

AACSB INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION: COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION WITH THE ACCOUNTING COMMUNITY

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Though the current AACSB International accreditation standards were adopted in 2003 for business accreditation and 2004 for accounting accreditation, the interpretive materials and guidelines for implementation are continuously subjected to review. The goal is to ensure clarity as well as the spirit and intent of the accreditation process focusing on high quality academic programs supported by an environment of continuous improvement. AACSB has two key committees that are responsible for continuous improvement in accreditation processes and standards, the Accreditation Coordinating Committee (ACC) and the Accreditation Quality Committee (AQC).

ACC is focused on process improvements and must grant final approval for business schools' and accounting programs' documentation relative to accreditation eligibility criteria for all initial and maintenance reviews.¹ AQC is an appointed committee of 12-15 members and includes business school deans and accounting administrators from AACSB accredited institutions. AQC focuses on the standards and supporting interpretive materials with the goal of enhancing clarity in the standards documents.

AQC and ACC agenda items emerge from a variety of sources including peer review teams, deans and accounting administrators who have recently gone through an AACSB review, questions and discussions at AACSB conferences and seminars, and AACSB committees and task forces. Agenda items are also identified based on discussions at academic conferences and individual comments received from business school and accounting leaders and faculty. AQC and ACC function on a fiscal year basis. Issues are introduced in a September meeting and staff members are provided guidance for drafting materials for review, editing and approval at a January meeting.

Following the January meetings, revised interpretive materials supporting the standards and process documents are posted on the AACSB web site and presentations on the approved changes are made at a number of AACSB meetings. In addition, an electronic notice is sent to all deans and accounting administrators about the changes that have been approved. The effective date of all changes is January 31 of each year. If the language of a specific standard is recommended for change, in contrast to the interpretive materials which can

¹ ACC membership includes the chair and vice-chair of the Accounting Accreditation Committee, Pre-Accreditation Committee, Initial Accreditation Committee, Maintenance of Accreditation Committee, and the Accreditation Quality Committee. ACC is chaired by the immediate past-chair of the AACSB Board of Directors.

be changed by action of AQC alone, the Board of Directors must approve the change followed by a vote of the AACSB Accreditation Council at the April business meeting.²

Between the meetings of ACC and AQC, AACSB leaders and staff will share the issues identified by the committees for feedback at regional and international deans' meetings. However, the process for feedback on accounting issues has suffered due to the ACC and AQC schedule. In particular, the AAA annual meeting is too early and the APLG/FSA annual meeting in February is too late to provide timely feedback to the committees before final action is taken. Therefore, an improved approach is needed.

To facilitate feedback on accounting accreditation issues that come before AQC and ACC, the following process is implemented for 2007-08 and beyond:

- Following the September meetings of ACC and AQC, all items that have a potential impact on AACSB accounting accreditation, standards, and/or processes will be forwarded to the Executive Director of AAA, the president of FSA, the president of APLG, chair of the AICPA Pre-certification Education Executive Committee, and the AICPA Director of Academic Relations and Career Development Team for comment and feedback. The feedback will have December 1 deadline in order to prepare agenda materials for the ACC and AQC January meetings. These individuals will be responsible for sharing the information with their appropriate constituencies for feedback to AACSB.
- If invited, AACSB representatives will provide an update of the approved changes at the APLG/FSA annual meeting or other events. Also, administrators of AACSB accredited accounting programs will be part of the electronic notice that is sent to all key AACSB constituencies on the changes.

It is our goal at AACSB to ensure that opportunities for feedback and comment are available and used. Additional channels for feedback are also being considered. We welcome constructive feedback at any time and it can be provided to the Accounting Accreditation Committee at AAC@aacsb.edu or to any accreditation staff members as follows:

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Another important opportunity available to the accounting community is to nominate individuals for AACSB committees and board of directors. Call for nominations are issued in late August to the AACSB constituency. The AACSB

² Changes in any accounting standard must be voted on by representatives from AACSB accounting accredited institutions.

Nominating Committee normally completes its work in late October or early November. The nomination slate must be approved by the AACSB Board at its January meeting and a vote is conducted in late January and February. Questions about who is eligible to serve in various roles can be directed to Jerry Trapnell at jerryt@aacsb.edu.

We look forward to an enhanced dialogue on common issues and opportunities focused on supporting high quality accounting education.