ICAISA REVIEW GUIDELINES

INITIAL REVIEW
INTERIM REVIEW
RENEWAL REVIEW
ANNUAL REPORT
TOOLKIT
After acceptance as a candidate for ICAISA membership, the association completes its self study and hosts the initial review team within 12 months.

Five years following the Initial or Renewal Review, the association completes an Interim Review.

Five years following the Interim Review, the association completes its self study and hosts the Renewal Review team.

ICAISA members complete an online Annual Report prior to ICAISA’s autumn meeting.

Questions to be addressed in an association’s self study.
INITIAL REVIEW

After acceptance as a candidate for ICAISA membership, the association completes its self study and hosts the initial Review Team within 12 months. The self study and review provide an opportunity for ICAISA to understand:

1. The association’s compliance with Criteria;
2. Alignment with Core Standards; and
3. The overall strengths, weaknesses, and plans for improvement in the association’s accreditation process.

While the association staff provides leadership in the self study, it is expected that the association’s Accreditation Committee/Council and Board will be full participants in the process and will approve the completed self study report before it is submitted to ICAISA. Ongoing communication between the ICAISA Executive Director, Review Team, and the association Executive Director allow for transparency and accuracy in the Review Team’s work.

Recommended Timeline for Initial Review

1. **12 months prior to the visit:** The Initial Review Team leader will convene the Review Team and the ICAISA Executive Director to discuss the review process. Following this, the ICAISA Executive Director and the Initial Review Team leader will discuss the review process with the association Executive Director and determine in-person and virtual visit dates. In addition, the Executive Director will discuss financial expectations (expenses will be covered by the association undergoing the review) and logistics. The association Executive Director will review the Initial Review guidelines and begin preparation of the self study.

2. **6 months prior to the visit:** A preliminary discussion is held with the ICAISA Executive Director, the Initial Review leader, and the association Executive Director to draft the schedule for the visit, and check-in on the self study preparation.

3. **2 months prior to the visit.** The association Executive Director will:
   a. Deliver its self study (survey, narrative report, and supporting documentation) to the Initial Review Team and the ICAISA Executive Director;
   b. Finalize arrangements for the visit; and
   c. Coordinate travel, accommodation, and meal logistics with the Initial Review Team Leader.

4. **1 month prior to the visit:** The association Executive Director will communicate with the Initial Review Team Leader to confirm final visit details (See #3).

5. **1 week prior to the visit:** The association Executive Director will communicate with the Initial Review Team to review the essential elements of the visit.

6. **Host the Initial Review Team:** The association Executive Director will host the Initial Review Team and ensure that it is fully supported throughout the visit.
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7. **2 weeks after the visit**: The Initial Review Team leader will provide the preliminary report to the association Executive Director to complete a fact check and to discuss major commendations and recommendations.

8. **1 month after the visit**: The Initial Review Team leader will provide the preliminary report to the ICAISA Executive Director for a final edit and review.

9. **At the next ICAISA Membership Committee meeting**: The Initial Review Team leader will present the report to the Membership Committee for discussion. Upon approval by the Committee, the Initial Review Team Report will be forwarded to the ICAISA Board for its approval. Following Board action, the Initial Review Team Report and an accompanying letter from the ICAISA Executive Director outlining next steps will be conveyed to the association within two weeks.

10. **No more than 12 months after the ICAISA Membership Committee meeting**: The association Executive Director will provide the Response Report. The response will be discussed by the Committee and contingent upon its approval, the Committee will make a recommendation regarding initial ICAISA membership. A certificate of membership and a welcome letter from the ICAISA Chair will be sent to the association Executive Director within two weeks.

Components of the Initial Self Study
The components of the self study are delineated below. Please note that these differ from the Renewal Self Study Components.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INITIAL SELF STUDY COMPONENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Survey of Membership</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Narrative Report</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Demonstration of compliance with <em>Criteria</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Report on the Association’s alignment with <em>Core Standards</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Summary of accreditation program strengths, weaknesses, and plans for improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>3. Supporting Documentation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Accreditation policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Standards and guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Self study manual</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. Training materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. Report on financial viability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Opinion audit from the prior year</td>
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<tr>
<td>ii. Financial resources devoted to accreditation (accreditation activities, dues, other sources of income supporting accreditation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. List of accredited schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. List of schools whose accreditation status has been changed</td>
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h. List of candidate schools
i. List of the association’s staff (organizational chart, bios, responsibilities)
j. The association’s bylaws
k. Board and accreditation committee roster
l. The association’s strategic plan
m. Survey and results

SURVEY OF MEMBERSHIP
The association should conduct a survey of its member schools to gather information to inform the narrative report. Questions should be designed to address the effectiveness and outcomes of the association’s accreditation, any applicable Criteria, and any other issues that the association would like to explore. The results of the survey are included in the supporting documentation and referenced in the narrative report, as applicable.

