

AACSB Moves to ISO 9001 Certification

In order to sustain a system of continuous improvement, AACSB elected to work toward the globally recognized ISO 9001 certification in quality management. The ISO family of quality management standards were designed to assure that an organization provides the highest level of service to its stakeholders.

Although some organizations may choose to go down the path of ISO certification on their own, AACSB decided to use the services of consultants with years of experience implementing ISO standards. ISO consulting firm Assess-it was hired to work with accreditation staff on this project. Previously, the Assess-it team worked with another specialized accreditor, ABET, which achieved ISO 9001 certification in 2015. An internal ISO working group led by Bob Reid will be working closely with Assess-it. In fact, the work has already begun. Over two days in late November, consultants from Assess-it visited AACSB's Tampa office and met with Bob Reid, accreditation team members, and IT staff. The initial feedback from the consultants was that there were "no real surprises," as many of our current processes appear to meet some of the ISO guidelines.

As a global association supporting various global networks and processes, recognition and alignment with an international quality improvement organization complements AACSB's growth in membership and accreditation in markets outside of North America. For example, China, one of AACSB's leading growth countries, holds the largest number of certified organizations at 342,800 (2014 data), with Japan and India placing third and fourth respectively in number of certifications. Of the top 10 countries holding ISO 9000 certifications, the U.S. places No. 8, preceded by the European countries of Italy, Germany, U.K., and Spain.

To maintain certification, organizations are visited by certification specialists on a yearly basis, generally a one-day visit. Every three years a more extensive visit occurs. Based on ABET's experience, we anticipate that the process will take at least two years and will occur in conjunction with the implementation of the new myAccreditation online portal. The next 24 months will be a challenging time, but the end result will provide all stakeholders, and certainly our volunteers, a technology-centered and efficient way of engaging with AACSB.