Continuous Improvement Review Handbook

For
Business Only Visits or
Joint Business and Accounting Visits

AACSB International Accreditation
Continuous Improvement Review Handbook for
Business Only Visits or Joint Business and Accounting Visits

PREFACE

The *Continuous Improvement Review Handbook for Business only visits or Joint Business and Accounting visits* is a resource which provides assistance and essential information regarding the continuous improvement review and the documentation process for institutions that hold AACSB Business or Business and Accounting Accreditation. The handbook also provides key information and guidance for peer review teams conducting business accreditation reviews or joint business and accounting accreditation reviews. It describes the philosophy, procedures, and guidelines for the continuous improvement review process, as well as the duties and responsibilities of the business and accounting peer review team members in conducting a thorough continuous improvement review visit.

Throughout this handbook, the information, processes and documentation refers to both business and accounting units, unless otherwise noted. The accredited academic business unit is referred to as the (business) school. The term school is used to describe the entity that offers programs and is not meant to imply any particular organizational structure. For accounting units holding supplemental AACSB Accounting Accreditation, the term accounting academic unit or unit is used.

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INTRODUCTION

The AACSB Board of Directors adopted the continuous improvement review process and procedures described in this handbook in April 2013.and updated April 2020.

The Continuous Improvement Review (CIR) process pertains only to institutions already AACSB accredited. Initial accreditation reviews follow a standard-by-standard review process as outlined in the *Initial Accreditation Handbook and the Initial Accounting Accreditation Handbook*.

The continuous improvement review process minimizes the reporting burden on accredited business and accounting academic units. The process creates an ongoing "continuous improvement" focus signaling that once an institution has achieved AACSB accreditation, a process of documented continuous improvements in support of the stated mission and strategic management plan will sustain AACSB accreditation status.

The continuous improvement review process is not a standard-by-standard review. Instead, the continuous improvement review process is consultative in nature, focusing on educational improvement, strategic management, and fulfillment of the school's mission. The CIR process relies on extensive and effective communications between the host business school, accounting academic unit (only for accounting accreditation), and the peer review team.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, all schools/units and the reviewers complete a post-visit evaluation of the process which informs AACSB of how to improve the process and training. Changes in the procedures and documentation specifications may be made each year to incorporate opportunities for continuous improvement learned from all participants in the previous year.

Each institution has an assigned accreditation staff liaison to assist with the review process. This individual serves as the designated AACSB staff member for all accreditation related questions and needs for the peer review team and is the liaison between the institution's business school and accounting academic unit leadership and the accreditation volunteer network, which includes peer review team members, the Continuous Improvement Review Committee (CIRC), and the Accounting Accreditation Committee (AAC). An AACSB staff liaison is available to assist with any questions regarding the continuous improvement review process.

Introducing the myAccreditation Portal

AACSB has a web-based portal to collect and house accreditation documentation and other pertinent school-related information including but not limited to scope of review, personnel contacts with myAccreditation access, staff liaison and the school's selected list of comparable schools. Schools/units are expected to upload their CIR application and subsequent CIR report including all files related to the specific reporting document using myAccreditation. Peer review teams are also expected to upload their team reports using the myAccreditation portal. To access your school's myAccreditation dashboard please go to myaccreditation.aacsb.edu.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT REVIEW PROCESS

The continuous improvement review process is displayed below as a timeline. This five-year review cycle remains constant throughout the cycle of consecutive review for a school, irrespective of whether a continuous improvement review 2 is required. Therefore, Year 1 represents the academic year immediately following an on-site review, regardless of whether or not an accreditation decision has been made. The next visit will occur in Year 5. The Continuous Improvement Review Committee is responsible for oversight of the continuous improvement review process for review

