

COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

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International Council for Online Educational Standards



POLICY & STANDARDS

This set of policy and standards is organised into 7 areas of action.

For each area of action, a set of standards will need to be verified with the appropriate evidences which a provider must submit to achieve accreditation.



- ✦ Administrative Accountability
- ✦ Integrity & Transparency
- ✦ Program Criteria & Academic Quality
- ✦ Assessments & Examinations
- ✦ Learners
- ✦ Tutors
- ✦ Staff

A. Administrative Accountability

The accreditation standards covered by Administrative Accountability refer to presentation of evidences regarding the legal responsibility, administrative procedures and practices, the organisational structure of the company, financial stability, references and resources.

Compliance with the standards listed below will qualify your organisation for accreditation related to all processes regarding administrative accountability.

1. Legality & QA Policies

- ✧ The quality assurance policies are made clear to all internal staff and are part of the strategic management of the organisation. ICOES standards are part of the institution's organisational structure and all relevant feedback is forwarded to ICOES promptly when needed.
- ✧ The organisation's legal identification must be evidenced:
Name, vision, mission, values, legal identity and registration (legal status), type of e-learning education offered and delivery method (Purely online with no face-to-face meetings, Blended Learning with practical component, Synchronous, Asynchronous, Web based, or combination...)
- ✧ The provider recommends and encourages his learners to notify ICOES about their satisfaction, complaints or any opinions or suggestions about the learning program. This will facilitate continual improvement and ICOES will be able to guarantee that quality standards are consistently followed.

2. Administrative Procedures and Practice

- ✧ A well structured and organised administrative system is in place for keeping up-to-date records of students, current course/module, resources or any relevant data to support an efficient operational procedure within the institution.
- ✧ The performance of the provider is monitored and reviewed on a regular basis through efficient and well organised systems.
- ✧ Effective systems are in place to monitor the standards and performance within the institution to guarantee continuous improvement. Annual reports should be in place to determine the results in all areas concerning the evolution and enhancement of the provider. Reports acknowledging student satisfaction, evolution, achievements, examination results and completion rates are set up as part of the organisational structure.

- ✧ Clear action plans are performed and are periodically analysed. The management team is informed of the outcomes.
- ✧ The organisation has implemented the appropriate procedures and policies to safeguard the confidentiality of records and details of its learners and tutors and ensures that they are used for the intended purposes only.
- ✧ An appropriate system is in place to handle and safeguard unexpected adjustments, e.g. a change in the tutors, or dates.
- ✧ There are means in place to access and monitor the feedback from learners and other stakeholders, such as staff, partner providers and employers. A management team has an action plan in the organisational structure to review and act on improvements as necessary, such as improving tutorial materials, the delivery of instructions and educational services.
- ✧ There's a mechanism in place for guaranteeing that learners are able to recognise what actions have taken place from the result of their feedback.

3. Organisational Structure

- ✧ All roles and responsibilities of the team are clear and well known. The team is well informed and all relevant information is clearly communicated to the respective personnel, especially those working remotely.
- ✧ The management team is well structured and clearly understand their responsibilities and duties which are effectively and efficiently accomplished.

4. Resources

- ✧ The size of the administrative team and the resources available are sufficient to ensure the day-to-day running of the organisation.
- ✧ All administrative support and resources available in the institution are well defined, acknowledged and identified.
- ✧ There are sufficient resources available to guarantee that reasonable needs of the learners are met and that they receive an adequate service.
- ✧ There's an experienced IT technician to ensure the operational systems work properly at all times and that all support is given to staff, learners and tutors working remotely.

5. References

- ✧ Any references relating to the institution's educational quality (of accreditation, recognition, memberships, organisational approvals from third parties, quality assurance certifications) must be described. Evidences need to be provided.

6. Financial Stability

- ✧ Evidence of financial stability: the institution shows that it can perform its financial duties responsibly and can meet the obligations to learners. The organisation should have a business plan in place to support its future development.

B. Integrity & Transparency

The accreditation standards covered by Integrity and Transparency refer to the presentation of evidences regarding the accuracy of the information provided, admission, support given, Post-graduate service, conduct and promotional activities.

Compliance with the standards listed below will give the organisation the accreditation related to all results regarding integrity and transparency.

