



# Handbook of Accreditation for Academic Programs

in Project Management and Related Programs

FIFTH EDITION (5.0)



**Global  
Accreditation  
Center**

Project Management Institute.

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## Preface

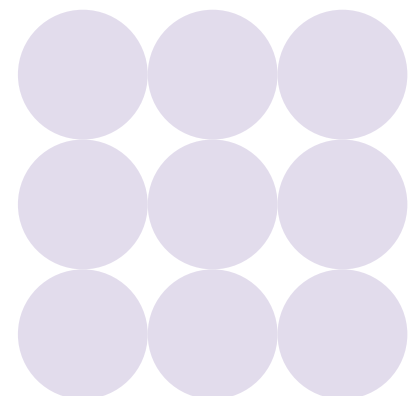
The Project Management Institute Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC) is an independent programmatic accreditation body for academic programs in project, program, and portfolio management and related programs in higher education. GAC accreditation scope includes degrees and awards at the associate, bachelor's, post-graduate, and doctoral degree levels.

With the wide adoption of project, program, and portfolio management in the academic curriculum, the Project Management Institute (PMI) Board of Directors recognized the growing need for establishing quality educational standards in university programs offering academic awards in this field of study. In 2001, after conducting an extensive feasibility study with academics, practitioners, and industry representatives, the PMI Board of Directors created the Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC) as an independent academic accreditation body for accrediting university programs in project, program, and portfolio management.

The GAC is governed by volunteer directors comprised of academic leaders, university administrators, and industry representatives, with at least one member representing the interests of the public. In accordance with its unique role, and in recognition of the need for independent evaluation of academic programs seeking accreditation, PMI affirms that the GAC is the sole policy-making body in all decisions related to accreditation of academic degrees and awards in project, program, and portfolio management or related programs, and PMI is committed to honoring GAC's independence in that regard.

The GAC values working collaboratively with other academic accrediting organizations and recognizes differences in the quest to advance academic excellence for project, program, and portfolio management around the globe.

*The Handbook of Accreditation for Academic Programs in Project Management and Related Programs – Fifth Edition (5.0)* (hereinafter referred to as “Handbook”) outlines the overall objectives of GAC accreditation, the Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards for programs, the accreditation process, the process for maintaining accreditation, as well as related GAC policies and processes.



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

## ▲ PHILOSOPHY OF ACCREDITATION

GAC is committed to excellence and continuous improvement in educational programs related to the field of project, program, and portfolio management.

The established policies, procedures, and standards set forth in this Handbook assess the quality of the educational programs seeking GAC accreditation.

The accreditation process is dynamic, and interpretation of the Accreditation Standards is subject to change, as environments, technology, circumstances, and communities evolve.

Self-assessment and peer evaluation, rather than regulation by external forces, provide the most effective assurance of accountability to GAC's various relevant individuals. Project, program, and portfolio management and related programs that successfully complete the accreditation review are identified as GAC accredited. The term "GAC accredited" assures students and the public that the education being provided by the program has been carefully assessed and that its scale, scope, and academic quality conform to comprehensive international Accreditation Standards while embracing and respecting program differences.

## ▲ THE ROLE AND VALUE OF ACCREDITATION

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

There are two basic types of educational accreditation, institutional and specialized/programmatic. Institutional accreditation normally applies to an entire institution, indicating that area of the institution is contributing to the achievement of the institution's mission.

GAC conducts specialized, programmatic accreditation of academic programs within an institution of higher education. As a programmatic accrediting body, GAC assures the quality of project, program, and portfolio management and related programs at the associate, bachelor's, post-graduate, and doctoral levels.

There are several valuable benefits of GAC accreditation for programs and their institutions:

- A competitive edge in enrollment by signifying the program's select standing;
- Differentiation as one of a select group of programs that embraces and promotes the discipline of project and/or program and/or portfolio management;
- Confirmation of a program's commitment to educational quality and continuous improvement;
- Peer recognition within academia for meeting preeminent global standards and achievement of quality benchmarks; and
- Distinguishing the program's graduates in the job market.

Accredited programs have completed a rigorous process, including an in-depth Self-Assessment Report and a visit conducted by a team of independent reviewers to verify the assertions made in the Self-Assessment Report. The preparation of the Self-Assessment Report and the visit engage all aspects of the institution and can result in increased institutional visibility and support for ongoing program improvements.



## Section A: About GAC

GAC has specific responsibilities and functions to ensure an effective process for the accreditation of degree-granting programs related to the field of project management.\*

### A.1: Mission /Objective/Scope

The mission of GAC is to advance excellence in project, program, and/or portfolio management education worldwide through collaboration with and support of academic institutions, as well as through the accreditation of academic programs.

GAC accreditation ensures a university's program is relevant to employers, innovative, student-focused, comprehensive, and accountable. GAC is the leading accrediting body for project, program, and portfolio management—and why its seal of approval is so important for those entering the field.

The GAC scope of accreditation includes project, program, and/or portfolio management and related programs at the associate, bachelor's, post-graduate, and doctoral levels offered within accredited institutions of higher education worldwide.

### A.2: Responsibilities and Authority

GAC has the following responsibilities and authority:

1. To function as the policy-making body in all matters related to GAC accreditation of academic programs related to the management of projects,\* and to be solely responsible for all related decisions.
2. To develop and enhance standards, guidelines, policies, and procedures for evaluating program effectiveness in the field of project and/or program and/or portfolio management education and to foster excellence in the same.
3. To ensure that the accreditation process recognizes the diversity of academic programs in the field.
4. To provide assistance as needed to academic programs, and to facilitate a collaborative community for these programs.
5. To schedule and coordinate the processes of GAC accreditation.
6. To commission and appoint members to GAC committees and working teams focusing on specific task areas to ensure effectiveness and continuous improvement in accrediting academic programs.
7. To review, arbitrate, and decide written appeals from any program appealing an action of GAC.
8. GAC has the sole and final authority for granting GAC accreditation.

### A.3: Composition and Governance

GAC is governed by the GAC directors. This group is composed of thirteen (13) members with a majority of members drawn from academia, and at least one member representing the public at large. The appointment of persons representing a balance between academia and industry, as well as geographic locations, is designed to provide a diverse, objective, and comprehensive review of academic programs pertaining to the management of projects.\* The PMI GAC manager serves as an ex-officio, nonvoting GAC director. A listing of the current GAC directors is posted on [www.gacpm.org](http://www.gacpm.org).

\*For the ease of the reader, the terms "management of projects" and "project, program and portfolio management" are used interchangeably.

The general duty of GAC Directors shall be to carry out the mission and objectives of GAC, in accordance with its governing documents in its present or amended form, and with any applicable law.

#### **A.4: Code of Good Practice**

##### **GAC Subscribes to and Follows These Guidelines:**

- Recognizes that the primary purpose of its activities is the quality assessment and the enhancement of academic programs in the field of project and/or program and/or portfolio management;
- Fosters the pursuit of excellence and assists in the improvement of academic programs in the field;
- Designs the accreditation process to stimulate continuous improvement;
- Ensures that the accreditation processes recognize the diversity of academic programs related to the management of projects\* around the world;
- Encourages sound educational experimentation and innovation;
- Recognizes that accreditation is a dynamic process, and that a program's accreditation status is to be reviewed regularly;
- Ensures the effectiveness and objectivity of accreditation processes, using relevant information and utilizing experienced and qualified evaluators;
- Regards the text of the evaluation reports and all other communications relating to programs as confidential; and
- 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 program's demonstrated qualification for accreditation.

##### **In Addition, Each GAC Director:**

- Shall not discuss matters regarding the accreditation of a specific academic program outside of the formal parameters set by GAC and will refer all inquiries to the chairperson of GAC and/or PMI GAC manager.
- Shall funnel specific discussions and/or concerns about a program's accreditation through the chairperson of GAC and/or the GAC manager.
- Shall hold in confidence all documents that are prepared for GAC directors' meetings.
- Will excuse themselves from deliberations or votes on decisions regarding any individual programs of which they are a former or current employee or trustee, consultant, business partner, or supporter.
- Will not participate in deliberations or vote on decisions in which he or she has any other personal interest that might reasonably appear to suggest divided loyalties or otherwise impair independent, unbiased judgment.
- Shall refrain from the potential of, or actual, conflict of interest, or self-dealing and advise the GAC directors of any personal activity that is related to any academic programs that have formally applied to or are being evaluated by GAC for accreditation.
- Shall abide by the *PMI Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct*, *Conflict of Interest Policy*, *Confidentiality and Records Compliance Agreement*, and all other relevant policies.

