

# **GETTING YOUR BEARINGS**

## **An Introduction to NASAD**

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF ART AND DESIGN**

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## **National Office**

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# GETTING YOUR BEARINGS

## An Introduction to NASAD

### WELCOME

NASAD welcomes you, your expertise, and your interests to its work of supporting art/design study and the people engaged in it. NASAD was founded in 1944 by a small number of schools. Since then, it has developed into an extensive effort involving approximately **360** institutions. By way of introduction, this document provides information about three topics: NASAD's fundamental aims and objectives, its organizational structure, and its basic services.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The National Association of Schools of Art and Design was established to develop a closer relationship among schools and programs of art and design for the purpose of examining and improving practices and professional standards in art and design education. Broadly stated, the aims and objectives of the Association are as follows:

1. To establish a national forum to stimulate the understanding and acceptance of the educational disciplines inherent in the creative arts in higher education in the United States.
2. To establish reasonable standards centered on the knowledge and skills necessary to develop academic and professional competence at various program levels.
3. To foster the development of instruction of the highest quality while simultaneously encouraging varied and experimental approaches to the teaching of art and design.
4. To evaluate, through the processes of voluntary accreditation, schools of art and design and programs of studio instruction in terms of their quality and the results they achieve, as judged by experienced examiners.
5. To assure students and parents that accredited institutions offering art and design programs provide competent teachers, adequate physical plant and equipment, and sound curricula, and are capable of attaining their stated objectives.
6. To counsel and assist schools in developing their programs and to encourage self-evaluation and continuing studies toward improvement.
7. To invite and encourage the cooperation of professional art and design groups and individuals of reputation in the field of art and design in the formulation of appropriate curricula and standards.
8. To establish a national voice to be heard in matters pertaining to the visual arts and design, particularly as they would affect member schools and their stated objectives.

NASAD builds its day-to-day work around four basic program areas that support its mission.

At the core of NASAD's activities is **accreditation**. Currently, **357** institutions in **48** states and the District of Columbia are accredited by NASAD.

NASAD accredits an institution when it demonstrates compliance with standards and guidelines related to the quality of the programs of study it offers, when its activities match published descriptions, and when it follows its own stated procedures.

NASAD's accreditation procedures involve orientation and training sessions, institutional self-study, on-site evaluation, and review by the Commission on Accreditation.

Regarding the **professional development** of art and design executives, NASAD has a triple focus. NASAD assists executives to address key education and training issues in the development of professionals in the visual arts and design; the broader philosophical issues surrounding art/design and art/design study; and the daily management issues faced by executives working in schools of art and design.

NASAD's third major program area is **institutional research**. NASAD compiles data, interprets it, then publishes and disseminates it to member and non-member institutions and the public. Dissemination happens in three ways: through (1) the NASAD Annual Meeting; (2) NASAD publications and projects, and (3) the annual reports of member institutions, and NASAD's participation in the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) system.

In the area of **policy**, NASAD works primarily in an analytical mode. Visual arts and design study in free-standing art/design schools, colleges, and universities is connected to a web of broader questions—free expression in a democracy, education funding, academic politics, arts policy, and many others. NASAD helps its members to navigate these issues by making the link between analysis and local action. NASAD policy reports often work their way into legislative testimony, reports of governmental task forces, the priorities of philanthropic boards, and the ongoing work of other arts and educational organizations. The primary purpose, however, is to help members think through issues deeply on the way to institutional decisions.

## ORGANIZATIONAL FUNCTIONS

To understand how NASAD accomplishes its mission and gets its work done, it is helpful to understand the organization's operational functions.

There are five basic functions. The first two are legislative; the next two, judicial; and the last, administrative.

All **policies and programs** of NASAD, as well as the standards and guidelines for accreditation, are the work of the membership, the Executive Committee, and the Board of Directors. Officers and six at-large members of the Board are elected by the membership. Two public members appointed by the President, along with the Executive Director, *ex officio* and non-voting, complete the roster of the Board. The Executive Committee is comprised of the officers of the Association and the Chair of the Commission on Accreditation, along with the Executive Director.

**Nominations and elections** are the responsibility of the Committee on Nominations, which consults with the membership as a whole and prepares a slate of officers for each Annual Meeting. Each year, two Committee members are elected at-large, and two members, plus the Chair, are appointed by the Board.

The **accreditation of institutions** is the responsibility of the Commission on Accreditation. All Commission members, including the Chair, are elected by the membership as a whole. The

Commission also has two voting public members, who are appointed by the President of NASAD with the advice of the Executive Committee.

