



AACSB Accredited MBA: Pros & Con

By Vicky Phillips

Question:

I'm looking for an online MBA (Master of Business Administration). I've found several that fit my budget but none of these are from AACSB accredited schools. I know the AACSB is considered the "gold-standard" of MBA accreditation. But, do I really need to spend the extra money to get an AACSB accredited MBA?

—*Roberta*
Gary, IN

Answer:

The AACSB is the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International. It is a voluntary, non-governmental accrediting agency that oversees the standardization of collegiate schools of business and accounting nationwide.

The AACSB has served as the academic watchdog of university business programs since 1916. Because of its longevity, many venerable Ivy League business schools are accredited by the AACSB. Stanford University, Yale University and Duke University, for example, all operate AACSB accredited business schools. (Of these, Duke University offers a distance-learning, low-residency MBA.)

Among academics and corporate headhunters, the AACSB is considered the gold standard of business school accreditation. Only about 30 percent of business schools in the USA carry AACSB accreditation.

MBA Accreditation: Who Needs the AACSB?

If your career goal is to become faculty at a business school, definitely consider an AACSB accredited MBA or business degree.

Outside of academia, this specialized accreditation is less crucial—unless you intend to compete at the executive level, especially in the Fortune 500 arena.

Recently, Intel Corporation made news by announcing that its corporate tuition program will only reimburse for business degrees earned at AACSB accredited degree programs, regardless of whether the degree is delivered face-to-face or online.

A business degree or MBA emblazoned with the AACSB brand will be extremely valuable in opening doors in any competitive corporate environment.

AACSB Accreditation Optional?

Universities do not need AACSB business school accreditation to offer the MBA or any other advanced business program, whether online or on-campus.

According to GetEducated.com's *National Ranking Survey of Online MBAs*, the majority of regionally-accredited universities that offer distance MBAs—more than 70 percent—do not follow the standards of the AACSB.

AACSB approval is not an absolute guarantee of quality. In fact, if an online business school has not pledged to follow AACSB standards it may gain the ability to offer a more innovative program of study.

Some online business schools shun AACSB accreditation because they seek the flexibility to develop more real-life curriculum, as well as the flexibility to admit an older, more career-savvy body of adult learners.

Of the 217 online business schools tracked by GetEducated.com's National Survey of Online MBAs, 93 of these (42 percent) hold AACSB accreditation. The other 58 percent (124) do not.

Forgo AACSB – Save a Bundle

GetEducated's National Survey of Online MBAs reveals that AACSB accredited distance MBAs cost significantly more than their regionally-accredited counterparts.

Average cost of an AACSB Online MBA: \$37,011.

Average cost of a regionally accredited distance MBA, on the other hand, is only \$24,663.

That's a whopping savings of \$12,348.

If your budget is tight, skipping AACSB accreditation on your online MBA can save you a bundle.

Forgo AACSB – Gain Easier Admission

If you're looking for easy admission to business school, don't look to AACSB accredited options. AACSB accredited business schools almost always maintain higher admission standards than their counterparts.

Most require the GMAT (Graduate Management Admissions Test) for admission. They typically also require a higher undergraduate GPA. Many require applicants to hold formal bachelor's degrees in business administration.

When to Consider an AACSB Accredited School

Five most likely reasons you'd be willing to pay more for the AACSB mark on your online business degree:

- You're competing in an aggressive career field in an urban environment—for example, becoming a Wall Street broker in Manhattan
- Academic prestige is very important to you
- You intend to join the faculty of a business college
- Your corporate tuition plan will only pay for an AACSB-accredited business degree
- You don't mind taking the GRE or GMAT—and are confident you can score above average on both

Five most likely reasons you'd be willing to forgo AACSB accredited business degree:

- Money is tight
- You're not competing in an aggressive career field in an urban environment

- Academic prestige is not all that important to you
 - You don't intend to join the faculty of a business school
 - You want to avoid taking the GRE or GMAT
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[Vicky Phillips](#) was cited by US News & World Report as "for 20 years the leading consumer advocate for online college students." In 1989 she designed America's first online counseling center for distance learners on AOL. In 1998 she authored the first print guide to online graduate degrees, *Best Distance Learning Graduate Schools* put out by the Princeton Review. She is also the author of *Never Too Late to Learn: the Adult Student's Guide to College*.