

**Council of International Schools**

**and**

**New England Association of Schools and Colleges**



# **THE EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION OF ADDITIONAL GRADES**

**A booklet for accredited schools seeking  
accreditation of additional grades.**

**This booklet is based on the 7th Edition of  
The Institutional Evaluation Guide for American/International Schools**

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# **CIS/NEASC EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION OF ADDITIONAL GRADES**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Given the nature of international education, a school already accredited by CIS and NEASC may find itself expanding and adding grades to its existing structure. For example it may be moving from a K-8 to a K-12 institution, or it may be adding an Early Childhood Center to already existing and accredited Primary and Secondary Departments. This booklet is designed to provide a structure to the process by which accredited schools may obtain accreditation for such additional grades.

The booklet consists of two Parts. The first contains the principles, guidelines and practical steps applicable to the process of accreditation of additional grades. The second is in effect a comprehensive form to be filled in by the Head of School, with the collaboration of other staff members, in order to provide CIS and NEASC with the information required to initiate the process of evaluation of additional grades.

# PART ONE

## PRINCIPLES, POLICY GUIDELINES AND PRACTICAL STEPS

### PRINCIPLES

1. CIS and NEASC recognize the dynamic nature of their member schools and the fact that international communities go through major, sometimes rapid, changes.
2. CIS and NEASC will preserve the flexible, supportive nature of their accreditation process so as to ensure that schools have the opportunity to obtain accredited status for additional grades without unnecessary work or expense.
3. CIS and NEASC will also preserve the integrity and status of their accreditation process which has come to represent a great deal to the American/International educational community. Accreditation of additional grades will therefore require a prior evaluation using the two sets of “bench marks” which apply to all CIS/NEASC accreditation processes, namely:
  - the school’s own Philosophy and Objectives
  - the CIS/NEASC Standards for Accreditation
4. CIS and NEASC require that an on-site visit take place to evaluate any additional grades for which a school seeks accreditation. Normally each agency will send one Visitor, though one person may be nominated to represent both agencies if the circumstances warrant such an arrangement. It is also possible that more than two Visitors will be required if a wide range of specialist subjects or courses are being offered.
5. Once the accreditation of additional grades is complete, subsequent procedures will automatically and immediately become synchronized with the accreditation processes applicable to the rest of the school.
6. If the number or type of additional grades is such that the general nature of the entire school is likely to be radically changed, CIS and NEASC reserve the right to require the whole school to submit itself to a complete evaluation, beginning with a Preparatory Visit. (This would only be required in very special cases and after in-depth discussions among the school, NEASC and CIS).

## **POLICY GUIDELINES**

CIS and NEASC have jointly established the following guidelines to assist schools, visitors and those within the two agencies who are involved in making accreditation decisions. However, these guidelines are of an advisory rather than binding nature, and each application for accreditation of additional grades will be considered in its own unique context.

1. Grades should normally have been in full operation for at least one complete academic year before they become eligible for evaluation with a view to possible accreditation.
2. Evaluation of complete “cycles” rather than individual grades is preferable. Examples of “cycles” would be:
  - Grades 11 and 12 together, where two-year IB Diploma or Certificate courses are offered
  - Years 12 and 13 (Lower and Upper Sixth Form) together, in a British-style school offering G.C.E. Advanced Levels
  - Complete two or three-year Early Childhood Units
3. Appropriate aspects of the additional grades provision should be legally recognized in the country, state or municipality concerned before they receive CIS and NEASC accreditation.
4. The school’s governing body should be publicly committed to the continued existence of any additional grades for an appropriate number of years. This should in no case be shorter than the time required for students to complete any recognizable “cycle” of studies upon which they have embarked.

## **PRACTICAL STEPS**

The practical steps involved in the accreditation of additional grades are routinely as follows:

1. A school seeking accreditation of additional grades will write to the CIS Director of Accreditation Services and the Office of NEASC to request initiation of the process.
2. The Accrediting Agencies will supply the school with this booklet, requesting that Part Two be completed and returned to CIS and NEASC at the school’s earliest convenience. The required information is identical for both agencies. (Replies to the questionnaire component for each of the Sections A to G should be returned on diskette as well as on paper.)
3. Meanwhile, CIS and NEASC will select the Visitor(s) and organize dates with the school. On-site visits will normally last a maximum of two days, and the conditions will be analogous to those applicable to any other accreditation visit. The Visitor(s) will submit a report directly to CIS and NEASC.

4. CIS and NEASC will consider the information submitted by the school and the Visitor's Report. The agencies will make separate decisions on the status of the additional grades.