\*For the ease of the reader, the terms "management of projects" and "project, program and portfolio management" are used interchangeably.



## A.5: GAC Directors' Meetings/Actions

The GAC directors meet monthly to make GAC decisions related to the accreditation status of programs.

Each accreditation decision of the GAC directors shall be made by a majority vote unless otherwise required by law or GAC policies. Each GAC director shall be entitled to one (1) vote on any accreditation decision matter coming before the GAC.

## Section B: GAC Accreditation Process Summary

### B.1: Beginning the Accreditation Process

Programs considering GAC accreditation should become familiar with the GAC Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards before submitting an application.

GAC hosts in-person and virtual accreditation workshops and personal information sessions. Programs are encouraged to attend these sessions to better understand the GAC accreditation process and receive assistance in preparing the Letter of Intent and the Self-Assessment Report. GAC staff are available to assist programs throughout the process. Please visit the events area of the GAC website ([www.gacpm.org](http://www.gacpm.org)) or contact [gac@pmi.org](mailto:gac@pmi.org) for more information.

**Please note:** All documentation submitted to GAC must be in English.

### B.2: Process Overview and Time Frame

**The GAC accreditation process consists of the following:**

- Step One:** Letter of Intent
- Step Two:** Self-Assessment Report
- Step Three:** Visit
- Step Four:** Accreditation Decision

The GAC accreditation process is rigorous and shows a commitment to excellence in project management education on the part of the program. A program applying for accreditation may expect the process to take approximately 10–12 months after eligibility is confirmed.

After receiving GAC approval of its Letter of Intent, the program has up to 6 months to complete and submit the Self-Assessment Report. GAC directors review the Self-Assessment Report at the next available monthly meeting. At that meeting, the GAC directors can authorize the visit, request further information, or stop the accreditation process.

Once the Self-Assessment Report is authorized, the visit is scheduled at a time mutually convenient to the program and the team.

After the visit, the team completes their report and submits it to GAC. The Visit Report is then sent to the program for a response within 30 days. The final Visit Report, Recommendation, and the Program's Response, including any documentation, are submitted to GAC directors. GAC directors review the documentation and make an accreditation decision at the next available meeting.

The GAC directors' decision to approve, defer, withdraw, or deny accreditation for a program is based on the body of information included in the Letter of Intent, the Self-Assessment Report, the Visit Report and Recommendation, and the Program's Response.

Refer to Section B.4.3: Changes in Application/Accreditation Status, of this Handbook for details regarding a Program-Initiated Withdrawal of Application for Accreditation.

## **B.3: GAC Accreditation Process**

### **Step One: Letter of Intent**

The Letter of Intent is the first step in the GAC accreditation process and is the point at which the program's eligibility for accreditation is determined.

For reaffirming programs, GAC sends a Letter of Request for Intent to Reaffirm GAC Accreditation 18 months before the program's cycle expiration date.

1. Programs planning to reaffirm GAC accreditation must complete a Letter of Intent for Accreditation Reaffirmation.
2. Any newly developed degree programs to be considered for accreditation may be included in this process.
3. This documentation must be received by GAC at least 15 months before the expiration of the reaffirming program's current accreditation cycle.

### **Required Information for the Letter of Intent**

GAC accreditation is open to programs serving learners in any geographic location. All documentation submitted to GAC must be in English. Programs bear the responsibility of demonstrating and documenting compliance with all GAC Accreditation Standards including when cultural, environmental, or regulatory differences exist. If a translator is required, the program bears the financial responsibility for this additional expense. GAC can provide guidance on the minimum number of translated supplemental documents required.

The Letter of Intent has the following information/documentation and process:

1. A statement from representatives of the program indicating its interest in pursuing GAC accreditation;
2. Required demographic information/program data on the academic degree(s) or award(s); and
3. Responses and evidence demonstrating that the degree(s) or award(s) meet the criteria indicated in Section C: GAC Eligibility Requirements.

### **Letter of Intent Review**

Upon submission, the program's Letter of Intent is reviewed by GAC staff for alignment with GAC Eligibility Requirements. If the degree or award is found to be aligned, the program is notified of acceptance of the Letter of Intent, and permission is granted to proceed with the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report. The application fee will be invoiced and must be submitted after GAC staff have reviewed the Letter of Intent documentation and confirmed eligibility. Please refer to Section B.7: Fees.

The determination of eligibility is at the sole discretion of the GAC directors.

**A template Letter of Intent is posted on [www.gacpm.org](http://www.gacpm.org).**





## Step Two: Self-Assessment Report

From GAC acceptance of the Letter of Intent, the program may take up to 6 months to prepare and submit the Self-Assessment Report.

### Required Information for Self-Assessment Report

GAC Accreditation Standards (Section D of the Handbook) are the foundation of the Self-Assessment Report. During the self-assessment phase of the accreditation process, the program collects and provides evidence that demonstrates alignment with GAC Accreditation Standards. Self-Assessment materials should be concise and readable documents that can be used for both GAC accreditation, internal planning, and continuous improvement of the program.

### The Self-Assessment Report contains the following information/evidence:

1. A cover letter from representatives of the program indicating interest in pursuing GAC accreditation;
2. Any updates to the original, submitted Letter of Intent; and
3. The program's responses and evidence demonstrating alignment with GAC Accreditation Standards. Refer to Section D: GAC Accreditation Standards.

### Self-Assessment Report Review

#### GAC Staff Review

GAC staff will review the submission and notify the program of omissions or additional information that needs to be added before the GAC directors' review. The program is given two opportunities to revise and resubmit the report before the GAC recommends the program is not ready to move forward with the next step of the accreditation process. Should further revision be necessary, the program is advised to seek a mentor/consultant. The program may resubmit the Letter of Intent and Self-Assessment Report in no less than 1 month and must pay the relevant fees.

The Self-Assessment Report Review Fee will be invoiced and must be submitted after the GAC staff review of the Self-Assessment Report. Reports submitted after the due date will be charged late fees for each month—or part of a month—past the due date. Please refer to Section B.7: Fees.

#### Failure to Submit the Self-Assessment Report

Unless otherwise agreed with GAC, programs that fail to submit the Self-Assessment Report within the prescribed time frame are no longer considered an applicant/accredited program. The program is removed from the list of applicant/accredited programs and forfeits the application fee. Refer to Section B.4.3: Changes in Application/Accreditation Status.

#### GAC Director and Team Lead Review of Submitted Self-Assessment Report

After GAC staff review, when all of the documentation is in order, the Self-Assessment Report is forwarded to a GAC director and visit team lead for review and discussion.

#### GAC director and team lead review of the Self-Assessment Report can have one of three outcomes:

1. Acceptance of the Self-Assessment Report: Permission to move forward with the visit and the visit is scheduled.
2. Request information: Request additional, clarifying information from the program before the decision can be rendered. In this case, the decision is held until the additional information is submitted and can be reviewed by the GAC directors.

3. Denial: The program does not substantially align with GAC Accreditation Standards. In this case, the GAC directors may choose to suspend the accreditation process. The program is advised to seek a mentor/consultant and may resubmit the Letter of Intent and Self-Assessment Report in no less than 6 months, and must pay the relevant fees.

A template Self-Assessment Report is posted at [www.gacpm.org](http://www.gacpm.org).

### Step Three: Visit Evaluation

The objective of the visit is to substantiate and evidence information presented in the Self-Assessment Report. After the Self-Assessment Report has been accepted by the GAC directors, arrangements are made for a visit of the program by an evaluation team.

#### Composition of the Visit Team

GAC maintains a list of qualified evaluators constituting the visit teams. These evaluators have been recommended by institution and program heads, colleagues who have participated in an evaluation process, GAC directors, and GAC staff. GAC relies on the personal and professional integrity of individuals to refuse any assignment where even the slightest potential for a conflict of interest exists. All team members sign and submit a Confidentiality Agreement and a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Agreement.

The team typically consists of the team lead and one or two team members. Additional team members are added for programs with multiple awards, degrees, or locations. At least one member of the team will be from the project management academic community and one will be a project management practitioner. The final composition of the team is determined by GAC.

Additionally, GAC may invite a representative from the governmental or nongovernmental quality assurance entity to observe the visit as a courtesy.

#### Selection and Role of Team Lead

##### Selection:

1. The team lead plays a pivotal role in the success of the accreditation process. The team lead must possess relevant experience to coordinate team efforts and an effective visit in accordance with GAC Accreditation Standards and policies, and represent GAC effectively.
2. GAC will contact the program with the name and résumé (curriculum vitae) of the proposed team lead for the tentative visit to confirm there are no conflicts of interest.
3. The GAC reserves the right to appoint the team lead.