NARRATIVE REPORT
The narrative report should include linked supporting documentation and/or references to the association’s website, as applicable. The report is informed by the results from the association’s survey of key constituents.

A. Introduction
The introduction should include an overview of the self study process, participants, and data-gathering methodology for the Initial Review; an explanation of the demographics of the association’s membership, board, and staff; and any general comments about the association and its accreditation process in particular that will not be covered in the remaining sections of the narrative report.

B. Demonstration of Compliance with Criteria
Each criterion must be addressed individually. Guiding questions are provided as prompts to encourage reflection. The narrative should explain the association’s compliance or outline specific plans, with a timeline, to come into compliance with the Criteria.

C. Report on Core Standards
The Association should cross-reference each Core Standard with its association’s standards. This is most easily be shown in a table format:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Standard</th>
<th>Association Standard reference</th>
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D. Accreditation Program Strengths, Weaknesses, Plans for Improvement
Reflect on the association’s accreditation program, identifying strengths, weaknesses,
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and plans for improvement.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION
The association provides online documentation that supports the narrative report.

SCHEDULING
The ICAISA Executive Director maintains the overall review schedule for associations, the available review team members, and works with the association Executive Director to coordinate the dates for the visit.

A preliminary discussion held among the ICAISA Executive Director, the Initial Review Team leader, and the association Executive Director will allow planning for observing and understanding the myriad components of the association's process. Virtual meetings with association personnel, if appropriate, may be scheduled. Included should be:

a. A variety of visits that reflect the breadth of what the association conducts for member schools;
b. An accreditation/membership committee meeting;
c. The association’s board meeting at which a school’s accreditation will be discussed and voted upon;
d. An accreditation training session for visiting teams;
e. Accreditation training session for a school undergoing a self study; and
f. Meetings with the association’s staff.

INITIAL REVIEW VISIT
Through observation and discussion, the Initial Review Team gathers data to inform its report on the association which will include commendations and recommendations for the association. The Initial Review Team will provide a copy of its preliminary report to the candidate association to complete a fact check and to discuss significant commendations and recommendations.

APPROVAL OF INITIAL REVIEW TEAM REPORT
The Initial Review Team Leader will present the report to the Membership Committee for discussion. Upon approval by the Membership Committee, the Initial Review Team Report will be forwarded to the ICAISA Board for its approval. The Initial Review Team Report and an accompanying letter from the ICAISA Executive Director outlining next steps will be conveyed to the association.

RESPONSE REPORT
Within a year, the candidate association will submit a Response Report addressing the summary recommendations and any strong recommendations identified by the Initial Review Team to the ICAISA Executive Director. This report will document a plan of action with a
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timetable to address any Criteria with which the association is in non-compliance.

DECISION ON INITIAL MEMBERSHIP
The Response Report will be discussed by the Membership Committee and contingent upon its approval, the Committee will make a recommendation regarding initial ICAISA membership to the ICAISA Board.* Upon approval, a certificate of membership and a welcome letter from the ICAISA Chair will be sent.

*Note: An adverse recommendation from the Board of Directors may be appealed. Please see ICAISA’s appeals process.
INTERIM REVIEW

Five years following the Initial or Renewal Review, the association completes an Interim Review. The Interim Review provides an opportunity for ICAISA to:

1. Understand the association’s continued approach to all recommendations made by the previous review team;
2. Verify the association’s continued compliance with Criteria and alignment with Core Standards;
3. Assure that the association continues to strive towards meeting/exceeding the Association Essential Capacities; and
4. Receive a summary of the overall strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement, and future direction of the association’s accreditation process.

While the association staff provides leadership in writing the interim report, the association’s Accreditation Committee/Council and Board should fully participate in the process and approve the completed interim report before it is submitted to ICAISA.

Recommended Timeline for Interim Review

1. **12 months prior to the review:** The ICAISA Executive Director and the Interim Review Leader (preferably a member of the previous Review Team who will serve as the sole reviewer) will discuss the review process with the association Executive Director and determine the review timeline including a virtual review, and if necessary, an in-person review. In addition and if applicable, the Executive Director will discuss financial expectations (expenses will be covered by the association undergoing the review) and logistics. The virtual review, hosted by the ICAISA Executive Director, will be a discussion with the Interim Review leader and the association Executive Director and may also involve members of the association’s staff, accreditation leadership, and the board chair and other members of the board. The association Executive Director will review the Interim Review guidelines and begin preparation of its Narrative Report.

2. **6 months prior to the review:** The ICAISA Executive Director, the Interim Review Leader, and the association Executive Director will discuss progress, the virtual review, and a possible in-person review (if necessary).

3. **2 months prior to the review.** The association Executive Director will:
   i. Deliver its Narrative Report to the ICAISA Executive Director and Interim Review Leader.
   ii. Finalize arrangements for the review.

