

2014 edition

ABEST21 Accreditation Manual



2014

**ABEST21
THE ALLIANCE ON BUSINESS EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP
FOR TOMORROW, a 21st century organization**

I. Introduction

1. The Purpose of Accreditation

ABEST21 accreditation aims to guarantee the quality of education and research at business schools focused at the development of highly qualified professionals engaged in the organizational management of business enterprises, etc., including business administration, technology management, the management of information systems, finance, etc. Furthermore, ABEST21 accreditation promotes the school's proactive approach to improving and developing its educational and research activities through PDCA cycle, on the premise of its own independent self-check/self-evaluation and an objective analysis through peer review. In the age of rapid globalization, nurturing highly skilled professionals in the area of international business is a task of pressing urgency for Asian countries in particular. Therefore, ABEST21 aims to review the quality of management education in business schools through its accreditation process.

The first aspect is the accreditation of the school's educational program by checking whether it meets the accreditation standards. Focusing on the educational quality assurance, which is one of the purposes of accreditation, the applicant school conducts self-check/self-evaluation on its educational research activities based on the accreditation standards. ABEST21 will assess this self-check/self-evaluation result and judge if the school is "accredited" or "not accredited". However, meeting accreditation standards are not sufficient to ensure the continuous enhancement of the educational quality. If the only purpose of accreditation is to meet accreditation standards, the applicants in general tend to conduct self-check/self-evaluation only to obtain the accreditation certificate, and become passive, making the minimum effort to overcome the hurdle. The applicant schools will recognize the accreditation as an unavoidable pass point, and educational quality assurance will be considered as a secondary aspect of accreditation.

This is why the second aspect of accreditation is included in the ABEST21 certificate. It involves assessment on practicability; the applicant's ability to spot the problems through self-check/self-evaluation, to indicate the ways to resolve the problems, and to improve its quality of education on a constant basis. Naturally, the assessment result will vary. The measures to enhance the quality of education will be assessed as "Excellent", "Very good", "Fair", or "Poor". In a society where educational research environment is changing rapidly, we consider that evaluating the practicability of "enhancement of educational quality" as an accrediting institution is our social responsibility to our stakeholders, because the stakeholders expect such evaluations to be practiced. The stakeholders expect to benefit from the applicant's value-added educational services. For instance, the students expect to receive value-added educational service which exceeds the total costs they pay, such as tuition and the student's time, energy, and psychic costs. If the student satisfaction degree is high the school will have more applicants, and if the degree is low, less applicants. Under the changing environment, the applicant school needs to assure its stakeholders that it has the system of providing value-added education to meet their expectations. Accrediting institutions are responsible for providing such assurance, because the assurance relies on the accreditation content. This is the reason why ABEST21 Accreditation emphasizes "educational quality enhancement" and considers the above two dimensions of the accreditation.

2. Accreditation Process

The School has to jump the two hurdles of review in the accreditation process conducted as follows:

1) The first hurdle is the Accreditation Plan

The School has to submit its Accreditation Plan. In preparing the Accreditation Plan, the School has to conduct SWOT analysis to determine the external environmental factors which present "Opportunities" and "Threats", and analyze the internal environmental factors which present "Strengths" and "Weaknesses." Based on this SWOT Analysis, the School has to examine its fundamental strategy to realize its Mission Statement.

2) The second step is the Self-Evaluation Report

As soon as the School passed the first step of Accreditation Plan, the School should carry out an extensive Self-Check/Self-Evaluation analysis covering the 18 Basic Standards and 78 Detailed Standards, and write the Self-Evaluation Report. It is aimed to help the School gain a clear understanding of organized improvement in the School's management education and to find out more detailed issues to be improved base on the ABEST21 Accreditation Standards for quality improvement of management education in the School.

3. SWOT analysis and the School's Strategies

In order to achieve its mission as outlined in the "Mission Statement", a school must have a strategy. The word "strategy" is commonly used in the field of corporate management and in the business school courses. However, because this word comes from a military jargon, some tend to dislike using it in the educational context, saying that a university is not a military organization. However, a strategy is indispensable for a school to accomplish its mission statement.