1. Accuracy & Information

- ✧ Prior to enrolment to any course, all relevant information is provided to the student. The terms and conditions corresponding to each specific course are clearly stated. The information should cover the following points:
 - » Legal status of the provider.
 - » Type of education offered online.
 - » Access and enrolment criteria.
 - » Tuition/course fees, schedule of payment and any policies which will relate to it, should be clearly defined and described. Any additional costs should be specified.
 - » Refund/rescheduling/cancellation policy.
 - » Total hours of course/module and estimated duration.
 - » Pre-requisites, course curriculum, objectives and expected learning outcomes.
 - » Clear instructions and suggestions on how to study, how to use the course/module and tutorial resources to support learners to learn efficiently and effectively.
 - » Availability of resources.
 - » Tutors' qualifications and relevant professional experiences.
 - » Qualifications, certification, level of recognition, professional and/or licensing status for the course/module.

- » All relevant terms and conditions.
- ✧ Robust procedures are in place to handle and manage complaints, appeals and refunds.
- ✧ The means by which information is communicated to the customer is outlined, along with the respective deadlines.
- ✧ The provider clearly shows his commitment to support learners to achieve their learning goals and educational outcomes.
- ✧ The technology used by the provider to communicate with the learner is accurate, readily accessible and effective.
- ✧ The provider has clear information about the total number of courses/programs provided and also a clear description for each of them.

2. Admission, Support & Post-graduate Service

- ✧ Steps for application documentation and enrolment are straightforward, transparent, easy to complete and to submit.
- ✧ Before deciding to start a program and prior to enrolment, the learners are made aware of their own responsibility to evaluate their needs and capacity and they are given the possibility to speak with competent staff about these matters.
- ✧ To enhance learner's performance and improve service and learning outcomes, all guidance and communication channels will be provided to students.
- ✧ All necessary procedures are available to support learners in handling any questions or difficulties that might occur during the learning process.
- ✧ An effective assistance and wellbeing procedure should be in place to support students attending face-to-face programs to ensure the needs of the students are properly met.
- ✧ The students records are kept for a minimum period of 5 years. They are accurately kept up to date, including student progress, results, payments, refunds, any relevant agreements, certificates, diplomas, transcripts, letters of enrolment or completion or any other documentation relevant to the student and it can be easily provided upon request.
- ✧ There's a stated period after enrolment when the student can cancel the registration. This information is clearly indicated by the provider.

3. Conduct and Promotional Activities

- ✧ The widely accepted rules and norms on good ethical business and good employment procedures and practices are conducted and followed by the organisation.
- ✧ The provider ensures all legal requirements are respected when the provision of services occurs in another country.
- ✧ All promotional activity is conducted in a fair and ethical manner, according to best practices and legislation.
 - » The website, advertising materials or promotional material, and images provide an accurate and comprehensive description of the courses/modules offered.
 - » They give a fair and balanced perspective of the provider, its provision, staff, goals and results.
 - » The information is real, updated and is easily confirmed.
- ✧ The provider has full responsibility for the actions, declarations, and conduct of the sales personnel.
- ✧ If the same program is offered by several partners (2 or more), an agreement needs to be written stating clearly the responsibilities, rights and correct divisions between them.
- ✧ The main provider is responsible for delivery and all aspects related to its products and services and learners need to be aware of this. Partner providers shouldn't claim ownership of a program if it doesn't belong to them.
- ✧ The provider can only claim accreditation in the areas covered by ICOES accreditation services.

C. Program Criteria & Academic Quality

The accreditation standards covered by Program Criteria and Academic Quality refers to the presentation of evidences regarding learning, teaching, development of the program and the outcomes, course/unit design and ongoing development, delivery and services.

Compliance with the standards listed below will give the organisation the accreditation related to all processes regarding program criteria and academic quality.

- ✧ All courses outline clear and easy to understand learning goals and course objectives. Students know from the outset what to expect on completing their chosen course.
- ✧ All learning objectives are presented in a logical order. Students are supported in mastering each stage before progressing to more advanced learning tasks.
- ✧ All content and practice exercises in each course are faithful to that course's learning goals and objectives.
- ✧ Where an education provider sets a time limit for completion of a course, this is clearly outlined. Possible extensions are also stated clearly along with costs.
- ✧ Students are given documentary confirmation of outcomes, where appropriate, on course completion.
- ✧ When successful completion of a course is the declared competence to sit examinations offered, or be otherwise assessed by another external organisation, the learner is informed of this prior to enrolment. He/she is also informed of the respective responsibilities of provider and applicant.
- ✧ Each course and its objectives are given perspective in a broader educational, vocational & professional context.
- ✧ Any resources supplied are suitable to the requirements, knowledge and experience of a stated group of learners.
- ✧ Course providers take all reasonable measures to ensure that course content is effective and free from significant errors of fact, misleading or out-of-date information, concepts or approaches.
- ✧ Course content is designed with a specific and clearly stated level of learner support. Access to this support is easy, effective and inbuilt in course material.