4. **1 month prior to the review.** The association Executive Director will communicate with the Interim Review Leader to finalize the virtual review and the in-person review (if necessary).

5. **The virtual review.** The ICAISA Executive Director will host the virtual review.

6. **In-Person Review (If necessary)**
a. **1 week prior to the in-person review**: The association Executive Director will communicate with the Interim Review Leader to confirm essential elements of the visit.

b. **Host the Interim Review Leader**: The association Executive Director will facilitate the visit.

7. **2 weeks after the review**: The Interim Review Leader will provide a copy of the preliminary Interim Report to the association Executive Director to complete a fact check and to discuss major commendations and recommendations.

8. **1 month after the visit**: The Interim Review Leader will provide the preliminary Interim Report to the ICAISA Executive Director for a final edit and review.

9. **At the next ICAISA Membership Committee meeting**: The Interim Review Leader will present the final Interim Report to the Membership Committee for discussion. Upon approval by the Committee, the Interim Report will be forwarded to the ICAISA Board for its approval. Following Board action, the report and an accompanying letter from the ICAISA Executive Director outlining next steps will be conveyed to the association Executive Director within two weeks.

10. **No more than 12 months after the ICAISA Membership Committee meeting**: The association Executive Director will provide the Response Report. The response will be discussed by the Committee, and contingent upon its approval, the Committee will make a recommendation regarding continued ICAISA membership. A letter confirming continued membership status will be sent from the ICAISA Chair.

### INTERIM REPORT COMPONENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Report</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Response to all recommendations made by the previous review team</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Verification of the association’s continued compliance with <strong>Criteria</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Report on the association’s alignment with <strong>Core Standards</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reflection on the <strong>Association Essential Capacities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Summary of overall strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement, and future directions of the association’s accreditation process</td>
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Supporting Documentation to support the narrative report should be provided.

### NARRATIVE REPORT

The narrative report provides an opportunity for the member to reflect on both its previous Review and the future direction of the association’s accreditation process.

A. **Introduction**

Include any general comments about the association and its accreditation process in particular that will not be covered in the remaining sections of the narrative report.
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B. **Response to Recommendations Made by the Previous Review Team**
   Explain the association’s progress on all of the recommendations made by the previous review team. The following tracking is suggested:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Progress</th>
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C. **Verification of the association’s continued compliance with Criteria**
   Note any Criteria that the association is not currently meeting and describe plans and timetable to bring the association into compliance.

D. **Report on the association’s alignment with Core Standards**
   Cross-reference each Core Standard and indicate whether your association’s standards are or are not aligned, and if they are not, discuss why. This is most easily shown in a table format:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Standard</th>
<th>Association Standard reference</th>
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E. **Reflection on the Association Essential Capacities**
   Analyze and reflect upon current practice in relation to the Association Essential Capacities. Assure that the association continues to strive towards meeting/exceeding the Capacities.

F. **Accreditation Program Strengths, Weaknesses, Plans for Improvement, and Future Directions**
   Reflect on the association’s accreditation program, identifying strengths, weaknesses, plans for improvement, and future directions.

**THE INTERIM REVIEW**

The Interim Review leader gathers data to inform the Interim Report on the association, which will include commendations and recommendations for the association. The Interim Review leader will provide a copy of the preliminary report to the association Executive Director to complete a fact check and to discuss major commendations and recommendations.

**APPROVAL OF INTERIM REVIEW REPORT**

The Interim Review leader will present the report to the Membership Committee for discussion. Upon approval by the Membership Committee, the Interim Review Report will be forwarded to the ICAISA Board for its approval. The Interim Review Team Report and an accompanying letter from the ICAISA Executive Director outlining next steps will be conveyed to the member.
RESPONSE REPORT

Within a year, the association will submit a Response Report addressing the major recommendations and any questions identified by the Interim Review leader to the ICAISA Executive Director. This report will document a plan of action with a timetable to address any Criteria with which the association is in non-compliance.

DECISION ON CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP

The Response Report will be discussed by the Membership Committee, and contingent upon its approval, the Committee will make a recommendation regarding continued ICAISA membership to the ICAISA Board.* Upon approval, a letter from the ICAISA Chair will be sent within two weeks.

*Note: An adverse recommendation from the Board of Directors may be appealed. Please see ICAISA’s appeals process.
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RENEWAL REVIEW

Five years following the Interim Review, the association completes its self study and hosts the Renewal Review team. The self study and review provide an opportunity for ICAISA to understand:

1. The association’s continued compliance with Criteria;
2. Alignment with Core Standards;
3. Progress towards meeting/exceeding the Association Essential Capacities;
4. A strategic and generative reflection the association is considering, such as a problem of association practice, a risk the association is taking, or an initiative it is contemplating; and
5. The overall strengths, weaknesses, and plans for improvement in the association’s accreditation process.

