



Initial Accreditation Handbook



AACSB International Initial Accreditation Handbook

PREFACE

The focus of this handbook is the initial accreditation process for schools seeking business accreditation. There is a separate handbook for schools seeking supplemental accounting accreditation. The third handbook is the Continuous Improvement Review handbook for schools that already hold business/accounting accreditation.

The Initial Accreditation handbook provides an overview of the philosophy, procedures and guidelines for the initial accreditation process, which include the submission of the eligibility application, the determination of the scope of accreditation, the self-evaluation and alignment with standards, and initial accreditation visit. The guidelines contained in this handbook are intended to be followed; however, mentors and peer reviewers should remain flexible in conducting reviews to achieve the conceptual aims that (1) bring value to the school, (2) maintain the integrity of AACSB accreditation, and (3) provide the type and level of learning experiences that mark an effective accreditation process. Where the schools, mentors or peer reviewers find they must depart from standard guidelines, documentation of any deviations must be provided.

A key source of information throughout the initial accreditation process is the AACSB accreditation staff liaison. Accredited institutions and those seeking accreditation have 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 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 accreditation process. The institution's staff liaison can be found in the myAccreditation system. (<https://myaccreditation.aacsb.edu/>).

Throughout the rest of this document, the academic business unit is referred to as the school. The term school is used to describe the entity that offers programs and is not meant to imply any particular organizational structure.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	The Initial Accreditation Process Overview	1
	Purpose of the Initial Accreditation Process	1
	Benefits of the Initial Accreditation Process for the School	1
	Importance of Commitment	1
II.	The Eligibility Process	1
	Eligibility Application Process	1
	What is Required	2
	When to Submit	2
	How to Submit	2
III.	Assignment of the Mentor	3
	Assignment of the Mentor	3
	The Mentor's Term	3
	Role of the Mentor	3
	Mentor Responsibilities to the School	3
	Mentor Responsibilities to AACSB/Initial Accreditation Committee	3
	School Responsibilities to the Mentor and AACSB/IAC	4
IV.	The Mentor Visit	4
	Purpose of the Mentor Visit	5
	Preparation for the Mentor Visit	5
	During the Visit	5
	Following the Visit	5
	Mentor Reporting Requirements	6
V.	Mission Consensus and Strategic Planning	6
	Relationship to the initial Self-Evaluation Report	6
	How should the School go about preparing the initial statement of mission, vision, and objectives?	6
VI.	Self-Assessment	6
	The Self-Assessment Process	6
	Conducting the Self-Assessment & Involving Appropriate Stakeholders	6
	Sources of Information to Guide the Self-Assessment	7
	Characteristics of an Effective Self-Assessment	7
	Communicating the Outcomes of the Self-Assessment	8
VII.	Initial Self-Evaluation Report	8
	Philosophy and Expectations	8
	Objectives and Content	8
	Profile Sheet	10
	Relationship to the Strategic Management Plan	10
	Submission of Initial Self-Evaluation Report	10
VIII.	Review of the Initial Self-Evaluation Report	11
	Role of the Mentor	11
	Criteria for Evaluating the Initial Self-Evaluation Report	11
	Initial Accreditation Committee Recommendations	12
IX.	Acceptance of the Initial Self-Evaluation Report	12
	Initial Self-Evaluation Report Implementation	12

	Role of the Mentor	13
	How Do We Know We Are on Track?	13
X.	Progress Reports	13
	Committee Review of the Progress Reports	14
	Validation of Progress	15
XI.	Transition to the Initial Accreditation Stage	15
	Handoff to the Peer Review Team	15
	Initial Accreditation Visit Overview	16
XII.	Initial Accreditation Review Process Schedule	18
XIII.	School Comparison Groups	19
	What is required?	19
	Use of the comparison groups	19
XIV.	Finalizing the Self-Evaluation Report (SER)	20
XV.	Pre-Visit Assessment	21
XVI.	Peer Review Team Visit	21
	Planning the Visit	21
	Possible documentation/meeting requests from the Team	23
	Meetings and discussion requested	23
XVII.	The Team Visit Report	24
	Elements of the peer review team report	24
	Optional response to the peer review team report	25
XVIII.	Review of the Team Recommendation	25
	Initial Accreditation Committee	25
	Board of Directors	26
	School Options	26
XIX.	Deferral Review	26
	Deferral Review Team	26
	Review of deferral report from school	26
	Review of team recommendation	27
	Appendix A - Resources Links	28

I. THE INITIAL 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 and schools working toward AACSB accreditation.

Benefits of the Initial Accreditation Process for the School

Schools participating in the process are strongly committed to the goal of quality enhancement and continuous improvement. They possess the desire to achieve accreditation. Schools benefit from the initial accreditation process by receiving guidance on standards alignment that fosters continuous improvement. Schools receive peer guidance from a trained mentor (dean or associate dean of an AACSB accredited school) during the period and feedback through interactions with the Initial Accreditation Committee (IAC). 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

The overall responsibility for aligning with the accreditation standards lies with the school. Strong commitment by the central administration and the dean (or equivalent) is a necessary condition for success; stakeholder involvement is essential.

