Handbook for Joint Business and Accounting Continuous Improvement Reviews

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AACSB International Accreditation Handbook for Joint Business and Accounting Continuous Improvement Reviews

PREFACE

The Accreditation Handbook for Continuous Improvement Reviews is designed to provide assistance and essential information regarding the continuous improvement review and documentation process for applicant institutions whose business schools and accounting academic units hold AACSB Business and Accounting Accreditation. The handbook also provides key information and guidance for Peer Review Teams conducting joint, collaborative business and accounting accreditation reviews. It describes the philosophy, procedures, and guidelines for the Continuous Improvement Review accreditation process, as well as the duties and responsibilities of the business and accounting Peer Review Team members in conducting a thorough and complete AACSB Continuous Improvement Review of institutions holding business and accounting accreditation.

AACSB International has also developed an online peer review training that provides an overview of the roles and processes involved in peer review. The training, found at http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/volunteers/training/ includes helpful information for schools and reviewers regarding all phases of the accreditation process, including continuous improvement review process and responsibilities.

AACSB Business and Accounting Accreditation are intrinsically linked through the accreditation standards. AACSB Business Accreditation Standards provide the foundation for the AACSB Accounting Accreditation process. As well, the peer review process for institutions that hold AACSB business and accounting accreditation should be a collaborative, integrative process that reduces duplicative documentation, supports input from Business and Accounting Peer Review Team members supporting both review and evaluation functions. Through integrated documentation, team collaboration in developing and implementing the visit schedule, and in sharing peer review team perspectives resulting from document reviews and the visit, the results and value to the applicant institution hosting these joint Continuous Improvement Reviews is maximized and enhanced. It is in this spirit that the remainder of this document is developed in support of joint AACSB Joint Business and Accounting Continuous Improvement Reviews.

Throughout the rest of this document the accredited academic business unit is referred to as the (business) School. The term school is used to describe the entity that offers programs and is not meant to imply any particular organizational structure. For accounting units holding separate AACSB accounting accreditation, the term “accounting academic unit” is used.
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I. INTRODUCTION

The AACSB International Board of Directors adopted the Continuous Improvement Review process and procedures described in this handbook in April 2013. The Continuous Improvement Review (CIR) process pertains only to institutions already accredited and this particular handbook outlines the process for those institutions that hold AACSB Business and Accounting Accreditation. All initial accreditation reviews follow the standard-by-standard review process as outlined in the Initial Accreditation Handbook.

The Continuous Improvement Review accreditation process minimizes the reporting burden on accredited institutions for business and accounting units. The process creates an ongoing “Continuous Improvement” focus signaling that once an institution has achieved AACSB Business and Accounting Accreditation, a process of documented continuous improvements in support of the stated mission and strategic management plan will sustain AACSB Accreditation status.

The Continuous Improvement Review process for AACSB Business and Accounting Accreditation is not a standard-by-standard review. By focusing the review on educational improvement, strategic management, and fulfillment of mission, the members of Peer Review Teams for business and accounting will be particularly attuned to educational quality issues and problems that may be revealed in the process. The CIR process relies on extensive and effective communications between the host business school and the accounting academic unit and the peer review teams for business and accounting. In addition, the value of the CIR process is enhanced with the business and accounting team collaboration in the review process and resulting report preparation.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, all applicants and the reviewers provide evaluations of the process which informs AACSB of continuous improvement efforts. Changes in the procedures and documentation specifications may be made each year to incorporate opportunities for continuous improvement learned from all participants in the previous year.

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 needs for the business and accounting peer review teams, and is the liaison between the institution’s business school and accounting academic unit leadership and the volunteer network (peer review team members, accreditation committee, etc.). The staff liaison is available to assist with any questions regarding the Continuous Improvement Review 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.

The AACSB Continuous Improvement Review process is conducted every five years and may involve up to two years of engagement by the applicant inclusive of the year in which the peer review team conducts its campus visit. A Continuous Improvement Review may produce the following recommendations from the peer review team for the applicant school (corresponding but separate recommendations may be made by the AACSB Accounting Accreditation Peer Review Team):
• Extension of Accreditation which may include continuous improvement recommendations to be addressed over the next five years and reported on at the time of the next review.
• Continuous Improvement Review 2 (referred to as CIR2) where specific concerns regarding alignment with AACSB business and/or accounting accreditation standards that must be addressed within twelve months through a follow up report to the appropriate accreditation committee. The follow up report must address how the school and/or accounting academic unit has resolved the specific concerns related to the identified accreditation standards.
• Revocation of AACSB accreditation and removal from the Accreditation Council based on the peer review team’s assessment that non-alignment with AACSB business and/or accounting accreditation standards seriously impact the applicant’s ability to demonstrate overall high quality and continuous improvement supported by innovation, impact, and engagement and that these concerns are not likely to be successfully addressed in the next 3-5 years. Such a recommendation must be supported by an analysis documenting the non-alignment issues with specific AACSB accreditation standards.
• The recommendation of the business and accounting peer review teams may yield different recommendations from the above set of possible outcomes.