While the association staff provides leadership in the self study, it is expected that the association’s Accreditation Committee/Council and Board will be full participants in the process and will approve the completed self study before it is submitted to the ICAISA Review Team. Ongoing communication between the ICAISA Review Team and the association Executive Director allow for transparency and accuracy in the Review Team’s work.

Recommended Timeline for Renewal Review

1. **12 months prior to the visit:** The Review Team leader will convene the Review Team and the ICAISA Executive Director to discuss the review process. Following this, the ICAISA Executive Director and the Renewal Review Team leader will discuss the Renewal Review process with the association Executive Director and determine in-person and virtual visit dates. In addition, the Executive Director will discuss financial expectations (expenses will be covered by the association undergoing the review) and logistics. The association Executive Director will review the Renewal Review guidelines and begin preparation of the self study.

2. **6 months prior to the visit:** A preliminary discussion is held between the ICAISA Executive Director, the Renewal Review Team leader, and the association Executive Director to draft the schedule for the visit and check-in on the self study preparation.

3. **2 months prior to the visit:** The association Executive Director will
   a. Deliver the self study to the Renewal Review Team and the ICAISA Executive Director.
   b. Finalize arrangements for the visit.
   c. Coordinate travel, accommodation, and meal logistics with the Renewal Review Team Leader.

4. **1 month prior to the visit:** The association Executive Director will communicate with the Renewal Review Team Leader to confirm final visit details.

5. **1 week prior to the visit:** The association Executive Director will communicate with the Renewal Review Team to review the essential elements of the visit.
6. **Host the Renewal Review Team**: The association Executive Director will host the Renewal Review Team and ensure that it is fully supported throughout the visit.

7. **2 weeks after the visit**: The Renewal Review Team Leader will provide the preliminary report to the association Executive Director to complete a fact check and to discuss major commendations and recommendations.

8. **1 month after the visit**: The Renewal Review Team Leader will provide the preliminary report to the ICAISA Executive Director for a final edit and review.

9. **At the next ICAISA Membership Committee meeting**: The Renewal Review Team leader will present the report to the Membership Committee for discussion. Upon approval by the Committee, the Renewal Review Team Report will be forwarded to the ICAISA Board for its approval. Following Board action, the Renewal Review Team Report and an accompanying letter from the ICAISA Executive Director outlining next steps will be conveyed to the association Executive Director within two weeks.

10. **No more than 12 months after the ICAISA Membership Committee meeting**: The association Executive Director will provide the Response Report. The response will be discussed by the Committee, and contingent upon its approval, the Committee will make a recommendation regarding ICAISA membership. The association will receive a certificate of membership and a welcome letter from the ICAISA Chair.

### RENEWAL SELF STUDY COMPONENTS

1. **Survey of Membership**

2. **Narrative Report**
   a. Introduction
   b. Verification of Compliance with Criteria
   c. Verification of alignment with Core Standards
   d. Reflection on Association Essential Capacities
   e. Strategic reflection
   f. Summary of accreditation program strengths, weaknesses, and plans for improvement

3. **Supporting Documentation**
   a. Accreditation policies
   b. Standards and guidelines
   c. Self study Manual
   d. Training materials
   e. Report on financial viability
      i. Opinion audit from the prior year
      ii. Financial resources devoted to accreditation (accreditation activities, dues, other sources of income supporting accreditation)
   f. List of accredited schools
   g. List of schools whose accreditation status has been changed
   h. List of candidate schools
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SURVEY OF MEMBERSHIP
The association should conduct a survey of its member schools to gather information to inform the narrative report. Questions should be designed to address the effectiveness and outcomes of the association’s accreditation, any applicable Criteria, the Association Essential Capacities, and any other issues that the association would like to explore. The results of the survey are included in the supporting documentation and referenced in the narrative report as applicable.

NARRATIVE REPORT

A. Introduction
The introduction should include an overview of the self study process, participants, and data gathering methodology for the Renewal Review. The association Executive Director offers a brief statement reflecting on the demographic characteristics of the association and its staffing, the Association’s self study process for ICAISA, and any general comments on the accreditation program which will not be included in the parts which will follow.

B. Verification of Compliance with Criteria
Each criterion must be addressed individually. The narrative should explain the association’s compliance or outline specific plans, with a timeline, to come into compliance with the Criteria.

C. Verification of Alignment with Core Standards
Cross-reference each Core Standard with the association’s standards. This is most easily shown in a table format:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Standard</th>
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D. Reflection on Association Essential Capacities
Analyze and reflect upon current practice in relation to the Association Essential Capacities. Assure that the association continues to strive towards meeting/exceeding the Capacities.

E. Strategic Reflection
Describe a problem of association practice, a risk it is taking, or an initiative the association
is contemplating and ask for input/feedback from the Renewal Review team.

