Eligibility Procedures and Accreditation Standards for Business Accreditation

AACSB International – The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
Standards for Business Accreditation

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Only the “Introduction” and the “Assurance of Learning Standards” are included in this excerpted document. For a full-text version of the standards, go to www.aacsb.edu.
INTRODUCTION TO AACSB INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION

Accreditation by AACSB International - The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business promotes continuous quality improvement in management education. The association was founded in 1916, and standards for business administration were first set in 1919. In 1980, AACSB adopted additional standards for undergraduate and graduate degree programs in accountancy to address special needs of the profession. The association regularly reviews accreditation standards for opportunities to improve their relevance and currency.

A collegiate institution offering degrees in business administration or accounting may volunteer for AACSB accreditation review. As a first step, the institution applies for a decision on its eligibility for accreditation. The initial accreditation process includes a self-evaluation, as well as a peer review. Having achieved AACSB accreditation, an institution enters into a program of periodic reviews of strategic improvement progress to maintain its accreditation.

AACSB is a not-for-profit corporation of educational institutions, corporations and other organizations devoted to the promotion and improvement of higher education in business administration and accounting.

☐ AACSB supports and upholds the Code of Good Practice for Accrediting Bodies of the Association of Specialized and Professional Accreditors (ASPA). Web site: www.aspa-usa.org

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ASSURANCE OF LEARNING

This interpretive information for the Assurance of Learning standards is organized differently from the earlier standards. Rather than material accompanying each standard, the interpretive information is placed at the beginning of this section, and then the standards are listed along with their respective “Basis for Judgment” and “Guidance for Documentation.”

Student learning is the central activity of higher education. Definition of learning expectations and assurance that graduates achieve learning expectations are key features of any academic program. The learning expectations derive from a balance of internal and external contributions to the definition of educational goals. Members of the business community, students, and faculty members each contribute valuable perspectives on the needs of graduates. Learning goals should be set and revised at a level that encourages continuous improvement in educational programs.

Schools use a variety of structures and approaches to provide learning experiences for students. Programs exist at a variety of academic levels and for a variety of purposes. The following general definitions describe learning expectations at three traditional degree levels.

**Undergraduate degree programs** (bachelor’s level) in business educate students in a broad range of knowledge and skills as a basis for careers in business. Learning expectations build on the students' pre-collegiate educations to prepare students to enter and sustain careers in the business world and to contribute positively in the larger society. Students achieve knowledge and skills for successful performance in a complex environment requiring intellectual ability to organize work, make and communicate sound decisions, and react successfully to unanticipated events. Students develop learning abilities suitable to continue higher-level intellectual development.

**Master’s level degree programs** educate students at a professional level that includes both the accumulation of knowledge and abilities for participation in the business world and an understanding of how to evaluate knowledge claims in their area of focus.

General programs (e.g., Master of Business Administration--MBA) prepare students with a general managerial perspective and aptitude.

Specialized master’s programs (e.g., Master of Accounting, Master of Marketing, Master of Finance) prepare students for roles in particular areas of business, management, and other organization-related professions.

**Intent of Assurance of Learning Standards**

Assurance of Learning Standards evaluate how well the school accomplishes the educational aims at the core of its activities. The learning process is separate from the demonstration that students achieve learning goals. Do students achieve learning appropriate to the programs in which they participate? Do they have the knowledge and skills appropriate to their earned
degrees? Because of differences in mission, student population, employer population, and other circumstances, the program learning goals will differ from school to school. Every school should enunciate and measure its educational goals. Few characteristics of the school will be as important to stakeholders as knowing the accomplishment levels of the school's students when compared against the school's learning goals.

Assurance of learning to demonstrate accountability (such as in accreditation) is an important reason to assess learning accomplishments. Measures of learning can assure external constituents such as potential students, trustees, public officials, supporters, and accreditors, that the organization meets its goals.

Another important function for measures of learning is to assist the school and faculty members to improve programs and courses. By measuring learning the school can evaluate its students' success at achieving learning goals, can use the measures to plan improvement efforts, and (depending on the type of measures) can provide feedback and guidance for individual students.

STANDARDS ADDRESSING DEFINING LEARNING GOALS AND MEASURING ACHIEVEMENT OF LEARNING GOALS (STANDARDS 16, 18, 19, and 21)

As an initial and critical step in its demonstration of learning, the school must develop a list of the learning goals for which it will demonstrate assurance of learning. This list of learning goals derives from, or is consonant with, the school's mission. The mission and objectives set out the intentions of the school, and the learning goals say how the degree programs demonstrate the mission. That is, the learning goals describe the desired educational accomplishments of the degree programs. The learning goals translate the more general statement of the mission into the educational accomplishments of graduates.

Standards that Relate to Learning Goals

Four of the standards in the Assurance of Learning portion of the standards relate directly to the setting and achievement of learning goals. Those are standards 16, 18, 19, and 21. Reviewers will expect schools to explicitly identify the goals and the demonstrations of achievement for each of these standards. For standard 21 the bulleted statements in the standard represent the normal learning goals for doctoral programs. Schools need only specify doctoral learning goals for programs where they differ from those listed in the standard.