The school applying for accreditation must consider how to achieve its mission, which is described in the "Mission Statement". In that process, the school will envision what it wants to be, and how this vision can be brought to life through implementing the long-term action plan. Within its educational and research environment, the school will determine the external environmental factors which present "Opportunities" and "Threats", and analyze the internal environmental factors which present "Strengths" and "Weaknesses". Through these steps the school will search for the position to realize the "Educational and Research Objectives". Development of an action plan to achieve this is the very strategy required.

If we do not request the applicant school to analyze its strategy, the school will only analyze its ongoing educational and research activities based on the accreditation standards, checking whether they satisfy the criteria or not. Such evaluation approach will only produce many similar schools. Each school has its DNA on which it stands. DNAs are totally different among schools, with individual characteristics. Thus, the school should pursue what it wants to be basing on its DNA as a source of uniqueness. Moreover, in the world today where external environment is changing dramatically, the school should design the concept of what it *should* be as an extension of what it *wants* to be. Then, an action plan to realize these goals must be developed. This is why we can never omit the "assessment of strategy" in the process of accreditation, when "educational quality assurance" is assessed under the changing environment.

In order to realize the School's mission statement, the school is requested to analyze the strategy, which is assessed by ABEST21. If the strategy analysis is not clear, the school's self-evaluation analysis will lose focus. It will only judge whether the criteria are met or not, and no issues for improvement will be found to realize the vision of what the school wants to be or should be. If the school is not obliged to analyze the strategy, it will probably concentrate on how to weave one's way through with minimum effort and will not even attempt to anticipate the future. Such school will regard accreditation as a mere pass point and its self-evaluation analysis will end as a status quo, lacking the motivation to pursue its vision – what it wants to be or what it should be.

When the strategy is analyzed, the self-evaluation analysis indicates a clear attitude to solve

problems by clarifying the “self-evaluation and kaizen issues” and to make positive steps to become what the school wants to be or what it should be. It is a sign of eagerness of the school to realize its aim in the future. In reality, however, not many schools conduct self-evaluation analysis related to strategy analysis. The two analyses are done separately. This is because the strategy planning does not control analyses on self-evaluation, kaizen issues, kaizen solution, and action plan.

The reason why ABEST21 emphasizes on strategy analysis is because we wish to support the school’s shift from “what it wants to be” to “what it should be”, through substantial self-evaluation analysis, and not a formal one. We regard that “educational quality enhancement” is a fruit of strategy implementation, and not an aim.

4. The Guidelines of Management Accreditation Standards

In order to achieve “educational quality enhancement”, we will need to assess the educational system from the viewpoint of combining appropriately the components of “Faculty”, “Student”, “Curriculum” and “Supporting staff and Infrastructure” to realize the “Mission Statement”.

Chapter One “Mission Statement”

Stating the school’s “Mission Statement” presents a certain problem. From an accreditation viewpoint, the “Mission Statement” is a key factor for quality assurance and enhancement of educational research activities. A university must maintain its educational environment to achieve the “Mission Statement”. To realize it, factors such as “Educational Programs”, “Students”, “Faculty”, and “Staff and Infrastructure” must be combined organically. The “Mission Statement” need to be developed in line with the change of environment. Universities must survive in a “world with an environment”, and not in a “vacuum”. Thus the “Mission Statement” must respond to the needs of the society.

In reality, however, the “Mission Statement” are often stipulated in an abstract manner. Many universities treat the “Educational and Research Objectives” in the same way as their mission, philosophy, or educational policy. There is no clear process for regular review. Once the “Mission Statement” are set, they are handled as a permanent rule which will never be restated. The “Mission Statement” set after painstaking efforts are treated as an eternal memorial charter. In such case, “Mission Statement” are not functioning properly. Originally, they should be used as decision-making criteria to spot and solve the issues which require improvement under the changing educational environment.

In ABEST21 Accreditation, we thoroughly explain the meaning of “Mission Statement” in the accreditation standards through the guidance for applicant’s self-evaluation analysis. Specifically, the following points concerning the “Mission Statement” need to be clearly understood.

The “Educational and Research Objectives” should:

- be clearly stipulated and publicized,
- aim to nurture world-class human resources,
- reflect the opinions of stakeholders,
- be in line with the mission statement of the university to which the applicant belongs,
- contribute to students’ career development,
- be reviewed regularly to respond to the changes in the educational environment,
- be backed up by a financial strategy to obtain necessary funds.