##### Role:

1. After the program confirms there are no conflicts of interest, the team lead and GAC director conduct an in-depth review of the Self-Assessment Report and supporting evidence.
2. The GAC director and team lead develop a report and recommendation regarding a decision on the Self-Assessment Report and the authorization of a visit for presentation to the GAC directors for a decision.
3. If a visit is authorized, the team lead works with the program contact and team to agree upon dates for the visit, develop the visit agenda, and coordinate logistics for the visit.
4. The team lead conducts a pre-visit meeting with the team members to review the program's documentation and ensure the team is prepared for the visit.



5. The primary responsibility of the team lead during and after the visit is to foster collaboration among the team members, stimulate critical thinking, and develop a common perspective concerning their overall assessment and evaluation of the program's alignment with the GAC Accreditation Standards.
6. At the conclusion of the visit, the team lead presents the team's findings regarding each accreditation standard and prepares the Visit Report and Recommendation. A draft of the report is provided to the program to ensure factual accuracy.

### **Selection and Role of Team Members**

#### **Selection:**

1. Each team member possesses sufficient relevant experience and understanding of the GAC Accreditation Standards to be able to represent GAC effectively.
2. GAC selects team members from its list of evaluators. The prospective team members' names and résumés (curricula vitae) are sent to the program to confirm there are no conflicts of interest.
3. GAC always reserves the right to appoint team members.

#### **Role:**

1. Before the visit, team members review the program's Self-Assessment Report and evidence and prepare their interview questions.
2. During the visit, team members participate in all aspects of the visit evaluation, including conducting interviews and providing feedback during the preparation of the evaluation exit debrief.
3. After the visit, team members support the preparation of the Visit Report and Recommendation by making content contributions and providing their perspective on the accreditation recommendation.

### **Planning Logistics of the Visit**

The team lead will proceed with arrangements for the visit when notified by GAC that all members of the team have accepted their assignments and the program has confirmed there are no conflicts of interest with the team members.

The dates for the visit are agreed upon by the team and program, with the team lead facilitating the alignment of schedules. The visit can normally be expected to occur within 90 days of acceptance of the Self-Assessment Report by the GAC directors.

The team lead contacts the program to discuss travel arrangements and accommodations for the team. The program arranges for charges for the team's travel, lodging, and meals to be billed directly to the program.

### **Materials Available for the Team**

The program makes available to the team:

1. Two weeks before the visit, access to information for every required and elective course and/or subject containing relevant management of projects\* content included in the evaluation of the program (for example, syllabi, Microsoft PowerPoint slides, samples of student work, including capstone projects, textbooks, readings, evaluations, etc.).
2. A conference room for the exclusive use of the team during its visit.

3. Time scheduled in the agenda for team study, review, and analysis of interviews and experiences during the day's visit, usually scheduled for the last 2 hours of the day.

## **Fees**

The Visit Fee must be submitted before the commencement of the visit. Please refer to Section B.7: Fees.

## **Pre-Visit Team Responsibilities**

Prior to arriving on campus, the visit team reviews the Self-Assessment Report and supporting documentation, including samples of student work provided 2 weeks before the visit. The team lead will work with the program to finalize arrangements, clarify information, and address questions resulting from the GAC director and team lead review and the team's review of the Self-Assessment Report, as documented in the letter from the GAC authorizing the visit.

## **Visit Responsibilities**

Upon arrival at the program site, the team holds a preliminary meeting, after which it meets with key members of the program for additional orientation to the program.

During the visit, team members verify and explore the information represented in the Self-Assessment Report. This is done through:

- Interviews individually and/or in groups with institutional leaders, program leaders, administrative personnel, faculty members, students, alumni, advisory board members, and industry representatives, if relevant;
- Review of institutional and program policies, processes, and procedures;
- Review of the program's curriculum and examples of student work, if not completed before the visit; and
- Examination of physical, financial, and/or digital resources supporting the program.

GAC visits typically require 2 to 3 days to complete. Additional visit days may be required to visit a branch campus. Additional locations or instructional sites do not require a visit. The program is responsible for all expenses associated with the visit, including travel, lodging, and meals for the team.

## **Post-Visit Responsibilities**

After the visit:

1. The team orally presents its summary findings to the program.
2. The team drafts a substantive Visit Report and Recommendation.
3. Within 2 weeks of the visit, the team submits only the Visit Report to the program for factual verification.
4. The factually corrected Visit Report and Recommendation are submitted by the team to GAC within 30 days from the conclusion of the visit.
5. The final report, including any required actions and suggestions, is reviewed by GAC staff and sent to the program for a Program Response.
6. GAC staff submits to the GAC directors the final Visit Report and Recommendation, and the Program Response.

*\*For the ease of the reader, the terms "management of projects" and "project, program and portfolio management" are used interchangeably.*



## Additional Information on the Visit

A “Guidance to Programs Hosting a Visit” document is posted on [www.gacpm.org](http://www.gacpm.org).

## Step Four: Accreditation Decision

### Evaluation of the Visit Report and Recommendation and Program Response

The GAC directors evaluate the collective information included in the Letter of Intent, the Self-Assessment Report, the Visit Report and Recommendation, and the Program Response at the next available directors’ meeting. The accreditation decision regarding the program is made based upon review of all information presented.

### B.4: GAC Accreditation Actions

The GAC directors are the policy-making body in all matters related to GAC accreditation of academic programs on the management of projects,\* and are solely responsible for all related decisions.

A program seeking accreditation may be granted accreditation for a maximum period of 5 years.

The following reflects the range of accreditation actions:

- Grant of Accreditation (Initial or Reaffirmation)
- Deferral of Accreditation
- Denial of Accreditation
- Withdrawal of Accreditation

Type of Accreditation:

- Initial—programs completing the initial accreditation process.
- Reaffirmation—programs completing the comprehensive reaffirmation of accreditation process before the completion of their accreditation cycle.
- Accredited—programs accredited by GAC.

### Grant of Accreditation (Initial or Reaffirmation)

The GAC directors may grant accreditation for a maximum of 5 years and a minimum of 3 years. The grant of accreditation may include a request for a progress report to ensure compliance and continuous improvement. The request for a progress report indicates a program’s compliance with the GAC Accreditation Standards, but ongoing verification is requested. The GAC directors outline the requirement based upon the relevant GAC Accreditation Standards in the decision letter. The program is required to submit the progress report by the deadline indicated in the decision letter.

### Deferral of Accreditation

The GAC directors may defer an accreditation decision when: 1) noncompliance is **substantial** and/or; 2) when documentation to determine compliance with GAC Accreditation Standards is inadequate. The GAC directors outline the reasons for deferral based on the relevant GAC Accreditation Standards in the decision letter. Programs may be deferred up to 1 year. A decision to defer is a ruling of no action on accreditation; therefore, the action cannot be appealed.

### Denial of Accreditation

The GAC directors may deny accreditation when: 1) noncompliance is **significant** and/or; 2) when documentation to determine compliance with GAC Accreditation Standards is lacking. The GAC directors outline the reasons for denial based on the relevant GAC Accreditation Standards in the decision letter. GAC informs the program of its right to appeal the decision. The program may reapply to GAC 1 year following the decision to deny accreditation and complete all steps in the initial accreditation process.

## Withdrawal of Accreditation

The GAC directors may withdraw accreditation if a program fails to maintain compliance with GAC Accreditation Standards or requirements outlined in the decision letter, including but not limited to the payment of fees, annual and progress reporting requirements, or failure to notify GAC of substantive changes to the program. Before withdrawing accreditation, the GAC directors may direct the program to undergo a special visit or provide a response. The GAC directors outline the reasons for withdrawal based on the relevant GAC Accreditation Standards in the decision letter. GAC informs the program of its right to appeal the decision.

See Section B.4.3 for more information on regarding the GAC-Initiated Withdrawal of Accreditation process.

### B.4.1: Announcement of GAC Decisions

**Program Notification:** All decisions of the GAC directors shall be announced within 30 days of the decision. GAC shall notify the primary program contact by official letter.

**Directory notification:** GAC updates its directory listing after accreditation decisions are made. Directory listings provide the following public information for each program:

- Institution name
- Institution address
- Program name
- Program website
- Accredited status
- Initial accreditation month and year
- Last reaffirmation month and year
- Next reaffirmation month and year

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

### B.4.2: Activities for Newly Accredited/Reaffirmed Programs

Along with the official decision letter granting GAC accreditation, programs receive information on required actions and suggestions noted in the Visit Report and Recommendation for which reporting is expected, other requirements for GAC accreditation compliance, and an outline of the benefits of GAC accreditation.