Intent of Learning Goals

Learning goals serve two purposes. First, learning goals convey to participants, faculty and students, the educational outcomes toward which they are working. This helps in setting priorities and emphasis, designing learning experiences, and fulfilling educational expectations. While the learning goals cannot be exhaustively stated for any higher education program, it is possible to set educational targets and to assure that the learning is progressing in
the specified direction. Second, educational goals assist potential students to choose programs that fit their personal career goals. Only with an accurate understanding of the learning goals will a potential student be able to make an informed choice about whether to join the program.

**What is a Program?** The school must specify learning goals for each separate degree program. Generally, such goals are anticipated for each degree program, not for separate majors or concentrations within a degree. Curricula content will determine if one set of learning goals or different sets of learning goals will be required for separate degree programs. For example, regardless of the degree title, if an undergraduate business program has a common framework for general knowledge and skills areas and management-specific knowledge and skills areas as the foundation for a major, concentration, or emphasis area, one set of leaning goals may be defined for all degree programs with this format and goals for each major, concentration, or emphasis area (while they may, or may not, be developed for the school’s use) would not be required for accreditation review purposes. If there are major differences in the curricula content in terms of general knowledge and skills areas that support a major, concentration, or emphasis area, specification of differentiated learning goals for each degree program would be expected though some learning goals could be the same across the different degree programs.

A school may offer substantially the same MBA degree to full-time day students and to parttime students in evening classes. The school might decide that the goals of the program are the same in both delivery modes, and thus, one set of goals would be provided. Alternatively, the school could determine that the two programs should have distinct learning goals. An Executive MBA program would require a separate set of goals to denote its differences from other programs.

Each specialized masters program would require a unique set of learning goals though a subset may be common to multiple programs. Doctoral programs should have appropriate learning goals reflecting the content of the program and emphasis or concentration area.

**Differences among Schools**

Because of differences in mission, faculty expectations, student body composition, and other factors, schools vary greatly in how they express their learning goals. Definition of the learning goals is a key element in how the school defines itself. Thus, care should be exercised in establishing goals and in the regular review and revision of the learning goals and measurement of their accomplishment.

Even if schools choose similar domains of learning goals, they are likely to develop the goals in different ways. There is no intention in the AACSB accreditation process that schools should have the same definitions of learning goals, or that they should assess accomplishment of learning goals in the same way. To the contrary, the standards expect faculty members of each school to determine the proper definitions and measurements for their situation.
Goals at the Program Level

Learning goals can be established at different levels in the educational process. At the course or single-topic level, faculty members normally have very detailed learning goals. These standards do not focus on such detailed learning goals.

AACSB accreditation is directed at program-level learning goals of a more general nature. These goals will state the broad educational expectations for each degree program. These goals specify the intellectual and behavioral competencies a program is intended to instill. In defining these goals, the faculty members clarify how they intend for graduates to be different as a result of their completion of the program. By developing operational definitions of the goals and assessing student performance, the school measures its level of success at accomplishing the goals. Normally, four to ten learning goals will be specified for each degree program.

General and Management-Specific Goals

The core learning goals for business programs will likely include two separate kinds of learning. First, there will be goals for the general knowledge and skills acquired by students. The general knowledge and skills goals, while not management specific, relate to knowledge and abilities that graduates will carry with them into their careers. Such learning areas as communications abilities, problem-solving abilities, ethical reasoning skills, and language abilities are the types of general knowledge and abilities that schools might define as a part of these goals.

Second, there will be management-specific learning goals for students. These goals relate to expectations for learning accomplishment in areas that directly relate to management tasks and form the business portion of degree requirements. Such areas include traditional learning disciplines such as accounting, management science, marketing, human resources, and operations management, and, depending on how the school defines its mission, might include such management-specific but non-traditional areas as corporate anthropology, change management, or others. In developing learning goals, the school should give careful attention to both the general and the management-specific learning goals.

Faculty Responsibility for Learning Goals

The faculty in aggregate (either in total, in representative units, in disciplinary units, or through some other organizational structure) will normally be the persons responsible for listing and defining the school's learning goals. Different schools have developed different structures and procedures for creating learning goals; deep involvement of faculty members in the process is a critical feature of whatever mechanisms the school uses. Agreement on learning goals for academic programs is one of the central defining features of higher education, and thus, faculty involvement/ownership is a necessary ingredient.

After setting the learning goals, the faculty must decide where the goals will be addressed within degree curricula. What coursework or learning experiences provided by the academic pursuit of degrees will help students to achieve the goals? Goals may be course specific, or
they may be spread throughout the curriculum, or both. For example, a learning goal stated as "ability to express complex business matters in writing" may be a part of a business communications course, and it also may be addressed in required writing projects in additional courses.