Chapter Two “Educational Programs”

The second field of ABEST21 accreditation items is Educational Programs. Educational Programs are important evaluation items because they are the key to assuring that students gain the

necessary expertise to acquire the qualities as outlined in the School's mission statement. In order to ensure the effectiveness of the Educational Programs, we need to assess the effectiveness of factors including "Learning Goals", "Curriculum", "Educational Level", and "Measures to Improve Educational Quality". Here are some specific examples of the items to be evaluated.

First of all, "Learning Goals" for expertise and skills which students are expected to develop must be clarified. To nurture world-class professionals, the goals must be set to meet the needs of this age, in light of cultural, social, and economic innovation and globalization as well as science and technology development.

The tool to realize these goals is "Curriculum". This is the core item in evaluating the effectiveness of the "Educational Programs". Good curriculum will ensure that the students gain the necessary expertise to acquire the qualities as outlined in the school's mission statement. Assessment of curriculum includes perspectives such as systematic design, bridging theory and practice based on practical needs, acquirement of advanced expertise, skills and vocational capability, promoting ethical behavior and widening of international perspective. There should also exist a process of reviewing whether curriculum is improved in response to the changes in the educational research environment.

The next issue is "Educational Level" in the teaching based on the curriculum. If the educational level is poor, it may be difficult to nurture human resources to realize the mission statement, or to guarantee the effectiveness of the curriculum. It is very important to think how to maintain the educational level. In assessing the educational level there are several key perspectives: maintenance of learning environment and guidance system, securing necessary class hours for study per credit, appropriate course schedule, limiting the number of credits per registration, stating clear criteria for grades and completion of the course, maintaining objectivity and strictness in grading and judgment of course completion, maintaining adequate number of students per course, providing appropriate course guidance, advisory support for study and career development, sharing information of students' course registration and credit earning among the faculty, etc.

Finally, the issue of "Measures to Improve Educational Quality" concerns the school's efforts as a whole. It is a question of having a system to spot issues for improvement and actually make improvements in response to the changes in the educational research environment. For example, we can consider a syllabus, which is a kind of contract regarding the course between the school and the students. It is necessary to spot any problems based on the different perspectives: whether the class is conducted according to the syllabus, peer review of the syllabus, sufficient research based on data of student registration, credit earned, academic performance, course completion and career options. Effort must be made to improve any problem found. Without such effort, it may be difficult to improve the quality of education, and therefore – to realize the mission statement.

Chapter Three "Students"

The third field of ABEST21 accreditation items is the "Students." Student is the major player in achieving the mission statement. For educational institutions aiming to nurture human resources, the students are the human resources. The institutions need to make sure that their students are equipped with the abilities required to achieve the mission statement. Following are the guidelines to achieve this goal.

First of all, it is necessary to set a clear student profile. Students should have the potential to acquire qualities described in the mission statement, and be able to acquire these through the education as designed in the curriculum. The point is whether the school admission process is consistent with the mission statement. Student profile shall assure the career options for the

students. Therefore in order to guarantee future career pathway for the students as described in the mission statement, the school should admit students with the ability to learn through the school's educational programs. Students should be selected based on a clear student profile.

Secondly, an admission policy which works as a criterion for student selection is necessary. For the policy to function well, qualifications of applicants must be clarified and publicized in application guidebook, etc. There was a case of new department which had planned an international seminar as part of the educational program. Just before the start of the seminar, it turned out that only 30% of the students were qualified to participate. To avoid such cases, the schools are required to select students through strict and objective evaluation of the applicants' ability and aptitude. School failing to do so may admit students who will never be a major player in achieving the mission statement, or may miss the chance to admit a potential major player.

Thirdly, some students face external/internal problems while continuing with their study. For example, external problems involve financial, career, or academic issues. Schools are required to maintain a system to provide support to the students who may need it.

Lastly, in relation to internal problems, systematic approaches such as rewards for outstanding students as well as guidance to help the poor performers are necessary.