F. Summary of Accreditation Program Strengths, Weaknesses, and Plans for Improvement
   Reflect on the association’s accreditation program, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and plans for improvement.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION
The association provides online documentation that supports the narrative report.

SCHEDULING
The ICAISA Executive Director maintains the overall Renewal Review schedule for associations, the list of available Renewal Review team members, and works with the association Executive Director to coordinate the dates for the visit.

A preliminary discussion held among the ICAISA Executive Director, the Renewal Review Team leader, and the association Executive Director will allow planning for observing and understanding the myriad components of the association’s process. Consideration should be given to virtual observations. Included should be:

   a. A variety of visits, in person and/or virtual, that reflect the breadth of what the association conducts at member schools;
   b. An accreditation/membership committee meeting;
   c. The association’s board meeting at which a school’s accreditation will be discussed and voted upon;
   d. An accreditation training session for visiting teams;
   e. Accreditation training session for a school undergoing a self study; and
   f. Meeting with the Association’s staff.

RENEWAL REVIEW VISIT
Through observation and discussion, the Renewal Review Team gathers data to inform its report on the Association which will include commendations and recommendations for the Association. The Renewal Review Team Leader provides the preliminary report to the association Executive Director to complete a fact check and to discuss major commendations and recommendations. The Renewal Review Team Leader then provides the preliminary report to the ICAISA Executive Director for a final edit and review.

APPROVAL OF RENEWAL REVIEW TEAM REPORT
The Renewal Review Team Leader will present the report to the Membership Committee for discussion. Upon approval by the Membership Committee, the Renewal Review Team Report will be forwarded to the ICAISA Board for its approval. The Renewal Review Team Report and an accompanying letter from the ICAISA Executive Director outlining next steps will be conveyed to the association Executive Director.
RESPONSE REPORT

Within a year, the Association will submit a Response Report addressing the summary recommendations and any strong recommendations identified by the Renewal Review Team to the ICAISA Executive Director. This report will document a plan of action with a timetable to address any Criteria with which the association is in non-compliance.

DECISION ON CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP

The Response Report will be discussed by the Membership Committee, and contingent upon its approval, the Committee will make a recommendation regarding continued ICAISA membership to the ICAISA Board.* Upon approval, a certificate of membership and a letter from the ICAISA Chair will be sent within two weeks.

*Note: An adverse recommendation from the Board of Directors may be appealed. Please see ICAISA’s appeals process.
ANNUAL REPORT
ICAISA members complete an online Annual Report prior to ICAISA’s autumn meeting. The survey serves as a review of these four areas:

1. **ICAISA’s Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation.** The association reviews each criterion and provides a status update on any that have not been met;
2. **Association Essential Capacities.** The association acknowledges that it has reflected on the Capacities;
3. **Significant Changes in the Association.** The association provides a brief summary of the changes and their effect—if any—on the accreditation program; and
4. **Association Data.** The association provides data on the association’s membership, staffing, accreditation reporting, and financial position.
CRITERIA FOR EFFECTIVE ACCREDITATION PRACTICES WITH GUIDING QUESTIONS
[Updated and Approved May 2017]

Criteria for Associations

1. The association holds schools accountable to a comprehensive set of standards related to the educational program and issues of institutional health.
   Guiding Questions:
   a. What is the policy concerning a school’s adherence to standards?
   b. How does the association monitor compliance with its standards?
   c. What action is taken if a school is not in compliance with a standard?

2. The association, recognizing that accreditation is a peer review process, institutes policies and procedures that ensure fairness and impartiality and that are free of conflicts of interest, both in appearance and in fact.
   Guiding Questions:
   a. What is the selection process for visiting committee chairs and members?
   b. How is potential conflict of interest avoided?

3. The accreditation process consists of a continuing cycle: self-study by the school, visit Lookand report by a team of trained peers, action by the association, and follow-up by the school and the association.
   Guiding Questions:
   a. Describe the accreditation cycle of your association, as it would apply to a typical school.

4. The association monitors the school’s compliance with standards and its progress in addressing the recommendations of the self-study and of the visiting team report. The association also regularly solicits reports from schools on substantive institutional change and reviews the school’s accreditation status in the light of those changes.
   Guiding Questions:
   a. Please provide copies of annual and/or interim report forms.
   b. Who reviews these?
   c. What action is taken with regard to them?

5. The decision-making and appeal processes regarding accreditation status and/or changes in the accreditation cycle are clear and understandable. Policies and procedures are available for public review.
   Guiding Questions:
   a. Please provide copies of the relevant policies

6. The association offers formal and comprehensive preparation and training for all participants in the accreditation process, including team chairs and members, heads of school, self-study coordinators, and association boards and commissions.
   Guiding Questions:
a. Describe accreditation training conducted by the association, including constituent representation and training schedule.

b. How do you assess training effectiveness and what have you done to improve it?

