**The British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education**

**History of BAC**

In 1982 the UK Government withdrew the Department of Education and Science (DES) inspection and accreditation of independent further and HE colleges and at approximately the same time increased fees for overseas students attending publicly funded colleges and universities in the UK. These actions placed the independent education sector in a position of opportunity as it was able to compete with the public sector on price and offer HE courses at a much lower cost, thereby providing attractive educational offers and value to international students.

At this time, the UK saw a rapid growth in the independent further and HE market, and with it the increased risk of a lack of quality assurance within the sector. The opportunities for profitable operation drew in unscrupulous operators and UK educational bodies became concerned that this could damage the reputation of education in the UK. Furthermore, institutions that held reputable positions were keen to establish a route that would allow them the means to differentiate their institutions and gain formal recognition of the quality of their offer.

Recognising a need for formal recognition and oversight of independent institutions, a working party led by the British Council consisting of representatives from the Department for Education and the further and higher education sector was formed to address concerns and develop a solution. The group recommended that a national body be set up to run a voluntary system of accreditation, and on 29 June 1984 the British Accreditation Council for Further and Higher Education was formally established.

Growth in the early years at BAC was slow. In the first year of operation, BAC awarded accreditation to 35 institutions including tutorial colleges and institutions offering professional education and training at further and HE levels. By the end of 1993 BAC had accredited 82 institutions. At this time, most of the institutions were sixth-form colleges offering business and professional studies and HE courses in addition to colleges catering for students with special educational needs.

By 1992, research showed that there were approximately 3,000 independent colleges in the UK, with just over 500,000 students, of whom approximately half were studying full time. From 1993 to 2005, BAC grew from 82 accredited institutions to 200. Many of these institutions were colleges offering business and computer studies, primarily for the benefit of overseas students.

In 2007, the UK Government approved BAC to provide accreditation associated to new legislation overseeing HEIs. The legislation was known as ‘Tier 4’, and it required any HE institution to have accreditation by a recognised body to apply for a government licence to admit students onto their courses.

Tier 4 was primarily introduced to control the number of international non-EU students to HE in the UK. Accreditation became a requisite for all IHE institutions wishing to recruit non-EU students. BAC experienced growth during this time reaching 540 accredited institutions in 2010/11.

A legislative review took place in 2011 and the government took the decision that educational oversight should be assigned to QAA. As a result, BAC could no longer offer Tier 4 and consequently experienced a rapid reduction in the number of institutions it accredited. This outcome meant that BAC had to consider its strategy for business development opportunities.

In the years that have followed, BAC has continued to develop and diversify its offers, and further schemes have been developed for international institutions and for online, distance and blended learning to cater for institutions who had differing educational offers.

The BAC consultancy service was established in 2011 to offer a clearly separated service in addition to its accreditation activities.

**Mission statement**

BAC’s mission is to provide respected and rigorous inspection-based accreditation to enhance the standards and quality of independent further and HE and training institutions.

**Vision**

BAC’s vision is to be an established, diverse and leading education charity for the independent further and higher education and training sectors, recognised by UK and overseas governments as an influential voice on standards and quality for the independent education sector.

**BAC Accreditation Schemes**

BAC provides accreditation services to a range of education and training institutions. To reflect diversity, it operates six accreditation schemes:

* [Short Course Provider scheme](http://www.the-bac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/BAC-Short-Course-Provider-Scheme-Document.pdf) for UK-based professional training organisations with courses up to 26 weeks in duration. BAC accreditation enables providers to enrol international students on UK student visas for up to six months.
* [Online, Distance and Blended Learning scheme](http://www.the-bac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/BAC-Online-Distance-Blended-Learning-Scheme-1.pdf) for UK and overseas providers offering flexible and virtual models of delivery.
* [College scheme](http://www.the-bac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/BAC-College-Scheme.pdf) for a variety of FE and vocational providers offering courses over six months. This was one of the earliest accreditation schemes and encompassed providers offering FE and HE programmes. Therefore, there are some mentions of HE, although after the launch of the Independent Higher Education (IHE) scheme in 2016, HEIs offering degrees were accredited under the IHE scheme.
* [International Centre scheme](http://www.the-bac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/BAC-International-Centre-Scheme-1.pdf) for established international organisations seeking assessment against UK quality assurance standards.
* [International English Language Provider (IELP)](http://www.the-bac.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/IELP-Scheme-Document-Online.pdf) scheme designed for overseas English language providers.
* [Independent Higher Education (IHE) scheme](http://www.the-bac.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/IHE-Scheme-2018.pdf) for UK and overseas HEIs, which is the subject of the external review as defined in ENQA’s Terms of Reference and confirmed by EQAR in the Eligibility Confirmation letter.

As of April 2019, BAC accredits 229 education and training institutions with 184 operating in the UK and 45 overseas

* Short Course Provider (112)
* College (62)
* Online, Distance and Blended Learning (11)
* International Centre (8)
* International English Language Provider (0)
* Independent Higher Education UK (13) and overseas (23)

**Capacity building projects**

BAC has also undertaken capacity improvement projects, such as in Bahrain, where BAC worked with the Higher Education Council (HEC) to develop an institutional accreditation framework against which all HEIs would be assessed in order to gain accreditation from the HEC.

The standards included international norms such as quality management, governance, academic and administrative management, as well as teaching, learning and assessment. In addition, the accreditation framework included country-specific standards such as the contribution to society and the economy of Bahrain.

BAC conducted training for HEC on the accreditation process and has been contracted to conduct inspections of all HEIs using the BAC inspectorate. At each inspection, a staff member from the HEC is an observer to the inspection team to help develop the HEC capacity and as staff development. The Government of Bahrain has set the requirement for all HEIs operating in Bahrain, both private and public, to gain HEC accreditation by 2020.