Chapter Four "Faculty"

The fourth factor of an educational system in realizing the Mission Statement is the "Faculty". It is a factor which has a direct impact on developing the students into the ideal professionals with the characteristics described in the Mission Statement. Thus the quality assurance of a faculty is a key assessment item. In assessment of a faculty, two perspectives are required; assessment of a faculty as an organization based on qualitative and quantitative viewpoint, and assessment of the educational research ability of the individual faculty members. In addition, dynamic assessment is necessary to assess the organizational ability to respond to the changes of the educational research environment.

The specific items for faculty assessment are as follows.

1) Secure a sufficient number of faculty members

- The school must hire a number of full-time members which is sufficient to deliver the educational program to achieve the Mission Statement.
- The school must maintain a sufficient number of full-time members to teach core subjects.
- The school must maintain a sufficient number of professional members.
- The school must maintain a reasonable balance between the numbers of full-time and part-time members.
- The school must establish a diverse faculty body.

2) Secure capable faculty members

- The school must hire capable faculty members to achieve the Mission Statement.
- The school must have a process to assess the capabilities of the faculty members.
- The school must disclose the materials concerning educational research performance of the faculty members.
- The school must establish the rules and standards for appointment and promotion of faculty members.
- The school must have a process to discuss appointment and promotion of faculty members.

3) Maintain educational research environment for the faculty members

- The school must maintain a good environment to promote educational research activities.
- The school must limit the number of classes its faculty members may teach so that they may develop their educational research activities.

- The school must maintain a system to support the faculty members in obtaining research funds required for educational research activities.
 - The school must maintain a system to support the faculty members with administration/technical staff required for educational research activities.
 - The school must take appropriate measures to activate the educational programs required for educational research activities.
- 4) Responsibility of faculty members
- The faculty members must make effort to communicate with the stakeholders and promote academic research in order to achieve the Mission Statement.
 - The faculty members must make effort to develop their course contents, materials used in their courses, and teaching methods as well as reviewing course evaluation by students.
 - The faculty members must devote themselves to increasing expertise and specialized knowledge in their respective fields.
 - The faculty members must help students achieve their academic goals by setting office hours to provide educational guidance to students and by communicating by e-mail with their students.

Chapter Five “Supporting Staff and Infrastructure”

The School is required to maintain good infrastructure to achieve the Mission Statement. Infrastructure is one of the important contributors to the quality of the educational services provided by the school. Business schools aiming to nurture management professionals must provide educational services to meet the expectations of students. Therefore the schools need to clarify the contents of value-added services which should match the costs borne by the students. So far we have discussed the following factors of the educational services: educational research performance by the faculty, the contents of educational program, student capability, etc. The final factor is “infrastructure” which supports the stakeholders’ educational research activities by providing sufficient administrative support, facilities and equipment.

The main assessment items related to infrastructure maintenance are as follows.

- The school must secure administrative body to support educational and research activities of its faculty members.
- The school must institute appropriate administrative systems in proportion to its size and status.
- The school must maintain facilities and equipment suitable for its educational and research organizations, and its educational program.
- The school must maintain a full range of facilities, such as classrooms, seminar rooms, and study rooms, in order to improve the efficiency of its programs.
- The school must provide individual offices for each full-time faculty member.
- The school must systematically maintain a collection of books, academic journals, and audiovisual materials for the educational and research activities of both students and faculty.
- The school must provide study environments which encourage students to engage in self-study.

The issue of infrastructure can become a bottleneck in creating educational environment which responds to globalization, especially when accepting foreign students. Here are some examples of problem cases: a school accepts Muslim students but does not provide prayer rooms for them, a school accepts part-time students but the administrative systems are instituted for full-time students, a school accepts foreign students but the administrative body cannot provide good support for them, and the campus guide information is given only in native language. The university’s management systems and administrative systems may be the Dark Continent in globalizing the educational and research environment.

5. Management Accreditation Standards

For accrediting business schools, ABEST21 offers a basic perspective for each of the 18 items of accreditation standards, as well as a detailed perspective for each item, in order to evaluate the School's quality maintenance and its improvement of education and research activities. The basic perspectives for each of the accreditation standards are fundamental criteria which serve to guarantee the quality of School's educational and research activities. The detailed perspectives serve as evaluation items in order to guarantee the quality of applicant's educational activities from an individual and specific perspective.