The peer review teams’ recommendations resulting from the business and accounting review must be reviewed by the appropriate AACSB accreditation committee. The committee may ratify the peer review team’s recommendation or remand it back for further discussion. If the committee ratifies an Extension or a Revocation recommendation, the accreditation recommendation must go the AACSB Board of Directors for final ratification. The accreditation recommendation is not final until the Board of Directors acts. In the case of a Revocation of Accreditation that is ratified by the AACSB Board of Directors, the applicant may appeal the decision in accordance with AACSB appeal procedures (http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/resources/policies/Appeal_Procedure.pdf).

CIR2 recommendations from a peer review team must be approved by the appropriate accreditation committee or may be remanded back to the team for further discussions. If a CIR2 recommendation is ratified by the appropriate committee, no further action is taken until the applicant provides the follow up report which must be evaluated as to adequacy of the progress in addressing the concerns stated in the original peer review decision letter. A member of the appropriate accreditation committee and a member of the original peer review team will review the report and make a recommendation to the appropriate accreditation committee. The recommendation may be as follows:

• Extension of Accreditation which may include continuous improvement recommendations to be addressed over the next five years and reported on at the time of the next review. The original review cycle remains in place and the next review will occur in approximately four years. If ratified by the appropriate AACSB accreditation committee, the recommendation is forwarded to the AACSB Board of Directors for final ratification.
• Focused Review (Referred to as FR1 or FR2 depending on the time frame granted by the committee) for up to two additional years if the concerns detailed in the CIR2 peer review decision letter have not been adequately addressed where issues of mission achievement and educational quality outcomes are in question. The
applicant will provide a report within one year of the committee’s decision on its progress in addressing the specific concerns. A member of the appropriate accreditation committee and a member of the original peer review team will review the applicant’s report and make a recommendation to the appropriate accreditation committee. If a school proceeds into the FR2 stage, the final decision must be either Extension or Revocation of Accreditation. In such cases, a peer review team must visit the school and/or accounting academic unit prior to making such a recommendation. For FR1 reviews, a campus visit is optional. Extension and Revocation decisions must be ratified by the AACSB Board of Directors to be final. If an Extension recommendation is ratified by the Board of Directors, the applicant moves forward to its next Continuous Improvement review which will occur based on the original Continuous Improvement review cycle. In the case of a Revocation of Accreditation that is ratified by the AACSB Board of Directors, the applicant may appeal the decision in accordance with AACSB appeal procedures (http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/resources/policies/Appeal_Procedure.pdf).

II. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT REVIEW APPLICATION

The Continuous Improvement Review (CIR) Application is due on July 1st, two years prior to the review year. This application initiates the CIR process. For institutions that will have a business school and accounting academic unit CIR review, separate business and accounting applications must be filed by the July 1 deadline; however, some documentation found in the business application does not have to be repeated in the accounting application and are identified in the application guidelines that follow.

What is Required

The applicant submits separate CIR Applications for sustaining business and accounting accreditation, respectively, in which the applicant provides details on the characteristics that determine alignment with eligibility criteria for business and accounting accreditation and an update on issues identified at the last AACSB review. The respective CIR application for the business and accounting reviews will include:

- Demographic information with names of the business school and accounting unit, mailing address, telephone numbers, web site address, names and email addresses of senior leaders of the business and accounting unit, the institutions chief academic officer, and chief executive officer, respectively, submitting for a business and accounting CIR review.

- Statement of affirmation of alignment with Eligibility Criteria F in the application documenting ongoing alignment with AACSB standards for business and accounting and validation of the accuracy of the information being presented supported by signatures of the: Chief Executive Officer (President, Chancellor, etc.); Chief Academic Officer (Provost, Vice-President/Chancellor for Academic Affairs, etc.); Head of the Business School; and Head of the Accounting Academic Unit.

- Comparable Peers (for consideration to serve on the Peer Review Team) -- a minimum of six comparable peers are required to compile the statistical data report. Any institutions duplicated in the competitive group do not count towards the minimum of six.
- Competitive Group (excluded from serving on the Peer Review Team)
- Aspirant Group (for consideration to serve on the Peer Review Team) -- a minimum of three aspirants are required to compile the statistical data report. Any institutions duplicated in the competitive group do not count towards the minimum of three.

- Note that an institution may be listed in one or all of the groups above. Additional detail regarding the selection of comparison groups can be found on page 7. Peer groups for business and accounting reviews may identify different sets of institutions. If peer schools are different between the business school peers and the accounting academic unit peers, provide an explanation in the accounting application.

- Update on how the school and accounting academic unit addresses: ethical behavior (Eligibility Criteria A); supports a collegiate environment (Eligibility Criteria B); and supports and engages in corporate social responsibility focus areas (Eligibility Criteria C). If the accounting academic unit does not have unique responses to Eligibility Criteria A, B, and C, the accounting application can refer the accounting peer review team to the business school documentation and not duplicate this material in the accounting report.

- Update on progress addressing concerns stated in the last AACSB review for business and/or accounting and updates on major changes in financial resources, facilities, other infrastructure, deployment of participating/supporting and qualified faculty including an assessment of impact on alignment with AACSB standards. The business school and accounting academic unit will address this documentation requirement in each unit’s respective application unless the business school documentation is sufficiently robust to address the concerns state in the prior accounting review. In regards to Eligibility Criteria E: Oversight, Sustainability, and Continuous Improvement, discuss trends in financial resources, faculty and professional staff resources, and any major organizational changes since the last initial or CIR review.