**Ethics reviews** are the responsibility of the Committee on Ethics, which considers any case properly brought before it under NASAD's review procedures. The Chair of the Committee on Ethics is elected by the membership, and its two members are appointed by the Board.

The President has an **oversight** role, ensuring that the work of NASAD follows the published policies, procedures, and protocols. The President also makes **appointments** and consults regularly with the Executive Director.

The **day-to-day business** of the Association is conducted from the National Office in Reston, Virginia, by the Executive Director, who is selected by the Executive Committee. The Executive Director hires all other full-time staff members.

The National Office staff carries out a broad range of functions including administrative management of the accreditation process, financial management of the organization, meeting planning, and record-keeping. The staff also carries out projects, and maintains extensive telephone, electronic, and written correspondence with members, the public, and other agencies.

## MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

NASAD is guided by a set of basic and well-tested management principles.

The first is **autonomy**, which means that NASAD is legally and organizationally independent.

At the same time, however, NASAD strives to maintain **collegial and collaborative relationships** with other bodies and associations in the arts, education, and accreditation.

NASAD's management philosophy is the same one that holds the United States together: the idea of **separation of powers within a democracy**. That means making a clear distinction between policy and operations so as to avoid conflicts of interest.

To put it in the simplest terms:

- The legislative and policy functions are the responsibility of NASAD institutional members, and the Board and Executive Committee they elect to represent them.
- The administrative functions are primarily the responsibility of staff. In the accrediting arena, the work of NASAD evaluators is facilitated and managed according to Association protocols by the National Office staff.
- The judicial function is carried out by Commission on Accreditation and the Committee on Ethics.

In summary, those making accreditation decisions base their judgments on policies and standards decided by the membership; the staff carries out the policies of the Association, but does not evaluate institutions or programs.

NASAD also focuses on its **service orientation** as an organization that meets the needs of its members. Typical of NASAD's services are its publications programs and consultation with institutions preparing for accreditation visits.

Always, however, NASAD's programs and organizational efforts are focused through the lens of its mission, which places **advancing the cause of art and design** at the top of the agenda. NASAD strives to temper its efforts with a sense of humor that says: "We take our work more seriously than we take ourselves."

## NATIONAL OFFICE

For most with inquiries, the first points of contact and chief sources of information are the [NASAD website](#) and the National Office staff.

The NASAD National Office is open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. weekdays, closed on major holidays and during the period between Christmas and the New Year.

The staff also manages the affairs of several other national arts and education organizations with missions similar to NASAD's:

- [The National Association of Schools of Dance](#),
- [The National Association of Schools of Music](#), and
- [The National Association of Schools of Theatre](#), as well as
- [The Council of Arts Accrediting Associations](#),
- [The Accrediting Commission for Community and Precollegiate Arts Schools](#), and the
- [Higher Education Arts Data Services](#) system.

Each staff member serves the same function for each organization.

## FINANCES

NASAD operates on a balanced budget. NASAD maintains a small investment reserve distributed among real estate, securities, equities, and cash. In order to remain independent and to avoid competing with member institutions, NASAD does not normally seek outside funding for its activities; it simply lives within its means.

## ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Although successful completion of the accreditation process is necessary for gaining membership in NASAD, the Association has always viewed the process **as more of a helpful process than as a test.**

Accreditation is a useful way for institutions to:

- Plan for the future;
- Judge themselves against national standards and their own aspirations;
- Take stock of their achievements and needs;
- Gain evaluative assistance from peer experts.

Since a thorough review of the accreditation process is presented during the Self-Study workshop at each Annual Meeting, only the highlights are provided here.

Every newly accredited institution must review its program on a five-year cycle. All others are reviewed every ten years. These reviews always include a full self-study, an on-site evaluation by a team of at least two evaluators, and a review by the Commission. The institutional self-study is the centerpiece of the accreditation process. If new programmatic offerings are adopted between reviews, an institution must submit the offerings for review and approval prior to implementation. Circumstances may determine that an on-site visit is necessary.

NASAD encourages those seeking and renewing accreditation to make extensive use of three fundamental resources found on the [NASAD website](#):

- The [Handbook](#) contains the accreditation Standards and the Rules of Practice and Procedure;
- The [Procedures](#) contain the procedures institutions must follow, the Self-Study formats, and the procedures for on-site visits; and
- The [Policies and Procedures for Reviews of New Curricula](#) are to be used when adding, changing, and/or modifying curricula.

