

Information

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF ART AND DESIGN

Introduction

The major activities of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design are the accreditation of educational programs in the visual arts and the establishment of curricular standards and guidelines. NASAD is the only accrediting agency covering the entire field of art and design recognized by the United States Department of Education. The Association is composed of approximately 360 member institutions, including public and private colleges and universities, as well as independent art and design schools. All member institutions of NASAD meet standards and uphold the code of ethics of the Association as stated in the *NASAD Handbook*.

In addition to the accreditation function of the Association, NASAD publishes a variety of resources for the art, design and education communities, holds an annual meeting, and provides information to the general public about educational programs in the visual arts and design.

A Brief History of the Association

In 1944, representatives of art and design schools met in New York at the Metropolitan Museum of Art by invitation of Mr. Richard F. Bach, then the museum's Dean of Education. Mr. Bach's intention was to focus attention primarily upon the new field of industrial design through the schools that had or could develop design education programs. In his first letter to the schools, he referred to the occasion as a "conference of schools of design." Because of the enthusiastic response of the schools, the meetings were continued on a conference basis until 1948. In that year, it was decided to establish a firm organizational structure and to use the meetings as opportunities to visit schools, as well as to exchange ideas and consider the broad problems of art and design education.

The organization thus formed was called the National Association of Schools of Design, with the following 22 schools as charter members: Auburn University, University of Alabama, Akron Art Institute, School of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute of Technology, School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Cincinnati Art Academy, University of Cincinnati, Cleveland School of Art (now Cleveland Institute of Art), Cooper Union, University of Illinois (Urbana), Kansas City Art Institute and School of Design, Maryland Institute, Massachusetts School of Art, Minneapolis School of Art, Moore Institute of Art, Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art (now part of The University of the Arts), Pratt Institute, Rhode Island School of Design, Syracuse University, Washington University, and the School of Worcester Art Museum.

The name of the Association was changed in 1966 to the National Association of Schools of Art, and in 1981, to the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, to more accurately reflect the broad interests of the growing organization. The membership now consists of leading art and design schools, college and university art/design departments, and artists and designers from all regions of the United States. This group has assumed increasing responsibility for the development of educational standards in art and design, and has contributed greatly to the feeling of mutual understanding and respect now existing among schools and departments of art and design throughout the country.

The Aims and Objectives of the Association

Broadly stated, the aims and objectives of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design 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 process of 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 formation 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.

The Association's Role as a Specialized, Professional Accrediting Agency

NASAD recognizes the need to find ways of clarifying and maintaining standards in art and design through responsible education of artists and designers. By means of accreditation, it can encourage those institutions that consistently give students a sound basis for significant future accomplishments in art and design. Accreditation also imposes on those institutions the responsibility for continual effort to strengthen art and design education in general—in both accredited and not-yet-accredited schools. In addition, it provides a basis for public recognition of an institution's quality.

The acceptance of NASAD as the only recognized accrediting agency covering the entire field of art and design has placed upon the Association the following responsibilities: to maintain high educational standards; to safeguard the profession against inadequately prepared educators and practitioners; to disseminate information on accreditation to institutions, counselors, teachers, parents, and students; to guard against improper non-educational pressures on individuals and institutions; and to consider other important educational problems and issues. The Association recognizes and accepts these responsibilities.

Procedures for NASAD Membership

The two basic procedures for Membership in NASAD are institutional self-study and peer evaluation. The self-study is designed to produce a comprehensive effort on the part of the institution to evaluate its own programs while considering its objectives.

Peer evaluation provides professional, objective judgment from outside the institution, and is accomplished through an on-site visitation, a formal visitors' report, and Commission review.

NASAD publishes procedural documents for each category of Membership. Institutions seeking Membership in the Association should visit the [website](#), or [contact the National Office](#) for appropriate materials.

Consultative Visits

During preparation for application for Membership, an institution may wish to request a [consultative visit](#). From a slate provided by NASAD, the institution may select a consultant experienced in the accreditation process in art and design to visit the campus for one or more days to assist the institution in developing or revising degree programs, to determine the readiness of the institution to apply for Membership in NASAD, or to provide other appropriate services. The consultant is hired by and works for the institution. Since the consultant may not act as an NASAD evaluator for the institution when application is made, a consultant's recommendations are purely advisory in nature, and do not affect later accreditation decisions.