- List of Degree Programs Offered in business for the business school application (to include accounting degrees) and accounting degrees offered through the accounting academic unit -- web links to online catalogs may be included in lieu of hard copy course catalogs.

- In accordance with Eligibility Criteria D, identification of programs requested for exclusion and justifications - The process for requesting exclusions is described in the Eligibility Procedures and Standards for Business and Accounting Accreditation (http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/standards.asp). New documentation does not need to be submitted for exclusions approved for a prior review, either a CIR or initial review. Business schools and accounting programs only need to submit exclusion request documentation for new degrees, degrees whose names have changed, or substantive changes in previously excluded degrees that have occurred since the last review. Separate documentation by the business school and accounting unit is expected.

- Request preferred range of dates for the business and accounting peer review team to conduct the campus visit. The AACSB staff liaison can provide time frames that may assist the business school and accounting programs in making this request. AACSB policies require the business and accounting CIR reviews to be conducted concurrently and collaboratively. Therefore, requests to conduct separate CIR reviews for business
and accounting will not be accepted. The only exception to this policy is when the business school is already AACSB Accredited and the accounting academic unit is seeking initial accounting accreditation. In such cases, a unique accounting review may be scheduled, but the next CIR review for business and accounting will be concurrent in accordance with the provisions of this document, AACSB policies, and standards.

AACSB International will make every effort to accommodate the requested review timeframe. However, AACSB reserves the right to schedule the review in a different period of the originally scheduled year if necessary to evenly distribute the reviews among available timeframes.

When to Submit

The CIR applications for business and accounting are due by July 1, two years prior to the scheduled year of visit; i.e., for a visit between July 1, 2016 and June 30, 2017, the items are due by July 1, 2014.

How to Submit

The applicant submits one hard copy of the required CIR application to the appropriate accreditation committee chair in care of the AACSB International headquarters:

AACSB International
777 S. Harbour Island Boulevard
Suite 750
Tampa, FL 33602-5730

The completed business and accounting applications must also be submitted electronically to the appropriate accreditation committee chair (circ@aacsb.edu for business and aac@aacsb.edu for accounting). The electronic file(s) should be in Adobe PDF format or Microsoft Word format.

What Happens Next

Upon receipt staff reviews the documentation and confirms the sections documenting the business school and accounting unit’s response to Eligibility Criteria and scope of accreditation (degree programs that will be included in the review). In the event that exclusion requests are controversial, the request will be forwarded to the Committee on Accreditation Quality (CAP) for a final decision. The process for identifying the accreditation scope must be completed prior to scheduling the on-site review and normally no later than one year in advance of the Peer Review Team visit.

III. COMPARISON/PEER GROUPS

Processes to support AACSB business and accounting accreditation reviews include the selection of comparison or peer groups to form a relevant context for judgments and assist in the selection of Peer Review Team members. Reviewers from comparable institutions are better prepared to make evaluative and consultative judgments and recommendations about the applicant and to understand the applicant and its aspirations.
What is Required

The business and accounting applicant submits three comparison groups selected from members of the AACSB Accreditation Council. The applicant may select comparison groups on the basis of institutional or program comparisons and other factors such as public vs. private, size, urban or suburban location, etc. It is important to note that a business school and/or an accounting academic unit may be chosen in all three groups, as a peer, competitor, and aspirant based upon the particulars of the business school or accounting academic unit and programs offered. Accounting programs may have a different set of comparison groups than the business programs and must be selected from those members of the Accreditation Council with AACSBB accounting accreditation. Doctoral programs may have another set.

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

- **Competitive Group:** A list of peers so directly competitive that conflict of interest considerations exclude their personnel from the review process. The competitive peers’ list may be of any number. Only those peers 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 peers that provides a developmental goal for the applicant, represents management education and/or accounting programs or features that the applicant hopes to emulate, and places the vision and strategy of the applicant in context. The list of aspirant peers may be of any number, though a minimum of three peers is required to compile a statistical data report that may be used during the CIR review.

Comparison groups do not imply categories or rankings of peers or members accredited by AACSB International. AACSB International will not publish or otherwise make available comparison group listings beyond the accreditation process. These lists are for the benefit of the applicant and the Peer Review Team in the accreditation review.

Although comparison groups include only AACSB International accredited schools of business or those with accounting accreditation when applicable, applicants are encouraged to look beyond academe for examples of best practices and potential Peer Review Team members. Processes for selecting Peer Review Team members will continue to value and support involvement from corporations and other appropriate persons.

The applicant should demonstrate in the review that it appropriately relates to the operational levels of the comparison school set. In some circumstances idiosyncratic features of the applicant may make some of the data non-comparable.

AACSB International has developed an on-line system to assist the applicant to identify potential comparison peers. The on-line service, available at
What Happens Next

- **Peer Review Team**: The appropriate accreditation committee chair selects, and proposes to the applicant for acceptance, Peer Review Team members suggested by the applicant that may include participants from the from the Comparable Peers and Aspirant Group. Other participants may be recommended based on AACSB’s goals of expanding participation in its peer review process. The proposed members are expected be most well-prepared to make evalulative judgments about the applicant, to understand the applicant and its aspirations, and to offer consultative suggestions for the applicant's improvement. When mutual agreement between the applicant and accreditation committee chair is reached, AACSB International invites the individuals to serve on the team. If invitees cannot serve, the process is repeated until a full team is selected.

