

## ACCREDITATION PROCESSES, ACTIONS AND TIME FRAMES POLICY

The Policy on Accreditation Processes, Actions and Time Frames for applicant and accredited schools describes the various phases of both the initial and continuous improvement review processes and the possible outcomes of each phase. Applicants for AACSB accreditation participate in the initial accreditation process which can take up to seven years. Initial business accreditation is overseen by the Initial Accreditation Committee (IAC) and the initial accounting accreditation is overseen by the Accounting Accreditation Committee (AAC). Accredited schools are reviewed under the Continuous Improvement Review (CIR) process every five years. This five-year cycle is firmly set and cannot be altered. The CIR process is overseen by the Continuous Improvement Review Committee (CIRC) and the AAC. The phases of both processes are detailed below.

### Initial Accreditation Process

#### Initial Accreditation Phase 1: Establish Eligibility to Seek AACSB accreditation

<b>Action Required by School</b>	Submission of Eligibility Application
<b>Purpose of Action</b>	To determine if 1) the school meets eligibility guidelines; 2) the school is potentially able to achieve accreditation in seven years
<b>Reviewed by</b>	1) AACSB Staff conducts a preliminary review for completeness, and 2) IAC/AAC <sup>1</sup> reviews and determines eligibility
<b>Fees</b> <a href="#">See website for current fees</a>	Application Fee is due prior to IAC review. If the application is accepted, the school pays two additional fees: IAC Process Acceptance Fee and Initial Accreditation Fee.

#### Possible Outcomes

**Acceptance of Application:** Mentor and AACSB Staff Liaison are assigned. School begins the process of writing the Initial Self Evaluation Report (iSER). The IAC/AAC may identify concerns/issues that the school should address in the iSER.

**Revise and Resubmit the Application:** The IAC/AAC may request clarification and more detail on specific items. Schools are able to resubmit an updated application for another meeting. At the discretion of the IAC/AAC, an updated Eligibility Application can be revised and resubmitted multiple times within a one-year period. If not accepted, the IAC/AAC may require the school to wait at least one year to submit a new Eligibility Application. A new Eligibility Application fee (current fees located on website) will be required if the Eligibility Application was not accepted within one year.

**Application not Accepted:** If IAC/AAC has strong concerns that applicant school may not be able to achieve accreditation within the seven-year time frame, the committee will not allow the applicant to move forward in the process. The school must wait one year to submit a new Eligibility Application.

NOTE: The new Eligibility Application should include an explanation of how the concerns from the previous application have been resolved. A new Eligibility Application fee (current fees located on website) will be required. A school may appeal a rejection of an Eligibility Application in accordance with the Appeal Procedure. The appeals procedure can be found on the website in our [Policy Governance Manual](#) (p17-19).

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<sup>1</sup> Schools already holding business accreditation that wish to pursue initial accounting accreditation are not required to submit an Eligibility Application for accounting. This stage is bypassed, and the accounting applicant goes to phase 2: development of an iSER.

