



Information for Programs Seeking Initial Accreditation

Answers to Frequently-
Asked-Questions

(from www.abet.org/new-to-accreditation/)



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Welcome new programs and programs new to ABET accreditation.

We hope the following information
is helpful as you begin the process
of accrediting your program.

This document intends to answer many of the questions that individuals involved with programs seeking initial accreditation ask. There are many steps that, if taken early, can make the accreditation process an easier, less mysterious, and much more positive experience for the program.

About ABET

ABET accredits academic programs at institutions preparing graduates for entry into professional disciplines of applied science, computing, engineering, and engineering technology.

Founded in 1932, ABET is a specialized accreditation agency that accredits post-secondary degree-granting programs. Note that ABET accredits programs at various levels; ABET does not accredit departments, colleges, or institutions. ABET is a private, non-profit organization comprised of 31 professional and technical societies spanning the professional disciplines listed above. ABET accreditation is conducted by four accreditation commissions at the degree levels indicated:

- **Applied Science Accreditation Commission (ASAC)** accredits the program at the associate's, bachelor's, or master's levels.
- **Computing Accreditation Commission (CAC)** accredits programs at the bachelor's level.
- **Engineering Accreditation Commission (EAC)** accredits the program at the bachelor's or master's levels.
- **Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission (ETAC)** accredits the program at the associate's or bachelor's levels.

ABET currently accredits over 3,200 programs at more than 670 colleges and universities in 24 countries. Some initial evaluations of programs outside the U.S. may be deferred for one or more years if the demand for evaluations exceeds ABET's resources.

Institutional Eligibility

ABET accepts Requests for Evaluation (RFEs) of postsecondary programs housed in **degree-granting** institutions only.

The first step in attaining ABET accreditation is to establish the institution's eligibility. In the United States, this eligibility is generally satisfied if the institution is accredited by a regional or national accreditation agency. For institutions outside of the U.S., establishing eligibility begins with the institution's completion of a Request for Approval (RFA). Each appropriate accreditation agency in the institution's country completes the RFA, and the institution submits them to ABET by January 31.

In addition, programs requesting initial evaluation must have graduates prior to the academic year of the scheduled accreditation visit.

Program Eligibility

Programs requesting initial review must have graduates prior to the academic year of the scheduled accreditation visit.

Programs housed within an institution without previously ABET-accredited programs in a given commission are required to complete a Readiness Review by submitting a preliminary Self-Study Report before the Request for Evaluation for a given commission is accepted.

- **For the 2013-14 review cycle**, a preliminary Self-Study Report for a given commission review is due **February 15, 2013**.



- **For the 2014-15 review cycle**, a preliminary Self-Study Report for a given commission review is due **November 1, 2013**.

Language

ABET accreditation will be offered only to programs that are able to prepare for and receive a visiting team conducting its evaluation activity in English. The Self-Study Report and other documents provided to the evaluation team must be in English. All visit activities will be conducted in English.

Commission Designation

Each program seeking accreditation will be assigned to a specific commission or to commissions based upon the “literal” name of the program, i.e., the program name shown on the graduating student’s transcript and in the institution’s literature. Although the selection of program names is the prerogative of the educational institution, the proliferation of program names is discouraged because different names for essentially the same program confuse and mislead the public, including students, prospective students, and potential employers. An institution may not use the same program name to identify both an ABET-accredited program and a program that is not ABET-accredited.

Accreditation Criteria

There are two types of criteria:

- **General criteria** apply to all programs accredited by an ABET accreditation commission.
- **Program criteria** are additional criteria that apply to all programs having names that fall within the *applicability* section

of the program criteria. Program criteria ensure that the program name accurately indicates the competencies of the program’s graduates.

Program Names

The program’s title must be properly descriptive of the program’s content and be shown exactly on the graduating student’s transcript and in the institution’s literature.

Some program names imply a specialization within a broader disciplinary area, and program criteria have been developed for many such areas of specialization. If a program name implies a specialization (or multiple specializations) for which program criteria have been developed, the program must satisfy *all* applicable program criteria in addition to the general criteria. For example, a mechanical engineering program will need to satisfy the general criteria for engineering and the mechanical engineering program criteria.

