

ACS WASC INTERNATIONAL ACCREDITATION

Overview

The Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (ACS WASC), a world-renowned accrediting association and one of the six regional accrediting agencies in the United States, works closely with the Office of Overseas Schools under the U.S. Department of State. This regional association provides assistance to schools located in California, Hawaii, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Fiji, Asia, and other parts of the world.

The Accrediting Commission for Schools extends its services to approximately 5,000 public, independent, church-related, and proprietary pre-K-12 and adult schools, works with 18 associations in joint accreditation processes, and collaborates with other organizations such as the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO). One example is the seamless joint process with the Council of International Schools (CIS). There is one initial visit, self-study, full visit and visiting committee report, and ongoing follow-up process; accreditation is awarded independently by the two agencies.

The Accrediting Commission for Schools is composed of 32 representatives from educational organizations that it serves; this includes a representative from the East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS) that supports the work of ACS WASC. The Accrediting Commission for Schools has been working with international schools, particularly in Asia, since the late 1960s and collaborates with foreign ministries of education, e.g., China and Thailand. Three of the first schools to be accredited by ACS WASC in Asia were the International School of Manila, Ruamrudee International School in Bangkok, and Hong Kong International School. The Commission closely collaborates with EARCOS regarding the accreditation plans for EARCOS schools, including the training and support for international schools.

ACS WASC Philosophy

The philosophy of ACS WASC centers upon three beliefs: (1) a school's goal is successful student learning; (2) each school has a clear purpose and schoolwide student goals; and (3) a school engages in external and internal evaluations as part of continued school improvement to support student learning.

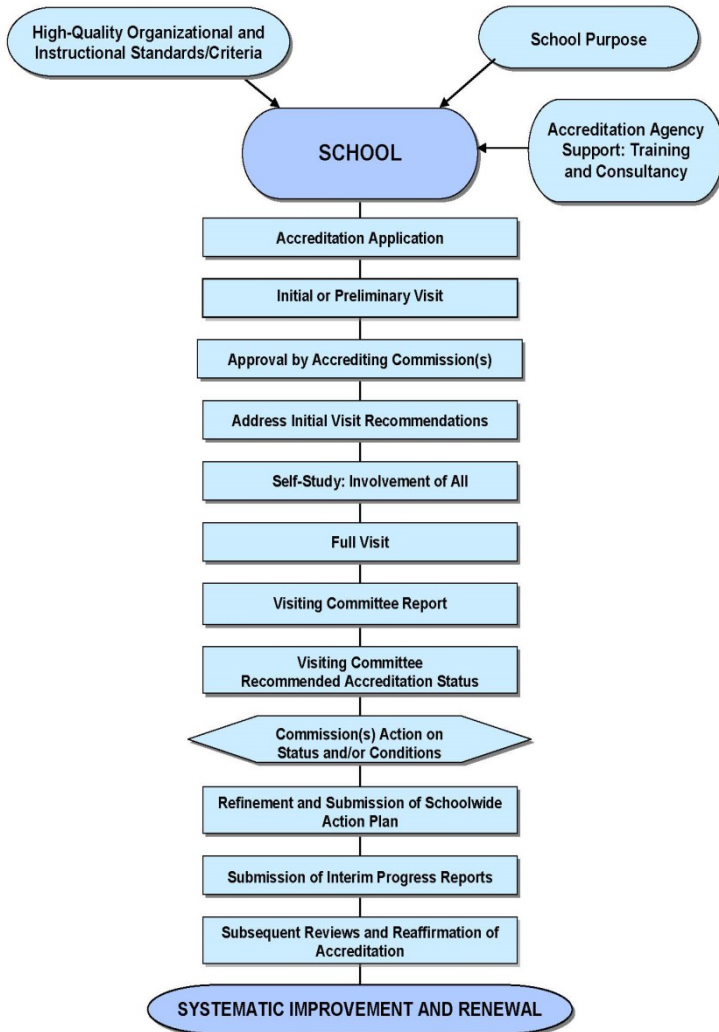
Accreditation is integral to a school's perpetual cycle of assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring, and reassessment based upon student achievement. It fosters excellence in elementary, secondary, adult, and postsecondary education by encouraging school improvement through a process of continuing evaluation and to recognize, by accreditation, schools that meet an acceptable level of quality, in accordance with established criteria. In addition to its official title, WASC means *We Are Student-Centered*.

Why Accreditation?

- ✓ Assures a school community that the school's purposes are appropriate and accomplished through a viable education program — a trustworthy institution for student learning
- ✓ Validates the integrity of the school's program and transcripts
- ✓ Facilitates transfer of credits to other English-speaking schools — critical for college/university acceptance worldwide
- ✓ Fosters the ongoing improvement of the school's programs and operations to support student learning
- ✓ Provides valuable insight from fellow educators visiting the school
- ✓ Benefits schools that choose joint accreditation or other collaborative processes, e.g., ACS WASC/CIS and the integration of ACS WASC and IBO.



ACCREDITATION: A COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS



International Accreditation Process

Initial Visit Process

- ✓ The purpose of the one- or two-day visit by a two-member team is to understand the school's purpose, its program, and operations based upon the ACS WASC criteria and detailed school description.
- ✓ If the Commission grants initial accreditation or candidacy, the school addresses recommendations from the visiting committee report and completes its first full self-study by the end of the third year.

Self-Study Process/Full Visit

- ✓ Involvement of all stakeholders in the self-study process.
- ✓ Clarification of the school's purpose and the schoolwide learner outcomes.
- ✓ Assessment of student program and its impact on student learning with respect to the ACS WASC criteria.
- ✓ Development of a schoolwide action plan that addresses identified areas for improvement.
- ✓ Visiting committee validation and enhancement based on accreditation criteria/standards, self-study and findings from visit.

Follow-Up Process

- ✓ Annual assessment of schoolwide action plan progress and refinement of the plan as needed.
- ✓ Completion of progress reports and/or reviews, e.g., annual reports.
- ✓ Celebration of success.

Contact Us

The ACS WASC staff looks forward to working with you.

- ✓ EARCOS Annual Leadership and Teachers' Conferences: Full-day ACS WASC session for schools conducting a self-study and members serving on a visiting team.
- ✓ EARCOS Annual Leadership Conference: ACS WASC chair training and meetings with school leaders about accreditation.
- ✓ Ongoing meetings, trainings, and webinars for schools.
- ✓ Personalized communications: individual telephone and conference calls, Skype internet communication, and emails.



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