Once faculty members have decided which components of the curriculum will contain certain learning goals, they must establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the proper learning experiences occur. Course syllabi, examinations, and projects should be regularly reviewed to see that learning experiences are included to prepare students to accomplish the intended learning goals. While this monitoring activity does not require elaborate processes, it must be regular, systematic, and sustained.

Beyond choosing and developing the list of learning goals, faculty members must operationalize the learning goals by specifying or developing the measurements that assess learning achievement on the learning goals. Obviously, operationalization of the learning goals is the ultimate step in the definition process. No matter how carefully the goals have been determined, making them operational through actual measurements is the definition. While the school may engage the assistance of strategic consultants in the creation of the list of goals or measurement consultants in the operationalization of goals, faculty members cannot negate their own responsibility for final definitions of goals and measurements.

Standards 18 and 19 include language intended to set the intellectual capacities of master’s level learning. This language suggests how graduates will be able to use their knowledge and skills. It is not intended to specify learning goals for master’s degree programs. The specific language at issue is:

In Standard 18:
“The capacities developed through the knowledge and skills of a general master’s level program are:
☐ Capacity to lead in organizational situations.
☐ Capacity to apply knowledge in new and unfamiliar circumstances through a conceptual understanding of relevant disciplines.
☐ Capacity to adapt and innovate to solve problems, to cope with unforeseen events, and to manage in unpredictable environments.”

In Standard 19:
“The level of knowledge represented by the students of a specialized master’s level program is the:
☐ Application of knowledge even in new and unfamiliar circumstances through a conceptual understanding of the specialization.
☐ Ability to adapt and innovate to solve problems.
☐ Capacity to critically analyze and question knowledge claims in the specialized discipline.”
While schools may wish to include some of these concepts in their learning goals for specific programs, there is no requirement to do so. The learning goals developed by each institution should fit the mission of that institution and the particular degree program.

**Using External Guidance**

The faculty has the responsibility for setting the learning goals for degrees. However, they need not, indeed they should not, operate in an isolated fashion on a task so critical to success of the school in meeting its mission. External constituencies can inject expertise and perspectives into the process that will be unavailable if the faculty operates alone. For business degrees, the business community provides valuable information about critical skills and knowledge for graduates. Major employers of graduates and corporate advisory groups give information about the situations most often faced by graduates and view the learning goals of the school from the perspective of persons who must put knowledge into practice on a daily basis. They also may provide insight into trends and anticipated demands on graduates, thus assisting in curricular revision toward future needs.

University expertise outside of the business school can also be a valuable resource. Faculty in language and area studies, communications, social sciences, law, information technology, and other disciplines can share information about the latest research of their disciplines, how it is best taught, and how business graduates may utilize it.

Students and recent graduates of degree programs can provide their insights into strengths and weaknesses of the educational experience provided by the business degree programs. Faculty may incorporate those ideas into the work of shaping the set of learning goals. The definition of learning goals must be developed at each member institution to fit the characteristics, circumstances, and mission of the institution and its business degree programs. The definition of learning goals is the first step toward the development of a program of assurance of learning. This first step answers the question, "Assurance of learning of what?" Once this first step has been completed, the faculty can begin its work on the final question of an assurance of learning program, "How do we demonstrate that we are accomplishing our learning goals?" The following discussion provides suggestions for demonstrating learning accomplishment.

**Demonstrating Learning Achievement**

The school must demonstrate what learning occurs for each of the learning goals the school identifies as appropriate for its programs. This discussion focuses on approaches schools can use to assure that students achieve learning expectations. By no means does this imply that these approaches exhaust the ways schools can demonstrate that learning goals are met. This presentation of different approaches is meant to declare that no single approach to assurance of learning is required. Schools are encouraged to choose, create, and innovate learning measures that fit with the goals of the degree programs, pedagogies in use, and the schools' circumstances.
Approaches to Assurance of Learning:

1. **Selection**: Schools may select students into a program on the basis of knowledge or skills expected in graduates of a degree program.

Some examples of assurance by selection might include:

- A school might insist that all of its MBA graduates have second-language ability. Rather than providing second-language training, the school might admit only students who can demonstrate second-language ability on a specified exam. Though the school does not provide this learning, they use the exam to assure (at entrance to the program) that all of the graduates have the specified ability.

- A program may select students on the basis of their having achieved certain levels of written communications skills as demonstrated in materials submitted during the school's application process. An assessment of the required skills would be a routine part of the admission decision process. The school might provide skill-building opportunities for applicants who do not register sufficiently high in the selection process, and such students would have a later opportunity to show that they meet the school's expectations.

- A school may attract a large proportion of students to its master’s level program who have engineering degrees or other backgrounds with high levels of quantitative training. While the degree program may have curricular opportunities for students to develop statistical reasoning skills, many applicants may demonstrate such skills in a placement exam during the application process. For this school, assurance of learning on its statistical reasoning learning goal may be demonstrable through performance on the placement exam at admission or alternatively, through another assurance technique for those students who take the required statistics courses.