## Initial Accreditation Phase 2: Develop an Initial Self-Evaluation Report (iSER)

<b>Action Required by School</b>	Submission of initial Self-Evaluation Report (iSER) A school has up to two years, from the month of the IAC meeting when the Eligibility Application was accepted, to develop and submit the iSER. <i>NOTE: Under some circumstances, a school may be granted a one to two-year extension beyond the first two years to submit an iSER; requests must be supported by the mentor and reviewed by the IAC/AAC for approval. If the iSER is not accepted within four years, the school will have to withdraw from the process and wait one year before re-entering the process at the Eligibility Application phase.</i>
<b>Purpose of Action</b>	The iSER should detail how the school aligns with AACSB standards, identify gaps in alignment with the standards, and describe plans to address the gaps.
<b>Reviewed by</b>	IAC/AAC
<b>Fees</b> <a href="#">See website for current fees</a>	Initial Accreditation Fee
<b>Possible Outcomes</b>	
<p><b>Acceptance of the iSER:</b> The school is invited to move to one of two phases in the accreditation process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin to implement the action items outlined in the iSER that will align the school with AACSB standards. <b>Please Note:</b> There is a three-year time frame limit for this phase. Annual Progress Reports along with mentor assessments must be submitted to the IAC each year based on the acceptance date of the iSER. Earlier submission of a Progress Report is permissible if concerns identified by the committee are addressed and the mentor is in agreement with an earlier submission. (See Phase 3) OR</li> <li>• The school is invited to enter the initial accreditation visit phase. That includes preparation of a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and the appointment of a peer review team (one-time Initial Business/Accounting Accreditation Visit Application Fee) (<a href="#">See website for current fees</a>) (see Phase 4) <i>Initial accreditation fees continue with both scenarios.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>Revise and resubmit the iSER:</b> The IAC/AAC may request clarification and more detail on sections of the iSER and ask the school to expand on these sections in a revised iSER to be resubmitted to the IAC/AAC for review. The committee can ask the school to revise and resubmit the iSER more than once within a two-year period. The last revised and resubmitted iSER, before the two-year period expires (or four years if the school has requested two one-year extensions), is reviewed by the IAC/AAC and must be <b>accepted or rejected</b>. If the iSER is ultimately rejected, the school must withdraw from the process and wait at least one year before re-entering the process by submitting an Eligibility Application..</p> <p><b>iSER not accepted, Voluntary Withdrawal by School:</b> The IAC/AAC may request a school to withdraw from the process after concluding that the issues and challenges facing the school in the attempt to align with AACSB standards are too significant to be resolved within the three-year implementation time frame. The IAC/AAC will request a school to withdraw from the initial accreditation process if the iSER is not accepted within four years of entering the accreditation process. If the school agrees to voluntarily withdraw, it may resubmit an Eligibility Application to the IAC/AAC addressing the stated concerns no earlier than one year from the official withdrawal date. IAC/AAC may specify a longer period before resubmission. Initial Accreditation fees must be paid at time of resubmission. Accreditation fees are not refunded.</p> <p><b>iSER not accepted, school does Not Voluntarily Withdraw and is no longer Eligible:</b> If school does not voluntarily withdraw, the IAC/AAC informs the school it is no longer eligible to pursue Initial Accreditation. In such cases, the school must wait three years before re-entering the AACSB accreditation process and must start by submitting a new Eligibility Application. Accreditation fees are not refunded. This decision may be appealed in accordance with the appeal procedure.</p>	

### Initial Accreditation Phase 3: Implementation Phase and Annual Reporting of Progress

<b>Action Required by School</b>	Submission of Progress Report
<b>Purpose of Action</b>	Annual reporting on progress of alignment with AACSB standards (up to three years in length)
<b>Reviewed by</b>	IAC/AAC
<b>Fees</b> <a href="#">See website for current fees</a>	Initial Accreditation Fee
<b>Possible Outcomes</b>	
<p><b>Acceptance of Progress Report, Committee recommends another Progress Report:</b> Another Progress Report is requested when the IAC/AAC determines the school is making sufficient progress, but additional actions items or other concerns may need to be addressed. The next Progress Report is due within one year. As noted above, Progress Reports may be requested for up to a maximum of three years. It is possible for the school to submit more than one Progress Report per year. Annual accreditation fees continue while in this process.</p> <p><b>Acceptance of Progress Report, school invited to apply for an initial accreditation visit:</b> When the IAC/AAC determines the school appears aligned with AACSB's standards, the school is invited into the initial accreditation visit phase. The school should submit a <i>letter of application for initial accreditation</i>. The school should also begin to prepare a final Self-Evaluation Report (SER). The appointment of a peer review team and setting of a visit date occurs during this phase. The school pays a one-time Initial Business/Accounting Accreditation Visit Application Fee (<a href="#">See website for current fees</a>) (see Phase 4 for IAC/AAC actions beyond this stage) in addition to the annual initial accreditation fees. Schools must be invited for a visit by year five of the initial accreditation process.</p> <p><b>Revise and resubmit Progress Report:</b> The IAC/AAC does not accept the Progress Report but requests additional clarification on identified sections of the Progress Report. A revised Progress Report should be submitted as directed by the IAC/AAC. Accreditation fees continue while in this process.</p> <p><b>Progress Report not accepted, Voluntary Withdrawal by School:</b> The IAC/AAC may conclude that the issues and challenges in seeking alignment with AACSB standards are too significant to be addressed within the remaining time frame. The school is asked to withdraw from the process based on the IAC/AAC concerns. If the school voluntarily withdraws, it may resubmit a revised iSER to the IAC/AAC addressing the stated concerns no earlier than one year from the official withdrawal date. IAC/AAC may specify a longer period before resubmission. Initial Accreditation fees must be paid at time of resubmission. Accreditation fees are not refunded.</p> <p><b>Progress Report not accepted, school does not voluntarily withdraw:</b> If school does not voluntarily withdraw, the IAC/AAC informs the school that it is no longer eligible to pursue Initial Accreditation. In such cases, the school must wait three years before re-entering the AACSB accreditation process and must start by submitting a new Eligibility Application. Accreditation fees are not refunded. This decision may be appealed in accordance with the appeal procedure.</p>	