There are four possible decisions:

- a) that accreditation of the additional grade(s) be awarded
  - b) that accreditation of the additional grades be awarded with specific qualifications
  - c) that accreditation of the additional grades be postponed for some specified reason(s)
  - d) that accreditation of the additional grades be denied
5. Once additional grades acquire accredited status, any subsequent procedures applicable to them will become automatically synchronized with the rest of the school. So if, for example, the main part of the school is due to submit a Five Year Report, or to undergo a Preparatory Visit and full Self-Study, as the next stage in its routine subsequent procedures the newly accredited additional grades will automatically be included in that process even if it is to occur in the very near future.

NOTES:

- a) Wherever possible, a visit to evaluate Additional Grades can be combined with another accreditation visit (e.g. a Five Year Visit) to the same school. In this way, overall travel and accommodation costs will be reduced.
- b) A school which is already in the later stages of the ten-year accreditation cycle should consider leaving the evaluation of additional grades until the next whole-school Self-Study is due. Any additional grade(s) can then be incorporated into that exercise, hence removing the need for a separate procedure or on-site visit.

## PART TWO

### INFORMATION TO BE SUPPLIED BY THE SCHOOL

The Head of the School is responsible for replying to the following points **as fully as possible**, submitting the completed questionnaire and supporting documents to CIS and NEASC in identical form. The work involved in completing Part Two will in some ways be a “mini-Self Study” based on the CIS/NEASC Standards for Accreditation, which is a valuable exercise in itself. However it is anticipated that the process will not be too time-consuming, especially as the majority of the required documents will be copies of items already in use within the school.

Please note that the Section headings in Part Two correspond to those in the *CIS/NEASC Institutional Evaluation Guide for American/International Schools (7<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. The Standards for Accreditation can be found under Step Two of Sections A to P in that instrument, and Heads and other staff members are required to study them carefully when replying to the questionnaire.

While the Head of School is overall responsible for the completion of Part Two, it is envisaged that other appropriate members of the school community will actively collaborate in the process. The member of the school’s Administration/Senior Management Team most directly involved in supervising the additional grades programmed will certainly be expected to take part in completion of Part Two.

The questionnaire component of each Section A to H, duly completed, should be submitted to the CIS, NEASC and directly to the appointed Visitor(s) on diskette as well as on paper at least one month before the Visit is due to take place.



## **SECTION A: PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES**

### **Questionnaire.**

1. Why were the additional grade(s) introduced into the school? Were initial feasibility studies carried out and, if so, what were the results?
2. Were the needs of students in the additional grade(s) already covered by the school's existing Philosophy and Objectives or have these been changed to accommodate the new situation?
3. What changes, if any, were made in the school's Philosophy and Objectives, how and by whom they were made, and why they are justified?
4. How does the school ensure that students accepted into the additional grades program can reasonably be expected to benefit from it?
5. Are there any aspects of the additional grades program which you would rate "E" (exceeds) or "D" (does not meet) against the CIS/NEASC 7<sup>th</sup> Edition Standards for Accreditation for Section A? If so, please explain fully.

### **Documents to attach.**

- a) Copy of the current school Philosophy and Objectives.
- b) Copy of the school Philosophy and Objectives which was valid before introduction of the additional grade(s), if different from the current version.
- c) Copy of literature describing the additional grades which has been published to the school community.
- d) Copy of the admissions policy applicable to the additional grades.

## **SECTION B: CURRICULUM**

### **Questionnaire.**

1. Which curriculum program(s) were changed, extended or introduced as a result of incorporation of the additional grade(s)?
2. What is the design of the curriculum offered in the additional grade(s)?
3. How is each program written down in a clear and comprehensive form?
4. How has the additional curriculum been articulated vertically so as to ensure continuity with the current curriculum?
5. By what mechanisms are the new programs being reviewed and if necessary revised?
6. What mechanisms exist to ensure there is co-ordination between the programmes offered in the additional grade(s) and those offered in other areas of the school?
7. What is the number of students in each of the additional grades, and what are their important characteristics?
8. How do the new programs meet the needs of all students, including those with Special Needs?
9. What changes, if any, were made in the principles, policies and practices for student assessment as a response to the introduction of additional grades?
10. How are the results of the assessment of student learning and performance used to evaluate and improve the effectiveness of the additional grades program?
11. What changes, if any, have occurred in the number and/or qualifications of staff involved in monitoring the assessment of student learning and performance in response to the introduction of the additional grades program?
12. Are there any aspects of the additional grades program which you would rate "E" (exceeds) or "D" (does not meet) against the CIS/NEASC Standards for Accreditation for Section B? If so, please explain fully.