Further, if a program name implies specializations that span disciplines accredited by more than one commission, the program must satisfy all applicable criteria for those commissions. For example, a computer science and engineering program must satisfy the Engineering Accreditation Commission’s general *and* computer engineering program criteria as well as the Computing Accreditation Commission’s general *and* computer science program criteria.

A program seeking accreditation must provide the program name in English. English translation of a program name should be based on the *technical content*, not the literal translation of the program name, so that the applicable criteria can be properly determined.

Helpful Documents

Early in the process, it is recommended that the following two documents be reviewed by the program’s administration and faculty members:

1) Applicable accreditation criteria:

- Criteria for Accrediting Applied Science Programs
- Criteria for Accrediting Computing Programs
- Criteria for Accrediting Engineering Programs
- Criteria for Accrediting Engineering Technology Programs

2) Accreditation Policy and Procedure Manual

Both of these documents, along with other forms and information, are available at www.abet.org/accreditation-criteria-policies-documents/.

Helpful Meetings, Workshops, and More

If your institution is considering accreditation, it would be useful for at least one individual associated with your program to attend one or more of the following meetings. There is a considerable degree of overlap among these meetings; therefore, it is generally not recommended that individuals attend all of these events.

■ Program Assessment Workshops

This one-day workshop helps participants broaden their understanding of the continuous quality improvement of student learning through the design of assessment processes, development of measurable learning outcomes, and application of data collection methods. More details are available at www.abet.org/program-assessment-workshops/.



■ Institute for the Development of Excellence in Assessment Leadership (IDEAL)

This four-day institute provides a professional development opportunity for those who lead the development and implementation of a program assessment plan to improve student learning and document program effectiveness. IDEAL engages participants in working with colleagues to develop new knowledge and skills that enable them to be effective assessment leaders. Although IDEAL's primary focus is developing sound assessment practices, participants learn how to lead others in the process by applying facilitation tools and basic change management principles effectively. See www.abet.org/ideal/ to apply for the next session of IDEAL.

■ ABET Symposium

This event is held every April. The symposium offers more than 80 peer-review sessions touching on subjects such as accreditation processes, assessing programs, preparing Self-Study Reports, planning for visits, and more. Additional information about the symposium is available at www.abet.org/symposium/.

■ Institutional Representative's Day

This meeting is generally held during the second half of July. It is specifically intended for institutional representatives who have programs being visited during the following fall and provides an opportunity for the institutional representative to meet and converse with the assigned team chair. Nevertheless, this event is open to the public.

Information about ABET meetings and events is provided on the ABET website at www.abet.org/events/.

Consultants

Consultation services regarding programs for which Requests for Evaluation (RFEs) *have not yet been submitted* are provided through the ABET Foundation (ABET Foundation, Inc.) — an independent entity that is distinct from ABET. Inquiries regarding programs for which RFEs *have already been submitted* should be directed to the ABET Accreditation Department at accreditation@abet.org.

ABET does not allow current members of its accreditation commissions or Board of Directors to consult on accreditation matters because of potential conflicts of interest. However, the ABET Foundation does maintain a list of past ABET commission members who are available to assist programs and institutions in preparing for accreditation application. The ensuing arrangements are strictly between the institution and the ABET Foundation and do not involve ABET. Recommendations thus obtained reflect the consultant's experience and do not reflect an official ABET position. Receiving consultation or other services from the ABET Foundation does not guarantee achieving ABET accreditation. Contact the ABET Foundation at info@abetfoundation.org for more information.

Evaluations

ABET's policies require a comprehensive reevaluation of each accredited program at least every six years. These comprehensive evaluations are referred to as "general reviews." If the criteria are not fully satisfied, additional focused evaluations may be required between the six-year comprehensive evaluations. These focused evaluations may require either a report or a visit.

Accreditation Costs

There are two types of costs associated with ABET accreditation: review fees (due within 30 days of invoice issuance for U.S. programs and 45 days for non-U.S. programs) and annual maintenance fees (due within 30 days of invoice issuance for U.S. programs and within 45 days of invoice issuance for non-U.S. programs once ABET accreditation is achieved). If a campus visit is required (which is always the case for an initial accreditation and for general reviews), the review fee is based upon the team's size. Generally, the minimum team size is **three** for a single program, i.e., one team chair and two program evaluators. For visits involving more than one program, the team size will typically be one team chair and one program evaluator for each program.

