

Strategic Plan 2015-2018

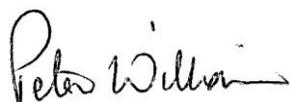
The British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education

STRATEGIC PLAN 2015 - 2018

Foreword by the Chairman

The British Accreditation Council has a long and distinguished history as the premier accrediting agency for independent further and higher education in the UK. Although the environment in which all sectors of education operate has changed considerably since BAC was founded, it has steadfastly maintained its belief in the vital importance of high quality and standards in further and higher education and training, the integrity and professionalism of providers, and the need for a central focus on the requirements and expectations of students.

These principles are equally applicable to BAC itself and the way that it operates. This Strategic Plan for the next three years describes and explains what BAC intends to do to develop its activities in order to move closer to realizing its vision, and how it intends to do it. The programme is ambitious but achievable and I am in no doubt that, at the end of the three-year period, BAC's accredited institutions, the students that study with them and those authorities around the world that rely on its inspections and judgments as a seal of quality, will see the BAC mark as a reliable and valued guide to the best that independent further and higher education can offer.



Peter Williams CBE
July 2015

Background

The British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education (BAC) was founded in 1984 with the assistance of the British Government to accredit independent further and higher education institutions.

This role expanded significantly in 2009 when BAC was asked to contribute to the introduction and monitoring of the Points Based Immigration System. The introduction of the PBIS led to a significant increase in demand for BAC accreditation and was accompanied by the growth of supporting infrastructure necessary to support the accreditation activities.

In 2011 a change in government policy meant that institutions recruiting international students who need visas to study in the UK onto courses with duration of more than 6 months had to be accredited or inspected by OFSTED, ISI or QAA.

This policy change had a significant impact on BAC. Many institutions had to seek accreditation or inspection services from one of the three organisations described above. This led to a significant fall in revenue for BAC and a reduction in the number of UK-based accredited organizations.

In 2012 BAC, in response to overseas demand, created a set of standards for the accreditation of international institutions.

Today, BAC accredits more than 260 institutions, operating in a total of 14 different countries with the majority of institutions based in the UK. Additionally, BAC has provided consultancy services to four national governments. In April 2015 BAC was awarded full membership of the European Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) so becoming only the second agency in the UK to achieve full membership. In June 2015 BAC was admitted onto the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

These two achievements have helped to lay the foundations for the next stage of BAC development which is set out in this Strategic Plan.

The British Accreditation Council's Vision

BAC wishes to promote strong, high quality independent higher and further education and training. It believes that the accreditation of institutions against standards based on the best current UK practice can contribute to that aim. BAC envisages itself as being a leading practitioner in the provision of internationally recognised accreditation and related consultancy services in the field of higher and further education and training.

The British Accreditation Council's Mission

BAC's aim is to provide globally respected and rigorous inspection-based accreditation to enhance the standards and quality of independent further and higher education and training providers. It also offers a bespoke consultancy service. BAC also aims to be recognised by UK and overseas governments as an influential voice on standards and quality for the independent education sector.

As well as providing clear guidance to prospective students, we want to encourage continuing improvement in the general standard and quality of independent further and higher education in the UK and internationally.

While the BAC is not a membership organisation, and indeed must maintain an objective distance from institutions to preserve the value of our accreditation, we are nevertheless dedicated to helping colleges in their efforts for continual improvement.

The British Accreditation Council's Values

Trust

We will act in a way that invokes the trust and confidence of all internal and external stakeholders. We will offer informed advice, guidance and support to students and colleges, along with other individuals who have expressed an interest in the independent education sector.

Respect

We will seek to remain a well-respected and trusted organisation by ensuring high standards of performance throughout our inspection, accreditation and consultancy work.

Integrity

We will be objective and honest and transparent in our provision of quality services to our stakeholders.

Responsibility

We will take full responsibility for all of our employees, associates, systems, procedures and processes, taking prompt and appropriate action to resolve queries or problems that may affect our service and care.

