ACISC

The Accrediting Council for International Schools and Colleges

Accreditation Handbook

Standards, stages, fees, decisions and policies in one document

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Contents

- 1. About ACISC and accreditation
- 2. Eligibility and scope
- 3. The nine standards
- 4. The eight stages
- 5. Fees and timelines
- 6. Decisions and status
- 7. Continuing obligations
- 8. Policies and integrity
- Further resources

This handbook summarises the ACISC accreditation framework for institutions, steering committees, governors, evaluators and affiliated consultants. Each section links to the official page at www.acisc.org, which holds the current version.

1. About ACISC and accreditation

The Accrediting Council for International Schools and Colleges upholds excellence in education worldwide. We set the standards that define quality, and we accredit the schools, colleges, universities and training providers that meet them.

ACISC accreditation is institutional. It covers the institution as a whole and every program, campus and delivery mode declared in its official publications and its signed accreditation agreement with ACISC, as listed in the approved scope on its public record.

Accredited status is awarded by the ACISC Council after independent evaluation. Fees, membership and consultants never influence an outcome. The public registry record is authoritative: anyone can check an institution's status, approved scope and dates at www.acisc.org/organization/.

ACISC's regulatory status, and what accreditation does and does not represent, is set out at www.acisc.org/recognition-regulatory-status/.

2. Eligibility and scope

Eligible categories include schools, colleges, universities, distance providers, technical institutes, corporate academies, training, professional and continuing education providers and other eligible categories, subject to ACISC standards, capacity, jurisdiction and approval.

Every applicant begins with a determination of eligibility. The institution then declares its scope: the programs, levels, campuses and delivery modes it asks ACISC to evaluate. Programs or campuses added later are approved through substantive change.

Read more: www.acisc.org/accreditation-scope-and-eligibility/ · www.acisc.org/determination-of-eligibility/

3. The nine standards

Every institution, in every sector, is evaluated against the same nine standards. Evidence is documentary (what is intended), implementation (what happens in practice) and effectiveness (what results it achieves).

Standard	What it expects	Guide
1. Mission & Institutional Purpose	A clear, published mission approved by the governing body that guides planning, resources and evaluation.	Read the guide
2. Governance & Leadership	A governing body with clear authority and independence; leaders with defined responsibilities; managed conflicts of interest.	Read the guide
3. Educational Quality	A coherent curriculum with clear outcomes, engaging teaching, valid assessment and regular program review.	Read the guide
4. Faculty & Staff	Qualified and sufficient staff, safer recruitment, induction, appraisal and professional development.	Read the guide
5. Students & Student Support	Fair admissions, accurate information, guidance, well-being and safeguarding support and clear complaint routes.	Read the guide
6. Institutional Resources	Sustainable audited finances, safe facilities, reliable technology and learning resources for every program.	Read the guide
7. Student Achievement	Learning outcomes, progression, completion and destinations measured, benchmarked and acted upon.	Read the guide
8. Institutional Effectiveness	Strategic planning, indicators, departmental review and evidence that results lead to decisions.	Read the guide
9. Continuous Improvement	An improvement plan with owners and dates, regular progress review and a culture of improvement.	Read the guide

Full standards and criteria: www.acisc.org/accreditation-standards/ · www.acisc.org/about-accreditation/criteria/

4. The eight stages

The accreditation process follows eight stages. A first-time applicant usually needs 12 to 18 months for the self-study; the evaluation visit lasts about one week.

