

Handbook of Accreditation

of Degree Programs in Project Management

Third Edition (3.1)



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Foreword to the Third Edition (3.1)

This handbook supersedes the *GAC Handbook of Accreditation of Degree Programs in Project Management – Third Edition*, published in 2010. The revisions in this edition reflect the following:

- A revised accreditation standard (C.2.4) regarding Information in the public domain. This standard assists the public in assessing accredited programs' performances, including student achievement.
- More fully detailed GAC Appeals & Complaints policies and processes.
- These revisions to the Handbook were made to clarify and affirm the independence and commitment to rigorous standards of the GAC in its accreditation procedures and decisions.

History of the Development of Earlier Editions:

The *GAC Handbook of Accreditation of Degree Programs in Project Management* was originally published in 2001, concurrent with the founding of the GAC Program. In the years following the release of the original Handbook, the discipline of project management became increasingly recognized in academia throughout the world. In an effort to take advantage of the GAC experience to date and to reflect a global view of this discipline, the GAC began the process of revising its Accreditation Standards in 2007. The Second Edition document, published in 2008, reflecting global input from the respondents listed on pages four and five (below), was the final result.

The Third Edition document, published in 2010, reflected GAC's continued growth by clarifying the scope of the GAC's accreditation program and the GAC's adherence to the highest standards of integrity and independence in performing its accreditation functions.

The GAC wishes to thank the following individuals for their contributions to the continuing development of these standards:

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Preface

The Project Management Institute Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (hereafter referred to as “the GAC”) is a voluntary committee of the Board of Directors of Project Management Institute (PMI). The PMI Board established the GAC in 2001 as an independent academic accreditation body for the policies, procedures and standards for accrediting project management programs at the bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degree levels. The PMI Board also assigned independent authority to the GAC to accredit those programs that meet and maintain the standards of performance as set forth in this Handbook. In 2009, in accordance with its unique role, and in recognition of the need for independent evaluation of academic programs seeking accreditation, PMI and the GAC executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) affirming that the GAC is authorized to perform its duties evaluating and accrediting degree programs related to project management autonomously, and PMI is committed to honoring GAC’s independence in that regard. The GAC Board is governed by a board of volunteer members comprising a balance between academic faculty and industry representatives, with at least one member representing the interests of the public.

The mission of the GAC is to advance excellence in project management education worldwide through collaboration with and support of academic institutions and through accreditation of academic programs. The GAC’s objective is to become recognized as the international authority for project management educational quality standards, supporting a vibrant network of academic programs and faculty that inspire project management thought leadership in education.

To this end, the GAC’s primary objective in the accreditation process is collaboration with colleges, universities and other educational institutions to encourage appropriate education and career development within the field of project management. These processes are intended to ensure that “GAC Accredited” educational programs in project management adequately prepare students to meet the current and anticipated needs of businesses and government organizations for qualified professionals working in the field of project management.

Prospective students, employees and employers may then use the “GAC Accredited” designation as a guide in choosing educational programs related to the field of project management and in recruiting qualified employees within the field of project management.

As recommended by the 1998 PMI Accreditation Options Feasibility Report, the GAC Accreditation Standards are outcome-based rather than prescriptive in nature and allow for recognition of current educational trends such as distance learning. These outcomes have been determined through the study and validation of the roles and tasks, which are generally required within the practice of project management.

This Handbook outlines the overall objectives of GAC Accreditation, the accreditation process for applicant programs, the process for maintaining accreditation, and the Accreditation Standards and Guidelines.

This Handbook is available to all interested parties. Copies may be downloaded from the GAC website at www.gacpm.org or requests for hard copies may be sent to:

The Project Management Institute Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC)

Attn: Accreditation Programs Administrator

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Newtown Square, PA 19073 USA

Tel: +1-610-355-1601

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E-mail: gac@pmi.org

The Project Management Institute Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC) Philosophy of Accreditation

The Project Management Institute Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC) is committed to the attainment and maintenance of excellence and continuous improvement in educational programs related to the field of project management. To this end, it has established the policies, procedures, and standards set forth in this Handbook as a means of assessing the ability of educational programs seeking GAC Accreditation status to achieve the learning and performance objectives described herein. The process is dynamic, and the interpretation of the standards is subject to change as environments, technology, circumstances and stakeholder communities evolve.

Both self-evaluation and peer evaluation by professionals, rather than regulation by external forces, provide the most effective assurance of accountability to the GAC's various stakeholders. Project management degree programs that successfully complete the accreditation review are identified as GAC accredited. The term GAC accredited as used by a program within an institution of higher learning assures students and other stakeholders that the project management instruction that is being provided by that program, meets or exceeds the standards that have been established and defined by the GAC and documented in this Handbook.

The Role and Value of Accreditation

Accreditation has two fundamental purposes: to assure the quality of an institution or program, and to assist in the improvement of the institution or program. Accreditation, which applies to institutions or programs, is to be distinguished from certification and licensure, which apply to individuals.

Accreditation may be conducted at either the *institutional* or *programmatic* level. Bodies conducting *institutional* accreditation consider the characteristics of whole institutions. For this reason, an institutional accrediting body gives attention not only to the educational offerings of the institutions it accredits, but also to other institutional characteristics such as student personnel services, financial conditions, and administrative strength.

Bodies conducting *programmatic* or specialized accreditation, such as the GAC, conduct accreditation of programs preparing students for a profession or occupation. Such bodies are often closely associated with professional associations in the field. A specialized accrediting body focuses its attention on a particular program within an institution of higher education, and provides a basic assurance of the scope and quality of professional or occupational preparation.

The GAC is a specialized accrediting body that assures the quality of project management degree programs at the graduate and undergraduate levels. There are several valuable aspects to this specialized accreditation, in addition to being recognized as one of a select group of programs that embraces and promotes the discipline of project management. Once a program is accredited, its stature within the institution is elevated, as it has completed a rigorous accreditation process, which includes an in-depth Self-evaluation Report and an on-site visit by a team of independent reviewers who verify the findings of the Self-evaluation Report. This self-evaluation leads to the refinement, evolution, and ultimately, improvement of a program.

Section A: About the GAC

The GAC has specific responsibilities and functions to ensure a continual and effective process for the accreditation of degree-granting programs pertaining to the field of project management. The GAC Board's membership includes voting representatives from relevant academic programs, industry, project management stakeholders and the public at large. GAC Board members serve without compensation.

A.1: Mission and Objectives

- A.1.1: | The mission of the GAC is to advance excellence in project management education worldwide through collaboration with and support of academic institutions, and through accreditation of academic programs.
- A.1.2: | The GAC's primary objective in the accreditation process is to ensure that GAC accredited educational programs in project management adequately prepare students to meet the current and anticipated needs of businesses and government organizations for qualified professionals working in the field of project management.
- A.1.3: | Scope of Accreditation: The GAC is a specialized accrediting body that accredits degree programs at the bachelor's, postgraduate and doctorate levels in the field of project management that are offered within accredited institutions of higher education worldwide.

A.2: Powers and Responsibilities

The GAC has the following powers and responsibilities:

- A.2.1: | To function as the policy-making body in all matters related to GAC Accreditation of academic programs in the field of project management, and to be solely responsible for all related decisions.
- A.2.2: | To develop and enhance standards and guidelines for evaluating program effectiveness in the field of project management education and to foster excellence in the same.
- A.2.3: | To develop and maintain policies and procedures, *GAC Handbook of Accreditation of Degree Programs in Project Management, On-Site Visit Guidelines* and other appropriate documentation for programmatic self-evaluation, and to distribute these upon request.
- A.2.4: | To ensure that the accreditation process recognizes the diversity of academic programs in the field of project management and provides assurance that such programs meet the GAC Accreditation Standards, including the Program Outcomes and Project Management Core Learning Outcomes, which have been established by the GAC.
- A.2.5: | To provide counsel and assistance as needed to established and developing academic programs in the field of project management, and to facilitate a collaborative community for these programs.
- A.2.6: | To receive, review, arbitrate and decide written appeals from any applicant program appealing an action of the GAC.
- A.2.7: | To schedule and coordinate the processes of GAC Accreditation of academic programs in the field of project management.
- A.2.8: | The GAC has the sole and final authority for granting GAC Accreditation to applicant academic programs in the field of project management.
- A.2.9: | To commission and appoint members to GAC committees and working teams focusing on specific task areas to ensure effectiveness and continuous improvement in the area of accrediting academic programs in the field of project management.

A.3: Composition, Authority and Governance

A.3.1: | Composition and General Authority.

The GAC Board shall consist of from seven (7) to eleven (11) members that represent the diverse interests of business, industry, academia, government and allied professions. A majority of members shall be drawn from academia, and at least one member shall represent the public-at-large. The public member shall not be currently or previously employed in the project management field, and shall be in good standing in his or her professional community. The Accreditation Programs Administrator shall serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the GAC Board.