**Documents to attach.**

- a) Copy of all curriculum documentation relevant to the additional grades program.
- b) A list of all teaching staff involved in the additional grades program showing: name, qualifications, experience, and role within the additional grades program.
- c) Copy of policies for admission to the additional grades program, as well as promotion and graduation where appropriate.
- d) Copy of policies designed to ensure all students' needs are served within the additional grades program.
- e) Copies of all principles, policies and procedures covering the assessment of student learning and performance applicable to the additional grades program (which may or may not be the same as those for the school as a whole).
- f) Copies of the report forms, grade sheets, transcripts, etc. used in recording and reporting the learning and performance of students in the additional grade(s).

## **SECTION C: GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **Questionnaire.**

1. What are the Board's policies concerning creation of the additional grade(s), and how long is the commitment to maintain it/them in existence?
2. How, if at all, have the composition of the Board and/or its working practices changed as a result of adding grades?
3. What is the school's long-range educational plan which includes the addition and maintenance of the grade(s) in question?
4. What changes have been made in the school's Administration/Senior Management Team to accommodate responsibility for the additional grade(s)?
5. How is the additional grades program financed?
6. What financial plans exist to ensure the viability of the additional grades program?
7. What changes, if any, have occurred in the number and/or qualifications of staff involved in financial and administrative management in order to cover the requirements of the additional grades program?
8. What changes have been made in the school's insurance cover in response to the introduction of additional grades?
9. What changes have been made to the annual budget, and in budgeting and monitoring procedures, in response to the introduction of the additional grade(s)?
10. Are there any aspects of the additional grades program which you would rate "E" (exceeds) or "D" (does not meet) against the CIS/NEASC Standards for Accreditation for Section C? If so, please explain fully.

### **Documents to attach.**

- A. Copies of Board policies regarding the additional grade(s).
- B. Copy of an organizational chart showing lines of authority and responsibility, highlighting aspects concerned with the additional grade(s)
- C. Copy of any Job Description for a member of the Administration/Senior Management Team which has undergone adjustment as a result of introduction of the additional grade(s).

- D. Copies of Board policies concerning the financing of the additional grades program.
- E. Copy of the school budget for the current year, showing comparisons with the situation which typically applied just before the introduction of additional grades.
- F. A copy of the schedule of student fees and other charges applicable to the additional grades program, along with comparable figures for other sectors of the school.
- G. List of extra financial and administrative management staff, if any, hired as a result of the introduction of additional grades, showing names, qualifications, current role and past experience.
- H. List of extra qualifications/training, if any, obtained by financial management staff in order to cover the requirements of the additional grades program, showing the names and responsibility posts of individuals concerned.

## **SECTION D: STAFF**

### **Questionnaire.**

1. What general changes have occurred in the number and/or qualifications of instructional and support staff in order to ensure the effectiveness of the additional grade(s) program?
2. Are the staff involved in the additional grade(s) subject to the same policies - on salaries and other terms of contract, professional appraisal, availability of professional development etc. - as personnel involved in the rest of the school? If they are not, please state and explain the differences.
3. Are there any aspects of the additional grades program which you would rate "E" (exceeds) or "D" (does not meet) against the CIS/NEASC Standards for Accreditation for Section D? If so, please explain fully.

### **Documents to attach.**

- a) Copies of any contracts, policies etc. for staff involved in additional grades which differ from those applicable to all other employees.
- b) List of extra personnel, if any, hired to operate the additional grades, showing names, qualifications, current role and past experience.
- c) List of extra qualifications/training, if any, obtained by staff in order to operate the additional grades, showing names of individuals concerned.

## **SECTION E: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **Questionnaire.**

1. What changes have occurred in the number and/or qualifications of staff in order to ensure the effectiveness of special needs provision in the additional grades program?
2. Were any new procedures for identifying and addressing the special needs of students with learning disabilities or exceptionally high ability introduced as a result of the establishment of additional grades?
3. What special educational programs are available within the additional grade(s)?
4. What changes have occurred in the number and/or qualifications of staff in order to ensure the effectiveness of guidance services in the additional grades program?
5. What changes have been introduced to ensure that there is an appropriate testing program for additional grades students?
6. If the additional grades program leads directly to university level studies, what relevant testing and advisory services have been introduced?
7. What policies and practices have been introduced to ensure that parents are adequately informed about the academic and social progress of their children in the additional grade(s)?
8. Did the school's previous provisions for health continue to adequately cover all aspects of the additional grades program, or were changes necessary? If changes were necessary to cover the new program, either in terms of procedures or physical plant, please give full details.
9. What changes have occurred in the number and/or qualifications of staff in order to ensure the effectiveness of health services in the additional grades program?
10. Are there any aspects of the additional grades program which you would rate "E" (exceeds) or "D" (does not meet) against the CIS/NEASC Standards for Accreditation for Section E? If so, please explain fully.