- Schools in countries where thirteen years of pre-collegiate education is the norm may be able to select students who already meet general knowledge and skills learning goals relating to historical and cultural understanding. In the accreditation review process, schools will be expected to demonstrate that the selection process ensures that students have accomplished the learning goals when they use selection as the assurance method.

2. **Course-embedded measurement**: Required courses may expose students to systematic learning experiences designed to produce graduates with the particular knowledge or abilities specified in the school's learning goals. In such cases, the school can establish assessments within the required courses for those learning goals. Some examples of course-embedded measurement might be:

- A school that has a written communication learning goal might specify that a particular course will have required writing exercises in it. Such exercises could serve the assessment needs of the course and also provide the school with assurance that students meet the learning goal in written communication. The course-embedded measurements must be constructed to demonstrate whether students achieve the school’s learning goals, and the measurements must be a mandated part of that course.
A school with learning goals that require students to integrate knowledge across business functional areas or to incorporate ethical considerations into decision-making, may embed the measurement of accomplishment on those goals into a capstone business-strategy course. In addition to the information provided for course assessment by the projects that measure learning on these topics, the assessments provide the school with the assurance measures needed to ascertain whether the school's learning goals are being met.

In the accreditation review process, reviewers will expect schools to have examples of student work available for inspection at the on-site review when they use course-embedded measurement to assure that students accomplish learning goals. Schools should present examples of student performance on tests or in course project work. The school should show how information from these measurements informs the school’s management of the educational process. Schools should describe the processes they use to see that the information from the course-embedded measurements inform the schools' management processes and lead to improvement efforts.

3. **Demonstration through stand-alone testing or performance**: Students may be required to demonstrate certain knowledge or skills as a requirement for graduation or at some other specific point in their degree programs.

Examples of demonstration through performance often take the form of special assessments:

- At the end of a degree program students may be asked to demonstrate knowledge and ability through testing in specific content areas such as foreign language ability, critical thinking ability, or specific content knowledge. Specific content knowledge tests may represent learning goals for disciplines.
- A special examination required of all students to qualify for the final year of the program might require a demonstration of composition skills in written communications.
- A thesis or senior project might be required to demonstrate students' ability to integrate knowledge across different disciplines.

**EXAMPLES OF LEARNING GOALS AND MEASURES OF ACHIEVEMENT**

**Example 1**

School A has defined a learning goal in ethical reasoning for each of its four undergraduate majors. Student achievement on this goal is relevant to demonstrating satisfaction of Standard 16. The school’s faculty has defined the goal:
Learning Goal
“Each student can recognize and analyze ethical problems and choose and defend resolutions for practical situations that occur in accounting, human resource management, and marketing.”

Demonstration of Achievement

The school uses course-embedded exercises in three required introductory-level courses. Faculty in the three disciplines have developed different methods for instructing and assessing achievement toward this learning goal.

In accounting, a two-week module near the end of the introductory course is devoted to “Ethical standards and fraud in accounting.” A topic outline has been developed by faculty members to structure an exam on the materials of this module, and a standard set of expectations has been created for grading the exam. In addition to this exam’s contribution to the course grade, it provides a pass/fail indication on the learning goal.

In human resource management, students must provide four written analyses of problem situations during the course. On three of these analyses (on the topics of selection, reward systems, and job design), students are asked to respond to ethical issues. A standard scoring key on the ethical component provides evaluation toward the course grade and a pass/fail indication on the learning goal.

In marketing, each student must compose a term paper analyzing a current national or international marketing campaign. The analysis must include a specified set of components, and ethical issues that have been presented in lectures are among the required components. In addition to the overall grade of the paper, each student receives a pass/fail indicator on the ethics component.

In addition to reporting course grades, each instructor of these three courses provides a summary of cumulative student performance on the ethics activity. This cumulative data should inform the curricula development process if changes are needed to improve results. Though not required for assessment purposes, a list of all of those students who successfully completed the ethics expectation may be maintained and may become a part of each student’s record. Students who fail the ethics evaluation while passing the course may be required to repeat the evaluation exercise or ethics module until they are successful, but this is a separate decision from the assessment process.

Example 2

School B has a communications learning goal that is a part of its expectations for all undergraduate degrees. Student achievement on this goal is relevant to demonstrating satisfaction of Standard 16. The school’s faculty has defined the goal:

Learning Goal
“Each student can conceptualize a complex issue into a coherent written statement and oral presentation.”
Demonstration of Achievement

The school uses course-embedded exercises to demonstrate achievement of this learning goal. The Strategic Management course required of each student in the final year of the program includes among its course evaluations a written analysis of a multi-functional case study and an oral presentation on an industry-wide analysis. A faculty task force has developed a standardized scoring key for use with these two exercises. Using dimensions agreed to by the faculty, each student’s performance on these exercises is evaluated. Students must repeat the exercises until they have satisfactorily accomplished minimum levels of performance.

Example 3

School C has a language requirement for the M.S. in International Business degree. Student achievement on this goal is relevant to demonstrating satisfaction of Standard 19 for students in the MSIB program. The school’s faculty has defined the goal:

Learning Goal
Each student shall be able to converse and to write at an acceptable level for business communications in three languages one of which shall be English.

