolled during a recent term and class rolls/lists, including faculty names for all business courses taught during a recent term.
- Probation and dismissal lists for the most recent academic year.
- List of transfer students for a recent term and records relating to the assurance of learning accepted toward meeting degree requirements.
- Information regarding student employment for recent graduates.
- Student usage of the library and computer technology.

**Faculty**

- Faculty files for all participating and supporting faculty teaching during a recent term, including faculty CVs.
- Files on promotion and tenure cases for the prior five-year period.
- Research output, including samples of output or access to output for the previous five-year period.
- Faculty professional development plans.
- Updated faculty data sheets, as appropriate.

**Programs**

- Course syllabi for all business courses used to satisfy the curriculum standards.
- Copies of articulation agreements with other institutions.
- Curriculum descriptions for any new programs to be introduced.
- Final exams for all core business courses taught during a recent term.
- Outcome assessment information, such as learning goals, measurements, and results.

**University/School**

- Copies of all institutional catalogs, promotional brochures and recruitment information.
- Copies of any additional documents, handbooks, policy manuals, and other relevant materials.

**The following meetings and discussions may be requested:**

The Peer Review Team may find that meetings and discussions with entities such as those listed below can provide additional opportunities for the team to understand and assess the School’s mission, processes, and outcomes:
Key administrators or staff in the business unit, such as department chairs, associate deans, assistant deans, program directors, center directors, advisors, and others.

Chief executive and chief academic officers of the institution, e.g., president, chancellor, provost, academic vice-president, etc.

Other university deans.

Key committees, such as promotion and tenure, strategic planning, curriculum, assessment, and research.

Faculty representatives, e.g., senior faculty representatives, junior faculty representatives, clinical faculty representatives, part-time and adjunct faculty representatives; participating and supporting faculty representatives, tenured and untenured faculty representatives.

Student service directors, e.g., graduate admissions, academic support and advising, career services and placement, information technology.

Students such as class visits, students assembled by School, and student advisory board.

Facilities such as the library, computer labs, classrooms, other campus sites.

The School and Accounting Academic Unit should understand its obligation to the team and must bear the responsibility in making its case and demonstrating that processes are in place to assure quality and continuous development and improvement. The School and Unit must explain its mission and objectives in terms of accreditation standards application.

When meeting with the dean, accounting head, and president, the team chair should emphasize that the recommendation is subject to change, either positively or negatively, to reflect consistency of decisions across Schools with similar missions. No public announcement should be made until official notification is given by AACSB and the team recommendation has been ratified by the Board.

XVII. THE TEAM REPORT

In preparing the Accounting Academic Unit’s Team Report, the Peer Review Team will assimilate the relevant information, constructively assess and perform a micro and macro analysis to (1) assess the Unit’s performance relative to each standard; (2) determine how the Unit’s policies and practices, in relation to each standard, affect achievement and continuity of overall high quality; and (3) consider whether or not the Unit’s processes lead to outcomes that are consistent with its mission and objectives. The Team performs a standard by standard review of the school’s situation. Additionally, the report notes the processes utilized by the Unit to ensure achievement of the standards, as well as those processes that may inhibit achievement of the standards.

Elements of the Peer Review Team Report:

- Statement of Team Recommendation**
For initial accreditation the options include:

1. **Accreditation.** The Team concludes that the School and Accounting Academic Unit fulfills its mission and achieves overall high quality with processes in place that assure continuous improvement. An appropriate strategic plan is in place to guide activities to the first five-year continuous improvement review.

2. **A one-year deferral.** The Team indicates specific deficiencies that can be resolved within one year, but precludes immediate accreditation. The Team should set forth issues to be addressed in the Unit’s deferral report. Normally a visit will follow review of the report.

3. **Denial.** The Team indicates that the Unit has deficiencies that cannot be remedied within one year and that preclude a favorable assessment of overall high quality. The letter should set forth clearly the deficiencies that led to the recommendation.

In cases of joint accounting and business initial accreditation, two separate team reports will be completed. The two team recommendations may differ. Note that business accreditation must be achieved prior to or concurrent with accounting accreditation.

- Identification of areas that must be addressed prior to the first continuous improvement review or during the deferral review.
- Relevant facts and assessment of strengths and weaknesses on a standard-by-standard basis in support of the team accreditation recommendation.
- Commendations of strengths, innovations, and unique features.
- Opportunities for continuous improvement relevant to the accreditation standards.
- Summary of the peer review visit.