Year 1 (July 1 – June 30)	Year 2 (July 1 – June 30)	Year 3 (July 1 – June 30)	Year 4 (July 1 – June 30)	Year 5 (July 1 – June 30)
• Review and refine strategic management plan	• Review and refine strategic management plan	• Review and refine strategic management plan	• Review and refine strategic management plan	• Review and refine strategic management plan
• Complete the Required Annual BSQ Survey Modules. • Schools with Supplemental Accounting Accreditation should also complete the *Accounting Program Questionnaire*	• Complete the Required Annual BSQ Survey Modules. • Schools with Supplemental Accounting Accreditation should also complete the *Accounting Program Questionnaire*	• Complete the Required Annual BSQ Survey Modules. • Schools with Supplemental Accounting Accreditation should also complete the *Accounting Program Questionnaire*	• Complete the Required Annual BSQ Survey Modules. • Schools with Supplemental Accounting Accreditation should also complete the *Accounting Program Questionnaire*	• Complete the Required Annual BSQ Survey Modules. • Schools with Supplemental Accounting Accreditation should also complete the *Accounting Program Questionnaire*
		• July 1 two years prior to visit year - submit continuous improvement review application(s)	• Peer review team and visit date confirmed. See Accreditation Policies & Procedures for accreditation volunteer deployment and selection	• Submit completed continuous improvement review report(s) 60 days prior to visit
		• CIRC or AAC rules on exclusions and the scope of the accreditation visit	• Begin communicating with peer review team	• Work with peer review team chair(s) to finalize the visit schedule
		• Date and peer review team nomination request(s) sent to school (February)		• Peer review team conducts accreditation visit
		• Return date and peer review team nominations form(s) to AACSB (March)		

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Years One and Two

Following the year of a school's peer review team visit, the school should regularly monitor progress made in achieving planned strategies as well as updating its strategic plan accordingly. The school will also be required to complete three Business School Questionnaire (BSQ) modules in AACSB's DataDirect system. The BSQ Finances Module is opened for completion in March with an early May due date. The BSQ Programs Module and the BSQ Staff Compensation & Demographics Survey is open for completion in October with an early December due date.

Year Three: Continuous Review Application

The Continuous Improvement Review (CIR) application is due on July 1st, two years prior to the actual review year. This application initiates the continuous improvement review visit. A separate accounting CIR application must be submitted for schools with supplemental accounting.

The business CIR application includes the following parts:

- **Part I School Information**: The school/unit is asked to provide Institutional and school/unit demographic information.
- **Part II Continuous Improvement and Consultative Feedback**: The school/unit is asked to provide progress made in addressing concerns from previous visit; requests for consultative advice (optional); changes/revisions to strategic plan; summary of initiatives related to engagement, innovation and impact and a brief summary of initiatives related to societal impact
- **Part III Scope of Accreditation** (see below for scope of review guidelines)
- **Part IV Review Schedule and Comparison Groups** (see below for Comparison Group Guidance)

The accounting CIR Application includes the following parts:

- **Part I** Organization Information
- **Part II** Eligibility Procedures
- **Part III** Continuous Improvement and Consultative Feedback
- **Part IV** Scope of Accreditation
- **Part V** Review Schedule and Comparison Groups

Information found in the business application that also applies to the accounting application does not have to be repeated in the accounting application. In these cases, the accounting application should reference the business application.

When and How to Submit

Submit the CIR application(s) by July 1st, two years prior to the scheduled year of visit. Please refer to the specific review year CIR timelines for business only visits here and joint business and accounting CIR timeline here. Both business and accounting CIR applications should be submitted via myAccreditation. For schools with joint visits, please be aware that there will be both a business and accounting dashboard on myAccreditation. CIR application dashboards will be ready for uploading six months prior to the submission due date, approximately January 15 of the same year.

What Happens Next

Upon receipt, staff will review the CIR application(s) for completeness. Staff will review progress made in addressing previous concern(s) stated in the school's last committee decision letter, as well as changes to the scope of accreditation. The school's staff liaison will raise any questions regarding the submission and send a confirmation of their review and information on next steps to the school by November in the year of the application submission.

Scope of Accreditation

Accredited schools are responsible for annually reviewing and updating their list of degree programs included in the scope of accreditation. The updating of scope process is accomplished through the completion of a survey called the (BSQ) Programs Module. Notification of access to this survey will be sent to all accredited schools each October. The deadline for completing the survey is early December. The BSQ Programs Module will allow schools to remove programs no longer offered; add new programs as well as programs that will begin beyond the review period and; identify the various delivery modes for every program. This survey is required to be completed by all accredited schools each year. Once all surveys have been reviewed and vetted by the Data Direct team, the information will rollover to myAccreditation and will be available to schools and their Peer Review Teams under the scope tab on their myAccreditation dashboard. **Please Note**: New business degree programs introduced by the accredited school/unit since the last review are considered accredited until the next continuous improvement review and should be reported in the BSQ Programs Module.