- A.3.1.1: GAC Board Members shall be eligible to serve a maximum of three (3) consecutive 3-year terms, or a maximum of nine (9) years total service. Additional terms may be granted upon unanimous consent of the GAC Board.
- A.3.1.2: Members serving on the GAC Board shall reflect:
 - A balance among the geographical location and wide range of educational programs served by the GAC;
 - A balance between academia, industry and the public-at-large;
 - No discrimination on the basis of race, age, religion, national origin, sex or disability nor any other status protected under law.
- A.3.1.3: The appointment of persons representing a wide range of professional and academic interests is designed to provide a balanced, comprehensive review of academic programs pertaining to the discipline of project management.
- A.3.1.4: The general duty of the GAC Board Members shall be to carry out the purposes and objectives of the GAC, in accordance with the GAC Bylaws, in their present or amended form, and with any applicable law.
- A.3.1.5: A Chairperson and Vice Chairperson(s) shall be elected by majority vote of the GAC Board Members, and shall serve for a two-year period provisional upon the time remaining in their respective terms. The term for the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson(s) will start 1 January, immediately following the election.
- A.3.1.6: Specific Authority: The GAC Board Members shall have the authority and control over all matters related to the specific powers and responsibilities delineated under A.2 noted above.
- A.3.1.7: Appointment, removal and replacement of the GAC Chairperson, Vice Chairperson(s), and GAC Board Members shall be in accordance with the procedures delineated in the GAC Bylaws.

A.4: Code of Good Practice

In accord with other accrediting bodies, the GAC and the GAC Board subscribes to and follows these guidelines:

- A.4.1: | Recognize that the primary purpose of its activities is the quality assessment and the enhancement of academic programs in the field of project management;
- A.4.2: | Recognize that accreditation is a dynamic process, and that a program's accreditation status is to be reviewed regularly;

- A.4.3: | Foster the pursuit of excellence and assist in the improvement of academic programs in the field of project management;
- A.4.4: | Design the accreditation process to stimulate academic programs in the field of project management toward continuous improvement;
- A.4.5: | Ensure the effectiveness and objectivity of the accreditation processes, using relevant information and utilizing experienced and qualified evaluators;
- A.4.6: | Ensure that the accreditation processes recognize the diversity of academic programs in the field of project management;
- A.4.7: | Encourage sound educational experimentation and innovation;
- A.4.8: | Regard the text of the evaluation reports and all other communications relating to applicants for accreditation as confidential;
- A.4.9: | Refrains from conditioning or offering accreditation upon the payment of fees for purposes other than administrative fees and actual evaluation costs or for any reason other than the applicant's demonstrated qualification for accreditation.

In addition, each Board Member of the GAC:

- A.4.10: | Shall accept and subscribe to the purposes of accreditation as defined in the GAC's Statement of Mission and Objectives;
- A.4.11: | Shall not discuss matters regarding the accreditation of a specific academic program outside of the formal parameters set by GAC review policy and will refer all inquiries to the Chairperson of the GAC and/or Accreditation Programs Administrator;
- A.4.12: | Shall funnel specific discussions and/or concerns about an academic program's accreditation through the Chairperson of the GAC and/or the Accreditation Programs Administrator;
- A.4.13: | Shall hold in confidence all documents that are prepared for GAC Board meetings;
- A.4.14: | Shall spend the necessary time preparing for GAC Board meetings in order to fully contribute to GAC discussion and action;
- A.4.15: | Will excuse himself/herself from deliberations or votes on decisions regarding any individual programs of which he/she is a former or current employee or trustee, consultant, business partner or supporter;
- A.4.16: | Will not participate in deliberations or vote on decisions in which he/she has any other personal interest that might reasonably appear to suggest divided loyalties or otherwise impair independent unbiased judgment;
- A.4.17: | Shall refrain from the potential of, or actual, conflict of interest or self-dealing, and advise the GAC Board of any personal activity that is related to academic programs that have formally applied to or are being evaluated by the GAC for accreditation.

A.5: GAC Meetings/Actions

- A.5.1: | **Annual Meeting:**
The GAC Board will hold an annual face-to-face meeting for the transaction of business items set before the GAC and the announcement of any GAC decisions and/or rulings related to the accreditation of applicant academic project management programs.
- A.5.2: | **Regular Meetings:**
In addition to the annual meeting, there shall be at least one (1) other regular meeting of the GAC Board each year for the transaction of any emergent business items set before the GAC Board requiring prompt

resolution. These meetings may be done via telephone conference call or other telecommunications, which allow all participants to fully communicate during the proceedings. The GAC Board conducts business as needed, on a monthly basis, via teleconference.

A.5.3: | Meeting Quorum:

A majority of GAC Board Members shall constitute a quorum of any meeting of the GAC Board, and shall be capable of transacting any business items authorized by the GAC Bylaws.

A.5.4: | Board Actions:

Each decision of the GAC Board shall be by a majority vote unless otherwise required by law, GAC policies, or GAC bylaws. Each GAC Board Member shall be entitled to one (1) vote on any matter coming before the GAC Board. All decisions on GAC Accreditation shall require the consensus of a majority of GAC Board Members.

Section B: The GAC Accreditation Process

B.1: Process Overview and Time Frame

The GAC Accreditation process consists of the following steps:

- Letter of Intent/Executive Summary
- Self-evaluation Report
- On-site Visit
- GAC Decision

A project management program applying for accreditation may expect the entire process to take approximately one year. From acceptance of the Letter of Intent/Executive Summary, the applicant program may take up to six months to complete and deliver the Self-evaluation Report. Once the report is received, the GAC Board will evaluate the report at its next regularly scheduled monthly meeting. The result of the evaluation may be to authorize the on-site visit or the GAC Board may request further clarifying information. Once the Self-evaluation Report is approved, the on-site visit will be scheduled at a time mutually convenient to the applicant program and the evaluation team. The on-site visit can normally be expected to occur within 90 days of acceptance of the Self-evaluation Report by the GAC Board. Within 30 days of the completion of the on-site visit, the on-site team will submit its report to the GAC Board. At its next regularly scheduled meeting, the GAC Board makes its accreditation decision regarding the applicant program(s). This decision is based on the collective evidence provided by the Letter of Intent, the Self-evaluation Report and the On-Site Visit Report and Recommendation.

B.2: Accreditation Process Steps

The GAC Accreditation process is very rigorous and truly shows a commitment to excellence in project management education on the part of the applicant program. There are four steps to the process:

B.2.1: | The Letter of Intent/Executive Summary

The program must be part of an institution accredited by a recognized accrediting agency for higher education or appropriate government agency, and the institution must be legally authorized, under applicable law, to confer higher education degrees. In addition, the program must have a degree of

autonomy that is both comparable to that afforded to the other relevant professional programs in the institution, and sufficient to assure conformance with all the conditions for GAC Accreditation.

- B.2.1.1:** To demonstrate that the above criteria are met, the applicant program's Letter of Intent must include an Executive Summary (refer to Appendix A of this Handbook for more detailed information). This Executive Summary addresses the following information:
- The complete institution name and school/college/department within the institution where the applicant program is housed, including names of branch campuses where the applicant program(s) is offered;
 - Exact title and short description of the degree(s) conferred upon completion of the program of study. The applicant program should clearly state the primary delivery format for each degree program submitted for accreditation;
 - The reason why the program is seeking GAC Accreditation at this time;
 - A statement verifying the applicant degree program resides within an institution of higher learning that is accredited by a recognized accrediting agency or appropriate government agency, and that the institution is legally authorized, under applicable law, to confer higher education degrees;
 - A description of the program's administrative structure, including budgetary support;
 - A statement of the mission or vision of the applicant program(s);
 - A statement detailing the admissions policy for the applicant program(s);
 - A description of any special entrance enticements/incentives offered to attract students to the applicant program;
 - A description of the student market [students who enroll and graduate from the applicant program(s)];
 - A statement that the program(s) has (have) been in operation for a minimum of two years, with at least one graduating class. Include a statement on the number of students enrolled and the number of graduates;
 - The approximate date when the applicant program intends to submit its Self-evaluation Report;
 - The name(s) of the appropriate program points of contact at the applicant program [please include name(s), title(s), address, telephone number(s) and e-mail address(es)].
 - A complete statement of academic requirements to satisfy the applicant degree program, including a listing of core and elective courses required for each degree program.
- B.2.1.2:** The letter must be sent on the applicant program's university/college letterhead and must include the signatures of the program director and the senior manager or administrator (e.g., dean, department head or equivalent administrator) to whom the program director reports.
- B.2.1.3:** The Application Fee must be included with the Letter of Intent documentation. Please refer to Section B.8, Fees, for more details.
- B.2.1.4:** Submit the Letter of Intent to:
- The Project Management Institute Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC)**
Attention: Accreditation Programs Administrator
14 Campus Boulevard
Newtown Square, PA 19073
United States
E-mail: gac@pmi.org

B.2.1.5: Upon receipt, the Letter of Intent/Executive Summary is reviewed by the GAC for compliance. If the letter is found compliant, the applicant program is notified of acceptance, the submitted application fee is processed and permission is granted to proceed with the preparation of the programmatic Self-evaluation Report.