II. THE ELIGIBILITY PROCESS

Pre-requisites for Eligibility

AACSB membership is a pre-requisite for entering the accreditation process.

AACSB members are eligible to apply for the following types of accreditation:

- Business Accreditation
- Business Accreditation concurrent with Accounting Accreditation
- Accounting Accreditation¹ for schools already holding Business Accreditation.

Determining the Accredited Entity and Programmatic Scope

AACSB accreditation is granted to the agreed-upon entity—either the institution or a single business unit within a larger parent university (or other academic institution), with institutional accreditation being the default accredited entity.

- Under institutional accreditation, all business degrees within the institution, regardless of whether they are housed within the business school or elsewhere in the university, are to be included in the scope of the AACSB accreditation review, unless otherwise excluded (see “Programmatic Scope” below).
- An alternative to institutional accreditation is the accreditation of a single business academic unit (referred to as “unit of accreditation”). Typically, such units are part of a larger parent university (or other academic institution) from which they derive degree-granting authority. Redefining the accreditation entity from institution to a single unit is subject to the receipt and approval of a unit of accreditation application that verifies that the

¹ For information regarding the Accounting Accreditation process, please refer to the Initial Accounting Accreditation Handbook [here](#).

unit has a sufficient level of independence in two areas: branding, and external market perception, as it relates to the single unit and the parent institution. The decision as to whether the school has made a successful case for a single unit of accreditation lies with the IAC. More information on the unit of accreditation application is found here: <https://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/journey/business/eligibility-and-application>. Schools should contact AACSB [accreditation staff](#) to discuss their institutional structure and whether accreditation as an academic unit is applicable before completing the eligibility application.

Subsequently, the next step is to gain agreement regarding which programs within the accredited entity will be included in the scope of accreditation. This is referred to as “programmatic scope.” Programmatic scope will normally include all business degree programs at the bachelor’s level or higher within the accredited entity. Schools may request exclusion of certain degree programs, subject to approval by the appropriate AACSB committee.

- Included programs are degree programs in which 25 percent or more of the content for baccalaureate degree programs, or 50 percent or more of the content for post-baccalaureate degree programs, relates to business disciplines such as accounting, economics, finance, legal studies, management, management information systems, marketing, and quantitative methods.
- Excluded programs are programs with business discipline content below the thresholds noted above, or for which a specific exclusion request has been granted by AACSB.

Eligibility Application Process: What is Required?

The school submits the eligibility application, written in English, via myAccreditation. A school may request access to the eligibility application by completing the “Accreditation Inquiry Form” at <https://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/journey/business/eligibility-and-application>.

Once notified that the eligibility application has been opened to the school in myAccreditation the school’s designated representative(s) may complete the application. Only the school’s Official Representative may submit the online application.

A non-refundable eligibility application fee is required before the eligibility application can be reviewed by the Initial Accreditation Committee. (AACSB accreditation fees are subject to change as approved by the board of directors. See [AACSB Accreditation Fees](#) for the most current fee schedule).

When to Submit?

Eligibility applications can be submitted at any time during the year. Following a preliminary review by staff, and if found complete and appropriate, the application is forwarded to the first regularly scheduled IAC meeting for consideration by the full committee. Schools are encouraged to provide a draft of their eligibility application to AACSB staff for review prior to the official submission.

How to Submit?

The school must submit the eligibility application and all supporting materials via myAccreditation. For AACSB member schools interested in initiation of the business eligibility application, the school will submit an [Accreditation Inquiry Form](#). AACSB Staff will contact you once your application is available within myAccreditation.

III. ASSIGNMENT OF THE MENTOR

Assignment of the Mentor

Upon acceptance of the eligibility application, the IAC appoints a mentor. The mentor is generally a dean/equivalent or associate dean/equivalent 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. All new mentors are required to go through Mentor Training. The proposed mentor needs to be approved and accepted by the school. AACSB will continue to work with the school until a suitable mentor has been confirmed.

The Mentor's Term

The mentor assists the school for up to two years to develop an initial Self-Evaluation Report (iSER), described further later in the handbook. Should the iSER not be completed two years after acceptance of the eligibility application, the school can submit a request for an extension of time to the IAC. This request needs to have the support of the mentor and will only be granted when the delay is caused by exceptional circumstances. Once the iSER is accepted by the IAC, the mentor continues to work with the school for up to three years as the school works towards full alignment with the standards.

Role of the Mentor

The mentor serves as a key resource in advising the school on its self-assessment and alignment with the standards. The mentor may ask questions that will stimulate a school 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. The mentor is a volunteer who receives no compensation from the school or from AACSB.