Using the scope tab on myAccreditation, schools will also be able to view programs that have been previously excluded from review. If during the CIR application process, the school identifies program(s) offered by the entity of accreditation, either the institution or in some cases an approved unit of accreditation, which could appear to a peer review team to be business program(s), the school should include these programs on Table A.1 of the CIR application. In addition, the school should complete and submit an Exclusion Request Form with the CIR Application. A staff liaison will review the exclusion form. In the event that exclusion requests are questionable, the requests will be forwarded to the CIRC/AAC for a final decision. Changes to a school's accreditation scope can occur after submission of the CIR application, but must be finalized in advance of the peer review team visit.

Comparison/Peer Groups

In order to support an accreditation review that best complements the characteristics of an accredited school (unit), developing a group of comparison or peer schools provides a relevant context for judgments and assists in the selection of peer review team members. Reviewers from comparable schools are better prepared to make consultative judgments and recommendations about the school/unit and to understand the school/unit and its aspirations. The most recent comparison/peer school groups can be found on the myAccreditation dashboard under the comparison groups tab. Please review the schools listed in each of the three school groups. It is not uncommon for schools to make adjustments to these groups as schools evolve during each review cycle. To request an update to the comparison/peer school groups, please contact myAccreditatio@aacsb.edu.

Please use the benchmarking and report tools of DataDirect when considering updating the schools in each of the below groups. AACSB's DataDirect system which collects school survey data serves is an important resource for identifying potential comparison peers. Schools that submit their BSQ data have access to advanced search functions that produce peer lists based on optionally selected criteria.

- **Comparable Peers:** A list of peers considered similar in mission and assumed appropriate for performance comparison. A minimum of six comparable peers must be provided. The peers should be chosen carefully to match key characteristics of the school/unit. In addition to mission, some features that might be salient when choosing comparison institutions include student populations served, size, degree levels, and primary funding source.

- **Competitive Group:** A list of peers so directly competitive that conflict of interest considerations exclude their personnel from the review process. The competitive group may be of any number. Only those peers should be included where the direct competition for students, faculty, or resources is so compelling that the appearance of a conflict of interest is present.

- **Aspirant Group:** A list of peers that provides a developmental goal for the school/unit, represents business education programs, or features that the school/unit hopes to emulate, and

places the vision and strategy of the school/unit in context. <u>A minimum of three aspirant schools is required.</u>

Comparison groups do not imply categories or rankings of peers or members accredited by AACSB. AACSB will not publish or otherwise make available comparison group listings beyond the accreditation process. These lists are for the benefit of the school/unit and the peer review team in the accreditation review.

The school/unit should demonstrate in the review that it appropriately aligns with the operational levels of the comparison school/unit set. In some circumstances, idiosyncratic features of the school/unit may make some of the data non-comparable.

Nomination of Prospective Peer Review Team Members

In the second half of year three, schools will be notified that that the head of the business unit (and the accounting chair of schools with supplemental accounting accreditation) can nominate deans/accounting chairs to serve as the peer review team chair(s) and peer review team members. The team nomination process is also used to advise AACSB which visit dates work best for the school. In selecting prospective team members it is important that these individuals are business school deans or heads of an AACSB accredited business school that is not in the same country/state/province as the school to be reviewed. In considering accounting team chairs and members the same criteria applies. Potential conflicts of interest are also considered. All team members <u>must</u> have recently participated in the appropriate volunteer training aligned with their role on the team to ensure all members are well-prepared to provide an objective, principle-based judgements.

- Access **my.aacsb.edu** to enter your team nominations and visit date preferences.
  - Login with your AACSB credentials;
  - Select My Account;
  - Scroll down to and select My Peer Review Team Nominations.
  - A recorded tutorial is also available.

Year Four: Formation of the Peer Review Team

Early in year four of the continuous improvement review cycle, AACSB staff, in conjunction with the CIRC/AAC chair selects, and proposes to the school/unit a peer review team. For schools with business only visits, the team consists of a chair and two members. For a joint business and accounting visit, the team consists of a business chair and an accounting chair, one business member, and an accounting practitioner. A fifth person may be added at the discretion of AACSB in cases that complex in nature (large school, offshore campuses, etc.) or to provide a developmental experience for new deans/accounting chairs. AACSB staff strives to include experienced deans proposed by the school, identified in the comparable school groups, or deans from schools with similar characteristics such as size, focus (teaching vs research), public vs private, and budget levels. Factors such as eligibility, experience, mission fit, and availability may eliminate some or all deans proposed by the school or from peer schools identified by the school.