If the letter is non-compliant, the applicant program is notified of missing/non-compliant criteria and asked to re-submit the Letter of Intent/Executive Summary.

B.2.2: | Accreditation Resources and Information Sessions

Academic degree program(s) considering GAC accreditation, are encouraged to utilize the following accreditation resources:

B.2.2.1: The GAC hosts optional in-person Accreditation Seminars during the year. Online webinars may also be scheduled to fit the applicant's schedule. Applicants are encouraged to attend these sessions to better understand the GAC accreditation process and receive assistance in preparing the Self-evaluation Report. Please visit the events area of the GAC website (www.gacpm.org) or contact gac@pmi.org for more information.

B.2.2.2: A template with step by step information regarding preparing the GAC accreditation Letter of Intent/Executive Summary and the Self-evaluation Report is also available on the GAC website at www.gacpm.org.

B.2.2.3: Programs considering accreditation are also encouraged to contact volunteer GAC mentors who have agreed to provide guidance in the process. These mentors work in GAC accredited project management programs. Please e-mail gac@pmi.org with your mentorship requests.

B.2.3: | The Self-evaluation Report

From acceptance of the Letter of Intent/Executive Summary, the applicant may take up to six months to complete and deliver the Self-evaluation Report to GAC. The Self-evaluation Report should be prepared in compliance with the following guidelines. For more information regarding the format of the document, please refer to the Self-evaluation Report template posted on the GAC website at www.gacpm.org.

B.2.3.1: Self-evaluation Report Guidelines. Applicant programs should use the GAC Accreditation Standards as the primary basis for the Self-evaluation Report. The self-evaluation material should be organized as a concise, readable, but substantial document that can later be used for internal planning by faculty members, administrators and students. It is strongly recommended that the applicant program use the Self-evaluation Report Template as a guide for structuring the report.

Further guidelines for the preparation of the Self-evaluation Report are included within the individual GAC Accreditation Standards area of this Handbook (Section C). Through the preparation of a Self-evaluation Report, the applicant program mobilizes its various elements to reflect on its purposes and effectiveness. During the self-evaluation phase of the accreditation process, the applicant program collects and presents evidence, which demonstrates that the GAC Accreditation Standards, including Program Outcomes and Project Management Core Learning Outcomes are being met. The following questions are critical:

- a. What are the program's objectives?
- b. Are these objectives appropriate for this particular program and in consonance with the GAC Accreditation Standards?
- c. Are all of its efforts organized and designed so as to make it possible to achieve the GAC Accreditation Standards?
- d. Are the resources available to meet the applicant program's objectives and the GAC Accreditation Standards? Will they continue to be available in the future?
- e. What evidence exists to show that the GAC Accreditation Standards are being achieved?

B.2.3.2: Format and Printing of the Self-evaluation Report. The Self-evaluation Report should be structured as follows:

- a. **Signature Sheet:** The report must include the signatures of the program director and the senior manager or administrator (e.g., dean, department head or equivalent administrator) to whom the program director reports, indicating their support for the project management program and accreditation initiative. The administrators should be those who are most responsible for the project management program area;
- b. **Table of Contents;**
- c. **Submission of updated Executive Summary:** The Self-evaluation Report submission must also include an updated "Executive Summary" of the applicant program(s). This summary is the same document that was submitted with the Letter of Intent. It is simply updated to present the current state of the applicant program. The format for this Executive Summary is found in Appendix A;
- d. **Body of Report:** The Body of the Report constitutes the self-evaluation of the program-based criteria found in the GAC Accreditation Standards, found in Section C of this Handbook. As noted in the Self-evaluation Report Template on the GAC website (www.gacpm.org), applicant programs are asked, if possible, to limit the body of the Self-evaluation Report document to 100 pages or less.
- e. **Appendices:** The appendices are the section where additional information regarding the applicant program is included, such as the program catalog, faculty resumes, sample class and faculty evaluations, applicant strategic plan, etc.

B.2.3.3: Payment of Accreditation Fee. The Accreditation Fee must be included with the Self-evaluation Report documentation submission. Please refer to Section B.8, Fees, for more details.

B.2.3.4: Reproduction, Binding and Shipment. The report should be reproduced in a clear and legible manner. Any appendices, exhibits or supportive materials may be designated "Appendices" or "Exhibits." These appendices or exhibits should include a program catalog (or print out of web-based catalog) and any other descriptive literature/documentation, which will provide supportive evidence that the GAC Accreditation Standards are met by the program applying for accreditation. Please make sure the hard copy report is not bound or inserted into notebooks, tabs or other devices that cannot be readily scanned and duplicated.

Prior to shipment of hard copies, please send a soft copy final draft to gac@pmi.org. GAC Staff will review the final draft submission and notify the applicant program(s) of any omissions or additional information that needs to be added to the final submission.

Five hard copies and one electronic copy (Word compatible document) of the final Self-evaluation Report with supporting documentation and the accreditation fee should be forwarded to:

The Project Management Institute Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC)

Attention: Accreditation Programs Administrator
 14 Campus Boulevard
 Newtown Square, PA 19073
 United States
 E-mail: gac@pmi.org

One hard copy will be archived and used as an office copy.

B.2.3.5: Failure to Submit Self-evaluation Report. Applicant programs who fail to submit the Self-evaluation Report within the prescribed time are removed from the list of applicant programs and forfeit the application fee. To reinitiate the accreditation process, programs must submit a new letter of intent and the appropriate fees.

B.2.3.6: GAC Board Review of Submitted Self-evaluation Report. After receipt of the Self-evaluation Report, GAC Staff complete a review of the submission to ensure that all required documentation and information are submitted. If all of the documentation is in order the Report will be forwarded to the GAC Board for review and discussion.

A decision regarding the acceptance of the report will be made at the earliest opportunity during the regularly scheduled meeting of the GAC Board.

The GAC Board discussion of the Self-evaluation Report submission can have three outcomes:

- a. Approval of the Self-evaluation Report submission and permission to move forward with the on-site visit process
- b. GAC Board request for additional, clarifying information from the applicant program before a decision can be rendered. In this case the submission is put on hold until the additional information is submitted and can again be reviewed by the GAC Board.
- c. In some cases, the GAC Board may find that the applicant program does not substantially comply with the GAC Accreditation Standards. In this case, the GAC Board may choose to stop the accreditation process

The applicant program(s) is notified of the GAC Board decision regarding the Self-evaluation Report submission. If the Report is approved, the accreditation fees are processed and the on-site visit is scheduled.

B.2.4: | The On-site Visit Evaluation

After the Self-evaluation Report has been reviewed and approved by the GAC Board, arrangements are made for an on-site visit of the applicant program by an on-site visit evaluation team. The specific steps of the on-site visit process are included as Appendix B of this Handbook.

B.2.4.1: Payment of On-site Visit Fee. The On-site Visit Fee must be submitted prior to the commencement of the On-site Visit. Please refer to Section B.8, Fees for more details.

B.2.4.2: On-site Visit Logistics. The dates of the on-site visit are agreed upon by both the GAC and the applicant program. GAC on-site visit teams are normally comprised of one team lead, and one or two additional team members. At least one member of the team will be a project management practitioner, and at least one member of the team will be from the project management academic community.

During the on-site visit, team members may follow up on:

- Any question raised by the GAC Board during the review of the Self-evaluation Report;
- Verify the information presented in the Self-evaluation Report;
- In addition, team members spend time interviewing key administrative officers, program representatives, faculty members and students that are enrolled or have graduated from the program;
- Lastly, team members will review classroom facilities, library resources and other resources used to support the program.

GAC on-site visits typically require two to three business days to complete. The applicant program is responsible for lodging and all expenses associated with the visit. At the completion of the visit, the team presents its findings to the applicant program for review and verification. Within 30 days of completion of the on-site visit, the final On-site Visit Report and recommendations are then forwarded to the GAC Board for the accreditation decision.

B.2.5: | Evaluation of On-site Visit Report and Recommendations

Upon receipt of the On-site Visit Report and recommendations, the GAC Board evaluates the report and recommendations at its next earliest possible regularly scheduled meeting. The GAC Board then makes its accreditation decision regarding the applicant's program(s).

This decision is based on the collective evidence provided by the Letter of Intent/Executive Summary, the Self-evaluation Report and the On-site Visit Report and recommendations.

