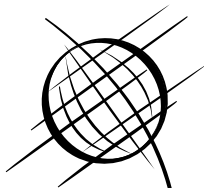


# What is Accreditation?



**ADVANCED ED**

Advancing Excellence in Education Worldwide

## What is accreditation?

Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance developed more than 100 years ago by American universities and secondary schools. Today, to demonstrate educational quality, accreditation is used by education providers of all types from traditional schools to distance learning providers to tutoring centers serving all ages of students from toddlers to adults.



Accreditation engages the school community in meeting high quality standards, implementing a continuous improvement process, and engaging in quality assurance through internal and external review. Accredited schools demand rigor, use data to make informed decisions, and approach the documentation of results with discipline. Accredited schools invite external scrutiny and welcome the constructive feedback of peers.

## What are the benefits of accreditation?

- A distinctive **mark of quality recognized internationally**, that affords external recognition of the school's commitment to quality
- **Standards** based on educational research and best practice
- Clear and intuitive **processes for school improvement** that are grounded in best practices from the education and business fields
- A **framework and support system** to help meet and exceed local, state, national, and appropriate international requirements
- **Professional development** opportunities such as service on review teams, annual conferences, and state workshops on all aspects of school improvement
- An opportunity to gain valuable input, validation, and **support from peers**
- A connection to the **best practices** of over 23,000 public and private schools
- Customized and **technical assistance** to maximize improvement efforts
- Access to a rich and wide array of **resources and tools** aimed at enhancing improvement efforts

## How does accreditation benefit students?

Students are the ultimate beneficiaries of the accreditation process. When the entire school is aligned and focused on a shared vision for student learning, students win. They benefit from the enhanced focus on student performance and from greater articulation and coordination as they move from one level of schooling to another. In addition, the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI) accreditation seals provide an educational currency for student credits that is recognized worldwide, easing the transferability of credits among other accredited schools and enabling access to special programs, grants, and scholarships.



## How do schools earn accreditation?

To earn accreditation from NCA CASI or SACS CASI, schools must follow the AdvancED accreditation process, which represents the unified accreditation process of NCA CASI and SACS CASI. Schools must:

- 1. Meet the AdvancED standards.** The standards require that schools have a clear vision and purpose; have effective and responsive leadership; have a rigorous curriculum taught through sound, research-based methods; collect, report, and use performance results; provide adequate resources and support for its educational programs; value and communicate with stakeholders; and have a commitment to continuously improve. The standards are derived from educational research and best practice. They can be viewed and downloaded at [www.advanc-ed.org](http://www.advanc-ed.org).
- 2. Engage in a continuous process of improvement.** Accredited schools are committed to being better today than they were yesterday. Schools identify a shared vision, maintain a school-wide profile of the current reality, establish plans and assess the implementation of interventions, and document the results of their efforts to improve student learning and school effectiveness.
- 3. Demonstrate quality assurance through internal and external review.** Internal review involves the schools and their stakeholders. External review involves feedback from experienced educators outside the schools. In both cases, reviewers examine evidence to determine if schools are meeting the standards and achieving goals for improving student learning and school effectiveness.

## What is used as a guide for schools to maintain accreditation?

The *AdvancED Accreditation Standards for Quality Schools* serve as the foundation for the accreditation process. The seven standards and accompanying indicators are tied directly to research on factors that impact student learning. Accredited schools adhere to the standards and use them as a tool for ongoing self assessment. The standards apply to all categories of schools, with the exception of post-secondary schools. If you would like to learn more about AdvancED accreditation standards, the standards can be accessed online at [www.advanc-ed.org](http://www.advanc-ed.org).

## How long is the accreditation term?

The accreditation process is based on a five-year term accreditation. The process helps schools continuously improve by providing external checks, support, and feedback. Once every five years, the school hosts a Quality Assurance Review Team.



## What is the purpose of a Quality Assurance Review?

The purpose of a Quality Assurance Review is to:

1. Evaluate the school's adherence to the standards.
2. Assess the effectiveness of the school's improvement efforts.
3. Review performance results and how those results are used to inform improvement efforts.
4. Provide high-quality feedback with clear recommendations and actionable next steps.
5. Make an accreditation recommendation.

## How can I find out more about accreditation and begin the accreditation process for my school?

Visit [www.advanc-ed.org](http://www.advanc-ed.org) for a step-by-step guide to initial accreditation, or contact your NCA CASI or SACS CASI State Office. A listing of state offices also is available on the AdvancED Web site.

## About AdvancED

AdvancED is the parent organization for the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI), the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS CASI), and the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE). NCA CASI and SACS CASI serve as accreditation divisions of AdvancED and operate through state offices.

Dedicated to advancing excellence in education worldwide, AdvancED provides accreditation, research, and professional services to 23,000 public and private schools and 4,500 school districts in 30 states and 65 countries. AdvancED engages 18,000 volunteers and touches the lives of nearly 15 million students each year.

Visit [www.advanc-ed.org](http://www.advanc-ed.org) to learn more about accreditation and AdvancED.



*Accreditation divisions of AdvancED*