7. The association engages in regular evaluation and review of its standards and accreditation process and solicits reports from schools and visiting teams on their experience with the process.

Guiding Questions:
   a. When was the last evaluation and review of standards conducted?
   b. What reports are solicited from schools and visiting teams on their experience?
   c. Please provide any forms that are used and any compilation of results.

8. The association designates a decision-making body charged with overseeing the evaluation and accreditation process and making final decisions regarding accreditation.

Guiding Questions:
   a. How many members are on the accreditation/membership committee?
   b. How are they chosen and what are their term limits?
   c. How often does the committee meet?
   d. Provide agendas and minutes of the meetings for the most recent year.

9. The accreditation process will examine the whole school, including all divisions and those programs that are included in the accreditation.

Guiding Questions:
   a. Are there special evaluation instructions for residential programs, including homestays and other off campus residential facilities?
   b. Are there special evaluation instructions for programs such as early childhood, semester, and/or other programs?
   c. Does accreditation include summer programs? If so, how is this evaluated?

10. The association has a procedure, available to the public and clearly explained, to handle complaints that accredited schools are not meeting standards.

Guiding Questions:
   a. Describe the procedure for handling complaints that accredited schools are not meeting standards
   b. What changes were made, if any, to the complaint process and/or the standards?

Criteria for Standards

11. The accreditation process rests on comprehensive standards which schools must meet. The standards address all areas of school life, including the following: mission, governance, finance, program, community of the school, administration, development, admissions, personnel, general health and safety, child and student protection and well-being, facilities, student services, school culture, and residential life (where applicable).

Guiding Questions:
   a. Please attach a copy of the association’s standards for accreditation.
b. Report on the congruence of the association’s standards with the Core Standards and explain any differences.

12. The standards require schools to conduct a thoughtful assessment of individual student progress consistent with the school’s mission.
   Guiding Questions:
   a. What standards relate to assessment of individual student progress and the communication and use of results?
   b. Are you satisfied with this aspect of your standards?
   c. Do you have plans for any changes?

13. The standards require a school to provide evidence of a thoughtful process, respectful of its mission, for informed decision-making that draws on data (both internal and external) about student learning.
   Guiding Questions:
   a. What standards relate to the collection and use in school decision-making of data (both internal and external) about student learning?
   b. Does the same standard apply to both elementary and secondary schools?
   c. How is compliance with the standard monitored?
   d. What data about student learning, if any, does the association collect and compile?
   e. How is it used?

14. The standards require a school to demonstrate that its educational programs, instructional practices, and institutional culture are informed by relevant research regarding how students learn and the knowledge and capacities they will need to lead purposeful and constructive lives.

Criteria for the Self-Study

15. The self-study process is deliberative, and the self-study report reflects the considered judgment of the school’s professional community.
   Guiding Questions:
   a. Please attach the self-study manual or other instructions for preparing the self-study.
   b. Are you satisfied with this aspect of your accreditation process?
   c. Do you have plans for any changes?

16. A broad cross-section of the community (including all faculty and staff, as well as members of the governing body and others in the community, as appropriate) participate in preparing the self-study.
   Guiding Questions:
   a. What instructions are given the school to guide it in the preparation of the self-study?
b. Are there provisions in the association policy that assure broad participation?

17. The self-study includes reflection and self-analysis as well as description, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and assesses both the school’s compliance with standards and the congruence between its program and mission, and balances documentation of accountability to association standards with a focus on school improvement. The school will provide all required documents in a timely fashion.

**Criteria for the Visiting Team**

18. The accrediting association appoints a visiting team chair who shall be responsible to follow the accrediting association’s guidelines, to ensure the visiting team’s effectiveness, and to protect the integrity of the process.

   **Guiding Questions:**
   
   a. Describe how visiting team chairs are appointed.
   b. What role, if any, does the school have in the choice?
   c. Who makes the final decision?
   d. Is there a job description for visiting team chairs?
   e. If so, please attach it.

19. The accrediting association appoints a visiting team to conduct a site visit while school is in session.

20. The association is mindful of the circumstances of the school and the full range of the standards in determining the size and selecting the members of a visiting team.

   **Guiding Questions:**
   
   a. What is the typical size and composition of a visiting team?
   b. Describe how visiting team members are appointed.
   c. What role, if any, does the school have in the size of the team or the selection of the members?
   d. What opportunity does the school have to request attention to special programs?
   e. Are there standard criteria used in assembling teams?
   f. Who makes the final decisions about the visiting team?
   g. Is there a job description for visiting team members? If so, please attach it.

21. The visiting team receives advance materials in a timely fashion and arrives at the school fully prepared.

   **Guiding Questions:**
   
   a. What is sent to the team in advance?
   b. What is the timetable for sending materials?

