AACSB BUSINESS ACCREDITATION STANDARDS: UPDATES 2021

AACSB significantly updated its Business Accreditation Standards in 2020. Over the past year, it has continued to consult and receive feedback on the new standards – from pilot schools, members and volunteers. It has now published its first set of amendments/updates (1 July 2021). The following is an overview of the updates made as part of the 2021 publication, together with an assessment of the significance of the change. Whilst the vast majority of changes reflect clarification only, there are a small number which could potentially impact schools. Regardless, QED recommends that all schools within an AACSB accreditation process (whether initial or renewal) should review and ensure they have understood the changes and clarifications.

NB: This document represents QED's interpretation of AACSB Updates. We recommend that you view the updated standards directly – which are available from AACSB's website in the following formats:

- Updated 2020 AACSB Business Accreditation Standards (clean copy)
- Updated 2020 AACSB Business Accreditation Standards (with tracked changes)
- Updated 2020 Interpretive Guidance for AACSB Business Accreditation Standards (clean copy)
- Updated 2020 Interpretive Guidance for AACSB Business Accreditation Standards (with tracked changes)
- AACSB Summary Table of Key Changes

QED's summary of the changes is provided below, plus a quick review of the changes on a standard by standard basis.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Level of Change	Preamble & Other Area	Guiding Principles	Standards
No material changes made (or no changes made)	All other areas	All except #5	2, 4, 7
Some changes, but unlikely to be substantial (may include clarifications or advice)	Collaborative Provision	5	1, 5, 8
Some changes: possible administrative impact	---	---	9
Some Changes: possible substantial impact (depending on school)	---	---	3, 6
Substantial Change	---	---	---

GENERAL CHANGES

- All changes listed are effective immediately, as they represent clarifications and minor updates.
- Only changes which suggest a material clarification or change in interpretation have been captured.

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COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

- Note added to confirm that AACSB continues to support collaborative provision partnerships with non-AACSB accredited schools.

- Note added to confirm that if the collaborative provision partner is an AACSB accredited school, then the faculty sufficiency and qualification status can be taken as established in the partner school when compiling faculty tables. If the partner school is not AACSB accredited, then the applicant school must apply its own faculty sufficiency and qualification criteria to each faculty member when compiling faculty tables.

(No change – Clarification Only)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE 5: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- An additional clarification has been added to indicate that "*clear accountability for operations*" is a key element of continuous improvement – alongside "*consistency of performance*" and "*stability of oversight*".

(Not a substantive change – focus is on clarification)

STANDARDS 1 - 3: STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND INNOVATION

STANDARD 1: STRATEGIC PLANNING

- The **Interpretive Guidance** document clarifies that "Contingency Planning" is better understood as "Risk Analysis". A sample Risk Analysis is included for illustrative purposes. *(QED also has sample risk analysis frameworks available at https://www.qedaccreditation.com/resource/risk-management-overview-sample/)*

(Clarification only)

STANDARD 3: FACULTY AND PROFESSIONAL STAFF RESOURCES

- Under **"Basis for Judgement / 3.1 Faculty Sufficiency"** (Standards Document), additional text has been added to clarify and reconfirm that:
  - sufficiency ratios must be met for every discipline (regardless of whether the discipline supports a degree or reflects a minor/supporting discipline).

- Sufficiency ratios are not expected to be applied to individual degree programmes, delivery modes or locations. Schools are expected to deploy faculty in a way that is appropriate for the relevant programmes and locations. In addition, QED recommends that the deployment also be aligned to the School's mission and strategy.
- Within "**Suggested Documentation**", AACSB clarifies that Schools are expected to include a discussion of faculty sufficiency within the narrative to explain the deployment of faculty across degree programmes, delivery modes and locations (i.e. the narrative underpinning Tables 3.1 and 3.2).