- **Accreditation Statistical Reports**: All AACSB Accreditation Council members are required to complete those sections of the AACSB Business School Questionnaire or Accounting Program Questionnaire that are reserved for accredited business schools and accounting programs, respectively. Statistical reports are generated from this data based on the responses from Comparison Groups identified by the business and accounting review. These reports will help form the context for judgment and consultative elements of the review. Upon request from the institution undergoing the accreditation review or on request of the visit team AACSB International will compile a
  
  - Comparable Peer Report (includes data on the applicant and its comparable peers)
  - Aspirant Group Report (includes data on the applicant and its aspirant peers)

The data should be used for **background information only and not for making accreditation decisions**. Feedback from the team that identifies those data elements most helpful in promoting useful discussions relating to the accreditation review will be used to further refine the Accreditation Statistical Reports.

### IV. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT REVIEW VISIT MATERIALS

**What is Required**

**AACSB International will provide:**

- List of approved included and excluded programs (Scope of Accreditation) for the business and accounting CIR reviews. Please note that any new degree programs started after the accreditation decision will be considered accredited until the next review. New degree programs will be reviewed during the next CIR accreditation review.

- Documentation related to the last accreditation review (CIR or Initial Accreditation Visit Reports and official AACSB correspondence resulting from those reviews).
The Applicant will provide the Fifth Year Continuous Improvement Report to each team member and to the applicable accreditation committee chair at least 60 days prior to the team visit.

V. FIFTH YEAR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT REVIEW REPORT

The format for the Accounting Fifth Year Continuous Improvement Review (CIR) Report documentation is outlined below. The Fifth Year CIR report is to be provided to AACSB and the Peer Review Team no later than 60 days prior to the start of the campus visit. A separate report for accounting programs is required when applying for an accounting Continuous Improvement Review. Opportunities to link the accounting CIR report to the business report for documentation are detailed below. The report should be no longer than 50 pages in length, excluding appendices. The documentation for the Fifth Year CIR (business and accounting) should include the following essential elements:

1. Innovation, Impact and Engagement: Provide an executive summary in bullet format, not to exceed three pages, describing the most significant strategies and outcomes related to Engagement, Innovation, Impact since the last accreditation review. Examples should include the outcomes linked to the mission and strategic plan. (For additional information please refer to pages 47 through 50 in the eligibility criteria and accreditation standards for business education at http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/standards/2013/ and accounting standards at http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/accounting/standards/2013/)

2. Situational Analysis (no more than three pages): Provide a brief analysis that enables the Peer Review Team to understand the context within which the school (accounting academic unit) operates. It should answer the following types of questions:
   - What historical, national, local, and other factors shape the school’s (accounting academic unit’s) mission and operations?
   - What are the school’s (accounting academic unit’s) relative advantages and disadvantages in reputation, resources, sponsors, and supporters?
   - What internal, environmental, or competitive forces challenge the school’s (accounting academic unit’s) future?
   - What opportunities exist for enhancing the school’s (accounting academic unit’s) degree offerings?
   - What degree programs are included in the accreditation review, and what is the number of graduates in the previous year for each program?

3. Progress Update on Concerns from Previous Review: Provide an update on progress in addressing “Concerns that must be addressed prior to or at the time of the next Continuous Improvement Review” as stated in the last AACSB accreditation review official correspondence.

4. Strategic Management and Innovation: Address the following items:
   - Mission Statement and summary of strategic plan or framework: Provide the mission statement of the school (accounting academic unit) and the
supporting major components of the strategic management plan or framework (expected outcomes, strategies, etc.). If the mission statement and supporting strategic management plan have changed, provide factors influencing the changes. Based on the mission and supporting plan, identify the elements of the plan that document the school’s (accounting academic unit’s) distinctive features, focus areas or priorities. Identify innovative actions, strategies, programs, and/or outcomes along with substantive impacts of the school’s (accounting academic unit’s) mission-focused activities.

- **Strategic Management Planning Process and Outcomes:** Describe the strategic management planning process of the school (accounting academic unit). Provide an overview of demonstrated continuous improvement outcomes and/or achievement of mission, expected outcomes, and strategies. Summarize key continuous improvement achievements since the last accreditation review.

- **Intellectual Contributions, Impact, and Alignment with Mission:** Provide Table 2-1 in an appendix. Briefly describe how the “substantial cross-section of faculty in each discipline” is achieved. Support Table 2-1 with narrative analysis focused on indicators of quality of the IC outcomes reported in the table and indicators if impact on theory, practice, and/or teaching/pedagogy. Briefly describe the infrastructure supporting faculty intellectual contribution development. For accounting CIR reviews, the documentation for this item may refer the peer review team to the business documentation including Table 2-1 if the material is sufficiently detailed to allow the accounting team to conduct its review of the accounting academic unit. If not, separate documentation is required in the accounting report.

- **Financial Strategies and Allocation of Resources:** Describe the school’s (accounting academic unit’s) primary sources of operational funding and how those funds are applied. Summarize the trend in these resources since the last AACSB review. Identify key 1-3 year strategic action items and financial plans to achieve them. This should include anticipated sources and timing of funding (see Standards 3).