Mentor Responsibilities to the School

- Provides clarification of the philosophy and intent of the standards and their interpretations
- Is fully informed about AACSB accreditation standards, and the accreditation process
- Commits time and availability for on-site visits and regular communication
- Provides 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 about possible culture change and the length of time required to accomplish the improvements envisioned by the school
- Assists the school to develop an understanding of the intent of the standards within the context of its mission
- Asks questions that stimulate the school to define its processes, activities and outcomes

Mentor Responsibilities to AACSB / Initial Accreditation Committee

- Consults with the IAC/AACSB when issues or processes require clarification

- Identifies opportunities for continuous improvement in the overall initial accreditation process
- Provides the IAC reviewers with periodic reports on the progress of the development of the iSER
- Identifies and resolves all eligibility issues surrounding the scope of accreditation and guiding principles.
- Provides iSER feedback 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 delay the school's progress in the initial accreditation process, the mentor informs the committee (or AACSB Accreditation Staff Liaison) in a timely manner
- Provides a recommendation on accepting the iSER in the form of mentor comments, which are submitted in myAccreditation.

School Responsibilities to the Mentor and AACSB/Initial 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 require clarification
- Provides accurate data and information about the school, its aspirations, commitment, systems, and processes; exhibits complete honesty and openness; is transparent about standards alignment and is open to new ways of doing things
- 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 is 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 IAC within two years after approval of the eligibility application

IV. THE MENTOR VISIT

After the mentor has been confirmed, it is the school'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), websites, curricula, budget, faculty vitae, and other reasonable requests by the mentor. The school should also provide materials that are related to the concerns and recommendations specified in the IAC decision letter.

Although the visit should be scheduled early on in the accreditation process, it is advisable to schedule the visit after the school has conducted a preliminary self-assessment (i.e. gap analysis).

Purpose of the Mentor Visit

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

- Gain familiarity with the school
- Identify and resolve eligibility issues (i.e., scope of accreditation, guiding principles and expectations on financial, faculty resources and intellectual contributions)
- Provide clarification regarding the philosophy and intent of the standards
- Ensure consistent application of standards among faculty, staff and administration
- Analyze the school's achievement relative to the standards
- Identify issues that may help or hinder potential accreditation
- Confirm the existence of processes and controls that ensure continuous improvement and accomplishment of the mission
- Assist the school in responding to issues raised in the IAC decision letter
- Review measurable outcomes of achievement of mission
- Begin formulating recommendations for quality enhancement and continuous improvement
- Provide insight to the IAC concerning the school's timetable for development of the iSER

Preparation for the Mentor Visit

The school should:

- Initiate contact with the mentor
- Plan an agenda for the mentor to review (see sample mentor visit schedule [here](#))
- Provide the mentor with information about the campus and school. Suggested information:
 - Electronic links to program information
 - Reports (including annual reports)
 - Brochures
 - Program exclusion data (if appropriate)
 - Planning documents
 - Drafts of materials for iSER, if available
 - Budget documents
 - Faculty vitae
 - Website addresses
 - Internal Processes
 - Institutional and departmental organizational charts

During the Visit

The school 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, professional staff, central administration, employers, alumni) about mission and objectives, processes, and resources
- Allow for open discussion of strengths and areas for improvement, the role of faculty in the accreditation process, and preparation for the iSER

Following the Visit

The school should:

- Continue to develop a draft iSER in myAccreditation
- Forward appropriate additional information to the mentor
- Process mentor's visit expenses in a timely manner

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 mission, vision, and objectives. The mission should identify attributes, focus areas, and priorities that indicate how the school positions itself among the community of business schools. Additionally, the mission statement or supporting set of statements normally include the types of degrees offered, characteristics of students served, and the school's focus with respect to the production of intellectual contributions. The mission should inform the strategic plan and should be reviewed and updated periodically in alignment with the school's normal planning cycle. The mission statement is articulated as part of the strategic plan.

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 go about preparing the initial statement of mission, vision, and objectives?

Most schools 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 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 Self-Assessment Process

The preliminary self-assessment process is the most critical step in assessing the school's readiness to pursue AACSB accreditation. It is a gap analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the school relative to each of the accreditation standards and relative to the school's unique mission and strategic management objectives. As a result, this systematic gap analysis of the school'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 school including faculty, administration, students, alumni, and business constituencies. There is no prescribed single approach to conducting the self-assessment. A school 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 early in the initial accreditation process. 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 school's programs and processes include:

- Other accreditation body reports
- Internal reports (e.g., program evaluations, outcomes reports, assessment results, exit surveys)
- External reports
- Surveys
- Interviews
- Focus group results
- Other school or university reports

Characteristics of an Effective Self-Assessment and Gap Analysis

Systematic

The self-assessment should be systematic and well planned to ensure that it is thorough and comprehensive. The school 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 sources

Use multiple data sources. Using only reports or the results of one survey may not provide the scope and depth of input that is needed. Use the data collection methods best suited to the

questions being asked. 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 standards (i.e. what gaps need to be closed to meet AACSB standards 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.

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 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 planning process.