(Clarification only)

- Under "**Basis for Judgement / 3.2 Faculty Qualifications / Faculty Deployment**" (Standards Document), AACSB has changed the initial guidance to reflect that Schools are now EXPECTED to meet the 90% ratio for faculty qualification on Table 3.2. This has been well signalled by AACSB in various conferences and accreditation events. This means that Schools are not expected to have more than 10% of Additional faculty teaching within any programme/degree level

  (Not a substantial change – but may impact some Schools that have higher levels of additional faculty in some disciplines (i.e. close to 10%))

- **Disciplines:** Within the **Interpretive Guidance** document, AACSB has clarified several points on the allocation of disciplines.
  - If a school is required to combine certain disciplines for the purposes of reporting to the National Regulator, then these disciplines can also be combined for the purposes of AACSB reporting. It suggests that such exceptions to the normal disciplinary structures be confirmed with AACSB accreditation staff and also that a Peer Review Team still has the right to ask for a more detailed breakdown.
  - Occasionally, faculty members may teach across multiple disciplines. In this instance, their % of time devoted to mission **(if material)** should be apportioned across the relevant disciplines as appropriate. In addition, the faculty qualification criteria should be considered in isolation for each discipline (i.e. A faculty member might meet the criteria for SA in one discipline, but not another). This means that a faculty member could potentially have more than one faculty qualification classification.
  - Based on the pilot of the new standards, AACSB confirms that typical business disciplines include accounting, business law, economics, finance, management, marketing and information systems (or other discipline related to data management systems)

  (Not expected to be a substantial change – but may impact Schools that have faculty who teach (in significant amounts) across multiple disciplines)

- **Table 3.1** - Within the **Interpretive Guidance** document, additional guidance on completion of Table 3.1 has been provided:
  - Schools are reminded to maintain the given template for Table 3.1. Only the normal academic year needs to be considered (i.e. exclude shorter periods that are not part of the normal academic cycle – such as summer terms)
  - The list of faculty members to be INCLUDED has been bulleted (for clarity) and confirmed that the following faculty should also be included:
    - faculty teaching prerequisite business courses within the school

- ▪ Visiting faculty (and classified according to the applicant's criteria for sufficiency and qualification)
    - o The list of faculty members to be EXCLUDED has been further clarified, by separating and expanding some of the examples.

(Clarification only)

STANDARDS 4 - 7: LEARNER SUCCESS

STANDARD 5: ASSURANCE OF LEARNING

- The **definitions** of direct and indirect measures have been updated to confirm the key distinguishing factor. Indirect measures relys on evidence that "*is not based on direct observation of individual performance behaviors or outcomes*". Direct Measures always relies on "*direct observation of individual performance behaviors or outcomes.*"
- As part of **Suggested Documentation / Table 5.1**, AACSB has reconfirmed that Table 5.1 is required for all reports during the initial accreditation process. The **Interpretive Guidance** clarifies that in the earlier stages of the process, it is understood that Schools will not have completed a full AoL cycle, and hence Table 5.1 should provide a summary of plans (i.e. How, where and when the competency is expected to be assessed).
- In the **Interpretive Guidance**, Schools are also reminded that AoL is reported at Programme Level – not Major level (so a School that offers a programme with several majors or streams is only required to report AoL at the top level).

(Not a substantial change)

STANDARD 6: LEARNER PROGRESSION

- An additional point has been added to **Basis for Judgement / 6.1** (Standards Document). Each school is now required to *actively seek to attract and retain diverse learners consistent with AACSB Guiding Principle 9*.
    - o This includes outlining the strategies in place to both attract and retain such diverse learners (**Suggested Documentation / 6.1** - Standards Document)

(Potentially significant, depending on the current level of attention given to learner diversity)

STANDARDS 8 - 9: THOUGHT LEADERSHIP, ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

STANDARD 8: THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

- Under **"Suggested Documentation"** (Standards Document), the heading for Section 8.2 has been amended and the bullet points reallocated appropriately to sections 8.1 and 8.2.
- Within the **Interpretive Guidance**, an additional paragraph has been added to thought leadership to emphasise the importance of being mission-aligned and that thought leadership is expected to evolve as Schools' develop.

(Correction and clarification only)

STANDARD 9: ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIETAL IMPACT

- An **optional Table 9.1** has been suggested within Standard 9 – designed to support Schools in summarising the outcomes of activities to support societal impact across the School's operations. The suggested table uses the SDGs as part of the framework. Schools are free to choose their own reporting framework: They do not have to use the SDGs as listed in the sample table. Schools are also free to choose an alternative reporting format.
- If a table is used, AACSB suggests that it is used to outline OUTCOMES and IMPACT (not a description of initiatives etc).

(Some changes: possible administrative impact, depending on the School's current and preferred reporting format)

For advice and further details on any of the above, please contact the QED Accreditation Team at info@QEDaccreditation.com.