- ✧ Course content is designed to facilitate remote, individual study and the development of study skills.
- ✧ Course material is current and is frequently reviewed to guarantee uniformity and consistency throughout the provision.
- ✧ While developing course content these two areas must be taken into account: independent learning and the guidance of and consultation with the tutor.
- ✧ A qualified and suitable manager with knowledge and experience in the online educational field is the head of the tutor body.
- ✧ There are enough tutors available to provide prompt assistance to learners when needed.
- ✧ There's an efficient recruitment process for tutors which includes a face-to-face interview (e.g. via skype).
- ✧ Course delivery takes into account the following points: the target learners group and their educational needs, enrolment process, program structure, objectives and outcomes, intuitive usage of the program, evaluations criteria and monitoring of the program, tutor guidance, support to learners, resources available.
- ✧ Certificate or Diploma must include:
 - » Name of the student
 - » Completion date of the program
 - » Nature of the award achieved (degree, professional recognition...)
 - » Name of the awarding body
 - » Signature of the representative and/or seal of the awarding body
- ✧ Transcript or equivalent document must include:
 - » Total number of hours of study completed
 - » The subjects studied
 - » Name of the student
 - » Name of the course/module concluded
 - » Completion date
 - » Grades or assessed qualification
 - » Name of the awarding body
 - » Signature of the representative and/or seal of the awarding body
 - » This information can be included in a separate document or it may show on the certificate or diploma

D. Assessments & Examinations

Compliance with the standards listed below will give the organisation the accreditation related to all processes regarding assessments and examinations.

The accreditation standards covered by Assessments and Examinations refer to the presentation of evidences regarding moderation, verification processes and that there are systems in place to ensure evaluation is managed in a correct and effective way.

- ✧ The organisation should have in place a system of supervision and evaluation of the performance of the teaching, assessment and exam activities, as well as a system to access continuous feedback which allows appropriate evaluation and improvement of the quality and efficiency of the teaching and assessment activities.
- ✧ Evidence must show that there are adequate procedures in place to administer assessments and examinations, ensuring they comply with the requirements of the relevant awarding bodies in terms of security and administration of exams.
- ✧ There's a flawless, beginning to end process for the learner, ensuring that the person who registers in the course is the same person participating in, completing and receiving the award/credit. The certificate process is straight forward and easily carried out in a timely and competent manner, ensuring that the learners receive their certificates without delay and correctly.
- ✧ Measures are in place to guarantee the safe delivery of the certificates from the providers to the respective learner or to a representative appointed by the student.
- ✧ Each assessment of ability or knowledge either during a course or on completion, adequately judges a student's achievement for that stage and the results are clearly shown
- ✧ There are strategic assessments throughout the course/module which indicate the achievement of outlined learning outcomes.
- ✧ Claims that successful completion of a course awards a nationally agreed level of competence are supported by the appropriate evidence.
- ✧ Courses that lead to degrees show that those degrees are properly validated.
- ✧ The educational institution takes into consideration, in the assessment processes, principles such as fairness, credibility, reliability, inclusivity, consistency, validity and accuracy.

- ✧ The processes of evaluation chosen and their structures are consistent, adequate, fair and current, according to the specifications of each module/unit and the qualifications being assessed.
- ✧ The assessment results are shown to learners in a timely manner.
- ✧ There's a flawless and effective system in place to store assessment results and they are within easy reach.
- ✧ Students and tutors are aware of the schedule of assessments, the processes and the criteria.

E. Learners

The accreditation standards covered by learners refers to presentation of evidences regarding all processes in respect to students, including support received, access to tutors and the information available which is easily accessible and is accurate.

Compliance with the standards listed below will give the organisation the accreditation related to all procedures at the end of learners processes.