Please keep in mind that the proposed team members have not yet been invited to serve on the team. It is the school's responsibility to notify AACSB whether they accept the team as is or would prefer AACSB to propose substitutions for either one or more of the team members proposed. The school should carefully consider the reasons for seeking team replacements as this could hold up the team confirmation process. Once the school confirms the proposed team, AACSB staff will invite the proposed deans to serve on the team. Visit date confirmation occurs when all invited team members agree to the date(s) proposed by the school. This process of confirmation from the time the school accepts the proposed team normally takes up to three months.

Finally, it is important that the school contacts the team chair and members as soon as possible after the team has been confirmed and continues to work with the team chair especially in developing the CIR report and visit agenda.

Year Five: CIR Report, Peer Review Team Visit, Committee Review

Developing the CIR Report

The continuous improvement review is a holistic review centered around the themes of the accreditation standards – Engagement – Innovation – Impact. The continuous improvement review report should not be a standard-by-standard review, but rather the report is organized around the three areas of accreditation standards:

Business CIR Report
- Strategic Management and Innovation
- Learner Success
- Thought Leadership, Engagement, and Societal Impact

Accounting CIR Report
- Strategic Management and Innovation for Accounting Academic Unit
- Accounting Learner Success
- Accounting Academic, Professional Engagement and Professional Interactions

Business CIR Report

Guidelines for preparing a business CIR report can be found here. The report should be accompanied by an executive summary, Tables (2-1, 3-1, 3-2, and 8-1. *5-1 is optional*), strategic plan, faculty qualification and sufficiency criteria, and addendum items as appropriate. The CIR report should not exceed 50 pages in length, excluding the executive summary, tables, strategic plan, faculty criteria, and addendum. **Please Note**: CIR report guidelines and tables may be updated each year. Refer here to determine if the most current version of these documents is being used.

Accounting CIR Report

Guidelines for preparing the separate accounting CIR report can be found here. The report should be no longer than 50 pages in length, excluding appendices and be accompanied by an executive summary, Tables (A2-1 and A6), strategic plan and addendum items as appropriate. **Please Note**: CIR report guidelines and tables may be updated each year. Refer here to determine if the most current version of these documents are being used.

Report Due Date and Submission Process

CIR Reports should be submitted at least 60 days prior to the peer review visit. The school/unit should upload the components of the CIR report in a PDF format to the school's myAccreditation dashboard. For schools with a joint visit, there are separate dashboards for the business and accounting reports. For review purposes, the peer review team and the CIRC will be able to access all related CIR report documents via myAccreditation.

PRE-VISIT PREPARATION

Communication between the School/Unit, Peer Review Team, and the AACSB Staff Liaison:

In order to maximize the benefits and value of the AACSB continuous improvement review process, it is vitally important that all parties engage in active communication as soon as the peer review team is identified. This early engagement allows the peer review teams to gain an in depth understanding of the school/unit, their strengths, opportunities, underlying characteristics, and unique features prior to the visit. This process enhances the value of the visit as the team is already familiar with the business school/accounting academic during the onsite visit.

Materials for the Team at the Time of the Visit

In addition to the CIR report, the school/unit is expected to provide supporting materials for the team to review during the visit process. These materials should be organized and accessible in a convenient location to facilitate the team's visit. Below are examples of materials that a school/unit may consider providing:

- Faculty vita on all faculty (ideally in a standardized format focused on the five-year review period).
- Professional Staff resource plan including deployment across mission-related activities.
- Faculty and Professional Staff Management Policies.
- Documentation of curricula management support data including outcomes assessment data, examples of student work assessed, program quality review reports, etc.
- Recent faculty promotion and/or tenure files.
- Access to student records, placement data, success of graduates.
- Annual reports by the school/unit for stakeholders and/or the institution.
- Supporting documentation related to the Assurance of Learning Process
- Documentation demonstrating the school's engagement with societal impact initiatives

The peer review team may identify other materials that are needed to support the review. However, care must be exercised by the team to maintain the spirit and intent of the CIR review process ensuring that all requests for documentation are relevant to the review process and the school/unit is granted sufficient time to collect and organize the information.