Demonstration of Achievement

Specific stand-alone examinations are used to measure performance on this learning goal. Each student must pass the conversation-level exam in two languages other than his or her native language. If English is not the native language, it must be one of the examined languages. The language department of the institution administers a program of standardized exams consisting of both oral and written components. Students may take the exams at any time during their enrollment in the MSIB program. No student is eligible for graduation until the language requirement is met, but for assessment purposes, aggregate information is all that is needed to assess the effectiveness of the educational experiences supporting the learning goal.

Example 4

School D has defined a learning goal for all students in general management master’s programs (MBA, EMBA, Master’s of Project Management) related to the understanding of organizational financial resources. Student achievement on this goal is relevant to demonstrating satisfaction of Standard 18. The school’s faculty has defined the goal:

Learning Goal
Each student shall be able to evaluate the financial position of organizations through examination of balance sheets, cash flow statements, and budgets.

Demonstration of Achievement

The school uses a course-embedded examination to assess performance on this learning goal.
The final examination in the required Financial Accounting course includes a section specifically aimed at assessment of this goal at a level that has been determined by the accounting faculty. Student results are collected across all students and summary results are used for curricula development and improvement. A student’s performance on this section must satisfy the minimal level, or it must be retaken until it is passed. Students for whom the Financial Accounting course is waived by virtue of undergraduate accounting coursework, must satisfactorily pass an equivalent examination.

Example 5

School E has defined a learning goal pertaining to all master’s level degree programs. The goal relates to teamwork skills and, it is relevant to demonstrating satisfaction of Standards 18 and 19. The school’s faculty has defined the goal:

Learning Goal
“Each student must understand and be able to use team building and collaborative behaviors in the accomplishment of group tasks.”

Demonstration of Achievement

A course-embedded exercise is used to assess performance on this learning goal. The required Organizational Behavior course has an extensive assessment-center module which trains all students as assessment center evaluators on team-behavior dimensions, and all students are rated for team skills in a series of group experiences. Performance as both rater and team member is combined into an evaluation on the learning goal. Results are summarized across all students and the results are used for curricula development purposes.

Indirect Measures of Learning

As part of a comprehensive learning assessment program, schools may supplement direct measures of achievement with indirect measures. Such techniques as surveying alumni about their preparedness to enter the job market or surveying employers about the strengths and weaknesses of graduates can provide some information about perceptions of student achievement. Such indirect measures, however, cannot replace direct assessment of student performance. Often, schools find that alumni and employer surveys serve better as tools to gather knowledge about what is needed in the current workplace than as measures of student achievement. Such surveys can alert the school to trends, validate other sources of curriculum guidance, and maintain external relationships. By themselves, surveys are weak evidence for learning.

Use of Achievement Measures

Measures of learning have little value in and of themselves. They should make a difference in the operations of the school. Schools should show how results impact the life of the school. Such demonstration can include uses to inform and motivate individual students and uses to generate changes in curricula, pedagogy, and teaching and learning materials.
Implementation of Assurance of Learning Processes

The development of systematic meaningful assurance of learning processes with fully developed learning goals and outcomes assessment processes is normally a multi-year project. These standards were originally adopted in April 2003. For 2007 and beyond, schools should be demonstrating a high degree of maturity in terms of delineation of clear learning goals, implementation of outcome assessment processes, and demonstrated use of assessment information to improve curricula. This expectation applies to schools entering the initial accreditation process as well as those that are in the maintenance of accreditation stage. For schools with visit years in 2007-08 and beyond, the impact of assessment outcomes on continuing development of degree programs should be evident.

A STATEMENT ABOUT CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT AND CONTENT
(Standard 15)

Curriculum Management

Normally, faculty member involvement leads curriculum management processes. This will involve many aspects of the construction and delivery of degree programs. When, for instance, the strategic management decisions of a school propose the development of a new curriculum, faculty expertise will be engaged in the activities that define learning goals for the new curriculum and that create the learning experiences that enact the goals. Faculty members will also be involved in processes to monitor progress and evaluate success of curricula. They will use information from curriculum evaluation and assessments of learning achievement to guide curriculum revision.

In managing curricula schools may engage perspectives from a variety of sources. The business community engaged by way of advisory councils, recruiters, or surveys, may provide valuable insights into needed characteristics of graduates. University departments outside of the business school (e.g., communications, mathematics, international studies, philosophy, history, ecology, etc.) may add understanding from recent advances in their disciplines. Public policy makers may supply ideas about skills needed in graduates to meet anticipated social demands. Alumni can share useful insights into their experiences as graduates from the school’s curricula.

A part of curriculum management process that will normally have substantial faculty involvement is the monitoring and evaluation to see that curricula are meeting the goals that have been set for them and to see that those educational goals are still appropriate. Where opportunities for curriculum improvement are found, faculty members will use this information to guide further development and revision.