These resources are only the beginning. There are additional ways to find out about how the accreditation process works:

- Sessions providing a thorough overview of procedure and self-study are held during each Annual Meeting.
- You can visit the Association's website at <http://nasad.arts-accredit.org>, or contact the [National Office staff](#) by phone at 703-437-0700 or by e-mail at [info@arts-accredit.org](mailto:info@arts-accredit.org).
- You can obtain a list of names of individuals who might serve as an on-site [consultant](#). Of course, you don't have to be seeking accreditation to host a consultant. Consultants will be glad to assist you in solving specific institutional problems. Although NASAD can provide a list of consultants, NASAD does not guarantee that hosting a consultant will ensure Commission approval. Consultants are not hired by NASAD, but by institutions.

## HEADS ANNUAL REPORT

Every NASAD member must file a [HEADS](#) Data Survey (Annual Report) every year. This information is submitted online and compiled by the staff. Compiled data in the form of *Data Summaries* are sent annually to NASAD members participating in the Survey to assist in their decision-making. A special feature of the HEADS system enables institutions to compare themselves against ten or more other institutions of similar size and type.

Because HEADS Annual Reports provide a composite, quantitative picture of each institution, the reports from each of the past three years are required as an appendix to the Self-Study in the renewal of membership process. Specific sections of all institutional HEADS reports remain confidential. Only National Office staff have access to them.

Informational sessions regarding HEADS are held during the Annual Meeting.

## ACCREDITATION AUDIT

In order to keep an accurate public record of each institution's descriptive information, NASAD requests that every member institution update its accreditation audit every year. This information, as well as programmatic offerings, is published in a membership listing. The searchable online Directory of [Accredited Institutional Members](#) serves as an updated mailing list and provides current information about degree programs at each institution.

## PUBLICATIONS PROGRAM

Like many associations, NASAD serves its members' needs through a variety of [Publications](#) on the NASAD website. You already know about the *Handbook* and the *Directory*. In addition to these, NASAD publishes:

- [Brochures and Advisories](#) on issues are published as needed, while [Assessment and Policy Studies](#) bring members up-to-date on issues, trends, and new policy initiatives.
- A [Sourcebook for Futures Planning](#) and its Supplements provide an extensive menu of techniques, approaches, and analyses for looking at a broad range of concerns.
- [Notices](#), including official announcements concerning proposed *Handbook* revisions and Commission actions; Annual Meeting information; and other items of interest.

The Association also publishes reports of special projects and studies in which NASAD is involved. Examples include a Policy Brief on Creation, Performance, and Research; a Statement on Credentials in Creative Fields of Art and Design; a joint statement on the Master of Fine Arts Degree and Faculty Policies with the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST) and the National Association of Schools of Dance (NASD); special focus reports on Minority Access to Arts Education; Advising, Counseling, and Mentoring the Arts Student; *Sourcebook Supplement IV: Creating Your Self-Study*; Giftedness, Arts Study, and Work; Tough Questions and Straight Answers About Arts Accreditation; and Distance Education and the Arts Disciplines. The comments and participation of members is actively solicited for the publications program. Ideas are also welcome, especially comments on issues and proposed changes in Association documents.

NASAD, in conjunction with the other accrediting organizations that make up the Council on Arts Accrediting Associations (CAAA), developed a web resource devoted to [Achievement and Quality: Higher Education in the Arts](#) to assist individuals and institutions. This resource is rich with information and resources that reflect a basic consensus by the representatives of over 1,200 accredited institutions and programs across the disciplines of art and design, dance, music, and theatre who seek broader public understanding of the nature of what they do and how they evaluate it as experienced professionals. A link to the website may also be found on the <http://www.arts-accredit.org> home page.

## ANNUAL MEETINGS

NASAD meets every year during the second or third week in October. All NASAD meetings focus on professional development, while some also address larger questions of policy.

You are encouraged to attend the national meetings, not just as a professional obligation, and not only because NASAD benefits from your participation, but because of what you can take home with you in the form of useful information, new contacts, and renewed friendships.

## CONCLUSION

In the end, NASAD is like every other organization. You get out what you put in. But there are some simple steps you can take. To benefit immediately and often from NASAD's services:

First, stay familiar with the NASAD website and NASAD publications, especially those related to the accreditation process. These documents may be able to answer a question before it turns into a problem. Become familiar with the NASAD standards and accreditation philosophy.

Second, if you do have a question or concern, [contact the National Office](#). The National Office staff will do its best to answer your questions or direct you to additional sources of information.

Third, if you are an institutional representative to NASAD, you are a conduit for information. Make sure you keep your faculty and administration informed about the things they need to know, and about how NASAD may be able to help them.

Finally, we ask you to work with NASAD to anticipate your needs. It is relatively easy for NASAD to deal with institutional concerns in advance, but only when the staff, the Commission, or the appropriate Committee has been made aware of them.

In other words, it's in your best interest to use NASAD. The Association exists to serve.