B.3: Range of Accreditation Decisions

The range of official GAC Board decisions is as follows:

B.3.1: | Grant of Accreditation

A program seeking initial accreditation may be granted accreditation for a maximum period of seven years. The grant of accreditation may include a request for informational reports as a condition of accreditation. The GAC Board will note the nature, purpose and scope of the information requested in its decision letter. All requests for additional information will be referenced to a specific accreditation standard.

In addition to an official decision letter granting GAC accreditation, the newly accredited program is sent an "Annual Report and Improvements Accreditation" letter. This letter outlines three key areas of GAC Accreditation:

- Opportunities for improvement noted in the On-site Visit Report and suggestions regarding the applicant program;
- The template for submission of the annual report;
- Benefits of GAC Accreditation.

An Award of Accreditation is presented to the accredited program(s) at a mutually beneficial time and place.

B.3.2: | Deferral of Accreditation

The GAC Board may defer action on a program's accreditation when it judges that it has insufficient data on which to base a decision. If the decision of the GAC Board is to defer accreditation status, the GAC Board will outline the reasons for deferral based on the relevant GAC Accreditation Standards in

its official decision letter to the applicant program. The letter will also state, if applicable, the required information necessary for the GAC Board to reach a decision at a later meeting. The GAC Board may recommend that a decision be deferred for up to one year at the discretion of the GAC Board. The GAC Board may also require an on-site visit with a review limited to those issues that constituted the basis for the deferral.

B.3.3: | Denial of Accreditation

The GAC Board may deny a grant of accreditation if it judges that a program does not meet the established GAC Accreditation Standards at the time of the review and will not be able to bring the program into compliance within the one year allotted for a deferral. If the decision of the GAC is to deny accreditation status, the GAC Board will outline the reasons for denial based on the relevant GAC Accreditation Standards in its official decision letter to the applicant program. The GAC Board will also inform the program of its right to appeal the decision. Further information concerning the GAC Accreditation Program appeals process may be found in Appendix C of this Handbook.

A program denied accreditation may reapply following a one-year period and must complete all steps in the initial application process.

B.3.4: | Withdrawal of Accreditation

The GAC Board reserves the right to withdraw a grant of accreditation if it is determined that a program fails to demonstrate compliance with the established GAC Accreditation Standards. A program found to not be in compliance would be given the opportunity to respond to the GAC prior to any vote to remove accreditation.

B.4: Announcement of GAC Decisions

All decisions of the GAC Board acting on the behalf of The Project Management Institute Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC) shall be announced in the following manner:

Within 30 days after the decision, the GAC Chairperson shall notify, in writing, the program director and the senior manager or administrator (e.g., dean, department head or equivalent administrator) to whom the program director reports as to the action of the GAC.

GAC also posts GAC Board accreditation decisions on its website, www.gacpm.org.

All correspondence, minutes, annual reports, interim reports and other materials used in the deliberations of the GAC Board shall be held in strict confidence.

B.5: Withdrawal of Initial Accreditation Request

The GAC will accept a written request from an applicant program to withdraw its initial application for GAC accreditation at any time during the accreditation process. One copy of any submitted application documentation (for example, Letter of Intent, Self-evaluation Report materials, etc.) will be retained by the GAC for historical purposes. All other materials related to the application will be destroyed.

B.6: Continuing Accreditation Responsibilities

GAC accredited programs are periodically reviewed and evaluated by the GAC Board. The timing of these reviews varies in accordance with the circumstances at a given program, and with the GAC's judgment as to how it can best serve the program's needs while simultaneously meeting its broader responsibilities. The interval between comprehensive evaluations for programs, which have been GAC accredited, cannot, however, be longer than seven years. In the interim,

programs are required to prepare and submit annual reports to the GAC. In addition, programs may also be required to submit special reports indicating progress in areas of concern identified by the GAC Board, or to undergo limited evaluations focused on specified matters. When a program undergoes a substantive change, or if its educational effectiveness is questioned at any time, the GAC will take appropriate action. The GAC reserves the right to review an accredited program at any time that circumstances may require.

B.6.1: | Annual Reports

During the period of a program's GAC accreditation, an annual report must be filed by the program at the time of its annual maintenance fee submission. This report notes any changes/improvements in the accredited degree program or institution where it is housed, particularly addressing opportunities for improvement noted in the "Annual Report and Improvements Accreditation Letter" sent with the Grant of Accreditation Letter. The GAC Board may also request that an annual report address specific issues of concern above and beyond those areas regularly addressed by the annual report form.

The annual report should include but is not limited to the following:

- Assessment of Anticipated Outcomes;
- Academic Community/Faculty and Staff;
- Program Outcomes/Project Management Core Learning Outcomes;
- Student Performance Criteria/Information in the Public Domain;
- Other significant changes in the program (e.g., support services, student selection, financial resources, etc.).

All annual reports will be reviewed by the GAC staff and presented to the GAC Board at its regularly scheduled meetings. Any resultant GAC decisions will be forwarded to the accredited program within thirty (30) days of the GAC Board meeting. For more information regarding this report, please refer to the "Annual Report Requirements and Template" in Appendix D of this Handbook.

B.6.2: | Renewal of Accreditation

Every program accredited by the GAC must undergo a comprehensive re-evaluation and GAC Renewal of Accreditation at least once every seven years.

- B.6.2.1: The GAC Renewal of Accreditation Process.** One year prior to the accredited program's current expiration of GAC accreditation, a "Letter of Request for Intent to Renew GAC Accreditation" is sent to the main point of contact for the GAC accredited program with the final invoice for the annual maintenance fee for the current GAC accreditation cycle.

Programs planning to renew their GAC accreditation must complete a Letter of Intent for Renewal of GAC Accreditation, submit an Executive Summary, and generally follow the GAC Accreditation process for new applicant programs. The specific steps and timelines for GAC Renewal of Accreditation are included in Appendix E of this Handbook.

All components of the GAC accreditation process, that is, Self-evaluation, On-site Visit and GAC Board decision, must be completed by the program requesting Renewal of GAC Accreditation prior to the expiration of its current accreditation cycle. If the accreditation renewal process is not completed during this time period, the program(s) risks losing GAC accreditation.

B.6.3: | Substantive Change Policy

A **substantive** change to an accredited program is one that may impact the degree to which the program complies with the GAC Accreditation Standards. Substantive changes may include, but are not limited to:

- Changes in ownership, legal status or form of control;
- Introducing a new educational method beyond the scope described in the application, e.g., adding significant distance learning or self-evaluation components;
- Changes in the accredited program's source(s) of financial support;
- Merging of current accredited programs to create a new program.

When substantive changes occur, the primary concern of the GAC is that the accredited program continues to meet the GAC Accreditation Standards. Accredited programs must be able to demonstrate that any substantive change(s) will not adversely affect the ability of the program to comply with established Standards. If the program changes are judged to represent a sufficient departure from practices in place at the time of application, the GAC may elect to re-evaluate the program before the next formal GAC Renewal of Accreditation is due.

B.6.3.1: Reporting Substantive Changes: All accredited programs are expected to report substantive changes **in writing** to the GAC in a timely manner. If a program is uncertain whether a change is substantive, the provider should contact the GAC staff for clarification and guidance.

The following procedures shall apply to substantive changes:

- GAC accredited programs must report any substantive change(s) to the GAC;
- The program must submit a description and/or documentation describing the change(s) and explaining how the accredited program will continue to comply with GAC Accreditation Standards;
- Accredited programs will receive written notification that:
 - a. The information is acceptable and will be kept on file for review at the time of the program's next scheduled GAC Renewal of Accreditation, or
 - b. Additional documentation is required for re-evaluation prior to the next scheduled GAC Renewal of Accreditation.
- The GAC may exercise its right to re-evaluate an accredited program at any time during the approval period;
- When an accredited program has received written notification to provide additional documentation, **failure to submit the requested documentation shall be considered grounds for withdrawal of GAC accreditation status** at the next regularly scheduled meetings of the GAC Board;
- Submission of false or misleading information shall be grounds for withdrawal of GAC accreditation status.