A long-standing problem with many iSERs is that they focus solely on closing gaps between current conditions and the conditions necessary to align with the accreditation standards. An internally generated iSER that is built on the school's particular circumstances is most likely to yield sustained continuous improvement. The goal of the accreditation process is for the school to develop a focused mission that articulates the school's distinctive attributes, a strategic plan for implementing its mission, and an action plan to close existing gaps between conditions at the institution and the accreditation standards.

Objectives and Content

The iSER is an action plan showing how the school will address its areas for improvement during the period of initial accreditation and how the school will maintain continuous improvements. The iSER outlines what gaps need to be closed to align with AACSB standards and how current activities meet the expectations of the standards, which ones, and how. The school will continually update the iSER during the initial accreditation process until alignment

can be demonstrated. The iSER is an evolving document and ultimately transforms 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 accreditation standards.
- Demonstrate that the resources necessary to satisfy the standards will be available.
- Show how these resources will be managed in order to align with standards.

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.

The iSER, submitted via myAccreditation, contains three separate and distinct sections:

1. Background information on the institution and the school:

- Location of the school, including all non-main campus programs offered by the school
- University or larger entity's mission statement (if applicable)
- School's mission statement
- Structure of the school
- Confirmation of scope

2. A standard by standard self-assessment of the strengths and areas for improvement of the school:

The iSER will include an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the school in relation to each of the standards. This section contains a self-assessment response to each standard. This 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 timetable for the completion, and the required resources are presented in a summary table. This assessment will also identify which expectations of AACSB standards are currently satisfied and which expectations of the standards remain to be met.

3. Executive Summary:

A three to five-page Executive Summary, which should include:

1. A one paragraph to one-page statement and written description of the school's mission and objectives.
2. Written descriptions of the processes that support achievement, the outcomes and measurements associated with those processes, and how the processes and objectives may have changed as a result of the school's efforts.

3. Describe the most significant strategies and outcomes related to Engagement, Innovation, and Impact. Examples should include the outcomes linked to the mission and strategic plan.
4. A written summary of self-assessed strengths and weaknesses as they relate to AACSB standards and the achievement of specific objectives.
5. How the strategic plan relates to your mission development activities; and,
6. A written section listing up to five effective practices, which are unique or inherent to the school.

Profile Sheet

In addition to the iSER, the school will prepare and submit a profile sheet. The IAC uses the profile sheet as a brief overview and reference document in their review. The template for the Profile Sheet is located on our [website](#).

Relationship to the Strategic Plan

The iSER naturally represents a facet of the school's overall strategic planning processes. The school's strategic plan should be uploaded as a separate document

Submission of the initial Self Evaluation Report (iSER)

iSERs may be submitted to the IAC for review four times during the year. Your school's iSER deadline will be displayed on your school's myAccreditation dashboard. Your iSER will be submitted electronically via myAccreditation. A complete draft of the iSER should be shared with your mentor for a review and feedback, prior to submission to the IAC. Provide the mentor with sufficient time to review the report and for the school to take into account the mentor's feedback in the final iSER. The school is expected to consult with the mentor early on regarding how much time he/she needs to review the complete draft before the school submits the report. After the iSER has been submitted via myAccreditation, AACSB staff will notify the mentor that it has been submitted. The mentor will then submit a mentor's report which will include a recommendation to the IAC. Involvement of the mentor as drafts of the iSER are developed facilitates this evaluation and, more importantly, provides the school with an ongoing benefit from review and comment. Once completed, the iSER and mentor recommendation will be presented to the IAC for review.

The iSER includes the following components:

- A. Executive Summary
- B. Profile Sheet
- C. Faculty Qualifications/Sufficiency criteria
- D. Standards and Tables 2-1, 3-1, 3-2, 5-1 and 8-1
- E. School's current strategic plan
- F. Addendum items

NOTE: There is a 100-page limit for Sections A, B, C and D documentation, excluding the tables.

VIII. REVIEW OF THE INITIAL SELF-EVALUATION REPORT

Role of the Mentor

The mentor thoroughly reviews the school's iSER and submits a recommendation, via myAccreditation, to the IAC. The mentor's recommendation should address:

- commitment to achieving AACSB accreditation; evidence of stakeholder (e.g., students, faculty, staff, community, university administrators) commitment to the initial accreditation process
- the school's understanding of both the initial accreditation process and AACSB standards for 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 school will meet AACSB standards and attain accreditation; the mentor may recommend that the school should withdraw if the school 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 school, 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 school 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 progress reports.

The mentor's review of the iSER must include a recommendation, as well as the mentor's comments, which are submitted in myAccreditation.

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 should be aware that programs in business 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 Recommendations

Each iSER will be presented and reviewed by the IAC. The IAC will take one of the following actions:

- Accept the iSER and invite the school to apply for the initial accreditation visit
- Accept the iSER, with comments outlining concerns of the committee to be addressed by the school in its annual progress report
- Request that the iSER be revised and resubmitted to address specific issues and concerns identified by the committee
- Reject the iSER

IX. ACCEPTANCE OF THE iSER

When the iSER has been approved by the IAC, the school moves to the iSER implementation stage. The school 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 school must submit progress reports (at least one per year) to the IAC. The IAC reviews the updates and provides its comments in the form of a decision letter to the school with a copy to the mentor.