### B.4.3: Changes in Application/Accreditation Status

#### Program-Initiated Withdrawal of Application for Accreditation

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

All fees submitted in support of the application are nonrefundable and will be retained by GAC.



### **GAC-Initiated Withdrawal of Application for Accreditation**

A program in the process of initial accreditation which does not respond to inquiries from GAC staff or does not submit requested documentation or materials will be withdrawn after 6 months of nonresponse or inactivity. One month before removal of GAC applicant status, GAC staff will notify the program via email that their application is being closed in 30 days due to inactivity/nonresponse. If the program does not respond, the application is closed, and the program is removed from the list of applicant programs on the [gacpm.org](http://gacpm.org) website.

To reinstate the accreditation process, programs must submit a new Letter of Intent and appropriate fees. One copy of any submitted application documentation (e.g., Letter of Intent, Self-Assessment Report, etc.) will be retained. All other materials related to the application will be destroyed.

All fees submitted in support of the application are nonrefundable and will be retained by GAC.

### **Program-Initiated Withdrawal of Accreditation**

GAC will accept a written request from an accredited program to withdraw its GAC accreditation at any time during the program's accreditation cycle. One copy of any submitted application/accreditation documentation (e.g., Letter of Intent, Self-Assessment Report, etc.) will be retained by GAC. All other materials related to the application/accreditation will be destroyed.

All fees submitted in support of accreditation are nonrefundable and will be retained by GAC.

### **GAC-Initiated Withdrawal of Accreditation**

The GAC directors may withdraw accreditation if the program fails to maintain compliance with GAC Accreditation Standards or requirements outlined in the decision letter, including but not limited to payment of fees, annual and progress reporting requirements, or failure to notify GAC of substantive changes to the program. Prior to withdrawing accreditation, the GAC directors may direct the program to undergo a special visit or provide a response. The GAC directors outline the reasons for withdrawal based on the relevant GAC Accreditation Standards in the decision letter. GAC informs the program of its right to appeal the decision.

All fees submitted in support of accreditation are nonrefundable and will be retained by GAC.

## **B.5: GAC-Accredited Program Reporting Requirements**

Throughout the accreditation cycle, programs are expected to remain in alignment with GAC Accreditation Standards and keep GAC informed of the status of the program.

GAC-accredited programs may also be required to submit progress reports indicating improvement in areas of concern identified by the GAC directors or to undergo limited evaluations focused on specified matters. When a program undergoes a substantive change, or if its alignment with GAC standards is questioned, GAC will take appropriate action. GAC reserves the right to review an accredited program at any time that circumstances may warrant.

### **B.5.1: Annual Report**

During the period of a program's GAC accreditation, an online report shall be filed by 31 October of each year. This report contains demographic information about the accredited program, such as current enrollment, graduates, number of faculty, etc. This report also notes any minor changes or improvements in the accredited program(s) or the institution where it is housed.

#### **Overview:**

1. Approximately 30 to 45 days before the annual report submission deadline, GAC staff send the primary contact for the program instructions for completion of the report.

2. The report collects the following information related to the accredited program:
  - a. Program contact
  - b. Program locations
  - c. Program delivery modality
  - d. University and program faculty data
  - e. University and program student data (enrollment/graduates)
  - f. Measures of student achievement
  - g. Course/module data
  - h. Continuous Improvement activities
  - i. Reporting on good practices, innovations, and achievements
3. Annual reports are reviewed by GAC staff. The data are used to evaluate program compliance with accreditation standards, assess program trends, and measure GAC accreditation impact.

**View a sample of the Annual Report on the GAC website: [www.gacpm.org](http://www.gacpm.org).**

Please refer to Section B.7: Fees for details on the Annual Report Late Fee.

### **B.5.2: Substantive Change**

A substantive change to an accredited program is one that may impact the extent to which the program aligns with GAC Accreditation Standards.

All accredited programs are expected to submit a Substantive Change Report to GAC before the change is made effective. The program should contact GAC staff for clarification and guidance if they are unsure about whether a change is substantive.

Substantive changes may include but are not limited to:

- Withdrawal, or risk thereof, of institutional/governmental accreditation;
- Change in the name of the program and/or degree title;
- Change in ownership, legal status, or form of control of the institution;
- Change in the program's source(s) of financial support;
- Merging of current accredited programs to create a new program;
- Significant changes to the curriculum of an accredited degree or award that may affect the program's alignment with the GAC core areas of focus, including replacing more than 40% of the program's courses or subjects that align to the GAC core area of focus; and/or
- Change in the location of the degree or award, offering the degree or award at a branch campus, or discontinuing a branch campus.

If the program changes are determined by GAC to represent a sufficient departure from practices in place at the time of affirmation/reaffirmation, GAC may elect to reevaluate the program before the next submission for GAC Reaffirmation of Accreditation is due.

The following procedures apply to reporting substantive changes:

1. The program must submit a Substantive Change Report demonstrating alignment with GAC Accreditation Standards.
2. The GAC directors review the report and evidence to evaluate the change and determine whether the change may impact the program's continued alignment with the GAC Accreditation Standards.
3. The GAC directors make one of the following decisions:
  - a. To accept the report;





- b. To request additional information; or
- c. To require a visit before further action, as the program may no longer be in alignment with GAC Accreditation Standards.

4. A decision letter is sent to the program.

If at any time, GAC discovers a program has undergone a substantive and unreported change, it will request additional information from the program along with a comprehensive report of any substantive changes that have occurred since the last accreditation review.

Submission of false or misleading information shall be grounds for withdrawal of GAC accreditation status. GAC may exercise its right to reevaluate an accredited program at any time during its period of accreditation.

### **B.5.3: Review and Approval of Additional Academic Degrees or Awards After Primary Accreditation**

GAC programs may apply to have additional academic degrees or awards accredited by completing an Additional Program Request demonstrating how the additional degree or award aligns with GAC Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards.

The following procedures apply to an additional program request:

1. The program must submit an Additional Program Request demonstrating alignment with GAC Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards.
2. The GAC directors review the request and evidence to evaluate the program's alignment with GAC Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards.
3. The GAC directors make one of the following decisions:
  - a. To accredit the new academic degree or award;
  - b. To request additional information; or
  - c. To request a visit prior to further action.
4. A decision letter is sent to the program.

### **B.5.4: Discontinuation of a Degree or Award**

When a program plans to discontinue an accredited degree or award, the program must submit a Teach-Out Plan demonstrating how the program will continue to align with GAC Accreditation Standards and provide students with the academic and student support necessary to complete their program through the duration of the teach-out.

The following procedures apply to the discontinuation of an accredited degree or award:

1. The program must submit a Teach-Out Plan demonstrating alignment with the GAC Accreditation Standards.
2. The GAC staff review the plan and documentation to evaluate the program's alignment with GAC Accreditation Standards.
3. The GAC staff make one of the following decisions:
  - a. To accept the plan;
  - b. To request additional information; or
  - c. To request revision of the plan to ensure the program is aligned with the GAC Accreditation Standards for the duration of the teach-out.
4. A decision letter is sent to the program.

The plan will be kept on file for review at the time of the program's next GAC Reaffirmation of Accreditation. The program is required to notify GAC upon completion of the Teach-Out Plan and discontinuation of the degree or award.

### **B.5.5: Progress Reports**

Progress Reports are required to demonstrate improvement in addressing required actions noted in the GAC Accreditation decision letter. The report provides description and evidence regarding the required actions.

Progress reports are due on one of the following dates:

- 28 February
- 30 September

Programs that do not submit a Progress Report put their accreditation at risk.

#### **The following procedures apply to Progress Reports:**

1. The program representative receives GAC decision letter noting:
  - a. The "required actions" for program elements that are partially aligned or not aligned to the GAC Accreditation Standards as noted in the GAC decision letter; and
  - b. Instructions and the deadline for submission of the Progress Report.
2. The program must submit the Progress Report by the deadline stated in GAC decision letter.
3. The GAC directors review the report and evidence to evaluate the progress.
4. The GAC directors make one of the following decisions:
  - a. Progress Report accepted: No further Progress Reports or actions are required.
  - b. Progress Report received: Additional information is required before a decision can be made.
  - c. Progress Report accepted: Continuation of reporting is required for the upcoming year.
  - d. Progress Report received: A visit is required before further action.
  - e. Progress Report received: The program did not show any progress toward addressing the required actions related to the GAC Accreditation Standards elements. Accreditation is revoked.
5. GAC staff sends notification to the program with the next steps.