Stage	What happens	Typical time
1. Eligibility	ACISC confirms the institution belongs to an eligible category and is ready to apply.	Weeks
2. Application	The institution submits the application, declarations, scope and registration fee.	Weeks
3. Self-study	The institution evaluates itself against the nine standards and writes the self-study report.	12–18 months
4. External evaluation	Trained peer reviewers visit, on site or online, to test the self-study against evidence.	About one week
5. Report & response	The team writes its report; the institution corrects facts and responds with an action plan.	Weeks
6. Professional review	The Intermediate Review Committee reviews the complete record independently.	Weeks
7. Council decision	The ACISC Council decides status, approved scope and any requirements on the documented record.	One meeting
8. Continuing accreditation	Annual reports, substantive-change notices, monitoring and renewal at the end of the cycle.	Ongoing

Process in full: www.acisc.org/about-accreditation/accreditation-process/

5. Fees and timelines

Fee	Amount (USD)	When
Registration	$2,140	With the application
Annual fee	$2,140	Each year, with the annual report
Preparatory visit	$4,780 + direct costs	Where required, before the evaluation
Evaluation team	$6,270 + direct costs	Before the evaluation visit

Fee schedule and refund terms: www.acisc.org/accreditation-fees/ · www.acisc.org/policies/fees-refunds-cancellation/

6. Decisions and status

The ACISC Council decides on the documented record after independent review. Every decision produces a public record of status, approved scope and dates. An institution may appeal an adverse decision on the grounds set out in the appeals policy; appeals are separate from complaints.

Status	Meaning	In force?
Applicant	Application accepted; not accredited.	No
Accredited	Meets the standards for the approved scope.	Yes
Accredited with Conditions	Accredited; specified improvements due by a set date.	Yes
Probation	Accredited; serious concerns must be resolved or accreditation may end.	Yes
Suspended	Accreditation paused during investigation.	No
Withdrawn	Ended because standards are no longer met.	No
Expired	The accreditation period ended without renewal.	No
Revoked	Ended for serious misconduct.	No

Status definitions: www.acisc.org/accreditation-status-definitions/ · Appeals: www.acisc.org/policies/appeals-policy/

7. Continuing obligations

- Submit the annual report on time, with enrolment, staffing, outcomes, finance and improvement-plan progress.
- Notify ACISC in advance of substantive change: new programs, campuses, delivery modes, ownership or mission.
- Describe accreditation accurately and use the accreditation mark and QR code only as the policies allow.
- Keep the improvement plan live and prepare for renewal about 18 months before the cycle ends.
- Comply with the law of every country in which the institution operates or recruits.

Read more: www.acisc.org/accreditation-maintaining/ · www.acisc.org/accreditation-renewal/

8. Policies and integrity

ACISC policies protect the integrity of every decision and every registry record. Consultancy is provided only by independent affiliated consultants; ACISC does not provide consultancy to institutions it assesses, and consultants never review or decide on institutions they advise.

Policy	Where to read it
Appeals	www.acisc.org/policies/appeals-policy/
Complaints	www.acisc.org/policies/complaints-policy/
Conflict of interest	www.acisc.org/policies/conflict-of-interest/
Substantive change	www.acisc.org/policies/substantive-change/
Withdrawal, suspension and revocation	www.acisc.org/policies/withdrawal-suspension-revocation/
Misrepresentation and false claims	www.acisc.org/policies/misrepresentation-and-false-claims/
Accreditation mark and logo use	www.acisc.org/policies/accreditation-mark-and-logo-use/
QR code use	www.acisc.org/policies/qr-code-use/
Whistleblowing and investigations	www.acisc.org/policies/whistleblowing-and-investigations/
Confidentiality	www.acisc.org/policies/confidentiality/
Anti-bribery	www.acisc.org/policies/anti-bribery/
Equality and non-discrimination	www.acisc.org/policies/equality-and-non-discrimination/
Fees, refunds and cancellation	www.acisc.org/policies/fees-refunds-cancellation/
Records retention	www.acisc.org/policies/records-retention/

All policies: www.acisc.org/policies/

Further resources

- Accreditation resources: practical guides for every stage, www.acisc.org/resources/
- Accreditation glossary: every term explained, www.acisc.org/resources/accreditation-glossary/
- Events and workshops: live online sessions, www.acisc.org/events/
- Verify an institution: www.acisc.org/organization/
- Contact: info@acisc.org · +44 20 4577 0477