Transparent

We are open and transparent about the work we do and how we do it. In our communications with stakeholders we will explain clearly and authoritatively our standards and requirements in an open and honest manner.

Ethical

We will ensure that within our professional relationships we act honestly and fairly. We will respect the dignity, diversity and rights of individuals and groups of people we associate with.

The Role of the British Accreditation Council

A wide range of stakeholders benefit from the work of BAC:

Students – BAC helps students to make an informed choice about where to study. The BAC approach of published standards, rigorous inspection and the sharing of good practice encourages institutions to improve their quality, further enhancing students' learning opportunities and experience.

Accredited Institutions – Accredited institutions benefit from the candid information about themselves that BAC accreditation gives them. It provides leaders with a clear insight into the working of their institution. BAC encourages the sharing of good practice amongst accredited institutions so disseminating new ideas, raising standards and encouraging collaboration. The BAC quality mark is valuable for attracting students and can put institutions at a competitive advantage.

Partner Institutions – institutions which have met and maintain BAC standards are attractive to other institutions as potential partners because of the management systems that will be in place and the openness that the published inspection reports provide. This encourages confidence in the institution and supports inter-institutional co-operation.

Governments and Regulators – BAC accreditation acts as an authoritative mark of quality for governments, regulators and buyers of educational provision. BAC accreditation reduces risk for governments and increases transparency and institutional accountability. This supports and promotes trust in the UK and the reputation of the UK educational brand

The Strategic Plan 2015-18

This Strategic Plan sets out a pathway to guide the growth and development of the British Accreditation Council over the next three years.

The Plan describes our key priorities, informs decision making and provides a focus for the day-to-day work of the Council's staff.

The Plan will enable the Executive Committee and Council to monitor the progress and development of BAC as it enters into its next phase of development.

The Annual Operational Plans

The Plan will be implemented through three Operational Plans which will set out key milestones and define annual targets and success criteria for each of the three years. These will also enable the Executive Committee to monitor progress, ensure accountability and fine tune BAC's strategy to reflect any changes in the operating environment.

Strategic Plan Target Outcomes

By 2018, BAC will

- become the first choice independent institutional accreditor in its target markets
- be seen as a strategic and reliable partner by relevant UK governmental and statutory bodies
- have strengthened its position as a leading international accreditor of further and higher education institutions
- have achieved a 22% increase in the number of its accredited institutions
- have maintained financial breakeven across all operational activities
- have increased annual revenue by 35% and invested any surplus revenue in support of the objectives of the BAC
- have maintained an appropriate financial reserve.

It will do this by developing and diversifying its business in the UK and internationally.

Business Development and Diversification

- UK

The British Accreditation Council is firmly rooted in the accreditation of UK-based independent education institutions.

Key Objectives

- To increase the number of individual institutions accredited
- To raise the profile of the BAC at governmental and institutional level
- To ensure that BAC is able to meet the rapidly changing needs of further, higher, professional and vocational education institutions as the regulatory operating environment evolves

Action Plan for Achieving these Objectives

We will

- ❖ offer a comprehensive range of subsidised courses and workshops to accredited institutions
- ❖ develop a 'Knowledge Centre' at BAC Head Office to offer technical support to accredited institutions
- ❖ develop communication channels for the sharing of good practice amongst all BAC accredited institutions
- ❖ offer networking opportunities for accredited institutions
- ❖ launch a study examining the benefits to UK Further and Higher Education institution, their international partners, education service providers and other stakeholders of BAC accreditation
- ❖ assuming a positive outcome from the study, work with UK and international further and higher education providers and education service providers to offer accreditation services which meet changing and developing needs
- ❖ work actively with governmental and non-governmental organisations to support and promote good academic governance and transparency and the sharing of good academic governance in the UK independent further and higher education sector

Measuring our Achievement

By 2018 BAC will know it is achieving these objectives because:

- the number of UK accredited institutions will have grown each year
- courses and workshops will have achieved high levels of attendance and have delivered BAC's stated objectives as measured by delegate feedback
- BAC will have participated in a range of forums and be represented in discussions and consultations at a national level
- revenue from UK accreditation and related services will have increased significantly
- a range of partnerships with UK-based educational institutions and education based groups will have been established

