

Accreditation Frequently Asked Questions



International Centre of
Excellence in
Tourism and Hospitality
Education (THE-ICE)



Accredited to meet THE-ICE
Standards of Excellence



What is accreditation?

Accreditation is typically regarded as an extensive quality review process conducted by an organisation that is external to the education institution being reviewed. Institutional accreditation is often undertaken by government departments or appointed agencies for legal registration reasons, whereas course or programme accreditation and quality assurance is often undertaken by professional bodies and organisations such as THE-ICE.

Accreditation has become increasingly important in a number of professional areas - and in some specialised areas students graduating from non-accredited programmes may not be able to join a professional association, gain registration (such as to become a doctor or dentist), and be able to find relevant employment.

Why should a potential student or an institution care if a programme is accredited?

Around the world there are literally thousands of institutions offering some sort of tourism, hospitality events and culinary arts programmes. Prospective students, their parents and career counsellors will all want to be sure that a programme can deliver the graduate outcomes and quality of education experience promised. They will also want to know whether the institution's programmes are benchmarked against best-practice, and are well regarded by the industry and future employers.

Internally within an education institution, accreditation is seen as an independent '**mark of quality**' that reflects positively on the programmes offered by the institution. Accreditation bodies typically provide ongoing input and play an important role as part of the institution's internal review processes. THE-ICE is able to help an institution benchmark itself both nationally and globally through its initiatives such as the student satisfaction survey on their study journey experience.



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What are the different types of accrediting organisations?

It is the role of some regulation bodies to 'accredit' entire institutions (e.g. www.caa.ae, in the United Arab Emirates <http://nva.com> in the Netherlands), whereas other more specialised bodies will focus on particular types of education programmes - such as business (www.efmd.org, www.aacsb.org, www.fibaa.org), engineering (www.engab.org.uk/) etc.

In many countries the national accrediting body for institutions is a government one, but this is not always the case. In certain countries (such as the USA) institutional accreditation or registration may be carried out by not-for-profit but government approved bodies. At the more specialised course or programme level, the vast majority of accrediting bodies are professional organisations (such as a Medical Association) or not-for-profit organisations whose focus is on quality assurance.



What sort of accreditation does THE-ICE offer?

THE-ICE is a specialised international accrediting body focusing specifically on quality assurance for tourism, hospitality, events and culinary arts programmes offered in either the vocational or higher education sectors. THE-ICE is a self-governing not-for-profit organisation. Using a progressive and stepped accreditation schema, institutions undergo intensive review of their education programmes before they are able to apply for full accreditation from THE-ICE - only then can an institution become a Fully Accredited Member of the THE-ICE. They remain a member for as long as their accreditation is valid however this is reassessed once every five years.

Institutions seeking accreditation from THE-ICE are initially assessed through a rigorous 'Pre-accreditation' assessment process. If approved they become an Associate of THE-ICE and are able to apply for full accreditation. THE-ICE works with its members to support their strategic activities and encourage their continued standards of education excellence.

How does the actual accreditation process work in the case of THE-ICE?

The accreditation and review process is outlined below. Initially an institution applies for 'Pre-Accreditation' and, if successful, then has up to three years to apply for 'Full Accreditation'. In brief, the steps to full accreditation include:

- 1. Self-review:** each institution prepares a self-review document using THE-ICE's 'Standards of Excellence' template. Rather than measure each institution or its programmes against some pre-determined set of absolute standards, the main focus of this process is on self-reflection. The mission, goals and aims of the institution and its programmes are initially examined, and then aligned with the actual programmes and their graduate attributes, facilities, teaching staff, internationalisation policies and industry engagement activities.
- 2. Evaluation:** conducted by registered auditors from the independent THE-ICE Assessment Panel who review the accreditation application materials presented by the institution about its programmes.
- 3. Site visit:** After being typically conducted by the accrediting body to the institution to see the facilities, registered auditors from the independent THE-ICE Assessment Panel will carry out a site visit to meet with the teaching staff, administrative support staff, students, alumni and industry advisory board.
- 4. Peer review:** the Chair of the independent THE-ICE Assessment Panel will make a recommendation to THE-ICE Board of Directors based on the outcome of the evaluation. Once accreditation is granted, it is valid for a period of five years before another review is required.
- 5. On-going benchmarking and monitoring:** use of THE-ICE's annual student satisfaction survey (International Student Barometer & Student Barometer, conducted by [i-graduate](#)) provides on-going data to institutions about the student experience. In addition to the confidential benchmarking reports thus produced, THE-ICE also monitors any programme changes to ensure alignment with accreditation granted, and can provide input into internal programme reviews.