Initial Self-Evaluation Report Implementation

Central to the iSER implementation phase is the ongoing assistance available to the school. This ongoing assistance includes:

- Networking and professional development (AACSB conferences, seminars, etc.)
- Review of the school's progress reports
- 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 school implements the goals and actions outlined in its iSER and communicates with the IAC on progress through the submission of progress reports. The school 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 continues for up to three additional years. The mentor will submit annually, or more frequently if necessary, feedback to the IAC on the progress the school is making towards alignment with the standards.

How Do We Know We Are on Track?

The progress report is the only formal contact with AACSB, aside from the mentor, Accreditation Staff Liaison and eventually the chair, while preparing for accreditation. Schools are encouraged to seek advice and evaluation of their progress from the mentor and the Accreditation Staff Liaison.

X. PROGRESS REPORTS

Each year or sooner, the school will provide a report to the IAC on the progress it is making towards meeting the objectives documented in the iSER. This update will take place via myAccreditation. Action items that have fallen behind their scheduled completion dates should be discussed in the text of the progress report.

The IAC will review the progress report to determine if acceptable progress is apparent.

The progress report should include:

- A. Executive Summary
- B. Profile Sheet
- C. Faculty Qualifications/Sufficiency criteria
- D. Response to IAC concerns
- E. Strategic Plan
- F. Risk Analysis
- G. Updates on individual standards (incl. required tables)
- H. Addendum items

NOTE: There is a 30-page limit for sections A, B, C, D and G combined. The school can use the 'Export to PDF' button on the myAccreditation Progress Report Dashboard to check the number of pages. Tables 2-1, 3-1, 3-2, 5-1, 8-1 and optional table 9-1 are not included in the 30-page limit. The Strategic Plan and Risk Analysis are also not included in the page limit.

A. Executive Summary

The IAC requires the school to prepare and submit a three to five-page executive summary. The IAC relies upon the executive summary to develop a basis for its reviews.

The Executive Summary should include:

1. A one paragraph to one-page statement and written description of the school's mission and objectives,
2. Written descriptions of the processes that support achievement, the outcomes and measurements associated with those processes, and how the processes and objectives may have changed as a result of the school's efforts,
3. Describe the most significant strategies and outcomes related to Engagement, Innovation, and Impact,

4. A written summary of self-assessed strengths and weaknesses as they relate to AACSB standards and the achievement of specific objectives, How the school's strategic plan relates to mission development activities,
5. A written section listing up to five effective practices, which are unique or inherent to the success of the school's operations,
6. The school should also report on any significant changes in the environment (internal or external) that affect the iSER (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).

B. Profile Sheet

IAC uses the profile sheet as a brief overview and reference document in their review. The template for the profile sheet is located on our [website](#).

C. Faculty Qualifications/Sufficiency criteria

The school should provide its definitions and criteria for faculty qualifications and faculty sufficiency. If there have been changes from previously submitted definitions/criteria these should be clearly noted.

D. Response to IAC concerns

The school should provide a detailed response to concerns, issues, and/or recommendations requested by the IAC in its most recent decision letter. This document should be uploaded in the 'Response to IAC concerns' section in myAccreditation.

E. Strategic Plan

The school should provide its strategic plan. Any significant changes encountered that may result in deviations from the original plan should be indicated in the progress report.

F. Risk Analysis

The school should provide a risk analysis. A contingency plan should accompany this document.

G. Updates on individual standards

The school should provide progress made to each standard. A separate upload is required for each standard. Please review the requirement, basis for judgment, and guidance for documentation listed for each in myAccreditation.

Committee Review of Progress Reports

The school's progress report is submitted to the IAC via myAccreditation. Prior to the IAC meeting, the IAC reviewers develop perceptions and compare notes. If there are differences or if clarification is needed, the reviewers will contact the mentor for more information. At the IAC meeting, both reviewers will present their impressions. A discussion will focus on what the school has accomplished, as well as areas of concern. The key focus is on whether the school is making *acceptable progress* toward the accomplishment of alignment with the standards and preparation for accreditation. If a school is not making acceptable progress, the IAC will recommend that it withdraw from the process. This review process is depicted below.

The IAC decision will be one of four options:

1. Acceptance of the progress report without issues or concerns.

2. Acceptance of the progress report with issues to be addressed in the next update.
3. Non-acceptance of the progress report due to inadequacy of information provided or a determination that evidence of acceptable progress toward accreditation is not apparent. In such cases, the IAC will outline its concerns and will request a supplemental update.
4. Rejection of the progress report with a recommendation that the school withdraw from the process.

Validation of Progress

Progress reports provide feedback to the IAC on the school's progress. Schools should be clear and forthright so that the IAC can advise and assist. Representations of alignment with the accreditation standards by the school can be verified by the mentor with subsequent on-site visits during this phase. The mentor submits, via myAccreditation, his/her report/feedback to the IAC to be reviewed simultaneously with the school's update. This practice ensures a continuous dialogue and facilitates the flow of accurate information between the school and IAC.