B.6.4: | Review and Approval of New Programs Developed after Primary Accreditation

Project management programs that have already completed the GAC accreditation process may apply to the GAC to have additional newly developed programs accredited. In order for an individual review of the program to be completed, the following information regarding the new program must be submitted to the GAC:

- For all degree programs submitted for accreditation, a statement listing the full name of the degree program(s) that is being submitted for accreditation. Indicate if the degree program is offered on multiple campuses, or in different formats such as online, distance learning, etc.
- Name(s) of the program administrator(s);
- Entrance requirements for the degree program;
- Course structure and research requirement;
- Number of credit hours (or equivalent) that constitutes the degree program;
- Required and elective courses that make up the degree program, highlighting the project management components of these courses/modules;
- Courses that are part of the new program that may not have been included during a previous accreditation review (provide complete information about content);
- A listing of any new faculty (provide resume and other descriptive information as to their roles in the program);
- Provide evidence that the new degree program will produce students who meet the academic performance outcomes contained in the GAC Accreditation Standards in general, and specifically, as outlined in GAC Accreditation Standard C.2.8 - Student Performance Criteria. Additionally, provide information addressing the following sub-sections of the GAC Accreditation Standards: C.2.6.1; C.2.6.2; C.2.6.3, as well as a graphic matrix and narrative, describing how the applicant programs meet the GAC Accreditation Standards' Project Management Core Learning Outcomes (reference C.2.7.1 and C.2.7.2 of the GAC Accreditation Standards);
- Provide evidence that at least one class has graduated.

Once the GAC Board evaluates this information a decision is made. The range of decisions can be:

- To accredit the new program;
- To ask for more information;
- To request an On-site Visit prior to further action;
- To require completion of the full accreditation process (Self-evaluation Report, On-site visit, etc.).

B.7: Appeals/Complaint Process

B.7.1: | Appeal of a Decision by the GAC

Any denial or withdrawal of accreditation may be appealed according to the appeals process established by the GAC Board. In all cases of an action that may be appealed, the GAC Board will provide the program the reasons for its action by referencing the specific GAC Accreditation Standards. Further information concerning the process to appeal a decision by the GAC may be found in Appendix C.

B.7.2: | Complaints Against a GAC Accredited Program

The GAC is concerned with maintaining programmatic integrity and performance, which are consistent with its established policies and standards. Further information concerning the process to lodge a complaint against a GAC accredited program may be found in Appendix C.

B.8: Fees

B.8.1: | Fees

The GAC will assess the following fees for the conduct and maintenance of the GAC Accreditation process:

- Application Fee – to be submitted with the Letter of Intent/Executive Summary;
- Accreditation Fee – to be submitted with the Self-evaluation Report;
- On-Site Review Fee – to be submitted by the applicant program when the On-Site Visit is authorized (after acceptance of the Self-evaluation Report).

- On-Site Visit Expenses – The applicant program will be responsible for the expenses incurred by the members of the on-site visit team, including transportation, lodging, meals, and other miscellaneous expenses. Every effort will be made to keep all related accreditation expenses at a reasonable level;
- Annual Maintenance Fee – payable on annual invoice;
- Re-evaluation Fee (Renewal of Accreditation programs only) – to be submitted with the Renewal of Accreditation Self-evaluation Report.

Please refer to the “GAC Fee Schedule” posted on the GAC website (www.gacpm.org) for specific fees associated with each step of the accreditation process.

B.8.2: | Payment Information

Checks, money orders, wire transfers or credit cards are acceptable. Please make checks payable to “Project Management Institute.” Checks must be in U.S. currency and drawn on a U.S. bank. To make payment by credit card, include credit card details in the hard copy Letter of Intent or Self-evaluation Report submission. Please include the following information: Type of Credit Card; Amount Paid; Credit Card Number; Expiration Date; Name of Person on Credit Card. Alternatively, you could telephone the Accreditation Programs Administrator at +1-610-355-1601 to relay this information. Any questions regarding payment may be directed to the Accreditation Programs Administrator at gac@pmi.org or +1-610-355-1601.

Section C: GAC Accreditation Standards and Guidelines for Project Management Degree Programs

C.1: Eligibility Requirements for Degree Programs Seeking Accredited Status

Each program applying for accreditation by the GAC must demonstrate that it satisfies each of the standards specified herein. Taken together, these requirements define the kind of program that the GAC considers within the scope of the accrediting activities for which it assumes responsibility. All variations of a program submitted for accreditation must meet GAC Accreditation Standards.

A program eligible for GAC accreditation may consist of multiple degrees or awards as long as they are led by one academic leader and share common project management courses for same level academic awards.

Any applications for GAC accreditation must contain only one eligible program. Each program requires a separate application.

C.1.1: | Institutional Accreditation and Legal Authority

The institution submitting a program to the GAC for accreditation must be accredited by a recognized accrediting agency or appropriate government agency. The institution must also be an institution of higher learning that is legally authorized, under applicable law, to confer higher education degrees.

Accordingly, the applicant’s Self-evaluation Report must include the following information:

- C.1.1.1:** Evidence that the applicant degree program resides within an institution of higher learning that is accredited by an appropriate institutional or governmental agency.
- C.1.1.2:** Evidence that the applicant degree program resides within an institution of higher learning that is legally authorized under, applicable law, to confer higher education degrees.

C.1.2: | Degree Programs Eligible for Accreditation

The applicant program should clearly identify the degrees they wish to be assessed by the GAC for accreditation. The degree program may be in project management or in some other field with a significant project management component and may include:

- Bachelor's[†]: 3 or 4 years full time equivalent – a minimum of 3600 study hours* (180 ECTS – European Credit Transfer System or 360 UK Credits or 120 US Semester Hours), which includes a minimum of 600 study hours (30 ECTS or 60 UK Credits or 15 US Semester Hours) of specific project management content as identified in Accreditation Standards C.2.6 and C.2.7;
- Post graduate Academic Awards[†] (Master's, Post graduate Diploma, etc.): 1 or 2 years full time equivalent – a minimum of 1200 study hours* (60 ECTS or 120 UK Credits or 30 US Semester Hours), which includes a minimum of 600 study hours (30 ECTS or 60 UK Credits or 15 US Semester Hours) of specific project management content as identified in Accreditation Standards C.2.6 and C.2.7;
- Doctorate[†] - PhD or Professional Doctorate: 3-4 years full time or equivalent – GAC recognizes that there are a range of doctorates (research, higher and professional) offered in countries around the world. To that end, the GAC will consider doctoral degrees with a major emphasis in project management, where the dissertation is focused on an aspect of project management with appropriate study hours.

*Footnote: Study hours include time spent in lectures, seminars, independent study, preparation for and taking of examinations, etc.

[†] GAC recognizes differences in regional academic processes and terminology.

Accordingly, the applicant's Self-evaluation Report must include the following information:

- C.1.2.1: For all degree programs submitted for accreditation, a statement listing the full name of the degree program(s) that is being submitted for accreditation. Applicant programs should indicate if they offer the degree program on multiple campuses, or if they offer the degree programs in different formats such as online, distance learning, etc.
- C.1.2.2: A statement describing the total number of ECTS, UK Credits or US Semester Hours contained within the degree program(s) submitted for accreditation. Include in this statement a breakdown of the total number of ECTS, UK Credits or US Semester Hours devoted to project management content.

C.1.3: | Period of Operation

Eligibility for GAC accreditation requires that a program has been in operation for a minimum of two years and has at least one graduating class.

Accordingly, the applicant's Self-evaluation Report must include the following information:

- C.1.3.1: A statement describing the dates when the submitted program(s) were launched and the year of the first graduating class for the applicant program(s). Additional information regarding program graduates year-by-year, or semester-by-semester is encouraged.

C.2: GAC Accreditation Standards

The Self-evaluation Report submitted by the applicant program should clearly demonstrate how the program complies with and achieves each of the following standards.

C.2.1: | Mission

The program shall have a clearly worded mission statement, which reflects objectives that have been developed in an orderly process, consistent with the mission of the institution as a whole (where applicable), and which are realistic for the program in general. The mission and objectives should clearly identify the target market for the program and the specific workplace-related abilities that the students will be expected to achieve.

To demonstrate that the above criteria are met, the applicant's Self-evaluation Report must include the following information:

- C.2.1.1:** Clearly describe the mission of the degree program and demonstrate that it is consistent with the parent institution (where the program is housed) and the primary objectives of the GAC Accreditation Program – to ensure that GAC accredited educational programs in project management adequately prepare students to meet the current and anticipated needs of businesses and government organizations for qualified professionals working in the field of project management.
- C.2.1.2:** Evidence that the mission statement has been developed in an orderly process with clearly stated objectives, and that the mission statement and objectives are realistic for the program, given the resources and personnel that are available to the program.

C.2.2: | Demonstration of Achievement of Mission

The program should provide an assessment of the success in fulfilling its mission and achieving its objectives. The applicant program should provide evidence of consultation with faculty, students, and alumni and other stakeholders on the program's overall curriculum and learning context. Individual course evaluations are not deemed sufficient to provide insight into the program's substantive focus and strategy.

Accordingly, the applicant's Self-evaluation Report must include the following information:

- C.2.2.1:** A description of the program's ongoing self-assessment and continuous improvement processes, including examples of the means by which faculty, students and staff are involved in curriculum review and program development.
- C.2.2.2:** Progress, which has been made relative to each aspect of the program's mission statement.
- C.2.2.3:** Evidence of satisfaction with the value of the degree from faculty, students, employers, alumni and other stakeholders.
- C.2.2.4:** Any notable program strengths, weaknesses and future directions.

