

WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

Accreditation is a voluntary method of quality assurance developed more than 100 years ago by American universities and secondary schools, and designed primarily to distinguish schools adhering to a set of educational standards. The accreditation process is also known in terms of its ability to effectively drive student performance and continuous improvement in education. But such definitions, though accurate, are incomplete.

While accreditation is a set of rigorous protocols and research-based processes for evaluating an institution's organizational effectiveness, it is far more than that. Today accreditation examines the whole institution—the programs, the cultural context, the community of stakeholders—to determine how well the parts work together to meet the needs of students.

For many, accreditation is both a significant achievement pronouncing an institution's quality of education, as well as a remarkably enriching process for the institutions recognizing the tremendous competitive and performance gains it affords. Sadly, some schools approach accreditation as a necessary imposition that they must endure to secure the seal of accreditation, and the quicker they satisfy the requirements, the sooner they can return their attention to running their institutions. But it is those schools and school systems that see the untapped transformative power in the process of accreditation that are able to build true capacity to improve student learning and make continuous school improvement a distinctive reality.

It is the process of accreditation that yields the greatest continuing return for institutions. When approached properly, the internal self-assessment an institution conducts against a set of research-based quality standards can produce a wealth of galvanizing insights. Honest self-evaluation is unparalleled in its ability to uncover and bring into sharp focus special challenges for an institution that may not have been fully understood. The external review is the hallmark of the accreditation process, and like the internal self-assessment, it energizes and equips the leadership and stakeholders of an institution or school system to tackle those areas that may be thwarting desired performance levels.

Accreditation is a force-multiplier. The process is a catalyst for transformative excellence, and AdvancED's accreditation process is designed on a standards-based framework to feed continuous improvement and transform education on a global scale. Education providers of all types around the world use AdvancED Accreditation.

- Elementary, Middle and Secondary Schools
- School Districts/Systems
- Postsecondary Schools
- Educational Corporations
- Digital Learning Institutions
- Educational Service Agencies
- Pre-K Institutions

Accreditation is inextricably linked to institution and educational system improvement. The accreditation process asks institutions and systems to critically evaluate their vision, strategies, priorities, leadership, and programs and resources. The process of earning and maintaining accreditation provides institutions and educational systems with clear and compelling direction for implementing changes to move toward excellence.