### **Documents to attach.**

- a) Copies of policies for identifying and addressing special student needs in the additional grades (which may or may not be the same as overall school policies).

- b) List of extra personnel, if any, involved in addressing special needs in providing guidance services and in providing health services within the additional grades, showing names, qualifications, current role and past experience.
- c) List of extra qualifications/training, if any, obtained by staff in order to address special needs to provide guidance services, and to provide health services within the additional grades, showing the names and responsibility posts of individuals concerned.
- d) If applicable, summary of the results of external examinations/tests taken by students in additional grades over the last three years or since the introduction of these grades (whichever is the shorter).
- e) If applicable, lists of places taken up at universities by students graduating from the additional grades over the last three years or since the introduction of these grades (whichever is the shorter).
- f) Copies of health policies covering the additional grades program (which may or may not be the same as those for the school as a whole).

## **SECTION F: RESOURCES**

### **Questionnaire.**

1. What changes, if any, have been made to the school grounds, buildings, technical installations, furnishings or equipment in order to serve the additional grades program?
2. What changes, if any, have occurred in the number and/or qualifications of maintenance and operating staff in order to cover the requirements of the additional grades program – particularly in terms of safety and comfort?
3. What use, if any, is made of resources in the community to support and enhance the additional grades program?
4. What changes have been made to the Library/Media Center in terms of plant, the collections and technology in order to cover the requirements of the additional grades program?
5. What changes, if any, have occurred in the number and/or qualifications of Library/Media Center staff in order to cover the requirements of the additional grades program?
6. What changes, if any, have been made in the orientation and training procedures for students and new staff as a result of the addition of extra grade(s).
7. What changes, if any, have been made in the orientation and training procedures for students and new staff as a result of the addition of extra grade(s).
8. Are there any aspects of the additional grades program which you would rate "E" (exceeds) or "D" (does not meet) against the CIS/NEASC Standards for Accreditation for Section F? If so, please explain fully.

### **Documents to attach.**

- a) Copies of all policies and procedures pertaining to school facilities used in the additional grades program (which may or may not be the same as those for the school as a whole).
- b) Floor plans of any new or modified school facilities which came into use as a result of the introduction of the additional grades program.
- c) Copies of licenses and certificates, issued by the competent authorities, which attest to the legalist of any new or modified school facilities.

- d) List of extra maintenance and operational staff and Library/Media Center staff, if any, hired as a result of the introduction of additional grades, showing names, qualifications, current role and past experience.
- e) List of extra qualifications/training, if any, obtained by maintenance and operational staff and Library/Media Center staff in order to cover the requirements of the additional grades program, showing the names and responsibility posts of individuals concerned.

## **SECTION G: STUDENT AND COMMUNITY LIFE**

### **Questionnaire.**

1. What changes, if any, in expectations for staff/student relationships and for student behavior have been introduced as a result of the addition of the extra grade(s)?
2. What changes, if any, have been introduced into the extra-curricular program to accommodate the needs and interests of students in the additional grade(s)?
3. What changes have occurred in the number and/or qualifications of staff in order to promote student life in the additional grade(s)?
4. If the school has a boarding program, what new or special features have been introduced to satisfy the requirements of resident students in the additional grade(s)?
5. Are there any aspects of the additional grades program which you would rate "E" (exceeds) or "D" (does not meet) against the CIS/NEASC Standards for Accreditation for Section G? If so, please explain fully.

### **Documents to attach.**

- a) Copies of all policies and procedures covering student life applicable to the additional grades program (which may or may not be the same as those for the school as a whole).
- b) List of extra personnel, if any, involved in student life in the additional grades, showing names, qualifications, current role and past experience.
- c) List of extra qualifications/training, if any, obtained by staff in order to promote student life in the additional grades, showing the names and responsibility posts of individuals concerned.

## SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The Head of School, in collaboration with the other members of staff involved in completing Part Two, should now write a **short and concise** summary of conclusions concerning the additional grades program. This should consist of three components, namely:

- (i) a list of the *Principal Strengths* of the additional grades program
- (ii) a list of the *Principal Factors in Need of Strengthening* in the additional grades program
- (iii) the *Specific Plans for Improvement* of the additional grades program.

N.B. All factors identified under heading (ii) should be reflected by a plan under heading (iii).