- **New Degree Programs:** Provide a list of degree programs introduced since the previous accreditation review. The following information is required for each new degree program:
  - A brief description of the employer or employment needs to be served by the program
  - A brief description of the intended student market
  - A description of the source(s) of faculty, technology, and facility support
  - A description of the learning goals, how the goals are measured, and results that demonstrate achievement

Please note that any new degree programs started after the accreditation decision will be considered accredited until the next review. New degree programs will be reviewed during the next CIR review.

5. **Participants – Students, Faculty, and Professional Staff:** Address the following in regards to participants:

- **Students:** Describe any changes in students (enrollments trends, diversity, effect of changes in admission criteria, etc.) and/or support services (advising,
career services, other student development initiatives, etc.) since the last review. Unless there are unique policies, procedures, etc. for the accounting academic unit, the accounting Peer Review Team may be referred to the business report if that report provides sufficient detail on accounting students.

- **Faculty and Professional Staff Sufficiency and Deployment; Faculty Management and Support:** Provide an overview of faculty management policies including recruitment, hiring, mentoring, evaluation, reward systems, etc. Also, please summarize your criteria guiding identification of faculty as participating and supporting. Summarize professional staff resources and how they are supported and developed. Describe any major changes in faculty resources or other related developments since the last review. Unless there are unique staff, faculty management policies, procedures, etc. for the accounting academic unit, the accounting Peer Review Team may be referred to the business report if that report provides sufficient detail on accounting students.

6. **Learning and Teaching:** Address the following in regards to curricula management, curricula development, content, student-faculty interactions, degree program educational levels, structure, and equivalence, and teaching effectiveness:

- **Curricula Management and Development:** Provide an overview of major curricula revisions that have occurred since the last review. Describe the factors that led to the revisions. Summarize in a brief statement learning goals for each degree program, along with a list of the assessment tools, procedures, and results used to demonstrate progress toward achievement of expected learning outcomes. Ensure documentation is available to the Peer Review Team that details the structure of all degree programs. If degree structure is not clear to a Peer Review Team, the team may request a curricula map indicating how each degree program addresses the content guidance in Standard 9. Summarize joint or partnership degree programs and transfer credit policies. Summarize how high quality teaching is encouraged, supported, and developed. Summarize continuous improvement activities of faculty focused on teaching enhancement. Be prepared to discuss how instructional development is supported across diverse delivery modes.

7. **Academic and Professional Engagement:** Summarize the following information:

- **Student Academic and Professional Engagement:** Address the school’s (accounting academic unit’s) strategies supporting student engagement, both academically and professionally. Examples of student academic engagement may include: evidence of active involvement in learning in the form of projects, papers, presentations and other demonstrations. Examples of student professional engagement may include exposure to industry through activities such as internships, consulting projects, mentorship programs, field trips and participation in industry professional speaker series. Summarize major initiatives focused on experiential and active learning strategies for students. Unless there are unique accounting activities for the accounting academic unit, the accounting Peer Review Team may be referred to the business report if that report provides sufficient detail on accounting students.

- **Executive Education:** Summarize the business school’s executive education portfolio including faculty involved linking it to the mission, expected outcomes,
and strategies. Describe how executive education is assessed for quality and summarize continuous improvement outcomes resulting from these assessments. Unless there are unique accounting activities for the accounting academic unit, the accounting Peer Review Team may be referred to the business report if that report provides sufficient detail on accounting activities in this area.

- **Faculty Qualifications and Engagement:** Address the school’s (accounting academic unit’s) strategies supporting faculty engagement with the practice of business. Examples of faculty engagement with the profession may include consulting, executive education development and presentation, professional education experiences and faculty internships. Summarize policies guiding faculty in support of the qualifications to support mission achievement and to be relevant and current for the classroom teaching responsibilities. In the appendix, provide Table 15-1 (A9-1) and 15-2 (A9-2) with supporting summary of the deployment of faculty across degree programs linked to mission, expected outcomes, and strategies. For accounting CIR reviews, the documentation for this item may refer the peer review team to the business documentation including Tables 15-1 and 15-2 if the material is sufficiently detailed to allow the accounting team to conduct its review of the accounting academic unit. If not, separate documentation is required in the accounting report.

8. **Other Material:** Address any additional issues or areas not included in an earlier section of the report. In addition, identify any innovative and/or exemplary practices, innovations, activities, programs, etc. that should be brought to the attention of the team and AACSB. Provide a brief overview of progress relative to the stated mission, the distinctiveness of the school’s (accounting academic unit’s) activities in support of mission, a summary of the impact of the school (accounting academic unit) across its mission-related activities.

9. **Consultative Review (Optional):** A school (accounting academic unit) may request the Peer Review Team to provide non-standard-related insights, analysis, and/or recommendations concerning a prospective strategic opportunity and/or challenge facing the unit. To support such a request, the school (accounting academic unit) should provide a summary of relevant background information that informs the team of the opportunity or challenge.

The Continuous Improvement Review is a holistic review centered around the themes of the 2013 accreditation standards – Innovation – Impact – Engagement. The Fifth Year Report should not be a standard by standard review, but rather the report is organized around the four areas of accreditation standards.