## **B.6: Appeals and Complaints**

### **B.6.1: Appeal of a Decision by GAC**

The GAC directors' decision may be appealed by following the GAC appeals process.

When a program receives a GAC directors' decision of denial or withdrawal of accreditation, the GAC directors will provide the program with the reasons for the decision, referencing specific GAC Accreditation Standards with which the program is not aligned.

The chief operations officer or other appropriate representative of a program may appeal a GAC accreditation decision of denial and GAC-initiated withdrawal of accreditation, as delineated in Section B.4 within 30 days of receipt of the written GAC decision. All appeals shall be addressed to GAC and provide the following:

1. The specific grounds on which the appeal is being made; and
2. All relevant supportive documentation demonstrating why the appellant believes the GAC decision should be reconsidered.

*\*For the ease of the reader, the terms "management of projects" and "project, program and portfolio management" are used interchangeably.*



Within 30 days of receipt of the written appeal, GAC shall forward the original decision, the appeal, and all supportive documentation to an ad hoc appeals panel, appointed by the GAC directors and 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 directors, which will render a final vote on the appeal.

### B.6.2: Complaint Regarding a GAC Accredited Program

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

1. Substantial evidence supporting any allegation that the accredited program is in violation of GAC policies and Accreditation Standards must be provided.
2. The complainant must demonstrate that a serious effort has been made to pursue all available review procedures, which are available within the program.
3. The complainant must grant permission to forward the complaint, in its entirety, to the program for comment. If GAC ascertains that the complainant is in litigation with the program, no action shall be taken regarding the complaint while the matter is under legal review. The complainant must sign a statement stating that they are not aware of any pending litigation.

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

Please refer to GAC Accreditation Policies and Processes posted on the GAC website ([www.gacpm.org](http://www.gacpm.org)) for specific information regarding the complaint process.

### B.7: Fees

GAC assesses fees for the conduct and maintenance of the following GAC accreditation processes:

Fee Type	Description
Application Fee	Due upon completion of the GAC staff review of Letter of Intent
Self-Assessment Report Review Fee	Due upon completion of the GAC staff review of the Self-Assessment report
Self-Assessment Report Extension Fee	Due for each month or part of month after deadline for submission of Self-Assessment Report
Visit Fee	Due upon authorization of the visit by the GAC directors
Reaffirmation Late Fee	Due for each month or partial month after expiration of accreditation cycle
Annual Maintenance Fee	Due on the anniversary of accreditation date
Annual Report Late Fee	Due for each month after the deadline for submission of the Annual Report
<b>Other Expenses</b>	
Visit	Program is responsible for all direct costs related to the visit team, including travel, lodging, meals, parking, etc.

*\*For the ease of the reader, the terms "management of projects" and "project, program and portfolio management" are used interchangeably.*

Failure to pay fees is grounds for a GAC-initiated withdrawal of accreditation. Please refer to the GAC Program Fee Schedule posted on the GAC website ([www.gacpm.org](http://www.gacpm.org)) for the fees associated with each step of the accreditation process.

### **Payment Information**

Programs will receive an invoice by email from PMI Accounts Receivable for all fees. Payment instructions are included with the invoice. Checks, money orders, wire transfers, or credit cards are acceptable. GAC staff can forward any questions or concerns to PMI Accounts Receivable as needed.

## **Section C: GAC Eligibility Requirements**

Each academic program (hereafter referred to as program) applying for accreditation by GAC must demonstrate that its academic degrees or awards satisfy the Eligibility Requirements specified herein.

An application for GAC accreditation may consist of single or multiple academic degrees or awards as long as they are under the same academic leadership. Programs under different academic leadership require separate applications.

The Letter of Intent submitted by the program shall clearly demonstrate how its academic degrees or awards address the GAC Eligibility Requirements.

### **C.1: Institutional Accreditation and Legal Authority**

The institution submitting an application to GAC shall also be an institution of higher education that is legally authorized, under applicable law, to confer higher education degrees or awards. The institution shall be accredited by a recognized accrediting agency or appropriate government authority.

To demonstrate that this eligibility requirement is met, the program shall submit documentation that the program resides within an institution of higher education that is:

**C.1.1:** Legally authorized, under applicable law, to confer higher education degrees or awards.

**C.1.2:** Accredited by an appropriate institutional or governmental authority.

### **C.2: Degrees or Awards Eligible for Accreditation**

The program should clearly identify the academic degrees or awards to be assessed by GAC for accreditation. Degrees or awards may be in the project and/or program and/or portfolio management discipline or in another field with a significant component specifically related to the management of projects.\* A degree or award shall meet the following minimum requirements in order to be deemed eligible for GAC accreditation. Any deviations from the minimum requirements must be justified with documentation from the program's recognized accreditation agency, or appropriate governmental authority, demonstrating that the program meets the authority's degree criteria.

\*For the ease of the reader, the terms "management of projects" and "project, program and portfolio management" are used interchangeably.

Degree or Award Eligibility					
Total Degree or Award Duration and Credit Requirements				Management of Projects* Credit and Study Hour Requirements	
Type of Degree or Award	Duration	Total Academic Credit Equivalents (Minimum)	Total Study Hours (Minimum)	Total Academic Credit Equivalents of Management of Projects* Content (Minimum)	Total Study Hours of Management of Projects* Content (Minimum)
Associate's (Undergraduate-Level, Higher Diploma, Two-Year Higher Education Diploma)	2 years fulltime or equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>120 ECTS</li> <li>240 U.K. credits</li> <li>60 U.S. semester credits</li> </ul>	2,400 Study Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30 ECTS</li> <li>60 U.K. credits</li> <li>15 U.S. semester credits</li> </ul>	600 study hours
Bachelor's Degree (Undergraduate-Level)	3 or 4 years full time or equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>180 ECTS</li> <li>360 U.K. credits</li> <li>120 U.S. semester credits</li> </ul>	3,600 Study Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30 ECTS</li> <li>60 U.K. credits</li> <li>15 U.S. semester credits</li> </ul>	600 study hours
Post-Graduate Degree (Master's, Post-Graduate Diploma, etc.)	1 or 2 years full time or equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>60 ECTS</li> <li>120 U.K. credits</li> <li>30 U.S. semester credits</li> </ul>	1,200 Study Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>30 ECTS</li> <li>60 U.K. credits</li> <li>15 U.S. semester credits</li> </ul>	600 study hours
Doctorate Degree (PhD or Professional Doctorate)	3 or 4 years full time or equivalent	GAC encourages research on the management of projects* and accredits related doctoral degree programs.			

Academic, Credit-Bearing Certificate Program Eligibility					
Total Award Duration and Credit Requirements				Management of Projects* Credit and Study Hour Requirements	
Type of Program or Award	Duration	Total Academic Credit Equivalents (Minimum)	Total Study Hours (Minimum)	Total Academic Credit Equivalents of Management of Projects* Content (Minimum)	Total Study Hours of Management of Projects* Content (Minimum)
Undergraduate Level	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24 ECTS</li> <li>48 U.K. credits</li> <li>12 U.S. semester credits</li> </ul>	480 study hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24 ECTS</li> <li>48 U.K. credits</li> <li>12 U.S. semester credits</li> </ul>	480 study hours
Post-Graduate Level	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24 ECTS</li> <li>48 U.K. credits</li> <li>12 U.S. semester credits</li> </ul>	480 study hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24 ECTS</li> <li>48 U.K. credits</li> <li>12 U.S. semester credits</li> </ul>	480 study hours

GAC recognizes differences in regional academic processes and terminology.

**Academic credit definition:** The unit of measuring educational credit. Different countries use different methods of calculating what is considered an academic credit (example: ECTS, U.S. semester credit, U.K. credits). It is typically based on the number of hours of class/seminar time plus student preparation time.

**Study hours definition:** The total number of actual hours spent by a student to complete a program of study. Study hours include time spent in lectures, seminars, independent study, preparation for and taking of examinations, and so forth. Typically, 1 hour per week of scheduled class/seminar time is expected to require a minimum of 2 hours of student preparation time.

**To demonstrate that this eligibility requirement is met, the program shall submit the following for each academic degree or award for which accreditation is being sought:**

- C.2.1:** The full name of the academic degree or award(s).
- C.2.2:** A definition of the academic credits in terms of study hours.
- C.2.3:** The degree or award(s) level (see Appendix).
- C.2.4:** The total number of academic credits and study hours required for completion of the degree or award(s) and the total number of required academic credits and study hours devoted to the management of projects\* content.
- C.2.5:** A listing of required and elective courses/subjects containing management of projects\* content, demonstrating alignment with the core areas of focus for program learning outcomes (GAC Accreditation Standard D.2).
- C.2.6:** The locations and delivery modalities, including any collaboration with other institutions, for each degree or award.