The annual maintenance fee covers the cost of maintaining the updated records of accreditation status. For programs in the U.S. not aligned with a lead professional society and all non-U.S. programs, an additional curricular fee is also assessed on an annual basis.

For programs that are required to complete a Readiness Review, please visit www.abet.org/readiness-review/ for associated fees.

The Typical Initial Accreditation Scenario

When a program thinks that it is ready to seek initial accreditation, the following steps should be taken:

- 1) Each program requesting evaluation should submit a completed *Request for Evaluation* (RFE) form, along with one official transcript from the most recent graduating class, to ABET by January 31 of the year in which an evaluation is desired. Institutions outside of the U.S. are also required to provide a *Request for Approval* (RFA) completed by each appropriate recognition/accreditation agency no later than



January 31. The RFE form and RFA form are available at www.abet.org/request-an-evaluation/. All documents must be provided in English or come with a certified/official English translation.

- 2) The program should prepare a Self-Study Report. This report should follow the Self-Study Questionnaire format for the appropriate accreditation commission(s). These questionnaires are available for download from www.abet.org/accreditation-criteria-policies-documents/. A copy (CD, flash drive, or paper) of the Self-Study Report must be provided to ABET by July 1 following submission of the RFE. The institution must also provide copies of this report to the evaluation team members when directed.
- 3) ABET will assign a team chair for the evaluation visit. This will typically occur in May. An institution must be willing to accept the assigned team chair. The only acceptable reason to reject a team chair is a documented or perceived conflict of interest. The institution will be provided with the opportunity to reject the assigned team chair if a conflict of interest is identified.
- 4) ABET expects prompt payment for all accreditation services. Visit fees are invoiced May 1 and must be paid within 45 days. Maintenance fees are invoiced October 1 and must be paid within 30 days. All payments are to be made in U.S. dollars. Non-payment of fees may result in cancellation of the visit, withholding of the Draft and/or Final Statements to the institution, and/or removal from the list of accredited programs.
- 5) The visit dates will be negotiated between the ABET team chair and the institution. The visit will generally occur in the

September-through-December period while the program is in session.

- 6) Program evaluators are typically assigned by the end of July. The team chair will provide information about the assigned program evaluators to the institution. An institution must be willing to accept the assigned program evaluators. The only acceptable reason to reject a program evaluator is a documented or perceived conflict of interest. The institution will be provided with the opportunity to reject an assigned program evaluator if a conflict of interest is identified.
- 7) The evaluation team will usually arrive on campus on a Saturday or Sunday. The campus visit will normally be conducted on a Monday and Tuesday, concluding with an exit meeting with the institution's chief executive officer, dean, and other appropriate officials. The exit meeting is intended to convey to the institution a summary of the results of the evaluation at that time.
- 8) After the visit, there will be a seven-day period during which the institution may respond to perceived errors of fact in the material that the team presented during the exit meeting.
- 9) Following the seven-day period, the ABET team chair will prepare a Draft Statement to the institution. This Draft Statement will undergo an extensive editorial process and will be provided to the institution several months after the visit.
- 10) Upon receipt of the Draft Statement, the institution will have a 30-day period in which to respond to issues identified in the evaluation. This period is referred to as the *due process response period*.
- 11) Upon receipt of any due process response, a Final Statement to the institution will be prepared.
- 12) The entire commission reviews the Final Statement to the institution at its annual meeting in July following the visit. The commission will consider any additional material related to issues identified in the evaluation if the institution provides it to the commission with enough time for the commission to effectively review it.
- 13) The commission will determine the final accreditation action, which will be communicated to the institution no later than August 31.

Retroactive Accreditation

ABET accreditation can be granted only if at least one student has graduated from the designated program. Retroactive accreditation may be granted to cover students who graduated during the academic year prior to the evaluation visit. Typically, these are the students whose sample work and transcripts have been evaluated. Thus, if a new program desires to have its first graduates covered by accreditation, the program's initial visit should be arranged for the September-December time period immediately following the academic year in which the first students graduate.

Other Questions

Please contact ABET at accreditation@abet.org with questions not addressed above.



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