Visit Schedule

The peer review team chair works with the administrative head of the school/unit to develop a coordinated schedule for the visit. Sample visit agendas can be found here. *The school/unit must be in academic session during an accreditation visit.* The visit should include certain individuals and groups. Because of differences in administrative structures, the groups and titles may differ from the following examples:

- Administrative officers of the business school/accounting academic unit
- Strategic management committee
- Department chairs and academic program directors
- Promotion and tenure committee
- Senior faculty representatives, junior faculty representatives, clinical faculty representatives, part-time and adjunct faculty representatives

- Assessment and curricula committee
- Student service directors, e.g., graduate admissions, academic support and advising, career services and placement
- Chief executive and chief academic officers of the institution, e.g., president, chancellor, academic vice president, provost, etc.
- Student representatives
- Alumni, advisory board members, business community professionals

The meeting of the peer review team with the chief executive and chief academic officers should be one of the final meetings of the visit. During this meeting, the team should present the peer review team recommendation and discuss any best practices highlighted during the review. The team should also leave a draft copy of the report with the school/unit.

The Peer Review Team Visit

The CIR review process focuses on the school's mission, strategies and expected outcomes. The peer review team contributes an external perspective on the school/unit's action items, accomplishments, progress toward achieving its mission, and expected outcomes through implementation of its various strategies. The school/unit should be prepared to respond to questions, such as:

- Are the expected outcomes, underlying strategies reflected in vision and mission statements realistic and supported by a strategic plan for the school/unit?
- Does the school/unit have a realistic vision and mission, expected outcomes, and strategies relative to its financial, intellectual capital, human capital, and physical capital resources?
- What has the school/unit accomplished relevant to its strategic plan?
- What are the next action items in the pursuit of the mission?
- Is the school/unit taking the necessary steps to see that its degree and executive education programs remain current and relevant?
- Does the school/unit have processes to ensure continuous improvement?
- Do the school/unit's accomplishments demonstrate effectiveness of its planning and implementation of its action items?
- Does the school have a plan to grow its efforts in pursuit of societal impact?

Peer Review Team Responsibilities in a Joint Business and Accounting Review

Working with representatives from the host school, the business and accounting peer review teams should work in a collaborative process to develop the visit schedule. The teams should also collaborate in conducting the on-site visit. To that end, the following is expected in joint business and accounting CIR reviews:

- The business and accounting peer review teams will collaborate in establishing the visit schedule and requests for documentation to be provided by the school in advance of and during the time of the visit.
- Throughout the campus visit process, the business and accounting peer review teams should provide time for joint meetings to share results and findings and to discuss the possible implications of the findings.
- At the time of drafting the peer review team report, the business and accounting team are expected to discuss their findings and conclusions and their respective recommendations resulting from the CIR review. The teams should be clear on the conclusions reached by each team and consider the impact of the conclusions of each team on the respective outcomes of the business or accounting review. If the

two teams reach different conclusions, all team members must understand the basis for the different conclusions and recommendations.

CIR Team Report Outcomes

Within ten days following the visit, the team will use the myAccreditation portal to input and submit all sections of the *Continuous Improvement Review Team Report*. Both the team and the CIRC/AAC will have access to the report via myAccreditation. Prior to issuing the final report to the school/unit and the CIRC/AAC, the school/unit should be provided a review of the report in order to offer any clarifying comments and corrections related to factual information noted in the report.

Please Note: Instances whereby a school/unit feels that information in the team report does not accurately demonstrate the characteristics, activities and accomplishments of the school/unit, the school can submit a response document addressing those areas that need further discussion. The CIRC/AAC will review any response to the visit report from the school/unit at its next scheduled meeting (the report should be received at least three weeks in advance of the committee meeting).

CONTINOUS IMPROVEMENT REVIEW DECISIONS

A continuous improvement review will produce one of three recommendations from the peer review team for the school and accounting unit if the school holds supplemental accounting accreditation. The business school and accounting unit will each receive a separate accreditation recommendation which may differ from one another. The possible recommendations are Extension of Accreditation, Continuous Improvement Review 2 (referred to as CIR2), Revocation of Accreditation, and are discussed in detail in the preceding paragraphs.