22. The team observes the program and interviews school staff, trustees, students, parents, and others as appropriate. It validates the self-study, evaluates the school’s compliance with standards, and writes a report with commendations and recommendations that is sent to the association and to the school in a timely fashion. The report is confidential, except as authorized by the school. Any release of parts or all of the report to the public
must follow association guidelines.
Guiding Questions:
   a. What is the structure of a typical Visiting Team Report?
23. The length of the visit is sufficient to accomplish the above.
Guiding Questions:
   a. Please attach any instructions to the visiting team on their role and responsibilities.
   b. What is the length of the visit?
   c. Describe a typical schedule for a visiting team.
   d. Are you satisfied with this aspect of your accreditation process?
   e. Do you have plans for any changes?
24. The members of the visiting team hold confidential the information they receive and their discussions during the accreditation process.
Guiding Questions:
   a. Does the Association have a policy on confidentiality?
   b. How is it communicated to those involved in the process?

Criteria for the Association Review

25. The association, or a representative committee, receives and reviews the self-study and the visiting team report, determines the accreditation status of the school, prescribes appropriate actions, and sets up a schedule for future reports and visits. The school is given an opportunity to respond to the report of the visiting team in advance of the association taking action on its accreditation.
26. The association notifies the board chair, as well as the head of school, concerning decisions related to a school’s accreditation.
Guiding Questions:
   a. Describe the procedure for association action following a visit.
   b. How are the self-study and visiting team reports reviewed?
   c. What are the options in determining the accreditation status of the school?
   d. What regular reports are scheduled?
   e. What special reports or visits may be requested for what reasons?
   f. Who is notified of association actions?
   g. Are you satisfied with this aspect of your accreditation process?
   h. Do you have plans for any changes?
CORE STANDARDS
[Updated and Approved Feb 2019]

Introduction
Core Standards are those that define the culture of independent schools and relate directly to the first of the Criteria for Effective Accreditation Practices. While they do not serve as a template, these standards reflect the core elements of our schools and their operation and should be represented in some form in a regional or state association’s accreditation instrument. Associations are expected to check that these areas are covered in their own standards and report on any discrepancies.

Mission
1. The school has a clear statement of educational mission. The stated mission and philosophy guide the school’s admissions, programming, planning, and decision-making.
2. The mission of the school is congruent with principles of academic scholarship, permitting and encouraging freedom of inquiry, diversity of viewpoints, and independent and critical thinking.

Full Disclosure
3. The school makes full, accurate, and truthful disclosure of its mission, policies, expectations, programs, practices, school culture, finances, and governance structure.

Governance and Fiscal Responsibility
4. The governing board of the school is a deliberative body with clearly defined roles and responsibilities that are communicated to all constituents. It provides for:
   a. continuity of mission
   b. stability in transitions of leadership
   c. establishing and monitoring school policies and general programs
   d. comprehensive strategic and financial planning
   e. financial oversight, accountability, and sustainability
   f. policies related to pluralism, diversity, equity and inclusion
   g. policies related to environmental sustainability
   h. risk management and school safety
   i. evaluation and support of the professional development of the head of school
   j. clearly-defined and regularly-applied procedures to orient, educate, and evaluate the governing body
   k. a model of inclusive decision-making for the school community
5. The governing body consistently exercises its fiduciary responsibility.

6. The governing body engages an independent accounting firm to conduct an annual audit of the school’s financial statements and practices.

7. The governing board provides opportunities for generative thinking on a regular basis.

8. There is evidence of effective management of resources sufficient to advance the mission of the school, and to provide for financial sustainability.

9. There are effective policies and procedures for the management of operating and capital funds in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles and practices.

10. The governing body delegates the operational and educational functions of the school to the head of school.

Program

11. The educational program stems from the school’s beliefs about teaching and learning that are regularly reviewed and that are consistent with the mission of the school.

12. All school programs (including early childhood, residential, extended care, etc.) demonstrate consideration for the well-being and the appropriate intellectual, social, physical, aesthetic, emotional, and ethical development of students in all aspects of school and student life.

13. The school has sufficient resources to support the program of the school and the needs of the students and professional staff.

14. Instructional materials, resources, equipment, and infrastructure are of sufficient quality, quantity, and variety to provide effective support to the goals and methods of the program.

15. Requirements and expectations for students, parents, faculty, administrators, and staff, and trustees clearly reflect the values and mission of the school.

16. Procedures are in place to assess individual student progress toward meeting the goals of the program, and to communicate progress effectively and appropriately to students and families.

17. The school demonstrates that its educational programs, instructional practices, and institutional culture are informed by relevant research regarding how students learn and the knowledge and capacities they will need to lead purposeful, constructive, and ethical lives.
ICAISA REVIEW TOOLKIT

Professional Staff

18. Faculty and staff are well-qualified through education, training, and/or experience to fulfill the responsibilities of their positions.