**If a team member is not in agreement with the majority of the team, that team member has the option to file a minority report along with the official team report.**

**Optional Response to the Peer Review Team Report**

Within 10 days of receipt of the Peer Review Team Report, the School and Accounting Academic Unit has the option to respond to the PRT report clarifying any of the comments and/or factual information noted within the report. A copy should also be sent to the AAC Chair in care of the AACSB International office, or electronically to AAC@aacsb.edu.

**XVIII. REVIEW OF THE TEAM RECOMMENDATION**

**Accounting Accreditation Committee**

The AAC will normally review the team visit report and any response from the School at its next scheduled meeting. Their review will result in a decision to:
• Concur with the Team recommendation
• Remand the team’s recommendation
  o The committee may remand the recommendation to the team for information, clarification, or similar reconsideration when an apparent inconsistency is noted. A conference call is convened with the committee chair and vice-chair, liaison, reader, Peer Review Team members, and AACSB International staff. The team may submit additional information or a revised recommendation following this conference call.
  o Based on additional information or an updated team recommendation, the committee concurs with the recommendation or refers the case to a panel.
    1. A panel consists of three individuals: one from the original team; one from the committee; and an outside member who is an experienced accreditation reviewer. The outside member serves as chair.
    2. The panel must reach agreement on recommendation
       ▪ Panel decision to achieve initial accreditation or denial is forwarded to the Board of Directors for ratification consideration.
       ▪ Deferral decisions do not require ratification by the Board of Directors.

Board of Directors
The AAC concurrence to accredit or deny initial accounting accreditation is forwarded to the AACSB Board of Directors for ratification. When the Board of Directors ratifies, the institution is accredited and joins the AACSB Accreditation Council, with a continuous improvement visit in year five. The Board will send official notification to the institution and accounting academic unit and provide formal recognition at the AACSB International Annual Meeting, usually held in April of the visit year.

The Board may remand the recommendation to the AAC for further information.

School Options
The institution / accounting academic unit may withdraw its application for initial accounting accreditation any time prior to consideration by the Board of Directors. In the case of a decision to deny accreditation, the School may submit an appeal to the Chair of the Board of AACSB International. An Appeal Panel will be formed to hear the appeal and make a judgment. The decision of the Appeal Panel is final.

XIX. DEFERRAL REVIEW
If, during the initial accounting accreditation review, the Peer Review Team finds standards-related deficiencies that can be resolved within one year, the team will recommend a one-year deferral review. The Peer Review Team identifies these deficiencies in the Peer Review Team Visit Report and states the expectations for the deferral review. A deferral team will be determined and the school is provided with a due date for the submission of the deferral report. The School / Unit submits its
response to the specific concerns cited by the Peer Review Team to the Deferral Team and AAC (AAC@aacsb.edu).

**Deferral Review Team**

The Deferral Team selected by the AAC normally includes one member from the original Peer Review Team and one member from (or appointed by) the AAC.

The Deferral Team focuses on the issues noted in the decision letter from the accreditation committee chair. The original Peer Review Team Visit Report may be referenced for further information relating to the issues detailed in the decision letter.

**Review of Deferral Report from School**

In the year following the original Peer Review Team visit, the School / Accounting Academic Unit will submit a written report to the Deferral Team and the AAC. This report details the progress made to address the issues noted in the original Peer Review Team Report. After review of the deferral review the team conducts an onsite visit to determine if the concerns have been satisfactorily addressed. Ordinarily, the deferral Team conducts a one and a half day on-site review within one year following the original Peer Review Team visit.

**Review of Team Recommendation**

The process for committee review of the Deferral Review Team Report is the same as that one outlined for Peer Review Team Recommendations.

The AAC concurrence with the deferral team to accredit or deny initial accreditation is forwarded to the AACSB Board of Directors for ratification. When the Board of Directors ratifies a recommendation for initial accounting accreditation, the institution is accredited and joins the AACSB Accreditation Council, with a continuous improvement visit to occur in year five. The Board will send official notification to the institution and accounting academic unit and provide formal recognition at the AACSB International Annual Meeting, usually held in April of the visit year. AACSB does not publicize the names of institutions to which the Board denies accreditation.