**Legal status and constitution**

Under UK law, BAC is constituted as a private company limited by guarantee (not-for-profit) and is also a registered charity.

BAC has a statutory role in the UK and is recognised as one of the accrediting authorities for the acceptance of students wishing to study in the UK under the Short-Term Study Visa regime.

BAC’s governing Objects are declared in BAC’s current Constitution Document, [the Articles of Association](https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/document-api-images-live.ch.gov.uk/docs/CxiSwOE_htzOih8vaJmMn6GQLPIbYkwEk7Fh30F0zJs/application-pdf?X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-Amz-Content-Sha256=UNSIGNED-PAYLOAD&X-Amz-Credential=ASIAWRGBDBV3C4VU3ZT4%2F20190409%2Feu-west-2%2Fs3%2Faws4_request&X-Amz-Date=20190409T153705Z&X-Amz-Expires=60&X-Amz-Security-Token=AgoJb3JpZ2luX2VjEJf%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2FwEaCWV1LXdlc3QtMiJHMEUCIBxyC00CaNM4zfAfw%2F55prqk81ZyQ14iBw2zhOJNVPjWAiEAqcTM4K2LX2g2pXQA9GUGD8%2BH68m7LebSrcp7i7D5fhgq2gMIYBABGgw0NDkyMjkwMzI4MjIiDAFZOw5effr4X%2F81Jiq3AyxQnTNGkIJpXrd4gvCDJuw7pSFl9L3QiQ9lwxAovKHEbjdFB0mObJ8EynI8vcdI236oj8iKL8Lw0HqWcmrpICzDLkr7t%2BZpJ7U9fyPOsd8x8vIoqMeV%2F6qJnYJdkeG4b0XmiYOAet8%2BLyszidTuDtrOAKsLfW9ggjF7Ac9%2BGX2r%2B1ry3p8mFNrB%2FQfsgU%2FO3NQpH44vw2Fwg%2BHD9LwGWOgzEWCZjq0pwd%2FAf5dVh1%2Bv0D8rp%2BxiU2jGuJJJCo4JM2LYG0LCsU8f4jH89Q%2F8sq%2FyLENuIq0t39s70dtKQQBJ2KsDykTQ8yEghY4mDb1GBzsAcxX5Z2Dabef3f3dwuKT%2BHJI1grocHIsbghCQtk7u1HOlEv5G37qUXRM2aIlEYLB%2Flbt4DxpXsw7X2C8KCX7TqhN5pDu3MHqEKCCfkxCEDcvlV0byDV2l%2F8Bm0jRhFaqGdpEP%2FCrg6uoB%2FXiM3K5KXZ0OZpaDlGSaHXAt4ou2CEkdN71pziqc8q59oa4U8vnClSL%2FG2rWGYWJWN5kgwfUcQHA2BdBwRuzOA5Sm1Nd%2FGMiJVVk3g9vy3X1njohYY%2F%2Fd9j354sw8duy5QU6tAG7l1Omp1pkC2mWkducJsifJXRFZwvsu7aqJJ5Z2HAR8rCDbxefCe8mV5NqUijAWEMtom%2BQPTFSz5jKWhgcmvJHAMlO5oob6VExg3%2FmXEPpW4XO4ig7UBVLHbNDBetHTFIvwJzp%2B54M4h2ocdBSBW35fRz3fK1HK2GqTknRMYwPJ0fc6FEfT3oNjY3g2bWjGLq8WtB9Se%2BlQMHMxIxOOOqZOYUD5EFL7sbNw9HU5n9e2H2phwk%3D&X-Amz-SignedHeaders=host&X-Amz-Signature=d89b4b71911b23d909243b44c4e14f3e4c0a24ae949bc1ad0162573c58913542) and are to advance education for the benefit of the public by:

*‘Providing a system of accreditation for educational and training institutions in order to promote public confidence in such institutions and their programmes of study’*

and

*‘Assisting in the improvement and maintenance of the standards of accredited institutions through the offer of advisory and consultancy services principally in the field of further and higher education.’*

BAC Articles of Association 4.1, 4.2 (Annex 1)

**Governance**

**The Council**

An elected Council of up to 12 members acts both as a Board of Directors as a company, and as a Board of Trustees as a charity. The current Chairman of the Council is Dominic Scott OBE, Chief Executive of the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), and the President is Peter Williams CBE, BAC’s former Chairman and former Chief Executive of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Peter is also former President of ENQA. Other members of the Council either have or have had leading roles in further and HEIs, awarding organisations, quality assurance agencies and in business.

The Council meet three times a year providing strategic direction and general oversight for the organisation.

**The committees of the Council**

The Council delegates authority to three committees who direct and monitor BACs’ strategic planning and accreditation work:

* The Accreditation Committee(AC) of ten members receives and considers reports of completed inspections and takes decisions to award or withdraw accreditation, making its recommendations based on BAC accreditation policy and procedures.
* The Standing Committee of three members steer the development and implementation of BAC’s strategy and operations
* The Audit Committee of three members provides oversight of BAC’s financial reporting and disclosure. It also monitors and reviews the effectiveness of the auditing process.

**BAC Head Office**

A central London office team led by the Chief Executive, provides administrative support to the committees and there is a remote team of inspectors, led and overseen by the Chief Inspector.

The [office team](https://www.the-bac.org/about/bac-team/) are responsible for the accreditation operational activities, the day-to-day running of BAC, and the management of inspections and communications with the public and other stakeholders.