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 THE INITIAL ACCREDITATION STAGE

When the action items described in the iSER are implemented and adequate progress has been demonstrated, the IAC will direct the school to complete the application for an initial accreditation visit. The letter of application, submitted via myAccreditation, will include the following:

- A confirmation of the programmatic scope
- The list of comparison groups, including comparable peers, competitors, and aspirant schools
- Nominations of peer review team members
- The preferred dates for the on-site review to take place. The school must be in session during an accreditation visit.
- The application for initial accreditation will need to be confirmed by the chief executive officer/president/chancellor, the chief academic officer, and the head of the business school.

Upon receipt of the application for initial accreditation, the school will be invoiced for the initial accreditation fee.

Handoff to the Peer Review Team

Upon receipt of the application for the initial accreditation visit and full payment of the initial accreditation fee, the IAC will appoint a peer review team chair. The team chair is generally a dean/equivalent from an accredited school with extensive experience serving on peer review

teams, who is from a similar school and/or familiar with the type of school and/or education system in the country. The chair replaces the mentor to assist the school 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 plan, progress reports, school and IAC correspondence, and other relevant materials) via myAccreditation.
- A conversation between the mentor and chair to discuss issues and concerns. The AACSB staff liaison will send the mentor's details to the chair.
- If possible, an introductory conversation between the mentor, chair, and host school dean/equivalent (may be at an AACSB function).

Along with team chair, two additional team members will be selected based upon eligibility, experience, mission fit and availability. These individuals are also generally deans/ equivalent of accredited schools. Peer review team members may continue to be assigned to 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 IAC chair will approve 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 school should begin to work with the chair to finalize its SER. The school must submit the final SER to the PRT and the IAC for review at least 5 months prior to the on-site review visit. After the peer review team reviews the final SER, the team drafts a pre-visit analysis in myAccreditation, which outlines the issues and concerns identified by the team. The analysis includes a "visit" or "no-visit" recommendation. The draft is forwarded to the IAC for review. In the interest of time this review can be facilitated off-line, outside IAC meeting dates. If the IAC approves the pre-visit analysis and agrees with the team's recommendation concerning the visit, the chair finalizes the pre-visit analysis and forwards it to the school at least 45 days prior to the visit.

While the SER and other written materials provide the foundation for the visit, the PRT achieves greater understanding of the school through the on-site review. The pre-visit analysis will point out specific issues to be addressed either before or during the visit. In addition, the pre-visit analysis 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 the IAC a team visit report with the team's accreditation recommendation, via myAccreditation. The school has the option of submitting a response to the PRT report. The IAC reviews the following:

- Team visit report.
- The team's accreditation recommendation.
- The school's response, if submitted.

The IAC can either concur with the team's accreditation recommendation or remand the recommendation to the PRT for additional information.

When concurrence is reached, the PRT and IAC recommendation for accreditation is forwarded for ratification to the AACSB board of directors. If the board concurs, the school is awarded accreditation and joins the AACSB Accreditation Council, with a continuous improvement review to occur in year six.

XII. INITIAL ACCREDITATION REVIEW PROCESS SCHEDULE

The timeline shown below is a representation of an initial accreditation peer review team visit and corresponding Initial Accreditation Committee (IAC) activity under normal circumstances. Changes to the normal visit timeline may be made on a case-by-case basis at the IAC's discretion. All questions regarding a school's timeline should be directed to the school's AACSB staff liaison.

Description	Timeline
School: Initial application, team nominations, and potential visit dates submitted via myAccreditation	Upon receipt of IAC decision letter directing school to proceed to self-evaluation and being invited to apply
<i>AACSB Staff:</i> Invite team after review and approval of senior AACSB staff and IAC chair	Within 45 days of application being submitted via myAccreditation
<i>AACSB Staff:</i> Send team and date confirmation to all once finalized	Upon confirmation of team members
School: Invite team chair to visit host campus (optional)	Chair visit (if necessary and time allows) generally takes place before submission of SER
School: Confer with review team (optional)	AACSB events or other convenient arrangement (Year of self-evaluation)
School: Submit final SER, and supporting documents via myAccreditation	5 months prior to visit
<i>Team Chair:</i> Submit draft pre-visit analysis to AACSB for review by the IAC recommending visit or no-visit and listing concerns (standard by standard analysis)	Normally 2 months prior to the visit date
<i>Team Chair:</i> Provide school with pre-visit analysis	Normally 45 days prior to scheduled team visit date
<i>Team Chair:</i> Confer with host regarding visit schedule	45 days prior to scheduled team visit date
School: Submit response to pre-visit analysis (to team and to AACSB via myAccreditation)	As per date listed in pre-visit analysis
<i>Team Chair:</i> Submit team visit report to school and IAC via myAccreditation	Within 10 days after the visit
School: Send optional response to team visit report	Within 10 days of receiving team's report
<i>Initial Accreditation Committee:</i> Review team's recommendation and send to AACSB board of directors	As per scheduled committee meeting date
<i>Board:</i> Ratifies and sends letter to school	Ratification performed via electronic ballot to the AACSB board of directors
Official Recognition	ICAM, AP Annual Meeting and EMEA Annual Meeting

XIII. SCHOOL COMPARISON GROUPS

Processes to support the 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 submits three comparison groups selected from members of the Accreditation Council and submits this information with the 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.