## Initial Accreditation Phase 4: Pre-Visit Activities

If the applicant school demonstrates alignment with AACSB standards, it may be invited by IAC/AAC to proceed to the Initial Accreditation Visit Phase. The first part of this phase includes the submission of a Letter of Application for an Initial Visit, appointment of a peer review chair and team, completion of the final SER, and the team's previsit analysis to the school. The second part of this phase is a campus visit by the peer review team and an accreditation recommendation which is reviewed by the IAC/AAC.

NOTE: The peer review team chair replaces the mentor and is available to guide the school in developing a final SER which is followed by a previsit analysis initiated by the team, reviewed by the IAC/AAC and/or AACSB staff and sent to the applicant school 45 days prior to the visit. The previsit analysis outlines additional information and materials required by the team before and during the visit.

<b>Action Required by School</b>	1. Submission of a Letter of Application for an Initial Accreditation Visit and 2. the final SER (see website for templates- <a href="#">Business</a> , <a href="#">Accounting</a> )
<b>Purpose of Action</b>	1. Appointment of Peer Review Team and set visit date 2. Preparation of Previsit Analysis
<b>Reviewed by</b>	AACSB Staff, Peer Review Team, IAC/AAC
<b>Fees</b> <a href="#">See website for current fees</a>	Annual Accreditation Fee One-time Initial Accreditation Visit Fee (if invited for visit)
<b>Possible Outcomes</b>	
<p><b>Peer Review Team recommends visit, IAC/AAC concurs with team:</b> Upon review of the final SER, the pre-visit analysis is drafted by the team and reviewed by the IAC/AAC and/or AACSB staff for comment. This analysis will articulate the team's and committee's concerns and focus of the planned visit. The document will be provided to the school within myAccreditation at least 45 days prior to the scheduled visit. The school will be asked to respond to the requests of the pre-visit analysis prior to or during the on-campus visit. Accreditation fees continue while in this process.</p> <p><b>Peer Review Team recommends no visit, IAC/AAC concurs with the team, school is asked to withdraw:</b> If a no-visit recommendation is made in the previsit analysis, the basis for this decision must be clearly based on non-alignment with specific AACSB standards. The IAC/AAC will advise the school to withdraw voluntarily due to the seriousness of the concerns and judgment that alignment with AACSB standards is insufficient.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>If the school agrees to voluntarily withdraw</b>, it can pursue the initial accreditation process after one year, subject to providing the IAC/AAC clear, documented evidence of how deficiencies have been resolved. The school must start by submitting a new Eligibility Application. Accreditation fees continue if the school indicates it will report back to the committee within the time frame allowed.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>If the school does not voluntarily withdraw</b>, the school must wait three years before re-entering the accreditation process at the Eligibility Application phase. Accreditation fees are not refunded.</li> </ul>	

## Initial Accreditation Phase 5: Initial Accreditation Review Visit

In preparation for the campus visit, the school works with the peer review team chair to create a visit schedule and coordinate travel arrangements. Prior to the visit, the school responds to the requests outlined in the team's previsit analysis. Following the peer review team visit to the applicant's campus, the team will make an accreditation recommendation to the IAC/AAC via the submission of a team report. The AACSB Board of Directors must ratify accreditation decisions to award initial accreditation or deny initial accreditation.