Management-Specific Learning Content

For a degree to prepare a student to enter and sustain a career in business and/or management certain content areas are generally deemed to be appropriate. The list below is one depiction of the topics normally included in business and management degrees.
Topical Coverage Must Fit the School’s Mission

There is no implication in these standards that these topics designate particular courses or treatments. Schools should assume great flexibility in fashioning curricula to meet their missions and to fit with the specific circumstances of particular programs. Some of these topics may be emphasized for particular learning needs and others may be de-emphasized. Combinations of topics may be grouped to integrate learning. Various topics and learning goals will call for special pedagogical treatment. Schools are expected to determine how these, or other, topics occur in the learning experiences of students, but accreditation does not mandate any particular set of courses, nor is a prescribed pattern or order intended. The school must justify how curricular contents and structure meet the needs of the mission of the school and the learning goals for each degree program.

Curricular contents must assure that program graduates are prepared to assume business and management careers as appropriate to the learning goals of the program. Contents of the learning experiences provided by programs should be both current and relevant to needs of business and management positions. This implies, for example, that present day curricula will prepare graduates to operate in a business environment that is global in scope. Graduates should be prepared to interact with persons from other cultures and to manage in circumstances where business practices and social conventions are different than the graduate’s native country. Another example of present-day relevance and currency is the need for graduates to be competent in the uses of technology and information systems in modern organizational operations. The school must determine the specific ways globalization and information systems are included in the curriculum, and the particular pedagogies used. Curricula without these two areas of learning would not normally be considered current and relevant.

Topics typically found in general management degree programs include:

- Global, environmental, political, economic, legal, and regulatory context for business.
- Individual ethical behavior and community responsibilities in organizations and society.
- Management responsiveness to ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity.
- Statistical data analysis and management science as they support decision-making processes throughout an organization.
- Information acquisition, management, and reporting for business (including information management and decision support systems for accounting, production, distribution, and human resources).
- Creation of value through the integrated production and distribution of goods, services, and information (from acquisition of materials through production to distribution of products, services, and information).
- Group and individual dynamics in organizations.
- Human resource management and development.
- Finance theories and methods; financial reporting, analysis, and markets.
Strategic management and decision-making in an integrative organizational environment.

Other management-specific knowledge and skills as identified by the school.

STANDARDS ADDRESSING THE LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (STANDARDS 17 AND 20)

Time Equivalence

Two standards, 17 and 20, give an indication of the expected education levels for degrees. Descriptions of the intellectual achievement levels are given in the introductory material for the Assurance of Learning Standards. These two standards provide additional equivalence statements to guide judgments about the sufficiency of undergraduate and master’s level programs. The standards are not meant to be rigid set points, but rather, they provide a basis for estimating the amount of expected learning.

Descriptions of Different Delivery Modes

Schools will be expected to describe the amount of effort normally required for the degree. The descriptive characteristics will differ by the pedagogical and delivery characteristics of the degree. Traditional, campus-based, education may be described by contact hours, credit hours, or course equivalencies. Distance learning programs may require other metrics and may depend more heavily on demonstration of the learning outcomes. The school should assist accreditation reviewers by clarifying the delivery modes and the kinds and extent of student effort involved in degree programs.

THE ASSURANCE OF LEARNING STANDARDS

Standard 15: Management of Curricula: The school uses well documented, systematic processes to develop, monitor, evaluate, and revise the substance and delivery of the curricula of degree programs and to assess the impact of the curricula on learning. Curriculum management includes inputs from all appropriate constituencies which may include faculty, staff, administrators, students, faculty from non-business disciplines, alumni, and the business community served by the school.

The standard requires use of a systematic process for curriculum management but does not require any specific courses in the curriculum. Normally, the curriculum management process will result in an undergraduate degree program that includes learning experiences in such general knowledge and skill areas as:

- Communication abilities.
- Ethical understanding and reasoning abilities.
- Analytic skills.
- Use of information technology.
Dynamics of the global economy
Multicultural and diversity understanding.
Reflective thinking skills.

Normally, the curriculum management process will result in undergraduate and master’s level general management degree programs that will include learning experiences in such management-specific knowledge and skills areas as:

- Ethical and legal responsibilities in organizations and society.
- Financial theories, analysis, reporting, and markets.
- Creation of value through the integrated production and distribution of goods, services, and information.
- Group and individual dynamics in organizations.
- Statistical data analysis and management science as they support decision-making processes throughout an organization.
- Information technologies as they influence the structure and processes of organizations and economies, and as they influence the roles and techniques of management.
- Domestic and global economic environments of organizations.
- Other management-specific knowledge and abilities as identified by the school.

[MANAGEMENT OF CURRICULA]

Basis for Judgment:
- Faculty led processes actively manage curricula for degree programs. Processes are in operation for all phases of curriculum management including development, monitoring, evaluation, revision, and assessment of learning.
- Curriculum management processes engage perspectives from a variety of relevant constituencies.
- Evidence of recent curriculum development, review, or revision demonstrates the effectiveness of curriculum management.
- Resulting curricula include an appropriate set of learning experiences to prepare graduates for business and management careers.