- **Comparable Peers:** A list of schools considered similar in mission and assumed appropriate for performance comparison. A minimum of six comparable schools should be provided to take advantage of benchmarking within DataDirect. 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, faculty size, degree levels, and primary funding source.
- **Competitive Group:** A list of schools so directly competitive that conflict of interest considerations excludes 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 needed.

Comparison groups do not imply categories or rankings of schools or members accredited by AACSB. These lists are for the benefit of the school and the peer review team in the accreditation review.

For assistance with identification of potential comparison schools, visit <https://datadirect.aacsb.edu/public/profiles/search.cfm> which offers advanced search functions that produce school lists based on optionally selected criteria.

The school 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 initial 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, schools are encouraged to seek the guidance of the team chair who can provide the following assistance:

1. Become familiar with the school and the institution as a whole, which is best achieved through an on-site campus visit (optional but recommended).
2. Identify areas in the existing SER that may be unclear, point out issues where further clarification may be needed, and identify other areas of possible concern. The chair can provide answers to questions about the initial accreditation process, the standards and also can assist the school in making a determination on the readiness for accreditation.
3. Encourage the school to submit materials as early as possible, via myAccreditation, to allow time for possible modifications.
4. Ensure continuous communication throughout this stage.
5. Provide illustrative guidance, not prescriptive guidance.
6. Work with the school to ensure their SER:
 - Tells the school's story.
 - Is clearly written and transparent in nature.
 - Includes faculty vitae (CVs) as an addendum item.
 - Includes summary data where applicable instead of including detailed data sets. Such detailed information may be made available to the peer review team on-site.
 - Limits addendum items to those directly relevant to demonstrating standards alignment and includes a table of contents.

The SER is due to the team members and the IAC 5 months before the scheduled peer review team visit. The SER is submitted electronically via myAccreditation. The PRT may download a copy of the SER and any attachments / addendum for their use from myAccreditation should they desire to work from paper copies.

The final SER includes the following 5 requirements:

- A. Executive Summary
- B. Profile Sheet
- C. Faculty Qualifications/Sufficiency criteria
- D. Standards and Tables (2-1, 3-1, 3-2, 5-1, and 8-1)
- E. Strategic Plan
- F. Addendum items (including CVs)

NOTE: There is a 100-page limit for Sections A, B, C and D documentation, excluding the tables.

XV. PRE-VISIT ANALYSIS

After the peer review team reviews the final SER, the team drafts a pre-visit analysis outlining the issues and concerns identified by the team. This analysis, including a “visit” or “no-visit” recommendation, is forwarded to the IAC for review. If the IAC concurs with the peer review team’s recommendation, the pre-visit analysis is sent to the school. 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, two IAC reviewers, peer review team members, and AACSB staff. The team may submit additional information or a revised pre-visit analysis recommendation following this conference call.

If the recommendation is “visit”, the pre-visit analysis will point out specific issues to be addressed either before or during the visit. In addition, the pre-visit analysis 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 IAC concurs with the team’s recommendation that a visit would be premature, the school has two options:

1. Pursue a visit as originally scheduled. The school must provide a written request for a visit within two weeks of the decision to the IAC (IAC@aacsb.edu).
2. Withdraw from the initial accreditation process. The withdrawal policy is available here: <https://www.aacsb.edu/educators/accreditation/policies-and-procedures>

XVI. PEER REVIEW TEAM VISIT

The on-site review affords the best opportunity for the team to assess the school’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.

Planning the Visit

1. Prior to the visit, the team chair will work with the school to clarify the itinerary and appointments for the visit. This step enables the school to make necessary arrangements and appointments with appropriate representatives.
2. Prior to the visit, the team chair will inform the school 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 also include a working area for the team.

3. The team meets with the school 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.
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/equivalent to report on any issues that have been uncovered. The host dean/equivalent 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/equivalent and 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 school should review the draft and provide factual corrections to the report. The final report is due to the school and the IAC, via myAccreditation, within 10 days of the visit.

Possible document requests from the team:

The following records may be requested, in compliance with local data protection policies. Such requests should be made by the team well in advance of the on-site visit.

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.
- 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 six-year period.

- Research output, including samples of output or access to output for the previous six-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 program competency 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.

Possible meeting requests from the team:

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/equivalent.
- 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.
- Professional staff from facilities such as the library, computer labs, classrooms, other campus sites.

The school 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 must explain its mission and objectives in terms of accreditation standards application.