<b>Action Required by School</b>	Submission of response to Previsit Analysis and finalize visit schedule
<b>Purpose of Action</b>	Preparation for and completion of an Initial Accreditation campus visit
<b>Reviewed by</b>	AACSB Staff, IAC/AAC if applicable, Peer Review Team
<b>Fees</b> <a href="#">See website for current fees</a>	Annual Accreditation Fee
<b>Possible Outcomes</b>	
<p><b>Peer Review Team recommends awarding of initial AACSB accreditation:</b> If the team's recommendation to award initial accreditation is concurred with by the IAC/AAC, the decision goes to the Board of Directors for ratification. If ratified, the school can publicly announce their initial accreditation status. If the IAC/AAC remands the decision, a remand process is conducted in accordance with AACSB policies and procedures.</p> <p><b>Peer Review Team recommends one-year deferral of initial accreditation:</b> If the team recommends deferral and the IAC/AAC concurs with the recommendation, the school has one additional year to address specific issues outlined in the team report. At the end of the year, a two-person deferral peer review team will review a deferral report submitted by the applicant school responding to the specific issues cited by the prior team. The deferral team will conduct a campus visit to determine if the school has successfully resolved the issues addressed in the previous team report. The deferral team report will be submitted with one of two recommendations -- either to award initial accreditation or deny the awarding of initial accreditation. If remanded, a remand process is conducted in accordance with AACSB policies and procedures.</p> <p><b>Peer Review Team recommends denial of accreditation:</b> If the recommendation to deny initial accreditation is concurred with by the IAC/AAC, the decision is submitted to the Board of Directors for final ratification. A denial of accreditation decision by the Board of Directors may be appealed to the Board in accordance with AACSB policies and procedures. The school must wait one year before re-entering the AACSB accreditation process and must start by submitting a new Eligibility Application.</p>	

## Continuous Improvement Review Process

Continuous Improvement Reviews are conducted on five-year cycles starting with the year initial accreditation was awarded. The Continuous Improvement Review process has two documentation requirements (CIR Application and CIR Report) and relies on peer review and self-assessment. The Continuous Improvement Review process is managed under the auspices of the AACSB Continuous Improvement Review Committee (CIRC) and the Accounting Accreditation Committee (AAC).

A Continuous Improvement Review (CIR) requires an on-campus peer review team visit. At the end of the onsite campus visit, the CIR team prepares a team report that includes one of three recommendations available to the team. The various recommendations are described below.

### Continuous Improvement Review Phase 1: Initiating the CIR Process

<b>Action Required by School</b>	Submission of CIR Application by July 1 (2 years prior to visit)
<b>Purpose of Action</b>	Update the CIRC/AAC on progress made on previous concerns, preference for visit period, completion of comparable, competitive and aspirant school groups.
<b>Reviewed by</b>	AACSB Staff, CIRC/AAC if staff deem necessary
<b>Fees</b> <a href="#">See website for current fees</a>	Annual Accreditation Fee
<b>Possible Outcomes</b>	
<p><b>Accept CIR Application:</b> Staff reviews CIR application and confirms responses to previous issues, scope of accreditation (degree programs that will be included in the review) as well as reviews requests to exclude programs. The school is informed of acceptance of the CIR Application. Any scope of review concerns are reviewed by the Global Chief Accreditation Officer for final determination of exclusion.</p> <p><b>Staff recommends review by CIRC/AAC:</b> In the event that information from the CIR application is incomplete, unclear, or exclusion requests are problematic, staff may request the school provide additional information. If the additional information is not provided or is insufficient, the application will be forwarded to the CIRC/AAC for discussion and recommendation for further action. School is informed of decision including denial of any program exclusion requests. NOTE: 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.</p>	

