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AACSB 2020 Proposed Business Accreditation Standards: Exposure Draft Unveiled at Global Accreditation Conference

The AACSB 2019 Annual Global Accreditation Conference in San Antonio, Texas was attended by three Lewis College of Business administrators and faculty – Dean Avi, Associate Dean Nancy Lankton, and AOL Co-Chair Alberto Coustasse. In this conference, AACSB released Exposure Draft 1 of the 2020 Proposed Business Accreditation Standards. The AACSB Business Accreditation Task Force (BATF) sought and received input from thousands of business faculty and practitioners from all around the world before releasing this document. Since the summer of 2018, the Business Accreditation Task Force (BATF) and AACSB accreditation staff have collected feedback from approximately 45 meetings and conferences, spanning eight countries—in addition to receiving approximately 250 online feedback forms—with suggestions on ways to enhance the business accreditation standards. This first exposure draft truly represents the broad views of AACSB’s diverse, global membership.

1. Reinforcement of the AACSB’s long-held commitment to mission focus and peer review
2. Updating the standards to be more principles-based and outcomes-focused—and relevant for business schools in the future
3. Recognizing the changing landscape of student demographics, and reflecting the activities the business school of the future will undertake to ensure continuous improvement and high quality in business education
4. Recognizing the diversity of thought leadership in the context of a school’s mission
5. An underpinning of the “Guiding Principles” that represent key values to AACSB

Standards Structure

The proposed standards fall within three constructs: (1) Strategic Management, (2) Learner Success, and (3) Thought Leadership, and amount to nine total. While it might appear that AACSB eliminated five standards from its current 2013 standards, in fact, they eliminated little of the existing standards. Instead, AACSB has streamlined the standards to group more naturally related ideas together, and cut redundancy and unnecessarily complex verbiage. The proposed standards are more principles-based and outcome-focused.

In addition, AACSB has separated what was previously one single document for both the standards and interpretive guidance into two documents: one for the standards, and one for the additional interpretive guidance. The standards document contains the guiding principles of AACSB accreditation and the standards themselves, while the interpretive guidance document contains clarifying material that supplements the standards. In the interpretive guidance, there is a section on rationale, which is where they describe the intent behind the standard; followed by clarifying guidance for each standard; and concluding with completed sample tables for every standard. AACSB’s mission of fostering engagement, accelerating innovation, and enhancing impact are all still prominently threaded through the standards, as this mission guides everything AACSB does, including implementing new standards.

Main Changes

According to AACSB’s Executive Vice-President and Chief Accreditation Officer Dr. Stephanie Bryant, the 2020 standards:

- Are streamlined by
 - Eliminating redundancy within the standards



MONDAY MORNING MEMO

from Dean Avi Mukherjee

- Moving interpretive guidance to a master white paper
- Simplifying language and using language that is more globally inclusive
- Reducing the number of standards from 15 to 9
- Emphasize principles over rules—this means some percentages are omitted or relaxed for more flexibility in various aspects
- Focus on competencies within both learning goals and curriculum
- Are more outcomes-focused than input-focused
- Include more flexibility with respect to faculty qualifications
- Move us toward a model of lifelong learning
- Incorporate a new standard to document how schools are enhancing business practice, and addressing real issues in society

What's Next

Exposure Draft 1 will remain open until November 16, at which time AACSB will review all input to determine where consensus is evident. Exposure Draft 2 will be issued concurrent with the 2020 Deans Conference in Nashville, Tennessee, and will be open for public comment for approximately 30 days. A membership vote is planned for the ICAM business meeting in Denver, Colorado, in April 2020. Representatives from accredited schools are entitled to one vote, and a majority of those representatives must vote to approve the standards for them to pass.

In the words of AACSB's Executive Vice-President and Chief Accreditation Officer Dr. Stephanie Bryant, "If I were asked in one sentence to describe the new standards, I would say – They are more principles-based and forward-looking with faculty models of staffing, more encouraging of innovation, more outcomes-based with respect to faculty deployment and assurance of learning, and more interested in what business schools can do to improve society."

Comments

Check out the proposed AACSB 2020 Business Accreditation standards at:

<https://www.aacsb.edu/-/media/aacsb/docs/accreditation/business/standards-and-tables/2020%20aacsb%20business%20accreditation%20standards%20%20exposure%20draft%20no%201%20distributefinal.ashx?la=en&hash=E9B979E1F216730D3ABA637AA61CDEA29E7BB8CA>

<https://www.aacsb.edu/-/media/aacsb/docs/accreditation/business/standards-and-tables/2020%20interpretive%20guidance%20for%20aacsb%20business%20accreditation%20ed1%20distribute%201final.ashx?la=en&hash=C4717B8B37018C433688FA85E3507B0817BAFFE2>

<https://www.aacsb.edu/-/media/aacsb/docs/accreditation/business/standards-and-tables/2020%20batf%20standards%20comparison-final.ashx?la=en&hash=7F79E27D2AEF88098A5B92A32C799D4890948C25>

Send me any comments or feedback you have, and I will compile all our feedback and submit to AACSB.