**How to Submit**

The applicant should submit the required items electronically and in hard copy to the Peer Review Team members. A hard copy should be submitted to the appropriate accreditation committee chair in care of the AACSB International headquarters:

AACSB International
Electronic copies to the appropriate committee chair should be submitted to for business circ@aacsb.edu and aac@aacsb.edu for accounting. The electronic files should be in Adobe PDF format or Microsoft Word format.

Materials for the Team at the Time of the Visit

In addition to the Fifth Year CIR report, the applicant is expected to provide organized supporting materials for the team to review during the campus visit process. These should be organized and available in one location to facilitate the team’s campus visit. The following should be provided:

- Faculty vita on all faculty (ideally in a standardized format focused on the five-year review period)
- Documentation of professional staff educational background and experience
- Faculty and Professional Staff Management Policies
- Documentation of curricula management support data including outcomes assessment data, examples of student work assessed, program quality review reports, etc.
- Recent faculty promotion and/or tenure files
- Access to student records, placement data, success of graduates
- Annual reports by the applicant for stakeholders and/or the institution

The peer review team through its early engagement and dialogue with the applicant identify other materials that may be needed to support the review. However, care must be exercised to maintain the spirit and intent of the CIR review process ensuring that all requests for documentation are important to the review process and the applicant is granted sufficient time to collect and organize the information.

Communication between the Business School, the Accounting Academic Unit, and the Team and AACSB Staff Liaison:

In order to maximize the benefits and value of an AACSB CIR review process for business school and accounting academic unit, it is vitally important that all parties engage in active communications as soon as the peer review team is identified and reported to the applicant business school and accounting academic unit. This early engagement allows the peer review teams to gain an in depth understanding of the applicants, their strengths, their challenges, and underlying characteristics and unique features prior to the visit. This familiarization enhances the value of the visit as the team can focus on the review process and not have to become familiar with the business school and accounting academic unit this late in the process.

VI. THE VISIT

The CIR review process focuses on strategic management, expected outcomes and underlying strategies. The Peer Review Team contributes an external perspective on the
applicant’s action items, accomplishments, and progress toward achieving its mission, expected outcomes through implementation of its various strategies. The applicant should be prepared to respond to questions, such as:

- Are the expected outcomes, underlying strategies reflected in vision and mission statements realistic and the supporting strategic management plan for the applicant?
- Does the applicant have a realistic vision and mission, expected outcomes, and strategies relative to its financial, intellectual capital, human capital, and physical capital resources?
- What has the applicant accomplished relevant to its plan?
- What are the next action items in the pursuit of the mission?
- Is the applicant taking the necessary steps to see that its educational degree and executive education programs remain current and relevant?
- Does the applicant have processes to ensure continuous improvement?
- Do the applicant’s accomplishments demonstrate effectiveness of its planning and implementation of its action items?

For institutions with both business and accounting accreditation, a business and accounting Peer Review Team is appointed with representatives having both general review responsibility and an assigned emphasis in either business or accounting, respectively. The most successful business and accounting CIR visit is one that is coordinated so that representatives of both business and accounting accreditation review are part of the same visit. Some parts of the visit may separate the business and accounting reviewers and leaders for discussions that emphasize specific concerns for the separate programs. Reviewers will prepare separate reports and recommendations for the appropriate accreditation committee, but it is critical for the business and accounting team members to interact and share perspective prior to, during, and following the visit.

**VISIT SCHEDULE**

The business and accounting peer review teams will have a designated chair. The Peer Review Team Chair works with the administrative head of the business school and/or the accounting academic unit to develop a coordinated schedule for the visit (see sample schedule on AACSB website). As noted earlier, the visit schedule will include events in which all team members participate and other events where the teams separate to focus on specific areas of the respective business or accounting review. The visit should include certain individuals and groups. Because of differences in administrative structures, the groups and titles may differ from the following:

- Administrative officers of the business school/accounting program
- Strategic management committee
- Department chairs and academic program directors
- Promotion and tenure committee
- Senior faculty representatives, junior faculty representatives, clinical faculty representatives, part-time and adjunct faculty representatives
- Assessment and curricula committee
- Student service directors, e.g., graduate admissions, academic support and advising, career services and placement
- Chief executive and chief academic officers of the institution, e.g., president, chancellor, academic vice president, provost, etc.
- Student representatives

The meeting of the combined business and accounting Peer Review Team with the chief executive and chief academic officers should be one of the final meetings of the visit. During this meeting, the team should present the business and accounting peer review team recommendations (Section I of the CIR Visit Report) and discuss any effective practices (Section IV) highlighted during the review.

**PEER REVIEW TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES IN A JOINT REVIEW**

The business and accounting peer review teams should work in a collaborative process to develop the visit schedule working with representatives of the host applicant. The teams should also collaborate in conducting the on-site visit. To that end, the following is expected in joint business and accounting CIR reviews:

- The business and accounting peer review teams will collaborate in establishing the visit schedule and requests for documentation to be provided by the applicant at the time of the visit.
- Throughout the campus visit process, the business and accounting peer review teams should provide time for joint meetings to share results and findings and to discuss the possible implications of the findings.
- At the time of drafting the peer review team report, the business and accounting team must discuss their findings and conclusions and their recommendation resulting from the CIR review. The teams should be clear on the conclusions reached by each team and consider the impact of the conclusions of each team on the respective outcomes of the business or accounting review. If the two teams reach different conclusions, all team members must understand the basis for the different conclusions and recommendations.

**CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT REVIEW VISIT REPORT**

Within ten days following the visit, the business and accounting Teams provide separate business and accounting Continuous Improvement Review Visit Report (Template available on AACSB website) to the applicant and copy the appropriate accreditation committee chair. Prior to issuing the final report to the applicant and the appropriate AACSB accreditation committee, the applicant should be sent a draft copy of the report in order to offer any clarifying comments and corrections related to factual information noted in either of the reports.

The appropriate accreditation committee will review any response to the visit report from the applicant at its next scheduled meeting (normally, provided that the report is received at least three weeks in advance of the meeting).
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT REVIEW 2

If, during the Continuous Improvement Review, the Peer Review Team finds standards-related issues affecting educational quality, additional investigation, reporting, and a focused review will occur in the following year. The Peer Review Team identifies the weakness or threat to educational quality in Section II of the Continuous Improvement Review Visit Report and states the expectations for the extended reporting period. During the CIR2 process the accredited status of the applicant does not change until the review and decision process has been completed.

What Happens Next

The relevant accreditation committee selects, and proposes to the applicant for approval, a revised, smaller team that normally includes one member from the Peer Review Team and one from (or appointed by) the accreditation committee. The applicant distributes a Continuous Review 2 Report of the Peer Review Team and appropriate accreditation committee detailing its response to the specific concerns cited by the Peer Review Team. During the CIR2 process The Extended Review Team reviews the response from the applicant and prepares a Team Report (template available on AACSB website). An on-site review may or may not be required. Please note that the policy for the extension of the CIR review period requires that the applicant be assessed a fee of $4200 (AACSB accreditation fees are subject to change as approved by the Board of Directors).

Successful completion of the review at the end of the CIR2 earns the institution a five-year Extension of AACSB Accreditation with the original review year as the start year and the next scheduled CIR review to take place in year five; i.e., the five-year review cycle remains constant. For example, if the applicant is reviewed in year 2014-15, the next review will be in year 2019-20, irrespective of whether an extended review period is required. If successful completion is not achieved in by the end of the extended review period, the Peer Review Team will recommend continuing review of accreditation for up to two additional years. Continuing Review is a probationary status and will be disclosed by AACSB.

FOCUSED REVIEW

During the focused review period, the applicant must rectify the standards-related quality issues identified by the CIR2 Peer Review Team Report before Extension of Accreditation can be formerly awarded.

What Happens Next

The relevant accreditation committee selects, and proposes to the applicant, the Focused Review Team that normally includes one member from the CIR2 Review Team and one from (or appointed by) the accreditation committee. The CIR2 Review Team may be asked to continue to serve as the Focused Review Team. The Focused Review Team reviews the Focused Review Report submitted by the applicant and confers with the appropriate accreditation committee to determine (1) if the concerns have been satisfactorily addressed, (2) how the Focused Review Team and Committee can further assist the applicant, and (3) if an on-site review is needed. An on-site visit is required in the second year of continuing review. The team prepares a Focused Review Team Report (template available on AACSB
website). Note that the applicant will be assessed a fee of $4200 (fees may change as approved by the Board of Directors) for each year of focused review.

Successful completion of the Focused Review earns the institution Extension of Accreditation for five-years with the original review year as the start year and the next scheduled CIR review to take place in year five; i.e., the original five-year review cycle remains constant. For example, if the applicant is reviewed in year 2014-15, the next review will be in year 2019-20, irrespective of whether a CIR2 review and Focused Review period are required. The Focused Review period can be up to two years in duration. If successful completion is not achieved by the end of the Focused Review period, the Focused Review Team must recommend revocation of accreditation. No additional time will be granted to resolve the issues identified over the review periods.

VII. REVIEW OF TEAM RECOMMENDATION

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE

The role of the accreditation committee is to ensure consistent application of AACSB International business and accounting accreditation standards and processes across Peer Review Teams. Within 10 days following the visit, the Peer Review Team forwards a copy of the team visit report and its recommendation to the appropriate accreditation committee.

Two members of the committee will serve as a liaison and a reader, respectively, between the visit team and the committee. The liaison’s role is to lead discussions concerning the applicant at accreditation committee meetings. The reader serves as a back-up should the liaison not be available for the committee meetings. Prior to the committee meetings, the liaison and reader thoroughly review the reports, recommendation, and any responses from the institution and should consult with the peer review team chair for additional information or clarification.

The appropriate accreditation committee will normally review the team visit report and any response from the applicant at its next scheduled meeting. The committee can make the following recommendations:

Continuous Improvement Review Team Recommendation

- Concur with the team recommendation
- Remand the team’s recommendation
  - 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.
  - 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 extend accreditation or revoke accreditation is forwarded to the Board of Directors for ratification consideration
   - Panel decision for Continuous Improvement Review 2 (when the panel consideration is between extending accreditation and continuing review) becomes the decision.

Continuous Improvement Review 2 Team Recommendation
   - Process is the same as noted above for original Peer Review Team Recommendation.
   - Successful completion of the review in the extended year earns the institution a five-year extension of its accreditation with the original review year as the start year and the next scheduled maintenance review to take place in year five. If successful completion is not achieved in the extended year, the Review Team will recommend continuing review of accreditation for up to two additional years.