ACCREDITED MEMBER



Accredited to meet THE-ICE Standards of Excellence

Why does an institution need accreditation specific to tourism, hospitality and/or events if it already has a Business School accreditation?

Within the university / higher education sectors, a number of tourism, hospitality and/or events programmes are incorporated under a Faculty of Business or a School of Business. Such a Faculty/ School may have carry accreditations from bodies such as AACSB, EQUIS. or AMBA. However, these generic business accreditation bodies are typically not focused on the specifics of tourism and hospitality programmes.

One particular problem facing suppliers of tourism and hospitality education programmes is that generic recommendations about changes to the wider business curricula (such as core programmes, programme structure etc) may end up affecting the more-focused tourism and hospitality programmes. The lack of understanding and appreciation of important education issues for tourism and hospitality programmes (such as internship, practical courses etc) means it is important that accreditation is undertaken by a relevant external accreditation body such as THE-ICE.



Does this mean that an institution with unaccredited programmes is no good?

Not at all, however it does mean that potential students (or an institution evaluating a potential partner) should look into the institution and its programmes more carefully for the reasons listed below.

From a potential student's point of view, there are many institutions with poor reputations existing all around the world. Their websites may look great, but they may even have no legal basis on which to operate.

For international students it may also be impossible to get a visa to attend a non-accredited institution in any particular country.

Institutional accreditation should not be confused with programme accreditation. While an institution may be accredited or 'licensed' to operate and teach students, that does not mean its specific programmes in any particular areas are well regarded by the industry, former students or other education institutions.

Institutions offering tourism, hospitality, culinary arts and events programmes do vary considerably in terms of their curriculum, industry relevance, staff qualifications, expertise, and facilities. Accreditation by THE-ICE means these institutions have all passed peer review, quality assurance and a benchmarking process.

From an institutional perspective, the rapid globalisation of education means many universities, private hotel schools and vocational colleges are now engaged in varying institutional arrangements - such as articulation agreements, student exchange and joint offerings of qualifications. Often it is difficult to ascertain the legitimate status of the institution, let alone to assess the quality of its programmes or how well regarded they might be by the industry. Institutions that have passed THE-ICE's rigorous accreditation and quality assurance process are not only much more likely to be suitable partners, but will also minimise the potential risk of association.



Why does an institution need more than one accreditation?

About 40 business schools in the university/ higher education sector have achieved Triple Accreditation (EQUIS, AACSB, and AMBA) status. Collectively they have taken out advertising claiming that they are in the 1% of the world's 3,500 Business Schools. One reason for multiple accreditations is that some accreditation bodies only focus on a specific programme type - for example AMBA is focused on MBA programmes.

In terms of tourism, hospitality and events higher education, we are now seeing multiple accreditation occurring. The reasons for this include, for example, that different accreditation bodies may focus on different academic programmes (eg. tourism only, or hospitality only). Others may have an international focus while others may be more focused on accreditation only relevant to a specific country (eg ACPHA is focused on courses in USA).

The desire for additional accreditations is also in recognition of the increasing importance of satisfying both the internal processes within the institution, as well as external processes with potential students.

Who accredits the accrediting bodies?

Simply put, there is no global system that recognises international accrediting bodies such as THE-ICE. However, THE-ICE is a Full Member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, INQAAHE (www.inqaahe.org) which is based in The Netherlands. This is the peak global body for national accreditation agencies. Furthermore, THE-ICE began as a seed-funded initiative of the Australian Federal Government.



Some countries have governmental bodies which recognise private accreditation bodies. For example, in the USA this is done by the United States Department of Education through the independent body called the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, CHEA (www.chea.org). There has been a stepping up of oversight recently due to the arrival of what are called 'Accreditation Mills', who are essentially fake accreditation bodies. They may also accredit fake institutions, often referred to in the media as 'Diploma Mills'. In other countries such as the UK, the British government has formed the UK Accreditation Service, UKAS (www.ukas.com) to cover a range of needs for all sorts of accreditation bodies.

Typically voluntary international accrediting bodies (such as THE-ICE) start out with a focus on one country and then expand internationally. For example, AACSB (www.aacsb.org) is a US-based body that has been accrediting business schools since 1917. While this US-recognised accrediting organisation started life in the USA, it has now expanded internationally and accredits business programmes in many other jurisdictions.

In Europe, following on from the Bologna Process in higher education, the European Union (EU) formed the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, ENQA (www.engq.eu). Essentially this is the peak body for the national quality assurance agencies in Europe, as well as various public authorities and the university quality assurance agencies.

THE-ICE Strategic Partners:



THE-ICE Full Members:



Associates of THE-ICE:



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