## Continuous Improvement Review Phase 2: CIR Accreditation Visit

<b>Action Required by School</b>	Submission of CIR Report, CIR visit
<b>Purpose of Action</b>	Prepare for and complete the CIR accreditation visit
<b>Reviewed by</b>	Peer Review Team, CIRC/AAC
<b>Fees</b> <a href="#">See website for current fees</a>	Annual Accreditation Fee
<b>Possible Outcomes</b>	
<b><u>Continuous Improvement Review visit:</u></b>	
<p><b>Peer Review Team recommends extension of AACSB accreditation, CIRC/AAC concurs or remands:</b> The CIRC/AAC reviews the team report recommending extension of accreditation and either concurs with the team recommendation or remands the recommendation back to the team for additional information. If the CIRC/AAC concurs with the team's recommendation for extension of accreditation, the recommendation goes to the AACSB Board of Directors for ratification. If remanded, a remand process is conducted in accordance with AACSB policies and procedures.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p><b>Peer Review Team recommends a Continuous Improvement Review 2, CIRC/AAC concurs or remands:</b> If the peer review team concludes that the school is not aligned with one or more AACSB standards, and that such non-alignment raises serious questions about sustaining quality and continuous improvement, the team may recommend a Continuous Improvement Review 2 (CIR2). This recommendation will allow the school an additional year to address issues identified by the CIR team. If the CIRC/AAC concurs with the CIR2 recommendation, the school is provided a due date for a CIR2 report. This report should address the issues identified by the CIR Team. A two-person Continuous Improvement Review 2 team is appointed to conduct the CIR2. CIR2 recommendations are not ratified by the AACSB Board of Directors, since the school's accreditation status does not change. If remanded, a remand process is conducted in accordance with AACSB policies and procedures.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p><b>Peer Review Team recommends Revocation (see below)</b></p>	

**Continuous Improvement Review 2 visit: A campus visit is at the discretion of the team**

**CIR2 Team recommends extension of AACSB accreditation, CIRC/AAC concurs or remands:** Proceeds in the same manner as an original extension of accreditation recommendation (See peer review team recommends extension of AACSB accreditation).

OR

**CIR2 Team recommends Focused Review, CIRC/AAC concurs or remands:** If the CIR2 team concludes that the school would benefit from another year to address outstanding issues, the CIR2 team can recommend that the school be placed on Focused Review (FR1). If the CIRC/AAC concurs with the FR1 decision, the school is provided a due date for a FR1 report that should address the ongoing issues identified by the CIR2 Team. FR1 recommendations are not ratified by the AACSB Board of Directors, since the school's accreditation status does not change.

OR

**CIR2 Team recommends Revocation (see below)**

**Focus Review 1 visit: A campus visit is at the discretion of the team**

**FR1 Team recommends extension of AACSB accreditation, CIRC/AAC concurs or remands:** Proceeds in the same manner as an original extension of accreditation recommendation (See peer review team recommends extension of AACSB accreditation).

OR

**FR1 Team recommends a Focus Review 2, CIRC/AAC concurs or remands:** This report should address the remaining CIR2 issues identified by the FR1 Team. A two-person Focus Review 2 team is appointed to conduct the FR2 review. FR1 recommendations are not ratified by the AACSB Board of Directors, since the school's accreditation status does not change.

OR

**FR1 Team recommends Revocation (see below)**

**Focus Review 2 visit: A campus visit by the team is required.**

**FR2 Team recommends extension of AACSB accreditation, CIRC/AAC concurs or remands:** Proceeds in the same manner as an original extension of accreditation recommendation (See peer review team recommends extension of AACSB accreditation).

OR

**FR2 Team recommends Revocation (see below)**

**Revocation recommendation for any CIR visit**

**Continuous Improvement Review Team or a Focused Review Team recommends revocation of accreditation, CIRC/AAC concurs or remands:** During any stage of the Continuous Improvement Review process (phases CIR, CIR2, FR1 and FR2), the peer review team may conclude that the school under review has substantive deficiencies regarding alignment with AACSB standards. If the level and type of deficiencies are critical enough to lead the team to believe that such deficiencies cannot be resolved within the required time frame, a recommendation to revoke AACSB accreditation may be made. As with all team recommendations, the CIRC/AAC reviews the team report and either concurs or remands the decision back to the team for additional information. If concurred by the CIRC/AAC, the decision to revoke accreditation must go to the Board for ratification or remand. If a revocation recommendation is ratified by the AACSB Board of Directors, the school may appeal the decision to the Board in accordance with AACSB appeal policies. Schools may re-enter the accreditation process by submitting an Eligibility Application no earlier than one year from the date accreditation was revoked (date of decision letter from board).