### **C.3: Period of Operation**

Eligibility for GAC accreditation requires that an academic degree or award has at least one graduating class by the date the Letter of Intent is submitted.

**To demonstrate that this eligibility requirement is met, the program shall submit the following information for each academic degree or award:**

- C.3.1:** The date when the academic degree or award was launched and the date of the first graduating class.
- C.3.2:** Data illustrating the number of students enrolled each year and graduated each year (up to 5 years as applicable).

### **C.4: Administrative Structure and Academic Leadership**

The program shall demonstrate that it has qualified, adequate, and sustainable academic leadership and governance to support an academic program in the management of projects.\*

**To demonstrate that this eligibility requirement is met, the program shall submit the following information:**

- C.4.1:** A description of the program's administrative structure and its relation to the overall academic and administrative structure of the institution.
- C.4.2:** Evidence that the program is led by an academic leader who is academically or professionally qualified in the management of projects, as appropriate to the program mission and objectives, and who has sufficient authority, support, and time to accomplish the academic program's goals and objectives as well as provide sufficient leadership and supervision.

*\*For the ease of the reader, the terms "management of projects" and "project, program and portfolio management" are used interchangeably.*



## Section D: GAC Accreditation Standards

Each program applying for accreditation by GAC must demonstrate that its academic degrees or awards satisfy the Accreditation Standards specified herein.

The Self-Assessment Report shall clearly demonstrate how its academic degrees and awards align with the GAC Accreditation Standards.

Continuous improvement is necessary to respond to feedback, program performance results, and the dynamic and evolving nature of the management of projects\* and teaching and learning practices. GAC requires programs to demonstrate evidence of a continuous improvement process related to each accreditation standard.

### D.1: Program Mission

The program shall have a clearly defined and publicly stated mission supported by objectives, consistent with the mission of the academic institution as a whole, and relevant to the management of projects.

**To demonstrate that the above standard is met, the program shall submit the following information:**

- D.1.1: Evidence that the program has a mission statement and that it is publicly available.
- D.1.2: Description of how the program's mission is aligned with the mission and/or vision of the academic institution.
- D.1.3: Description of how the program's mission is relevant to the project management profession.
- D.1.4: Description of how the program's mission contributes to society.
- D.1.5: Description and evidence of regular assessment of the program's mission ensuring relevance to the project management profession.

### D.2: Curricula and Student Achievement of Learning Outcomes

GAC recognizes the dynamic nature of the management of projects.\* Thus, programs are to provide academic curricula that integrate practice and theory at different degree levels while honoring each program's unique context. GAC encourages programs to be innovative and forward thinking in developing curricula that will both advance the profession and prepare students to be effective professionals who make a positive contribution to society.

GAC requires programs to offer curricula that assure student achievement of three GAC core areas of focus for learning outcomes that address generally accepted practices, knowledge, and competencies found within the management of projects\* discipline and documented in professional standards.

For all of the following areas of focus, programs are required to demonstrate student achievement of learning outcomes for each academic degree or award that reflect appropriate levels of academic achievement in higher education.

#### *Area of Focus 1: Technical Expertise*

Management of projects\* to meet needs within constraints, with reference to professional standards and frameworks

#### *Area of Focus 2: Professional Behavior*

Ethical and culturally aware stakeholder engagement, communication, leadership, and teamwork

### Area of Focus 3: Strategic Awareness

Contextual awareness and knowledge of strategic, societal, and operational drivers required to inform decisions and deliver sustained competitive advantage

#### GAC Expected Levels of Academic Achievement

Each academic degree or award is required to demonstrate achievement of program learning outcomes that reflect appropriate levels of academic achievement (see Appendix).

**To demonstrate that the above standard is met, the program shall submit the following information:**

- D.2.1:** Description of the academic degree or award including:
  - D.2.1.1:** How it executes its mission
  - D.2.1.2:** How it reflects professional standards and/or frameworks utilized in the curricula
  - D.2.1.3:** How it serves potential and current student
- D.2.2:** List the program learning outcomes reflecting the academic degree or award level and the knowledge, skills, and/or competencies acquired throughout the program
- D.2.3:** A chart for each degree or award that cross-references the program learning outcome with the GAC core areas of focus
- D.2.4:** A chart for each degree or award that cross-references each course or subject with the program learning outcomes
- D.2.5:** Description and evidence of how curricula facilitate student engagement including collaborative activities, integrative activities, and/or environments designed to enhance student learning
- D.2.6:** Description and evidence of how curricula provide a summative experience(s) that incorporates the appropriate management of projects\* based on the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired throughout the program
- D.2.7:** Description of how curricula include academic content, rigor, and quality appropriate for the degree or award level as noted in GAC Expected Levels of Academic Achievement (see Appendix)
- D.2.8:** A detailed outline for each course or subject (e.g., course description, learning outcomes, assessment methods, reading, and resources,) relevant to the management of projects\*
- D.2.9:** Description and evidence of consistent delivery of curricula across all locations and delivery modalities including regular, substantive interactions between faculty and students
- D.2.10:** Description and evidence of how relevant individuals are involved in the curricula continuous improvement process
- D.2.11:** Description and evidence provided in a chart of how the achievement of program learning outcomes are assessed for each academic degree or award using direct and indirect measures of assessment. The description must include:
  - D.2.11.1:** Description of a documented assessment process including, for example: what data are collected, who is responsible for collecting the data, when data are collected, the performance targets or benchmarks of achievement, how data are analyzed, and how the results are used for program improvement
  - D.2.11.2:** Evidence of the analysis of assessment data showing the extent to which students have achieved the GAC core areas of focus for all program learning outcomes
  - D.2.11.3:** Evidence of the use of these data for continuous program improvement

\*For the ease of the reader, the terms "management of projects" and "project, program and portfolio management" are used interchangeably.





### **D.3: Program Information Integrity**

The program ensures that students and the public have access to accurate information about the academic degree or award to make informed decisions. The program shall provide accurate, consistent, and verifiable information about the academic degree or award to students and the public.

**To demonstrate that the above standard is met, the program shall submit the following:**

- D.3.1:** Description and evidence of the communications provided to the public and relevant individuals about the academic degree or award
- D.3.2:** Description and evidence that program information is regularly assessed to ensure their accuracy, consistency, and relevance

### **D.4: Faculty and Staff**

The program shall demonstrate adequate program leadership, faculty, and staff. Program leadership and faculty are academically/professionally qualified for their roles. Program leadership and faculty are resourced for administration and effective teaching as appropriate to their respective roles. The faculty contribute to their institution, professional community, and society.

The program supports the faculty to participate in the creation of new knowledge related to the management of projects\* through research, professional development, and/or other scholarly activity.

**To demonstrate that the above standard is met, the program shall submit the following information:**

- D.4.1:** Description of the program leadership's and support staff's roles and responsibilities to demonstrate an adequate staffing structure
- D.4.2:** Description and evidence of the faculty workload
- D.4.3:** Description and evidence of the institutional/program standards for hiring and retaining faculty
- D.4.4:** Curriculum vitae for program leadership demonstrating academic and/or professional qualifications in the management of projects,\* as appropriate to the program mission and objectives
- D.4.5:** Curriculum vitae for all current faculty, demonstrating sufficient academic and/or professional qualifications in the management of projects,\* as appropriate to the program mission, expected levels of academic achievement, and assigned teaching responsibilities
- D.4.6:** The courses/modules offered by year and term/semester over the past 2 years, including course title and assigned faculty
- D.4.7:** The professional development and institutional engagement of faculty addressing the following:
  - D.4.7.1:** Description and evidence of policies or processes to support faculty in acquiring new skills and knowledge
  - D.4.7.2:** Description and evidence of faculty engagement in activities to acquire new skills and knowledge
  - D.4.7.3:** Description of the interaction between the program and other programs at the institution, as appropriate to the program mission
  - D.4.7.4:** Description of program leadership and faculty's contribution to the governance and intellectual life of the program and institution

*\*For the ease of the reader, the terms "management of projects" and "project, program and portfolio management" are used interchangeably.*

**D.4.8:** The external engagement of the faculty addressing the following:

**D.4.8.1:** Description of contribution to the professional community

**D.4.8.2:** Brief description of contributions to society through scholarship, leadership, and other activities

**D.4.9:** Description and evidence of how the effectiveness of faculty is evaluated and used to inform continuous improvement

## **D.5: Student Support**

The program shall demonstrate that it facilitates student academic and professional success.