For further details of the Management Accreditation Standards, please refer to our website at www.abest21.org.

II. Accreditation Plan (AP)

1. The Objectives of Accreditation Plan

The Accreditation Plan must be self-critical rather than promotional, and analytical as well as descriptive. The information produced must be sufficient to allow an understanding of the School's situation and to support the work of the international peer review team. In order to achieve the School's Mission Statement, the self-check/self-evaluation process is designed to help the School gain a clear understanding of its strategic position by assessing its strengths and weakness, by measuring the principal constraints and opportunities determined by its environment, and by looking realistically at the coherence between its ambitions and its resources. The process is also designed to lead the School to judge the overall effectiveness of its own processes. It should contribute substantially to the development of the School and in itself provide considerable added value. The Accreditation Plan is prepared according to respective designated formats.

2. Contents of the Accreditation Plan

The AP should in no way be presented or used as a promotional document. It should instead serve as a useful internal reference document. The overall report should be unified piece of work, rather than a collection of separate individual reports. The Report must cover eight areas as follows;

- 1) Management Education in Home Country
- 2) The School's History and Profile

The School must describe basic factual information about the School, the School's history, and the School's distinguished educational and research activities. The School should present a historical perspective, *i.e.* how the School has developed and how it sees its future.

- 3) The School's Mission Statement

The School's Mission Statement must not be a mere statement of ideal or spirit of foundation or a welcome message towards its stakeholders but must clearly clarify its goals for continuous development of its management education.

- 4) SWOT analysis and the School's Strategies

The School must design basic strategy in order to achieve the School's Mission Statement. When neither mission nor strategy is clarified, start discussing them. Necessity for quality improvement of management education comes from a clear the School's Mission Statement, and planning of strategy to realize the goal is indispensable. In order to plan the strategy, clear analyses should be conducted by assessing its strengths and weakness and by measuring the principal constraints and opportunities determined by its environment. The School's strategies must be delivered from SWOT Analysis and clear up the guideline of next step for further development of its management education.

- 5) The School's Educational Programs
- 6) Uniqueness in the School's Educational Programs
- 7) The Scope of Accreditation
- 8) Working group to treat ABEST21 Accreditation
- 9) For the school which applies the Maintenance Accreditation

3. Format

The Main Report of the AP must be in Word format between 25 and 30 pages in length and be

printed one-sided, excluding annexes and supporting documents. A page of the Main Report should be vertical A4 size, 25mm margin, Tahoma font, 10.5 text size, 1.15 line space, and 47 lines.

4. Schedule

1) When to submit

Deadline for submission of the AP is by the end of September, 2014.

2) Where and How to submit

The AP must be accompanied by both cover pages with a table of contents and a cover letter signed by Dean. The cover page should clearly state the full name of the School and the date of submission. The AP must be sent to the ABEST21 Accreditation Division in hard copy and electronic copy. The electric copy of the Main Report should be sent in both MS Word format and PDF format. An electric copy of other documents such as cover letter, Annexes, and Supporting Documents must be sent in PDF format.

5. Contact Information

ABEST21 Accreditation Division: 5-4-29, Minami-Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo, 107-0062, JAPAN
E-mail : ABEST21@abest21.org, Phone: +81-(0)3-3498-6220, FAX: +81-(0)3-3498-6221

III. Self-Evaluation Report (SER)

1. The Objectives of Self-Evaluation Report

As soon as the School passed the first step of Accreditation Plan, the School should carry out an extensive Self-Check/Self-Evaluation analysis covering the 18 Basic Standards and 78 Detailed Standards, and write the Self-Evaluation Report. It is aimed to help the School gain a clear understanding of organized improvement in the School's management education and to find out more detailed issues to be improved based on 18 Basic Standards and 78 Detailed Standards for quality improvement of management education in the School. In improving issues, the School is provided the opportunity to enhance quality of management education in the School and take an advanced step as a going concern. Therefore, the School should refer constantly to the ABEST21 Management Standards and Guidance which explains in detail what should be covered for each of the five areas in Accreditation Standards.