The peer review team recommendation resulting from the review must be evaluated by the CIRC/AAC. There are two possible outcomes resulting from a committee review. The committee may concur with the peer review team's recommendation or remand the recommendation back to the team for further discussion (for more details please see CIRC Review Possible Outcomes). If the committee concurs with an extension or a revocation recommendation, the accreditation recommendation must go the AACSB Board of Directors for final ratification. The accreditation recommendation is not final and may not be publicly announced until the AACSB Board of Directors' votes are finalized.

Extension of Accreditation - Accreditation is extended for five years. This decision may include continuous improvement recommendation(s) to be addressed over the next five years. Progress updates are required in the CIR application due in year three of the five-year cycle, with further updating reported in the CIR report due 60 days prior to the visit. If extension of accreditation is concurred with by the CIRC/AAC, the recommendation is forwarded to the AACSB board of directors for final ratification.

Continuous Improvement Review 2 (referred to as CIR2) - The review process extends to an additional year (maximum of three years). Occurs when concern(s) regarding alignment with AACSB accreditation standards is(are) serious enough that actions should be more immediately implemented. The school and/or unit will be required to provide a Continuous Improvement Review 2 report to the peer review team and appropriate accreditation committee. The follow up report must address how the school and/or unit has resolved the specific concern(s) related to the identified accreditation standards. Since the school's accreditation status does not change, CIR2 recommendations are not ratified by the AACSB Board of Directors. In the case of a revocation of accreditation that is ratified by the AACSB Board of Directors, the school/unit may appeal the decision in accordance with AACSB appeal procedures.

Revocation of Accreditation - After careful review and discussion, a team may recommend revocation of accreditation. This outcome can be due to serious non-alignment with AACSB accreditation standards and a school/unit's inability to successfully address these issues within a reasonable timeframe or can be the result of inappropriate actions/activities undertaken by a school that will inhibit a school from sustaining high quality and continuous improvement. Such a recommendation is not taken lightly and must be supported by an analysis documenting the non-alignment issues with specific AACSB accreditation standards and guiding principles.

CIR2 and Focused Review Decisions

Continuous Improvement Review 2 (CIR2)

If the peer review team finds standards-related issues that are impacting educational quality, the PRT may recommend an additional year of review called a CIR2. The purpose of a CIR2 is to give a school additional time to put into action plans to resolve the issues identified in the team report and the decision letter from the CIRC/AAC. **Please Note**: The accredited status of the school/unit does not change until the continuing review and decision process has been completed.

What Happens Next: CIR2 Decision

The CIRC/AAC selects, and proposes to the school/unit for approval, a revised, smaller team that normally includes one member from the peer review team and another member from the CIRC/AAC. During the CIR2 year, it is expected that the school address the identified issues and develop a report that demonstrates how the issues have been resolved or what plans are in place to resolve those issues which will take more time to correct. The school should work closely with the CIR2 team to ensure that the expectations outlined in the CIRC decision letter and team report are adequately addressed. The CIR2 report needs only to address the concerns identified by the original PRT and CIRC. As with the original CIR report, the school/unit will upload the CIR2 report via myAccreditation. The CIR2 team will then review the report and based on the CIR2 report and conversations with the school will prepare a CIR2 team report. An on-site review may or may not be required.

Successful completion of the review at the end of the CIR2 earns the institution a five-year extension of AACSB accreditation with the original review year as the start year and the next scheduled CIR review to take place in year five; i.e., the five-year review cycle remains constant. For example, if the school/unit is reviewed in year 2019-2020 (with a CIR2 review in 2020-2021, the next review will be in year 2024-25, irrespective of whether an extended review period is required. If successful completion is not achieved in by the end of the extended review period, the peer review team will recommend a focused review for up to two additional years. Continuing Reviews will not be publicly disclosed.

A continuing review fee will be assessed for each year of a continued review. Please refer to AACSB Accreditation Fees for the most current fee schedule.

Focused Reviews

During the continuing review period, the school/unit must rectify the standards-related quality issues identified by the CIR2 peer review team before extension of accreditation can be formally awarded.

What Happens Next: Focused Review Decision

The CIRC/AAC selects, and proposes to the school/unit, a focused review team that normally includes one member from the CIR2 team and one from the CIRC/AAC. The CIR2 team may be asked to continue to serve as the focused review team. The focused review team reviews the focused review report submitted by the school/unit and determines (1) if the concerns have been satisfactorily addressed, (2) how the focused review team and committee can further assist the school/unit, and (3) if an on-site review is needed. An on-site visit is required in the second year of focused review. The team prepares a focused review team report. Note, a focused review fee applies.