Students admitted to the academic degree or award should meet the institution's admission and selection policies. The program, regardless of modality, shall demonstrate equal student access to services in support of academic achievement.

**To demonstrate that the above standard is met, the program shall submit the following information:**

**D.5.1:** Description and evidence of clear policies for program admission, as relevant to the expected level of academic achievement

**D.5.2:** Description and evidence of clear policies for academic performance and progress, as relevant to the expected level of academic achievement

**D.5.3:** Description and evidence of the academic advisement provided to students necessary to complete the program

**D.5.4:** Description and evidence of the student support services provided to meet the needs of students as appropriate to the program mission

**D.5.5:** Description and evidence of adequate and accessible library resources to support the expected level of academic achievement, including library services, holdings, and digital resources

**D.5.6:** Description and evidence of adequate and accessible facilities and technology to support the program and the needs of the students

**D.5.7:** Description of opportunities for students to participate in student and/or professional societies and activities that contribute to professional preparation and/or societal impact

**D.5.8:** Description and evidence of regular assessment of student support services

## **D.6: Financial Resources**

The program should demonstrate that the institution allocates adequate and sustainable resources for the program to achieve its stated objectives.

**To demonstrate that the above standard is met, the program shall submit the following information:**

**D.6.1:** Description and evidence of financial resources to execute and sustain the program

**D.6.2:** Description and evidence that the program's financial resources are regularly assessed to ensure sustainable support for the program faculty, student learning, and services



## Appendix: GAC Expected Levels of Academic Achievement

Each academic program, degree, or award is required to demonstrate achievement of program learning outcomes that reflect appropriate levels of academic achievement. Below, please find a grid with the appropriate levels of achievement.

GAC Expected Levels of Academic Achievement for Undergraduate (Bachelor's), Post-Graduate (Master's, Post-Graduate Diploma, etc.), and Doctoral Academic Program, Degree, or Awards			
	<b>Undergraduate (Bachelor's)</b> <i>Graduates at this level will demonstrate:</i>	<b>Post Graduate</b> <i>Graduates at this level will demonstrate:</i>	<b>Doctorate</b> <i>Graduates at this level will demonstrate:</i>
<b>Knowledge</b>	Broad and coherent theoretical and technical understanding of the methods of managing projects* and the profession.	Advanced and integrated understanding of the methods of managing projects* and the profession; its interface with other fields of work and disciplines; and recent developments in allied research, methods, and practice.	Systemic and critical understanding of the methods of managing projects* foundational bodies of knowledge, the profession, and its interface across fields or other disciplines.
<b>Skills</b>	<p>Analytical, communicative, creative, and technical skills to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope and solve specialized problems in predictable and unpredictable contexts.</li> <li>• Distinguish relevant concepts, choices, consequences, events, and strategies.</li> <li>• Engage others to set and realize objectives.</li> <li>• Propose pathways through complex situations.</li> </ul>	<p>Analytical, communicative, creative, and technical skills to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope and solve complex problems that traverse fields of work or disciplines in unpredictable contexts.</li> <li>• Interpret and synthesize relevant concepts, choices, consequences, events, and strategies.</li> <li>• Engage multidisciplinary teams to set and realize objectives.</li> <li>• Propose innovative pathways through complex situations that minimize risks and optimize impacts.</li> </ul>	<p>Expert specialized analytical, communicative, creative, and technical skills to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in critical reflection, synthesis, and evaluation of existing knowledge in order to contribute to the development of a field of work or discipline.</li> <li>• Extend or redefine existing knowledge to make substantial contributions to a field of work, discipline, or professional practice.</li> <li>• Develop and utilize original quantitative or qualitative research methodologies to address unresolved issues or new problems in the project management field of work, discipline, or professional practice.</li> <li>• Present cogently a complex original investigation or research for external examination against international standards and to communicate results to peers and the community.</li> </ul>
<b>Application of knowledge and skills</b>	<p>Autonomy, judgment, and responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage complex professional and technical activities to create value.</li> <li>• Navigate uncertainty in familiar and unfamiliar contexts.</li> <li>• Awareness of sociocultural factors that may promote or hinder management of people, procedures, or processes.</li> <li>• Self-awareness to guide and evaluate one's own decisions and actions to continuously grow and improve.</li> </ul>	<p>Autonomy, accountability, adaptability, and judgment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a project and organizational strategy to create and deliver value.</li> <li>• Manage complex professional and technical activities and the execution of complex projects.</li> <li>• Develop new knowledge, procedures, and processes integrating knowledge from different fields.</li> <li>• Develop innovative solutions and proposals relevant to an academic/ professional field, field of work, or discipline.</li> <li>• Provide specialized counsel and expertise to predict and navigate risk in unfamiliar contexts.</li> <li>• Leverage complex sociocultural factors to promote successful management of people, procedures, or processes.</li> <li>• Consistently and sensitively manage complex and diverse ethical issues; self-awareness to guide and evaluate one's own decisions and actions to continuously grow and improve.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovation, autonomy, accountability, adaptability, expert judgment; scholarly and professional integrity as an expert, leading practitioner, and/or scholar.</li> <li>• The ongoing capacity to generate new knowledge and lead contributions to foundational knowledge, ethics, and practice relevant to the management of projects.*</li> </ul>

# Glossary of Terms

**Project Management Institute Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC)** — specialized accrediting organization that accredits bachelor's, post-graduate, and doctoral degrees in the management of projects\* and related programs.

**Academic** — relating to educational institutions, namely colleges and universities.

**Academic Award** — conferred by an institution of higher education upon completion of a course of study at a college or university. A qualification given to a student upon completion of an undergraduate, post-graduate, doctoral, or other equivalent program. The term academic degree is often used to signify an academic award.

**Academic Credit** — the unit of measuring educational credit. Different countries use different methods of calculating what is considered an academic credit (for example, ECTS, U.S. semester credits, U.K. credits). It is typically based on the number of hours of class/seminar time plus student preparation time.

**Academic Degree** — conferred by an institution of higher education upon completion of a course of study at a college or university. A qualification given to a student upon completion of an undergraduate, post-graduate, doctoral, or other equivalent program. The term academic award is often used to signify an academic degree.

**Academic Leadership** — a competent administrator who has sufficient authority, support, and time to accomplish the education program's goals and objectives and who provides sufficient leadership and supervision to develop a strong academic program.

**Accreditation** — the designation conferred by GAC upon a management of projects\* or a related degree program or award that meets or exceeds the standards of performance established and defined by GAC and documented in the Handbook.

**Alignment/Compliance** — the term used by GAC to indicate that a program minimally meets the GAC Accreditation Standards.

**Annual Report** — a yearly report submitted to GAC by an accredited program. The report contains demographic information about the accredited program and notes any minor changes/improvements in the accredited degree program or the institution where it is housed.

**Applicant Program** — a particular management of projects\* or related degree program within an institution of higher education which has met the GAC Eligibility Requirements and is put forward for GAC accreditation by the institution where it resides.

**Bachelor's Degree** — an academic degree conferred by a college or university upon those who complete the undergraduate curriculum.

**Campus** — the physical location of a program including the main, satellite/branch, or additional location

- **Main Campus:** The primary physical location where a program is offered by a university or college.
- **Satellite or Branch Campus:** A campus of a college or university that is physically at a distance from the main campus. This satellite/branch campus may be located in a different city, state, or country, and is often smaller than the main campus of an institution. The branch campus offers a full degree or award.
- **Additional Location:** A location that is physically at a distance from the main campus and offers less than a full degree or award.

**Continuous improvement** — an ongoing effort to improve all aspects of a program, process, or service. These efforts can seek "incremental" improvement over time or "breakthrough" improvement all at once.

**Contribution to Society** — doing an act for the benefit of the community or society at large.

**Course/Coursework** — a series of lectures or lessons on an individual subject recognized for credit toward the granting of a degree by an institution of higher education. The United Kingdom, Australia, and Singapore equivalent is *module or unit*.

**Credit Hour** — the unit of measuring educational credit usually based on the number of classroom hours or direct instructional hours and out of class student work per week throughout a term or semester.

**Curricula** — the totality of student experiences that occur in the educational process.

\*For the ease of the reader, the terms "management of projects" and "project, program and portfolio management" are used interchangeably.