19. The school ensures that there are sufficient and trained administrators, faculty, and staff members dedicated to supporting students and their families across all cultures.

20. The administration actively supports the professional development of faculty and staff through allocation of time and resources.

21. The school implements clearly defined programs for supervision and regular performance evaluation of the administration, faculty, and staff.

22. Personnel and human resources practices provide equitable and ethical treatment of all faculty, administrators, and staff with respect to compensation, workloads, and working conditions.

Culture and Climate

23. In keeping with its mission, the school promotes an equitable, just, and inclusive community of adults and students, fosters a culture of learning, and inspires students to respect and value diversity in its many forms.

24. The school promotes environments that provide opportunities to enhance positive interaction among domestic and international students, and to develop sensitivity and understanding regarding cultural differences and needs that are specific to international students.

25. The school recognizes global connectedness, promotes a culture of global understanding, and fosters a commitment to the values of environmental sustainability for current and future generations.

Health, Safety, and Well-Being

26. The school has a process to ensure that it demonstrates compliance with all state, local, and federal regulations.

27. The school ensures that it provides appropriate care, support, and protection of all students, including attention to their health, safety, and well-being.
28. The school ensures that boarding personnel and/or homestay host families receive specific training, supervision, and evaluation that address the needs of boarding and/or international students.

Recruitment, Admission, Enrollment, and Retention

29. The school has mission-aligned procedures in place to ensure that students can be well-served by the school programs.

30. The school is transparent in its admission and retention policies and provides information that accurately describes tuition levels, fees, and all other expectations.
ASSOCIATION ESSENTIAL CAPACITIES WITH GUIDING QUESTIONS

Essential Capacity 1
Association Capacity to Articulate Purpose and Value of the Association’s Accreditation

Working together, the Board and Executive Director articulate and promote the purposes and value of the association’s accreditation program.

Guiding Questions:
1. How would you explain your association’s particular approach to accreditation if you were orientating a Head of School new to your association? What would you say both in terms of its history and the changes that are emerging for member schools?
2. How is the association’s mission congruent with the purpose and value of the association’s accreditation program?
3. What is the balance between accountability and school improvement and how is it manifested in all aspects of the accreditation process (self-study; visiting team composition, training, and work; and decisions on accreditation)?
4. Regarding the “improvement” purposes of accreditation, how prescriptive can the process be? What role does the independence of member schools play in the association’s thinking?
5. Are there elements of the association’s accreditation process that are distinctive and particularly important and effective?
6. How does the association help its members and other outside constituencies understand the value and purpose of accreditation?
7. Where does the association struggle in helping others to understand the value of accreditation?

Essential Capacity 2
Association Capacity to Assess the Strategic Environment

There is an ongoing process that enables association leaders to assess the evolving educational, environmental, financial, cultural, and other strategic landscapes, and the needs of member schools.
ICAISA REVIEW TOOLKIT

Guiding Questions:
1. How do the Board and Executive Director stay informed about changes in the strategic landscape that could affect either or both the association and its member schools? What sources of information, both internal and external, are used in this process?
2. What are the major strategic trends (global, national, and local) that the association is tracking on behalf of member schools and significant trends that have emerged among member schools in the past 3-5 years?
3. How is the association using data and research in its decision-making?

Essential Capacity 3
Association Capacity to Align Needs and Resources
Association leadership resources are aligned to address emerging issues and the changing needs of member schools as they relate to the accreditation process.

Guiding Questions:
1. Please evaluate the adequacy of time and quality of thought dedicated to strategic thinking and scanning the environment by the association’s Board and/or Accreditation Committee.
2. What changes have there been in staffing time and/or job descriptions related to the accreditation program?
3. What is the approximate percentage of time spent by the Executive Director on the major elements of his/her job description, including scanning the strategic environment? What are the reasons for current allocation of association time? Do you see any shifts in the near future, and why?

Essential Capacity 4
Association Capacity to Evaluate and Adapt the Accreditation Process
The association adapts its accreditation process as necessary in order to a) maintain high standards, b) remain relevant in a changing world, and c) respond to the emerging needs of member schools.

Guiding Questions:
1. How are the trends identified above (Question 2, Capacity 2) addressed in the accreditation process?
2. How does the association assess the effectiveness of the accreditation process and determine whether and to what extent its purposes are achieved? What have you learned from an analysis of member-school survey responses?
3. Have there been significant changes in the association’s accreditation process in the past three years?

4. If so, what has prompted them? If not, please explain.

5. In what ways does the association accreditation process address the need for its member schools to stay informed about and respond to fast-moving educational trends? To sustain an adult culture of ongoing improvement and professional development? To maintain financial sustainability, especially in view of the potential for the emergence of disruptive educational models? To exhibit the capacity of informed and wise decision-making at all levels?

6. What professional development does the association offer to help schools understand emerging issues, challenge them to take advantage of opportunities, and support them in the accreditation process?