C.2.3: | Academic Community/Faculty and Staff

The program should demonstrate that it both benefits from and contributes to its institutional context. It must also demonstrate that it provides adequate human resources for a professional degree program in project management, including academic leadership and scholarly activity, a sufficient faculty complement, an administrative head with sufficient time for effective administration, administrative and technical support staff, and faculty support staff. Student enrollment and scheduling of classes must assure adequate time for an effective exchange between the faculty member and the student. The total teaching load should be such that faculty members have adequate time to pursue research, scholarship and practice in order to enhance their professional development in the field.

Accordingly, the applicant's Self-evaluation Report must include the following information:

- C.2.3.1:** The program's academic and professional standards for both faculty and students, including current resumes/curriculum vitae for all faculty involved in teaching within the applicant program and a summary of scholarly and/or academic research output for the last two calendar years and professional experience for each member of the academic staff.

- C.2.3.2: The level of interaction between the program and other programs at the institution.
- C.2.3.3: The contributions of the students, faculty and administrators to the governance as well as to the intellectual and social life of the institution.
- C.2.3.4: Contributions of the institution to the applicant program in terms of intellectual resources as well as personnel.
- C.2.3.5: A description of the distribution of effort between teaching and other responsibilities of each faculty member.
- C.2.3.6: A description of the responsibilities of administration and support staff, by position.
- C.2.3.7: Evidence that students evaluate individual courses and faculty.
- C.2.3.8: Evidence of support for staff and faculty in acquiring new skills and knowledge, including attendance at professional meetings and sharing of information across the academic staff.

C.2.4: | Student Support Services /Information in the Public Domain

The program should demonstrate that it provides support and encouragement for students to assume leadership roles both during their school years and later in the profession. To assist in assessing the program's performance, including student achievement, information about the program's performance must be consistently provided to students and the public.

Accordingly, the applicant's Self-evaluation Report needs to include information on such issues as:

- C.2.4.1: How students have access to necessary physical and intellectual resources relevant to the program of study.
- C.2.4.2: How students have access to advising services related to their coursework and are provided with the support necessary to complete their intended course of studies.
- C.2.4.3: Descriptions of student support services, including evaluation of progress, career guidance, orientation and language support services, internships and job placement (if applicable).
- C.2.4.4: Any post-graduation support, which is provided to students by the applicant program.
- C.2.4.5: Evidence of opportunities to participate in student professional societies and other student activities.
- C.2.4.6: The description of the program as it appears in university catalogs, websites and any other institutionally authorized printed materials.
- C.2.4.7: A description and examples of how the program provides information to students, prospective students, other stakeholders and the general public on the program's performance in general. This includes student achievement and other data supporting the qualitative and quantitative claims made by the program. Please submit url where this information is publicly posted to your program's website.

C.2.5: | Student Selection

As a general practice, students admitted to a bachelor's degree program should meet the university admission and selection policies. Students admitted to postgraduate studies (that is, Master's, Post

graduate Diploma, etc.) or doctoral degree programs should hold a bachelor's degree or equivalent from a recognized institution. In addition, assessment of applicants to advanced degree programs should be made via a review of previous academic performance, performance on a recognized standardized test, required prerequisite courses and/or relevant life experience related to the field of project management.

Accordingly, the applicant's Self-evaluation Report must demonstrate that:

- C.2.5.1:** The program has a clear policy for student selection.
- C.2.5.2:** Clear, complete and accurate information is provided to the public in the program catalog and all program promotional literature regarding candidate selection for program admission and the academic expectations of the program.

C.2.6: | Program Outcomes

The GAC accredits professional programs at the bachelor's, postgraduate and doctoral degree levels. GAC curricular requirements are outcomes-based rather than prescriptive in nature. The curricular requirements of the applicant program must include both general studies and specific professional studies, which respond to the needs of the institution, the project management profession, the stated mission and objectives of the program and the students, respectively. Together these components comprise a general education that ensures that graduates will be technically competent critical thinkers who are capable of defining multiple career paths within a changing societal context.

The program shall have clearly stated intended learning outcomes for each element (e.g., course or subject) of the program that are directly related to the stated mission and objectives. Within this framework, the core of a professional degree that would be accredited by the GAC must include intended learning outcomes that address the generally accepted processes, knowledge and competencies found within the project management discipline. An undergraduate program would be expected to meet these standards. At the graduate level, the program would be expected to exceed these standards within the context of project management theory, research and/or practice. At the doctorate level, the program would also go beyond expectations to expand and/or create new project management knowledge. Based on public research the topics below are generally represented at a high level in all the primary project management standards and guides. These topics would normally be expected to be part of the program or prerequisite knowledge. This list is not meant to be comprehensive of all project management topics and, therefore, academic programs are encouraged to include other topics.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ■ Change Control | ■ Reporting |
| ■ Cost Management | ■ Resource Management |
| ■ Documentation Management | ■ Risk Management |
| ■ Information / Communication Management | ■ Time Management / Scheduling / Planning |
| ■ Procurement | ■ Stakeholder / Relationship Management |
| ■ Project Context / Environment | ■ Team Building / Development / Teamwork |
| ■ Quality Management | ■ Work Content and Scope Management |

While the GAC encourages the use of creative and effective means to cover these topics, the Self-evaluation Report must demonstrate that the learning outcomes specified in Accreditation Standard C.2.7, which represent a minimum project management core, are covered in the program.

Accordingly, the applicant's Self-evaluation Report must include the following:

- C.2.6.1: Explicit and clearly stated intended learning outcomes that show how the program objectives will be achieved.
- C.2.6.2: Identification of what students should know and be able to do by the end of the program.
- C.2.6.3: Demonstrate how the curriculum design, including assessment, achieves the intended learning outcomes, and how it incorporates international and corporate aspects, professional ethics, as well as awareness of the broader trends in society.

C.2.7: | Project Management Core Learning Outcomes

The GAC recognizes that the coverage of these core topics may vary in emphasis in accordance with the mission of the school and the degree level. While the GAC encourages the use of creative and effective means to cover these core topics, each of the specific Learning Outcomes in the following Areas of Focus must be addressed by the applicant program in the Self-evaluation Report:

Areas of Focus:

1. Project Selection and Initiation;
2. Project Planning;
3. Project Execution and Control;
4. Project Close;
5. Ethics and Professional Responsibility.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Project Selection and Initiation

Upon completion of the program, the student will be able to take responsibility for the following tasks:

- 1.1: Apply project selection methods to evaluate the feasibility of projects.
- 1.2: Assess project contribution to business strategy, purpose and plans.
- 1.3: Determine and document project goals and performance requirements by working closely with project stakeholders.
- 1.4: Define and document product or service deliverables.
- 1.5: Select appropriate project management practices, tools and methodologies.
- 1.6: Define constraints and assumptions.
- 1.7: Define and document project schedule, budget, resources and quality.
- 1.8: Evaluate alternative strategies in order to meet stakeholder requirements.
- 1.9: Define performance criteria to support quality assurance effort.

- 1.10: Assess and document project risks.
- 1.11: Produce a project approval document for appropriate stakeholder review and decision.

2. Project Planning

Upon completion of the program, the student will be able to take responsibility for the following tasks:

- 2.1: Define, analyze, refine and document project requirements, assumptions and constraints.
- 2.2: Develop a Work Breakdown Structure (WBS).
- 2.3: Develop the resource management plan and obtain commitments from resource providers.
- 2.4: Analyze and refine project time and cost estimates to define project baseline, schedule and budget.
- 2.5: Implement project control system to manage project change, communications, procurement, risk, quality and human resources.
- 2.6: Develop a formal and comprehensive project plan, including, where applicable:
 - Communications plan;
 - Risk management plan;
 - Change management plan;
 - Resource management plan;
 - Quality plan;
 - Procurement management plan;
 - Organization plan.
- 2.7: Conduct processes to obtain project plan approval.

3. Project Execution and Control

Upon completion of the program, the student will be able to take responsibility for the following tasks:

- 3.1: Commit project resources and procedures required to initiate and monitor the performance of work in accordance with the project plan.
- 3.2: Implement the project plan by authorizing the execution of project activities required to produce project deliverables.
- 3.3: Manage project progress by applying performance reporting, analysis and progress measurement techniques to ensure activities are executed as planned.
- 3.4: Communicate project progress to stakeholders.
- 3.5: Implement quality assurance procedures.
- 3.6: Develop, lead and manage project teams.