Action Points and Milestones

Action Point	Milestones
Offer a comprehensive range of subsidised courses and workshops to accredited institutions	A range of course will be published in September 2015 with the first course commencing in October 2015
Develop a 'Knowledge Centre' at BAC Head Office to offer technical support to accredited institutions	The development of a Knowledge Centre will commence in September 2015 and continue to develop over the course of 2015-2018. The Knowledge Centre will reflect the changing regulatory landscape of the UK education environment
Improve communication between BAC and external stakeholders	A communication strategy will be developed for launch in September 2015 and implemented in full by December 2016
Develop communication channels for the sharing of good practice between all BAC accredited institutions	Arrangements for developing communication channels will begin in January 2016 with a view to implementing a robust system for encouraging communication to be in place for September 2017

<p>Launch a study examining the benefits to UK further and higher education institution their international partners, education service providers and other stakeholders of BAC accreditation</p>	<p>The study will be completed by December 2015</p>
<p>Assuming a positive outcome from the study, work with UK and international further and higher education providers and education service providers to offer accreditation services which meet changing and developing needs</p>	<p>A successful outcome from the feasibility study will mean the reallocation of resources with a view to implementing the finding of the feasibility study over the course of this plan</p>
<p>Work actively with governmental and non-governmental organisations to support and promote good governance and transparency and the sharing of good practice in the UK independent further and higher education sector</p>	<p>BAC will have an action plan for engaging with governmental and non-governmental bodies for implementation over the three year period by November 2015 and will seek to engage in consultations where appropriate and relevant to the work of BAC</p>

Business Development and Diversification - International

The BAC currently accredits institutions in 14 countries and has supported the development of national accreditation services in four countries.

International demand for internationally-recognised accreditation services is increasing as students, parents, institutions and governments demand greater and more reliable information and improved standards of education. The rapid development of transnational education is likely to support this trend.

BAC is one of two UK-based institutions which has the international recognition necessary to participate in the quality assurance of transnational education.

Key Objectives

- to increase the number of international institutions holding BAC accreditation
- to identify and work with international institutions in order to develop accreditation and related activities
- to raise the international profile of BAC
- to expand and develop the international consultancy base

Action Plan for Achieving our Objectives

We will

- ❖ investigate mechanisms and opportunities for the sharing of good practice across international further and higher education institutions
- ❖ develop communication channels to keep BAC accredited institutions abreast of new developments and informed of international education trends
- ❖ develop links and, where appropriate, partnerships with international quality assurance and accreditation associations

- ❖ engage actively in broadcasting the benefits of accreditation to international professional, vocational, further and higher education institutions
- ❖ actively seek appropriate opportunities for the accreditation of individual institutions overseas
- ❖ attend a small number of international conferences where we believe we can contribute to the debate and meet our stakeholders
- ❖ engage with the UKTI and UKTI Education to support the development of UK professional, vocational, further and higher education exports
- ❖ seek opportunities to build on the experience gained from our international consultancy gained from advising and supporting national governments

Measuring our Achievement

By 2018 BAC will know it is achieving these objectives because

- there will be a sustained increase in the number of institutions seeking BAC accreditation
- revenue generated by international institution accreditation will show a significant contribution to BAC's revenue
- BAC attends and participates in a targeted range of industry relevant conferences
- International consultancy activities will be generating at least 5% of BAC's annual revenue

Action Points and Milestones

Action Point	Milestones
BAC will develop strategies for sharing of good practice across international institutions	By March 2016 a draft strategy will be in place for consideration with a view to launching the strategy by January 2017
BAC will develop an International Newsletter for international vocational, further and higher education institutions	The first newsletter will be posted for January 2016 and will be key to sharing information and building communication channels between BAC, accredited institutions and other interested parties