**Degree** — the award conferred by an institution of higher education that indicates a course of study at a college or university, or the qualification given to a student upon completion of an undergraduate, post-graduate, doctoral, or other equivalent program.

**Delivery Modality** — the mode used to deliver instruction to students. Examples are distance learning, face-to-face instruction, and blended learning.

**Direct Measures of Assessment** — evidence from student academic outcomes such as examinations, assignments, or rubrics.

**Diploma** — a certificate awarded by a higher education institution certifying that the person has satisfactorily completed a course of study (undergraduate, post-graduate, or doctoral).

**Doctorate** — an academic degree or professional degree, usually the highest-ranking degree awarded by a university.

**Formal Education** — the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction at a school, college, or university. It requires a program written by the institution or the Ministry of Education, which determines the learning progress in all stages of formal education.

**Faculty** — individuals who teach in a college or university or in a department of a college or university. In the European higher education system, faculty represents a group of departments in a college that specialize in a particular subject or a group of subjects. Faculty is equivalent to academic staff (or academics) in that context.

**Financial Resources** — the funding available to a program to ensure it is able to operate efficiently and sufficiently.

**GAC Accreditation Standards** — learning and performance objectives that a program must meet or exceed in order to receive GAC accredited status.

**GAC Core Areas of Focus for Learning Outcomes** — generally accepted processes, knowledge, and competencies found within the management of projects\* discipline and documented in professional standards. The three GAC core areas of focus are: Technical Expertise, Professional Behavior, and Strategic Awareness.

**GAC Directors** — governing body of the Global Accreditation Center for Project Management Education Programs (GAC) comprised of volunteer members representing the diverse interests of academia, industry, management of projects\* relevant parties, and the public at large.

**GAC Eligibility Requirements** — set of requirements that a management of projects\* or related academic degree or award must satisfy in order to be considered eligible to apply for GAC accreditation.

**GAC Expected Levels of Academic Achievement** — each academic degree or award is required to demonstrate achievement of program learning outcomes that reflect appropriate levels of academic achievement related to the level of the degree/award (associate, bachelor's, post-graduate, doctoral). Refer to the "GAC Expected Levels of Academic Achievement" document in the Appendix of the Handbook.

**Indirect Measures of Assessment** — assessment of learning based upon student or third-party perception rather than academic outcomes. Examples include student surveys or employer feedback.

**Institutional Accreditation/Appropriate Government Authority** — institutional accreditation considers the characteristics of whole institutions, rather than specific programs within an institution. An institutional accrediting body reviews not only the educational offerings of the institutions it accredits, but also other institutional characteristics such as student personnel services, financial conditions, and administrative strength. Accrediting agencies or appropriate governmental authorities are organizations (or bodies) that establish operating standards for educational or professional institutions and programs, determine the extent to which the standards are met, and publicly announce their findings.

**Learning Outcomes** — statements that describe what a learner is expected to know, understand, and be able to do upon graduating from a program.

**Letter of Intent/Eligibility Application** — the first step of the GAC accreditation process, a document demonstrating how a program meets the Eligibility Requirements for GAC accreditation.

**Management of Projects** — the term *management* of projects includes project and/or program and/or portfolio management.

\*For the ease of the reader, the terms "management of projects" and "project, program and portfolio management" are used interchangeably.

**Master's Degree** — a post-graduate academic degree conferred by a college or university upon those who complete at least 1 year of prescribed study beyond the bachelor's degree.

**Visit** — the third step of the GAC accreditation process; a visit to the institution hosting the program by a team of independent reviewers/evaluators with the charge of verifying the findings of the Self-Assessment Report.

**Period of Operation** — the length of time that an academic degree or award has been offered by an academic program.

**Post Graduate (studies, level)** — studies done after receiving a bachelor's degree.

**Professional Behavior** — GAC Core Area of Focus Two. Ethical and culturally aware stakeholder engagement, communication, leadership, and teamwork.

**Professional Doctorate** — equivalent to a doctorate (the highest-ranking degree awarded by a university) but with a focus on a specific professional content.

**Program/Programme** — an integrated course of academic studies that may house several individual academic degrees or awards. Within its Eligibility Requirements and Accreditation Standards, GAC also defines program as the department or business unit that is responsible for the project, program, and/or portfolio management curricula, quality control, and resource allocation.

**Program Mission** — a written statement that defines the general values and principles that guide the program, including the individuals it is designed to serve. It is the basis for program guidance, planning, and implementation.

**Progress Report** — the method by which GAC accredited programs report their improvement in demonstrating adherence to GAC Accreditation Standards as identified in the decision letter with oversight from the GAC directors.

**Public Member** — the GAC director who is not, and has not been, employed in the management of projects\* field and is in good standing in their professional community.

**Reaffirmation of Accreditation** — process of reevaluation that a GAC-accredited program must undergo at the end of its current accreditation cycle in order to maintain its GAC accreditation.

**Self-Assessment Report** — a comprehensive analysis of the program's mission, curricula, and core areas of focus for program learning outcomes, faculty and staff, students, financial resources, and program improvement. This analysis is the basis for the document that is developed and sent to GAC during the second step of the GAC accreditation process. This report clearly demonstrates how the program aligns with and achieves each of the GAC Accreditation Standards.

**Sole Discretion of** — the only person or entity with the freedom to decide how to act or what should be done in a particular situation.

**Strategic Awareness** — GAC Core Area of Focus Three. Contextual awareness and knowledge of the strategic and operational drivers required to inform decisions and deliver sustained competitive advantage.

**Student** — individual enrolled in a course of study within an institution of higher education.

**Study Hour** — the total number of actual hours spent by a student to complete a program of study. Study hours include time spent in lectures, seminars, independent study, preparation for and taking of examinations, and so forth. Typically, 1 hour per week of scheduled class/seminar time is expected to require a minimum of 2 hours of student preparation time.

**Suggestions** — collegial comments in the Visit Report by the visit team. Programs are not required to respond to suggestions; however, responses can evidence continuous improvement efforts.

**Sustainable** — capable of being maintained and supported at a certain level with institutional commitment and funding.

**Technical Expertise** — GAC Core Area of Focus One. Management of projects\* to meet needs within constraints, with reference to professional standards and guides.

**Undergraduate Degree Program** — a program leading to a bachelor's or associate's degree in a particular area of study.

**Undergraduate Student** — a student who is studying for a first degree at a college or university.

\*For the ease of the reader, the terms "management of projects" and "project, program and portfolio management" are used interchangeably.

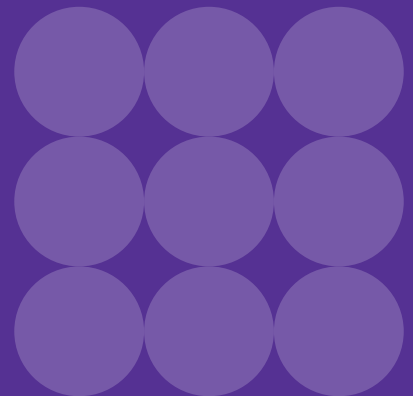
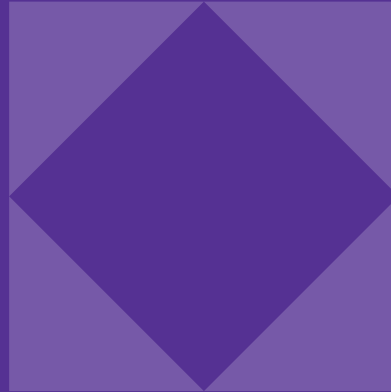
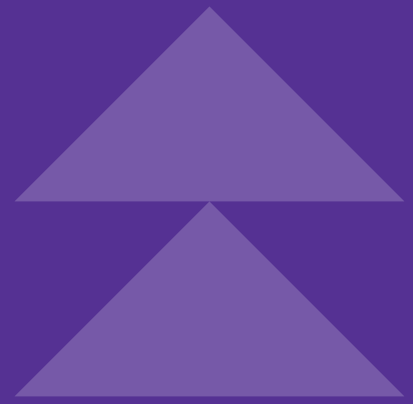


## **Acknowledgments to the GAC Handbook of Accreditation for Academic Programs in Project Management and Related Programs – Fifth Edition (5.0)**

This Handbook supersedes the *GAC Handbook of Accreditation for Academic Degrees and Awards in Project, Program, and Portfolio Management and Related Programs – Fourth Edition (4.0)*, published in 2015.

As required of its programs, GAC engages in continual improvement.

This revision was developed with input from the GAC directors and GAC program representatives to provide clarity on GAC's expectations related to the processes and policies surrounding the GAC accreditation process, reporting, and related policies.



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