Focused Review Team Recommendation
   - Process is the same as noted above for original Peer Review Team Recommendation.
   - Successful completion of the Focused Review earns the institution a five-year extension of its accreditation with the original review year as the start year and the next scheduled maintenance review to take place in year five. If successful completion is not achieved in the second year of Focused Review, the Focused Review Team must recommend revocation of accreditation.
     - Recommendation for revocation will initiate an invitation to the applicant to present its case for extension of accreditation at the next accreditation committee meeting.
     - When AACSB accreditation is revoked, the member is removed from the Accreditation Council and the listing of accredited institutions.
     - Suspension requires Board of Directors ratification.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
   - Ratifies recommendation for Extension of Accreditation or revocation of accreditation.
   - May remand the recommendation to the appropriate accreditation committee with specific conditions.

APPLICANT
   - The institution may withdraw its application for Extension of Accreditation any time prior to consideration by the Board of Directors. In the case of an accredited school or accounting academic unit in the Continuous Improvement Review process a, withdrawal from the process is also a withdrawal from the Accreditation Council.
   - As to a revocation decision, the institution may submit an appeal in accordance with AACSB appeal procedures and policies, http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/resources/policies/Appeal_Procedure.pdf
   - When AACSB accreditation is revoked, the member is removed from the Accreditation Council and the listing of accredited institutions.
The Continuous Improvement Review Process is displayed on the following page as a timeline. This five-year review cycle remains constant throughout the cycle of consecutive reviews for a school, irrespective of whether a continuous improvement review 2 is required. Therefore, Year 1 represents the academic year immediately following an on-site review, regardless of whether or not an accreditation decision has been made. The next visit will occur in Year 5. The appropriate accreditation committee is responsible for oversight of the Continuous Improvement Review process for business and accounting reviews.

### CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT REVIEW TIMELINE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1 (July 1 – June 30)</th>
<th>Year 2 (July 1 – June 30)</th>
<th>Year 3 (July 1 – June 30)</th>
<th>Year 4 (July 1 – June 30)</th>
<th>Year 5 (July 1 – June 30)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>• Complete Key Data and Accreditation Data Sections of the Business School Questionnaire and the Accounting Program Questionnaire for prior academic year</strong></td>
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<td>*<em>• July 1, 20xx - <em>Submit Review Application with signed cover letter requesting accreditation review and preferred visit dates</em></em></td>
<td><strong>• Work with AACSB to select Peer Review Team from nominations, peer and aspirant groups</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Work with AACSB to set the visit date</strong></td>
<td>*<em>• <em>Submit Fifth Year Report</em></em></td>
<td>*<em>• <em>Submit Executive Summary</em></em></td>
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<td>*<em>• <em>Submit List of Degree Programs including Catalogs (or online link in lieu of Catalogs)</em></em></td>
<td>*<em>• <em>Submit request for exclusion of degree programs including justification for the request</em></em></td>
<td>*<em>• <em>Submit List of Comparison Groups (Peer, Competitive, and Aspirant)</em></em></td>
<td>*<em>• <em>Submit Situational Analysis</em></em></td>
<td><strong>• Accreditation Statistical Reports will be distributed to applicant and team members by AACSB upon request only</strong></td>
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<td>*<em>• <em>Submitted together</em></em></td>
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<td><strong>• Committee on Accreditation Policy (CAP) rules on exclusions and the scope of the accreditation visit</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Work with Peer Review Team to prepare the Visit Schedule</strong></td>
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<td><strong>• Peer Review Team Visit</strong></td>
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<td><strong>• Return Date and Team Suggestions as Requested</strong></td>
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Appendix A

The following documents referenced within this Handbook may be downloaded from the AACSB International website at http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/business/maintenance.asp

Accreditation Process Timeline, Terminology, and Roles and Responsibilities
- Continuous Improvement Review Timeline
- Accreditation Terminology
- Roles and Responsibilities

Application for Maintenance of Accreditation Review
- Cover Letter Template
- Continuous Improvement Review Application (Business)
- Continuous Improvement Review Application (Accounting)

Fifth Year Maintenance Reports
- Fifth Year Continuous Improvement Review Report Outline
- Table 2-1(A2-1) - Five-Year Summary of Intellectual Contributions
- Table 15-1 (A9-1) - Five-Year Summary of Faculty Sufficiency and Qualifications
- Table 15-2 (A9-2) - Deployment of Participating and Supporting Faculty

The following documents referenced within this Handbook may be downloaded from the AACSB International website at http://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/volunteers/peer_review_teams.asp

Peer Review Team Visits
- Example Visit Schedule

Peer Review Team Reports

Continuous Improvement Reviews:
- Continuous Improvement Review Visit Report Template (Business)
- Continuous Improvement Review Visit Report Template (Accounting)

Continuous Improvement Review 2:
- Continuous Improvement Review 2 Team Report Template (Business)
- Continuous Improvement Review 2 Team Report Template (Accounting)

Focused Reviews:
- Focused Review Year 1 Team Report Template (Business)
- Focused Review Year 1 Team Report Template (Accounting)
- Focused Review Year 2 Team Report Template (Business)
- Focused Review Year 2 Team Report Template (Accounting)