<p>BAC will identify, in conjunction with the UKTI, appropriate conferences to attend in order to promote accreditation services and support the UK vocational, further and higher education sectors</p>	<p>An list of suitable and appropriate conferences will be drawn up by September 2015 with costed attendance and action plans in place for engagement</p>
<p>BAC will actively seek international accreditation and consultancy opportunities</p>	<p>By September 2015 BAC will have completed registration with the UK Department of International Development.</p> <p>BAC will continue to liaise with the UKTI in identifying suitable areas for consultancy activity over the course of the plan</p>
<p>BAC will actively seek appropriate opportunities for individual institution accreditation</p>	<p>BAC will commission feasibility studies to develop new markets by January 2016. Assuming a successful outcome BAC will move to design and implement a strategy for entering new markets by April 2016 and will implement strategies over the course of the plan</p>
<p>BAC will identify suitable opportunities for developing appropriate partnerships to promote accreditation as a mechanism for institutional improvement and improving transparency for the benefit of students, other institutions, internal management, governments and other stakeholders</p>	<p>By November 2015 BAC will have identified at least one suitable partnership opportunity and will identify appropriate partnership opportunities as a key operational objective</p>

Governance

BAC operates with a high degree of transparency. All our inspection reports are scrutinised by the Accreditation Committee. The strategic development and running of the organisation is overseen by the Executive Committee and the work of both committees is overseen by the BAC Council.

More recently, ENQA has provided external scrutiny of our capacity to sustain the standards necessary to meet the demands of transparent accreditation services.

To maintain the quality standards expected of a leading accreditation body, we will continue to develop systems of governance that will continue to inspire confidence and trust in our accreditation and consultancy services.

Key Objectives

- to carry out an independent and regular review of the committee oversight mechanism so ensuring 'best practice' and transparency
- to ensure that our standards are fully in line with ENQA's revised membership criteria
- to entrench ENQA European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) into BAC operational and strategic policy development
- to maintain BAC listing on EQAR
- to establish an independent and regular monitoring of our inspection systems, thereby ensuring 'best practice' and transparency
- to establish an effective risk management policy and associated procedures

Action Plan for Achieving our Objectives

We will

- ❖ appoint an independent external reviewer to review the operation of the committee oversight mechanism
- ❖ draw up and implement a policy for a regular system for committee review
- ❖ develop an ENQA/ EQAR checklist as a basis for a BAC Self Evaluation Form
- ❖ submit the BAC Self Evaluation Form for review by the Accreditation and Executive Committee on an annual basis

- ❖ publish an Annual Report detailing BAC activities and reporting progress on implementation of the Strategic Plan
- ❖ Develop and implement an effective risk management policy

Measuring Our Achievement

By 2018 BAC will know it is achieving these objectives because

- there will be an independent review of the oversight mechanisms over the ENQA accreditation cycle
- BAC will continue to be a full member of ENQA and continue to be recognised as a leading international accreditation agency
- BAC will continue to be listed on EQAR
- The risk management policy will have identified and mitigated key corporate and operational risks

Action Points and Milestones

Action Point	Milestones
BAC will appoint an independent reviewer to review the operation of the committee oversight mechanism	<p>BAC will identify an independent reviewer by October 2015 and request a full report by the end of January 2016.</p> <p>An independent review cycle will then be established to ensure that regular independent reviews become entrenched within the BAC internal quality oversight mechanism</p>
BAC will develop an ENQA Self Evaluation Form checklist as a basis for a BAC Self Evaluation Form	<p>BAC will develop a BAC Self Evaluation Form for review by March 2016 and every year thereafter</p> <p>BAC will complete the first Self Evaluation Form by June 2016 for submission to the Accreditation Committee and Executive Committee and every year thereafter.</p>

	<p>If areas for improvement are identified, an action plan will be drawn up for implementation by September 2016 and every year thereafter</p>
<p>BAC will publish an Annual Report on its activities BAC will develop and implement an effective risk management policy</p>	<p>BAC will publish a full annual report by September 2017 and every year thereafter</p> <p>BAC will draft a risk management policy by 2015 and implement it by April 2016. The policy will be reviewed each year to reflect the operational environment</p>