The Self-Evaluation Report must be self-critical rather than promotional, and analytical as well as descriptive. The information produced must be sufficient to allow an understanding of the School's situation and to support the work of the international peer review team. In order to achieve the School's Mission Statement, the self-check/self-evaluation process is designed to help the School gain a clear understanding of its strategic position by assessing its strengths and weakness, by measuring the principal constraints and opportunities determined by its environment, and by looking realistically at the coherence between its ambitions and its resources. The process is also designed to lead the School to judge the overall effectiveness of its own processes. It should contribute substantially to the development of the School and in itself provide considerable added value. The SER is prepared according to respective designated formats. The School must prepare two kinds of documents, that is, the Main Report and the Annexes and Supporting Documents. The main objective of writing the Self-Evaluation Report is to understand improvement issues surrounding further development of its management education and to set designated goals to resolve the issues. The SER must be self-critical rather than promotional, and analytical as well as descriptive.

2. Contents of the Self-Evaluation Report

The SER should in no way be presented or used as a promotional document. It should instead serve as a useful internal reference document. The overall report should be unified piece of work, rather than a collection of separate individual reports. The Main Report must cover five areas such as Mission Statement, Educational Programs, Students, Faculty, and Supporting Staff & Infrastructure.

I. An Outline of the Accreditation Plan

The School explains an outline of the Accreditation Plan about following topics:

- 1) The School's History and Profile
- 2) The School's Mission Statement
- 3) the School's Strategies
- 4) The School's Educational Programs and the Scope of Accreditation
- 5) Uniqueness in the School's Educational Programs

II. Self-Check/Self-Evaluation analysis

The School must carry out self-check/self-evaluation by positive analysis and the write the SER covers following items in line with ABEST21 Accreditation Standards and its Guidance.

- 1) Self-Check/Self-Evaluation analysis

ABEST21 Management Accreditation Standards consist of five areas, namely, 1) Mission

Statement, 2) Educational Programs, 3) Students, 4) Faculty and 5) Staff and Infrastructure. Each area consists of standards related to the theme of the area, and under these standards there are Criteria which are detailed standards for self-check. In analysis of the SER, the School has to conduct Self-Check/Self-Evaluation on education and research activities based on the 18 Basic Standards and 78 Detailed Standards. The Self-Check/Self-Evaluation must be self-critical, and analytical as well as descriptive. The data indicated in the analysis should be used the date as of May 2013.

2) Improvement Issues

The School has to arrange the improvement issues found through Self-Check/Self-Evaluation analysis by sorting out similar related issues in each of five chapters. And, the School has to make priority based on the level of importance and urgency through the chapters.

- Chapter One: Mission Statement
- Chapter Two: Educational Programs
- Chapter Three: Students
- Chapter Four: Faculty
- Chapter Five: Supporting Staff and Infrastructure

3) Improvement Initiatives

The School has to plan the Basic Improvement Initiatives according to the priority for the Improvement Issues.

4) Action Plans for three years

The School must draw up the three-year action plans on the basis of Improvement Initiatives planned by the School.

III. Annexes and Supporting Documents

Annexes and supporting documents to the SER must include with following four materials:

- 1) Curricula
- 2) Faculty Organization
- 3) Faculty's Educational and Research Achievements
- 4) Infrastructure

The Annexes and supporting documents are provided at the end of the Self-Evaluation Report.

3. Format

The Main Report of the SER must be in Word format between 75 and 100 pages in length and be printed one-sided, excluding annexes and supporting documents. A page of the Main Report should be vertical A4 size, 25mm margin, Tahoma font, 10.5 text size, 1.15 line space, and 47 lines.

The Main Report should be accompanied by a cover letter detailing the name of the individual to contact in case of questions related to the report. The cover of the Main Report and Abstract should clearly state the full name of the School and the date of submission to the ABEST21.

4. Schedule

1) When to submit

Deadline for submission of the SER is by the end of June, 2014.

2) Where and How to submit

The SER must be accompanied by both cover pages with a table of contents and a cover letter signed by Dean. The cover page should clearly state the full name of the School and the date of submission. The SER must be sent to the ABEST21 Accreditation Division in hard copy and electronic copy. The electric copy of the Main Report should be sent in both MS Word format and

PDF format. An electric copy of other documents such as cover letter, Annexes, and Supporting Documents must be sent in PDF format.

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