- 3.7: Measure project performance comparing results to the baseline.
- 3.8: Identify needs for corrective action, obtain approvals, perform appropriate actions and evaluate effectiveness.
- 3.9: Manage project scope changes.
- 3.10: Reassess and update project control plans and practices to ensure effectiveness.
- 3.11: Recognize and respond to risk events and issues.

4. Project Close

Upon completion of the program, the student will be able to take responsibility for the following tasks:

- 4.1: Obtain final acceptance of deliverables from appropriate stakeholders.
- 4.2: Document lessons learned.
- 4.3: Facilitate administrative and financial closure.
- 4.4: Preserve essential project records to adhere to legal and other requirements.
- 4.5: Release project resources by following appropriate organizational procedures.
- 4.6: Ensure project has been transitioned to operation, if applicable.

5. Ethics and Professional Responsibility

Upon completion of the program, the student will be able to take responsibility for the following tasks:

- 5.1: Ensure individual integrity and professionalism by adhering to legal requirements and ethical standards.
- 5.2: Enhance individual competence with continuous learning.
- 5.3: Recommend approaches that strive for fair resolution to satisfy competing needs and objectives.
- 5.4: Respect personal, ethnic and cultural differences.

To meet the requirements of Accreditation Standard C.2.7 Project Management Core Learning Outcomes, the applicant program's Self-evaluation Report must include the following:

- C.2.7.1: Evidence that the curriculum and assessment strategies are designed to meet the GAC Project Management Core Learning Outcomes as listed above.
- C.2.7.2: A graphic matrix that cross-references each course/subject with the Core Learning Outcomes as detailed in Accreditation Standard C.2.7 and indicating whether the course/subject is required or elective.
- C.2.7.3: Detailed outline for each course/subject (e.g., aim and objectives, learning outcomes addressed, content, teaching/learning strategy, readings and resources and assessment).

C.2.8: | Student Performance Criteria

The program must ensure that all its graduates possess the knowledge, skills and the ability to accomplish the tasks established by the GAC and as defined in the Learning Outcomes, which comprise Accreditation Standards C.2.6 and C.2.7 of this document.

Accordingly, the applicant's Self-evaluation Report must provide evidence that:

C.2.8.1: All graduates have satisfied each of the individual Learning Outcomes listed in Accreditation Standards C.2.6 and C.2.7 through required course work, assessment, research, professional experience and/or experiential learning.

C.2.9: | Library/Learning Resource Center and Educational Innovations and Technology

The program must provide physical resources and/or electronic resources that are appropriate for a degree program in project management, including lecture and seminar spaces; office spaces for the exclusive use of full-time faculty members; and related instructional support space. The Library and Learning Resource Center collection must contain a wide variety of print, visual and electronic media, and be adequate in size, scope, content and availability for a professional degree program in project management.

These requirements may not be applicable to those applicant programs utilizing nontraditional means of instructional delivery as their primary educational method. In these particular situations, evidence should be provided demonstrating how students are provided with access to equivalent resources.

Accordingly, the applicant's Self-evaluation Report must include the following information:

C.2.9.1: A self-assessment of the library, including adequacy of the library collections, visual resources and other non-book collections that demonstrate the scope and depth of library holdings.

C.2.9.2: Evidence that the library staff and services are adequate and appropriate to support the goals, objectives and curriculum of the program.

C.2.10: | Financial Resources, Facilities and Equipment

Where applicable, programs must have access to institutional support and financial resources comparable to those made available to the other similar professional programs within the institution.

Accordingly, the applicant's Self-evaluation Report must include the following information:

C.2.10.1: The program budget, along with any endowments, scholarships or development activities.

C.2.10.2: Comparative data on annual expenditures per undergraduate and/or graduate student relative to the other similar professional programs at the institution.

C.2.10.3: Facilities and equipment accessible to the program and its enrolled students.

Appendix A: Format for Executive Summary

The Executive Summary must be submitted with the Formal Letter of Intent. An updated Executive Summary must also be sent with the Self-evaluation Report.

Format:

- **Name and Location of Institution Housing Applicant Program(s)**
Name and location(s) of the university/college, mailing address, and point of contact(s) including telephone number and e-mail address.
- **Business Unit**
College/school/department within the university that offers the applicant degree program(s). Include names of branch campuses where program(s) is offered.
- **Degree Program(s)**
Names of applicant project management degree program(s) along with associated credit hours or equivalent. Please include a grid of total credit hours associated with the program in general, and specific credit hour information on the project management component of the applicant program.
- **Content Delivery Modality**
A brief description of how courses are delivered (on campus versus online or blended) and the modality.
- **Reason Why Applicant Degree Program(s) is Seeking GAC Accreditation at this Time**
- **Institutional Accreditation and Legal Authority**
A statement verifying that the applicant degree program resides within an institution of higher learning that is accredited by a recognized accrediting agency or appropriate government agency, and that the institution is legally authorized, under applicable law, to confer higher education degrees.
- **Administrative Structure**
A description of the program's administrative structure, including budgetary support.
- **Mission/Vision Statement**
A succinct statement of the mission or vision of the applicant program.
- **Admissions Policy**
A statement of the application criteria for a student to be eligible/admitted in full standing.
- **Special Entrance Enticements**
A clear description of any incentives that may be offered to attract students. *Example: If an applicant student already holds some type of project management credential, is the applicant student awarded any credit hours toward fulfillment of elective or core degree requirements in the applicant degree program.*
- **Student Market**
Describe the profile of the students who enroll and graduate from the applicant degree program(s) in terms of age and experience ranges and industries represented.
- **Inception and Size of Program**
A statement that the applicant degree program(s) has (have) been in full operation for a minimum of two years with at least one graduating class. Include a statement on the number of students enrolled and number of graduates for past few semesters or years.
- **Academic Requirements**
A complete statement of the academic requirements necessary to satisfy the applicant degree program(s).
- **Curriculum**
A listing of core and elective courses required for each degree.
- **Expected Self-evaluation Report Submission**
The approximate date when the applicant institution intends to submit its Self-evaluation Report.

Appendix B: Guidelines for the On-site Visit Process

After the Self-evaluation Report has been approved by the GAC, arrangements will be made for an on-site visit of the applicant program by an evaluation team.

Dates of Visit:

The on-site visit can normally be expected to occur within 90 days of acceptance by the GAC Board. The dates for the on-site visit are to be mutually agreed upon by the GAC and the applicant program.

Selection of On-site Team Lead:

The role of the on-site team lead is a central factor in the success of the accreditation process. The team lead must possess sufficient relevant experience to understand team objectives, coordinate team effort, and be able to represent the GAC effectively. The primary responsibility of the team lead is to ensure that team members pool their resources and insights, stimulate and question each other, and finally reach a clear consensus concerning their overall assessment and evaluation. In addition, the team lead works with the applicant program contact to develop the agenda for the on-site visit as well as to coordinate logistics for the on-site visit with the applicant program representative.

Well in advance of the on-site visit, the GAC, with a consideration of the nature and needs of the particular applicant, will propose a team lead to the applicant program and solicit comments. While the GAC always reserves the right to appoint the team lead as well as members of the team, the views of the applicant program are important in ensuring the appropriateness and effectiveness of evaluators.

Selection of On-site Team Members:

The GAC maintains an active file of evaluators. These evaluators have been recommended by institution and program heads, colleagues who have themselves participated in an evaluation process, GAC Board members, and GAC staff. The GAC relies on the personal and professional integrity of individuals to refuse any assignment where even the slightest potential for conflict of interest exists. All on-site team members sign and submit a Confidentiality Agreement and a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Agreement, which are kept on file at the GAC offices.

From this listing of evaluators, and with the help of the team lead, the GAC selects a prospective team. The prospective list of team members will then be sent to the applicant for comments concerning the proposed members. As a general rule, the on-site team shall consist of the team lead and two team members. The final composition of the team will then be determined by the GAC. Because it is sometimes necessary to make changes in the team, the team lead will not proceed with arrangements for the on-site visit until notified by the GAC that all members of the team have accepted their assignments.

Format of Visit:

Upon confirmation of the on-site team's membership, the team lead will contact the applicant program to discuss travel arrangements and accommodations for the team. The applicant program should arrange for charges for the on-site team's travel, lodging and meals to be billed directly to the applicant program. Upon arrival at the applicant program, the on-site team will hold a preliminary informal meeting after which it will meet with key members of the applicant program for additional orientation.

Suggested Logistics and Materials for the On-Site Team:

- An on-site conference room for the exclusive use of the on-site team during its visit;
- A binder with full information on every course taught within the applicant programs (e.g., syllabus, PowerPoint slides, evaluations, etc.);
- Time scheduled in the agenda for on-site team study, review and analysis of interviews and experiences during the day's visit. Usually scheduled for the last 2 hours of the day.