- ✧ A prompt support service, appropriate and sympathetic, is available to help learners with any queries related to course/module contact, general queries or technical issues. Learner's reasonable needs are clearly met.
- ✧ When needed, an accessible and appropriate system is in place so that learners have access to tutors for learning support.
- ✧ Learners are empowered and encouraged to develop autonomous learning skills and are aware that they are responsible for their own learning.
- ✧ Learners are aware of the provider's role of being supportive to their learning.
- ✧ Learners receive feedback and suggestions for improvement to ensure they progress positively, with good performance and keep themselves motivated with their evolution throughout the course/module.
- ✧ Learners receive appropriate assessment which is efficiently monitored.
- ✧ When intervention is needed to support learners in their progress, there are appropriate procedures in place to act promptly and efficiently.

- ✧ Adequate procedures are in place to handle any difficulties between the learner and the provider. Learners are made aware of the different possibilities to resolve any issues that can possibly arise.
- ✧ Learners are advised of and have easy access to the complaints procedures. They are also aware of ICOES complaints procedures.
- ✧ Learners are made aware of all IT system's requirements. They receive adequate technical support whenever needed when the technological problems are the responsibility of the provider.
- ✧ The institution supports and encourages the interactions of the learners through the different communication channels available.
- ✧ Learners attending face-to-face components receive appropriate support.
 - » The provider has policies to avoid discrimination and to deal with any offensive behaviour. Learners are made aware of these.
 - » Learners receive appropriate advice, information and instructions.
 - » Learners are treated with the appropriate respect for their cultural/religious background. The support given will take those aspects into consideration.
- ✧ The resources available are adequate to meet the needs, knowledge and development of skills of the learners.
- ✧ Learners are motivated and encouraged to conclude their course/module.
- ✧ It is the responsibility of the learner to evaluate his own abilities and knowledge to take the chosen course/module. This is clearly stated by the provider.
- ✧ Learners are made aware of the language proficiency needed to complete the course/module according to the language adopted in the program.

F. Tutors

The accreditation standards covered by tutors refers to the presentation of evidence regarding all processes in respect to tutors, including relevant qualifications, experience of the tutors, communicative approach, skillful feedback and the taking into account the needs of learners.

Compliance with the standards listed below will give the organisation the accreditation related to all procedures at the end of tutors processes.

- ✧ Tutors have professional qualifications, experience and knowledge in the relevant subject areas and pedagogical skills.
- ✧ Tutors must have the knowledge and understanding of the requirements of online education.
- ✧ Tutors have a skillful knowledge of the most efficient, communicative approach to make sure the programs are delivered in the most coherent, straightforward and effective form.
- ✧ The tutor's feedback takes into account the importance of maintaining the motivation of the learning experience and therefore should be given constructively and expertly.
- ✧ There's an effective system in place to monitor tutor feedback and evaluation procedures.
- ✧ The tutors are aware and receive training when needed to be up to date with the learners needs, latest policies and the knowledge of the latest pedagogical teaching techniques, methodologies, approaches and technologies.
- ✧ Where appropriate, tutors must take into account, upon design and delivery of a program, the various styles of learning so that the program corresponds with the widest range and variety of learning needs.

G. Staff

The accreditation standards covered by staff refers to the presentation of evidence regarding all processes in respect to staff, including relevant qualifications, experience and skills in all respective areas of the business, number of staff available to perform the required tasks, policies and systems for recruitment, staff development and knowledge about product and customer needs to ensure a positive experience.

Compliance with the standards listed below will give the organisation the accreditation related to all procedures regarding staff processes.

- ✧ The institution must show evidence that all staff have the necessary qualifications, skills and knowledge to perform their roles effectively to assure an excellent and satisfying customer experience and that they are continually motivated to perform well.
- ✧ In regular circumstances there are enough staff to ensure an excellent customer experience.
- ✧ The appropriate policies and effective systems are in place to guarantee the recruitment of qualified new staff whenever required.

- ✧ There's an effective system in place for evaluation of staff performance.
- ✧ Staff development is encouraged and supported. Assistance and sufficient time is given to ensure it is feasible.
- ✧ To ensure that customers have a positive and valuable experience, all staff members are encouraged to contribute and collaborate to make this happen.

Getting Help

To learn more about how to apply for Accreditation visit our [How to Register](#) page.

If you have any questions or would like some further clarification don't hesitate to [Contact us](#) directly.



ICOES

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