Guidance for Documentation:
- Document curriculum management processes.
- Show how the curriculum management processes have produced new or revised curricula.
Provide curriculum descriptions for all degree programs included in the accreditation review.
Show how the curriculum across the dimensions outlined in the standard demonstrates a global perspective.

**Standard 16: Bachelor’s or undergraduate level degree: Knowledge and skills.** Adapting expectations to the school’s mission and cultural circumstances, the school specifies learning goals and demonstrates achievement of learning goals for key general, management-specific, and/or appropriate discipline-specific knowledge and skills that its students achieve in each undergraduate degree program. [UNDERGRADUATE LEARNING GOALS]

**Basis for judgment:**
- For each undergraduate degree program the school defines learning goals for key general, management-specific, and/or appropriate discipline-specific knowledge and skills identified by the school.
- For each undergraduate degree program the school demonstrates that students meet the learning goals. Or, if assessment demonstrates that learning goals are not being met, the school has instituted efforts to eliminate the discrepancy.
- The school is responsible for the quality of learning counted toward satisfying degree requirements regardless of where or how it takes place.

**Guidance for Documentation:**
- Define the learning goals for each undergraduate degree program—this should include both conceptual and operational definitions.
- Show that students meet all of the learning goals for undergraduate degree programs. Or, if assessment demonstrates that learning goals are not being met, describe efforts that have been instituted to eliminate the discrepancy.

**Standard 17: The bachelor’s or undergraduate level degree programs must provide sufficient time, content coverage, student effort, and student-faculty interaction to assure that the learning goals are accomplished.** [UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATIONAL LEVEL]

**Basis for Judgment:**
- Expectations will vary dependent on the educational practices and structures in different world regions and cultures.
  - In the USA, for example, the bachelor’s or undergraduate level degree normally represents the equivalent of four years of full-time study subsequent to the completion of a 12-year pre-collegiate education.
  - In several European countries, for example, the bachelor’s or undergraduate level degree normally represents the equivalent of three years of full-time study.
subsequent to the completion of a 13-year pre-collegiate education.
- Variations in educational expectations, length of academic years, pedagogies, and other educational features will give rise to other patterns.

☐ The Peer Review Team will need to judge the appropriateness of the educational level expectations taking into account the context and mission of the school.

☐ Normally, the majority of learning (credits, contact hours, or other metric) in traditional business subjects (as listed under “Defining the Scope of Accreditation”) counted toward degree fulfillment is earned through the institution awarding the degree.

☐ The school defines and broadly disseminates its policies for evaluating, awarding, and accepting transfer credits/courses from other institutions consistent with its mission and degree programs. These policies should ensure that the academic work accepted from other institutions is comparable to the school’s own degree programs.

☐ If the school awards an undergraduate business degree as part of a joint and/or partnership degree program, the expectation that “the majority of business subjects counted toward degree fulfillment is earned at the institution awarding the degree,” can be met through the agreements supporting the joint/partnership degree program. However, in such joint programmatic efforts, the school must demonstrate that appropriate quality control provisions are included in the cooperative agreements and functioning, and these are functioning to ensure high quality and continuous improvement. Such agreements should address and ensure that: the joint/partnership programs demonstrate mission appropriateness; that students served align with mission; student admission criteria are consistent for all students admitted by all partner institutions and are consistent with mission; deployment of sufficient and qualified faculty by all partner institutions; and assurance of learning processes function for the entire program including components delivered by partner or collaborating institutions. Furthermore, the school should demonstrate appropriate, ongoing oversight and engagement in managing such programs. If such joint degree programs involve partners who do not hold AACSB accreditation, quality and continuous improvement must be demonstrated.

Guidance for Documentation

☐ Show that undergraduate level degree programs fulfill expectations appropriate for the context and mission of the school.

Standard 18: Master’s level degree in general management (e.g., MBA) programs:
Knowledge and skills. Participation in a master’s level degree program presupposes the base of general knowledge and skills appropriate to an undergraduate degree. Learning at the master’s level is developed in a more integrative, interdisciplinary fashion than undergraduate education.

The capacities developed through the knowledge and skills of a general master’s level program are:

☐ Capacity to lead in organizational situations.
Capacity to apply knowledge in new and unfamiliar circumstances through a conceptual understanding of relevant disciplines.

Capacity to adapt and innovate to solve problems, to cope with unforeseen events, and to manage in unpredictable environments.

Capacity to understand management issues from a global perspective.

Adapting expectations to the school’s mission and cultural circumstances, the school specifies learning goals and demonstrates master’s level achievement of learning goals for key management-specific knowledge and skills in each master’s level general management program. [MASTER’S LEVEL GENERAL MANAGEMENT LEARNING GOALS]

Basis for Judgment:

- For each master’s level general management degree program the school defines learning goals for key general and management-specific knowledge and skills identified by the school. The learning goals include the capacity to apply and adapt knowledge.
- For each master’s level general management degree program the school demonstrates that students meet the learning goals. Or, if assessment demonstrates that learning goals are not being met, the school has instituted efforts to eliminate the discrepancy.
- The school is responsible for the quality of learning counted toward satisfying degree requirements regardless of where or how it takes place.