The remaining time of the visit will be spent in conducting a rigorous review of the program. Team members will be involved in the following activities:

- Interviewing individuals and groups, such as principal central administrative officers, program administrators, faculty, students, members of advisory committees and industry representatives knowledgeable about the program;
- Verify the information presented in the Self-evaluation Report;
- Performing essential data-gathering functions and analyzing the resulting information;
- Writing a basic, substantive on-site visit report, including recommendation to the GAC;
- Presenting the findings of the evaluation team to the applicant program representatives during an exit interview session. This presentation will provide an oral preview of all major points that will be made in the on-site visit report, but will not include the recommendation of the team concerning accreditation status.

The team lead, working with the other team members, will then prepare a draft report for submission to the GAC. After review of the draft by all team members, the draft will then be forwarded to the applicant program for correction of any factual errors. Within 30 days of completion of the on-site visit, the final, verified, team report is forwarded to the Accreditation Programs Administrator, along with the team's recommendations regarding the applicant program(s). The on-site report will then be distributed to the GAC Board who will render a review and decision.

Appendix C: Overview of the GAC Accreditation Appeals & Complaints Policies and Processes

GAC Policy:

Appeal of a Decision by the GAC: The chief operational officer or other appropriate representative of a program may appeal any of the GAC accreditation decisions delineated in Section B.3 within 30 days of receipt of the written GAC decision. All appeals shall be addressed to the GAC and clearly provide the following:

- a. The specific grounds on which the appeal is being made;
- b. All relevant supportive documentation demonstrating why the appellant feels that the GAC decision is in error and should be reconsidered.

Within 30 days of receipt of the written appeal, the GAC shall forward the original decision, the appeal, and all supportive documentation to an ad hoc appeals panel, appointed by the GAC Board, comprised of three members having no affiliation with either the GAC decision, or the appellant. The appeals panel will consider all evidence and make its recommendation to the GAC Board who will render a final vote on the appeal.

GAC Process:

Appeal of a Decision by the GAC: Please refer to the "GAC Process Document - Appeal of a Decision by the GAC" posted on the GAC website (www.gacpm.org) for specific information regarding the appeals process.

GAC Policy:

Complaints Against a GAC Accredited Program: The GAC is concerned with maintaining programmatic integrity and performance, which are consistent with its established policies and standards. Complaints will be considered only when made in writing and with the complainant clearly identified. All complaints shall be addressed to the GAC and clearly provide the following:

- a. Substantial evidence, which supports any allegation that the accredited program is in violation of the GAC policies and Accreditation Standards;
- b. The complainant must demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to pursue all available review procedures, which are available within the subject program;
- c. The complainant must grant permission to forward the complaint, in its entirety, to the subject program for comment.

If the GAC ascertains that the complainant is in litigation with the program, no action shall be taken on the complaint while the matter is under review. The complainant must sign a statement stating they are not aware of any pending litigation.

Both the complaint and any comments received from the subject program shall be placed on the agenda for the next GAC Board meeting. Both the complainant and subject program will then be notified in writing of any action(s) taken by the GAC Board in response to the complaint.

GAC Process:

Complaints Against a GAC Accredited Program: Please refer to the “GAC Process Document – Complaints Against a GAC Accredited Program” posted on the GAC website (www.gacpm.org) for specific information regarding the complaint process.

Appendix D: Annual Report Requirements and Template

During the period of a program’s GAC Accreditation, an annual report must be filed by the program at the time of its annual maintenance fee submission. This report notes any changes/improvements in the accredited degree programs and the institution where the program is housed.

The GAC may also request that an annual report address specific issues of concern above and beyond those areas regularly addressed by the annual report form. Below please find the template for submission of the GAC Annual Report.

The template for submission of the GAC Annual Report:

- a. Each program accredited by the GAC must submit an annual report according to Section B.6 of the *GAC Handbook of Accreditation of Degree Programs in Project Management*. The annual report should highlight changes to the program since the prior report (or self-evaluation if this is the first annual report). It should be part of the process for continuous improvement to the program;
- b. The document is not expected to be lengthy. It should cover highlights of significant changes to the program and progress on any recommended improvements identified during the on-site visit. Additional details, if warranted, may be requested by the GAC;
- c. The report should be submitted to the GAC via e-mail at gac@pmi.org and by postal service to: The Project Management Institute Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC); Attention: Accreditation Programs Administrator, 14 Campus Boulevard, Newtown Square, PA 19073-3299 United States.
- d. The annual report should include, but is not limited to, the following:

Section A: Assessment of Anticipated Outcomes

- Discuss progress relative to the program’s mission statement, overall program assessment and continuous improvement plans. Discuss progress toward meeting improvement recommendations from on-site visit and evaluation report. Include summary of recent student feedback (qualitative and quantitative).

Section B: Academic Community/Faculty and Staff

- Detail additions and deletions to faculty and staff.

Section C: Program Outcomes/Project Management Core Learning Outcomes

- C.1: Deletions of any courses;
- C.2: Additions of any courses, including Program Outcomes and Project Management Core Learning Outcomes as detailed in Accreditation Standards C.2.6 and C.2.7 of the Handbook;
- C.3: Significant changes to existing courses, including Program Outcomes and Project Management Core Learning Outcomes as detailed in Accreditation Standards C.2.6 and C.2.7 of the Handbook.

Section D: Student Performance Criteria/Information in the Public Domain

- Show number of enrolled students and graduates from program(s) for past two years.
- Provide program information on student achievement and other data supporting the qualitative and quantitative claims made by the program for the current year. Also demonstrate how the program's performance in general is provided publicly to students, prospective students, other stakeholders and the general public. Please submit url where this information is publicly posted to your program's website.

Section E: Other

- Explain any other significant changes in the program (e.g., support services, student selection, financial resources, etc.).

The GAC Annual Report is now available in an online format, where this information may be submitted by the accredited program electronically. For more information regarding this process, please contact gac@pmi.org.

Appendix E: GAC Renewal of Accreditation Process

1. A year prior to the accredited program's cycle expiration date, a "Letter of Request for Intent to Renew GAC Accreditation" is sent to the accredited program(s) with the final invoice for the annual maintenance fee for the current accreditation cycle.
2. Programs planning to renew their GAC accreditation must complete a "Letter of Intent for Renewal of GAC Accreditation" and an Executive Summary of the renewing degree programs.
 - a. This letter must be sent on the institution's letterhead, and must follow the Letter of Intent format that is in Section B.2.1 of the *GAC Handbook of Accreditation of Degree Programs in Project Management*.
 - b. The format for the Executive Summary is found in Appendix A of the *GAC Handbook of Accreditation of Degree Programs in Project Management*.
 - c. Any newly developed degree programs may be included in this process.
3. A hard and soft (electronic) copy of the "Letter of Intent for Renewal of GAC Accreditation" and the Executive Summary of the renewing degree programs are sent to the GAC with the renewing program(s)' Annual Maintenance Fee and Annual Continuing Accreditation Report for the last year of the current GAC accreditation cycle.
 - a. This documentation is sent to the following address:

The Project Management Institute Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC)

Attention: Accreditation Programs Administrator
 14 Campus Boulevard
 Newtown Square, PA 19073
 United States
 Email: gac@pmi.org

4. The submitted “Letter of Intent for Renewal of GAC Accreditation” and Executive Summary are reviewed by the GAC and permission is granted for the institution and its programs to move forward in the GAC accreditation renewal process.
5. The renewing GAC applicant program develops its Self-evaluation Report and submits it to the GAC at least six months prior to its current accreditation expiration date. The format and submission process for the Self-evaluation Report is as outlined in Section B.2.3 of the *GAC Handbook of Accreditation of Degree Programs in Project Management*.
6. Once the Renewing Self-evaluation Report is received in the GAC offices the process for renewal of GAC accreditation is the same as with the original accreditation application process outlined in Sections B.2 and B.3 of the *GAC Handbook of Accreditation of Degree Programs in Project Management*. This process includes:
 - a. Self-evaluation Report review, discussion and decision by the GAC Board,
 - b. The On-Site Visit Evaluation,
 - c. GAC Board Accreditation Decision.
7. Renewing program(s) may be granted GAC accreditation for a maximum period of seven (7) years. The Renewing Program(s) new GAC Accreditation Cycle would commence on the anniversary date of its original accreditation.
8. The renewed GAC Accredited Program(s) would then move forward with its continuing accreditation responsibilities for the remainder of the accreditation cycle, which includes the payment of any fees on the anniversary of its original accreditation. The Annual Report, which would normally be required to be submitted with this fee, is waived for this initial year due to the extensive information that was submitted earlier in the year with the submission of the Self-evaluation Report.
9. Please refer to the “GAC Fee Schedule” posted on the GAC website (www.gacpm.org) for specific fees associated with each step of the accreditation process.



The GAC is the independent academic accreditation body of Project Management Institute.

**THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE
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