Successful completion of the Focused Review (FR) earns the institution/accounting academic unit extension of accreditation for five years with the original review year as the start year and the next scheduled CIR review to take place in year five. The original five-year review cycle always remains constant. For example, if the school is reviewed in year 2019-2020 [with ongoing reviews in 2020-2021 (CIR2), 2021-2022 (FR1), and 2022-2023 (FR2)] the next review will be in year 2024-25, irrespective of whether a CIR2 review and focused review period are required. The focused review period can be up to two years in duration. If successful completion is not achieved by the end of the focused review period, the focused review team must recommend revocation of accreditation. No additional time will be granted to resolve the issues identified over the review periods.

Committee Review of the Team Recommendation

The Role of the Committee(s)

The role of the Continuous Improvement Review Committee (CIRC) and Accounting Accreditation Committee (AAC) is to ensure consistent application of AACSB accreditation standards and processes across peer review teams. Within 10 days following the visit, the peer review team submits the team visit report and its recommendation to the CIRC/AAC on the school's dashboard via myAccreditation.

Once a team report is final, the report will be placed on the agenda of the next scheduled CIRC/AAC meeting. Prior to the meeting, two members of the committee will be assigned as reader one and reader two and liaise between the visit team and the committee. Reader one's role is to lead discussions concerning the school/unit at the CIRC/AAC meetings. Reader two who may serve as a back-up to reader one also provides insights related to the discussion. Prior to the committee meetings, the reviewers thoroughly review the reports, recommendations, and any responses from the institution/unit. It is recommended that the readers consult with a school's peer review team chair if additional clarification is needed.

CIRC Review Possible Outcomes

The committee can make the following recommendations:

- Concur with the peer review team's recommendation

- Remand the recommendation back to the peer review team

  - The committee may remand the recommendation back to the team for information, clarification, or similar reconsideration when an apparent inconsistency is noted. A conference call is convened with the committee chair and vice-chair, committee reviewers, peer review team members, and AACSB staff. The team may submit additional information or a revised recommendation following this conference call.

  - Based on additional information or an updated team recommendation, the committee concurs with the recommendation or refers the case to a panel in the event that they continue to disagree.

    1. A panel consists of three individuals: one from the original team; one from the committee; and an outside member who is an experienced accreditation reviewer. The outside member serves as chair.

    2. The panel must reach agreement on recommendation with two possible outcomes.
       - Extend accreditation or revoke of accreditation: these decisions are forwarded to the board of directors for ratification consideration.
       - CIR2 (when the panel consideration is between extending accreditation and continuing review).

CIR2 Possible Outcomes

Role of School / Accounting Unit

- The school/accounting unit may withdraw its application for accreditation any time prior to consideration by the board of directors. In the case of an accredited school/ accounting academic unit in the continuous improvement review process, a withdrawal from the process is also a withdrawal from the Accreditation Council.

- As to a revocation decision, the school/unit may submit an appeal in accordance with AACSB appeal procedures and policies (https://www.aacsb.edu/accreditation/resources/policies-and-procedures).

- When AACSB accreditation is revoked, the member is removed from the Accreditation Council and the listing of accredited schools/accounting units.

Appendix A: Resource Links

Accreditation Policies, Processes, Terminology, and Timelines

> [Accreditation Policies & Procedures](#)
>
> [Accreditation Terminology](#)
>
> [Continuous Improvement Review Timelines](#)

Continuous Improvement Review Resources

The below two websites can be used to access the required documents utilized by the continuous improvement review processes for business and accounting accreditation.

[Documents for Business Accreditation](#)

- CIR Application
- CIR Report Guidelines
- Required Tables
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Visit Timelines

[Documents for Accounting Accreditation](#)

- CIR Application
- CIR Report Guidelines
- Required Tables
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Visit Timelines

[Exclusion Request Form](#)

[2013 Business Standards](#)

[2020 Business Standards](#)

[2020 Interpretive Guidance Document for 2020 Standards](#)

[2018 Accounting Standards](#)

Sample CIR Visit Agendas

[Business only](#)
[Business and Accounting](#)