Guidance for Documentation:

- Define the learning goals for each master’s level general management program—this includes both conceptual and operational definitions.
- Show that students meet all of the learning goals for master’s level general management programs. Or, if assessment demonstrates that learning goals are not being met, describe efforts that have been instituted to eliminate the discrepancy.
- Show how the curriculum across the dimensions outlined in the standard demonstrates a global perspective.

Standard 19: Master’s level degree in specialized programs: Knowledge and Skills. Participation in a master’s level program presupposes the base of general knowledge and skills appropriate to an undergraduate degree and is at a more advanced level. The level of knowledge represented by the students of a specialized master’s level program is the:

- Application of knowledge even in new and unfamiliar circumstances through a conceptual understanding of the specialization.
- Ability to adapt and innovate to solve problems.
- Capacity to critically analyze and question knowledge claims in the specialized discipline.
Capacity to understand the specified discipline from a global perspective.

Master’s level students in specialized degree programs demonstrate knowledge of theories, models, and tools relevant to their specialty field. They are able to apply appropriate specialized theories, models, and tools to solve concrete business and managerial problems. Adapting expectations to the school’s mission and cultural circumstances, the school specifies learning goals and demonstrates achievement of learning goals in each specialized master’s degree program.

[SPECIALIZED MASTER’S DEGREE LEARNING GOALS]

Basis for Judgment:
- Learning goals for specialized master’s programs require extensive knowledge in the field, an understanding of how knowledge is created in the field, and the ability to apply knowledge of the field.
- The school demonstrates that students achieve the learning goals. Or, if assessment demonstrates that learning goals are not being met, the school has instituted efforts to eliminate the discrepancy.
- Students demonstrate the capacity to apply and adapt knowledge.
- The school is responsible for the quality of learning counted toward satisfying degree requirements regardless of where or how it takes place.

Guidance for Documentation:
- Display examples of student work showing the ability to apply and adapt accumulated knowledge.
- Describe the learning goals of each specialized master’s degree program.
- Demonstrate that students achieve all of the learning goals for each specialized master’s degree. Or, if assessment demonstrates that learning goals are not being met, describe efforts that have been instituted to eliminate the discrepancy.
- Show how the curriculum across the dimensions outlined in the standard demonstrates a global perspective.

Standard 20: The master’s level degree programs must provide sufficient time, content coverage, student effort, and student-faculty interaction to assure that the learning goals are accomplished. [MASTER’S EDUCATIONAL LEVEL]

Basis for Judgment:
- Expectations will vary dependent on the educational practices and structures in different world regions and cultures.
  - In the USA, for example, master’s level education normally represents the equivalent of 9 to 12 months of full-time study subsequent to earning a bachelor’s
degree in business or in a discipline related to a specialized master’s degree, or the equivalent of 15 to 18 months of full-time study subsequent to earning a bachelor’s degree in a non-business field.

- Variations in educational expectations, length of academic years, pedagogies, and other educational features will give rise to other patterns.

☐ The Peer Review Team will need to judge the appropriateness of the educational level expectations taking into account the context and mission of the school.

☐ Normally, the majority of learning (credits, contact hours, or other metric) in traditional business subjects (as listed under “Defining the Scope of Accreditation”) counted toward degree fulfillment is earned through the institution awarding the degree.

☐ Normally, the majority of learning (credit hours, contact hours, or other metric) counted toward degree fulfillment is earned in classes reserved primarily for graduate students.

☐ The school defines and broadly disseminates its policies for evaluating, awarding, and accepting transfer credits/courses from other institutions consistent with its mission and degree programs. These policies should ensure that the academic work accepted from other institutions is comparable to the school’s own degree programs.

☐ If the school awards a graduate business degree as part of a joint and/or partnership degree program, the expectation that “the majority of business subjects counted toward degree fulfillment is earned at the institution awarding the degree,” can be met through the agreements supporting the joint/partnership degree program. However, in such joint programmatic efforts, the school must demonstrate that appropriate quality control provisions are included in the cooperative agreements and functioning, and these are functioning to ensure high quality and continuous improvement. Such agreements should address and ensure that: the joint/partnership programs demonstrate mission appropriateness; that students served align with mission; student admission criteria are consistent for all students admitted by all partner institutions and are consistent with mission; deployment of sufficient and qualified faculty by all partner institutions; and assurance of learning processes function for the entire program including components delivered by partner or collaborating institutions. Furthermore, the school should demonstrate appropriate, ongoing oversight and engagement in managing such programs. If such joint degree programs involve partners who do not hold AACSB accreditation, quality and continuous improvement must be demonstrated.

Guidance for Documentation:

☐ Show that master’s level degree programs fulfill expectations appropriate for the context and mission of the school.