When meeting with the dean/equivalent 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 VISIT REPORT

In preparing the school'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 school's performance relative to each standard; (2) determine how the school's policies and practices, in relation to each standard, affect achievement and continuity of overall high quality; and (3) consider whether or not the school'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 school 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 business accreditation the options include:

1. **Initial accreditation.** The recommendation of the Peer Review Team is that the selected degree programs in business offered by the school be granted initial accreditation with a Continuous Improvement Review to occur in year six. Concurrence by the Initial Accreditation Committee and ratification by the board of directors are required prior to the confirmation of the accreditation decision. Following ratification by the board of directors, the school will be notified. The school must wait for this official notification before making any public announcement. AACSB provides a list of schools achieving accreditation to its members and the public.
2. **Deferral review.** The recommendation of the Peer Review Team is that the initial accreditation review of the selected degree programs in business offered by the school be deferred for an additional year. Deferral of initial accreditation is for one year and does not require ratification by the board of directors because deferral does not change the accreditation status of the school. Concurrence by the Initial Accreditation Committee is, however, required prior to official notification. AACSB does not publicize the names of schools on deferral visits.

3. **Denial of accreditation.** The recommendation of the Peer Review Team is that the selected degree programs in business offered by the school be denied initial accreditation. Concurrence by the Initial Accreditation Committee and ratification by the board of directors are required prior to the confirmation of the accreditation decision. Following ratification by the board of directors, the school will be notified. AACSB does not publicize the names of schools denied initial 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.
- Identification of the school's success in demonstrating engagement, innovation, and impact outcomes.
- Commendations of strengths, unique features and effective practices.
- Opportunities for continuous improvement relevant to the accreditation standards.
- Consultative feedback
- Summary of 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 has the option to respond to the PRT report clarifying any of the comments and/or factual information noted within the report. The school should send their response to the IAC (IAC@aacsb.edu).

XVIII. REVIEW OF THE TEAM RECOMMENDATION

Initial Accreditation Committee

The IAC 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, or 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, IAC reviewers, peer review team members, and AACSB 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 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 IAC concurrence to accredit or deny initial 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 six. The board will send official notification to the institution and provide formal recognition at the AACSB Annual Meeting, usually held in April of the visit year.

The board may remand the recommendation to the IAC for further information.

School Options

The school may withdraw its application for initial 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. 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 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 required to submit a deferral report 60 days prior to a campus visit. The school submits its response to the specific concerns cited by the peer review team via myAccreditation.

Deferral Review Team

The deferral team selected by the IAC normally includes one member from the original peer review team and one member from (or appointed by) the IAC.

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 will submit a report to the deferral team and the IAC 60 days prior to the campus visit. 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 on-site 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 IAC concurrence with the deferral team to accredit or deny initial accreditation is forwarded to the AACSB board of directors for ratification. When the board ratifies a recommendation for initial accreditation, the institution is accredited and joins the AACSB Accreditation Council, with a continuous improvement visit to occur in year six. The board will send official notification to the institution and provide formal recognition at an AACSB conference. AACSB does not publicize the names of institutions to which the board denies accreditation.

Appendix A

Resources Links

Accreditation Policies, Processes, Terminology, and Standards

[Accreditation Policies & Procedures](#)

[Accreditation Terminology](#)

[Business Accreditation Standards & Interpretive Guidance](#)

Initial Accreditation Resources

The following documents and references within this handbook may be downloaded or accessed from the AACSB website at: <https://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/journey/business/initial>.

Initial Self-Evaluation Report

- Business Accreditation Standards Worksheet
- Gap Analysis
- iSER Outline and Guidelines
- Profile Sheet

Scope of Accreditation

- Program Exclusion Request Form

Required Tables

- Table 2-1 Strategic Initiatives and Expected Source of Funds for the Next Accreditation Cycle

- Table 3-1 Summary of Faculty Sufficiency and Qualifications for Most Recently Completed Regular Academic Year, by Discipline

- Table 3-2 Deployment of Faculty by Qualification Status in Support of Degree Programs for the Most Recently Completed Regular Academic Year

- Table 5-1 Assessment Plan and Results for Most Recently Completed Accreditation Cycle by Degree Program

- Table 8-1 Intellectual Contributions

Sample Tables also available in the Interpretative Guidance document

Progress Report

- Progress Report Guidelines and Submission Instructions

Application for Initial Accreditation Review

- Letter of Application for Initial Accreditation

Final Self-Evaluation Report

- Self-Evaluation Report Submission Instructions

Miscellaneous Resources

Frequently Asked Questions: <https://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/resources/frequently-asked-questions>

Initial Accreditation Committee meeting dates and submission due dates:

<https://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/volunteers/committees>

Peer Review Team Visit resources: <https://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/volunteers/peer-review-teams>

Sample Initial Accreditation Visit Schedule

Sample Virtual Initial Visit Schedule

Initial Visit Team Report

Deferral Visit Team Report

Mentor Visit resources: <https://www.aacsb.edu/about-us/volunteer/mentors>

Sample Mentor Visit Schedule

Sample Mentor Virtual Visit Schedule