Individual Membership

NASAD maintains an [individual membership](#) category open to interested individuals. It is a useful, optional service provided by NASAD. Individual members are informed about, but have no vote in, the activities of the Association.

Individual Membership is designed especially for art/design executives and faculty members of institutions preparing for NASAD accredited institutional Membership. The art/design executive is encouraged to become an individual member during the application phase of the process.

Non-Accredited Institutional Affiliation

Postsecondary institutions not yet ready to apply for accredited status or not wishing to seek accreditation may become nonvoting institutional affiliates. Appropriate materials for non-accredited institutional affiliation can be obtained from the National Office.

Professional Organization Affiliation

National not-for-profit organizations representing individual professionals in art, design, or art/design-related disciplines may affiliate with NASAD and participate directly in the work of the Association. Information may be obtained from the National Office.

Accredited Institutional Membership

Institutions meeting Association standards for accreditation shall be accorded Membership following review under applicable NASAD procedures.

It is the policy of the Association to reexamine accredited institutional members on a regular cycle, the period of which shall not exceed ten years. However, the Commission on Accreditation has the authority to require reexamination at any time upon prior notification to the institution.

Institutions eligible to apply for Membership include independent art schools, colleges, universities, two-year institutions, and institutions offering graduate work only. Institutions may be degree-granting and/or non-degree-granting.

- A. Associate Membership.** Associate Membership may be granted to baccalaureate and/or graduate degree-granting institutions, community/junior colleges, and non-degree-granting institutions applying for the first time that meet all curricular standards and all other applicable standards of the Association, and which are developing in areas related to purposes or operations. Accreditation with Associate Membership is valid for up to five years. At the end of this period, such institutions will be required to demonstrate substantial progress in areas under development and to satisfy all criteria for Membership in the Association.
- B. Membership.** Membership is granted to institutions meeting all of the standards of the Association. Institutions approved for Membership are granted five-year periods of accreditation. At the end of five years, such institutions are expected to apply for renewal of Membership. Institutions approved for renewal of Membership are granted ten-year periods of accreditation.

The standards for institutional membership are published annually in the NASAD [Handbook](#). When applicable, new or amended standards that have been ratified by the NASAD Membership and/or the Board of Directors are available as addenda to the *Handbook*.

The Development of Standards and Guidelines for Accreditation

In presenting its standards and guidelines for member institutions, NASAD reaffirms its special commitment to those principles of voluntary accreditation that encourage diversity among institutions and respect for operational integrity within institutions.

As has been the case since the founding of the Association, the standards and guidelines are presented, not as a set of rules and regulations to be enforced through rigid procedures, but as a synthesis of current thought about professional training in art and design to be used as part of the peer review process of accreditation.

In this process, standards and guidelines provide a point of departure for (a) dialogue occurring within the institution as part of the self-study process, (b) the institution's discussions with the visiting team, and (c) the exchange of views between the institution and the Commission on Accreditation.

Therefore, the standards and guidelines are also intended to provide the public at large with a comprehensive document outlining the attributes of professional training programs in the visual arts. These attributes are presented as a framework within which each institution develops the specifics of its unique program. *In no case should "standards and guidelines" imply standardization.*

Basic Criteria for Membership for Degree-Granting Institutions

The National Association of Schools of Art and Design recognizes many types of programs in degree-granting institutions. The primary purpose of all institutions, whatever types of programs they offer, should be to provide the best possible environment for education and training in the visual arts. Such an environment should foster an understanding of the arts and an attitude of respect for their potential contribution to society.

Applicants for accreditation as degree-granting members are two-year, four-year, or five-year undergraduate or graduate level institutions. Accredited members shall meet the following Basic Criteria for Membership:

1. The institution shall maintain a curricular program of education and training in the visual arts or design.
2. The institution shall offer at least one degree program, (e.g., Bachelor of Fine Arts, Bachelor of Arts with major in Art, et al.) or shall provide the visual arts/design component of a degree program offered in conjunction with an accredited degree-granting institution.
3. The institution shall have graduated at least one class of students who have been through the institution's own program from beginning to final year, and another class shall be in readiness subject to examination.
4. Institutions offering one or more graduate programs as their only degree programs shall have graduated at least two students from at least one graduate program that meets all applicable standards, and shows evidence of continuing enrollment. If institutions offer undergraduate and graduate programs, graduate programs must have graduate students matriculated or in residence, or have received Plan Approval from the Commission on Accreditation.
5. The institution's legal authority shall be stated clearly in its published materials as identified by its charter, authority to grant degrees, structure of control, profit or non-profit status, and affiliation, if any, with a parent or sibling organization.
6. All policies regarding admission and retention of students, as well as those pertaining to the school's evaluation of progress, shall be clearly defined in literature published by the institution.
7. All tuition, fees, and other charges, as well as all policies pertaining thereto, shall be clearly described in the institution's published literature.
8. Faculty members shall be qualified for their specific teaching assignments by educational background and/or professional experience. The institution shall list its faculty in its published literature.
9. The institution shall have facilities and equipment commensurate with the needs of its educational program.
10. The institution shall have library space and resources commensurate with the needs of its educational program.
11. The institution demonstrates commitment to a program of continuous self-evaluation.

12. The institution shall be licensed or chartered to operate as required by local and state legal codes. The institution shall meet all legal requirements to operate wherever it conducts its activities. Multipurpose institutions offering degrees in art and design and in other disciplines shall be accredited by the appropriate regional or institutional accrediting agency.
13. The institution shall provide (or, in the case of foreign studies programs, be responsible for) all coursework or educational services to support its educational programs, or demonstrate that any cooperative or contracted coursework or educational services are provided by an outside institution or organization having accreditation as an entity by a nationally recognized accrediting agency.

Basic Criteria for Membership for Non-Degree-Granting Institutions

The National Association of Schools of Art and Design accredits non-degree-granting institutions. Programs in these institutions may or may not lead to a professional diploma or certificate. The primary purpose of all such institutions should be to provide the best possible environment for the artistic growth of their students. Such an environment should foster an understanding of the arts and their contributions to society.

Unless specified otherwise in the *Handbook*, regardless of institutional type, the composite institution offering non-degree-granting programs must meet the following Basic Criteria for Membership:

1. The institution shall maintain a curricular program in studio art or design at various levels according to the needs of its students.
2. The institution shall offer, as part of its regular program, studies reflecting attention to such areas as art/design history and criticism. Such studies may be in addition to, or in conjunction with, studio studies.
3. The institution offering postsecondary professional education and training programs must offer at least one non-degree curricular program at the undergraduate level requiring at least 30 semester hours or the equivalent, or one non-degree curricular program at the graduate level requiring at least 15 semester hours or the equivalent. Such institutions shall offer at least one curricular program that meets all appropriate standards that (a) has been completed by students, (b) has an enrollment of at least three students, and (c) is progressing students toward completion.
4. The institution shall have been in operation for at least three consecutive years and shall maintain its programs on a regular academic-year or year-round basis.
5. The institution's legal authority shall be stated clearly in its published materials as identified by its charter, authority to offer curricular programs, structure of control, profit or non-profit status, and affiliation, if any, with a parent or sibling organization.
6. All policies regarding the admission and retention of students, those pertaining to the school's evaluation of progress through its educational program, as well as those concerning the operation of certificate or diploma programs, shall be clearly defined in literature published by the institution.
7. All tuition, fees, and other charges, as well as all policies pertaining thereto, shall be clearly described in the institution's published literature.
8. Faculty members shall be qualified for their specific teaching assignments by educational background and/or professional experience. The institution shall list its faculty in its published literature.
9. The institution shall provide in its institutional catalog a complete description of each course or program offered.
10. Although only federal and state governments shall have legal jurisdictional powers and responsibilities in matters of public law, the institution should develop an appropriate code of ethical standards governing institutional and programmatic practices that recognizes social concerns relevant to quality education.
11. The institution shall have facilities and equipment adequate to the needs of its educational program.

12. The institution shall have either library space or holdings adequate for its educational programs, or shall have made arrangements for its students and faculty to have access to appropriate library facilities in the immediate area.
13. The institution demonstrates commitment to a program of continuous self-evaluation.
14. The institution shall be licensed or chartered to operate as required by local and state legal codes. The institution shall meet all legal requirements to operate wherever it conducts its activities. Multipurpose institutions offering programs in art and design and in other disciplines shall be accredited by the appropriate regional or institutional accrediting agency, unless such accreditation is not available.
15. The institution shall provide (or, in the case of foreign studies programs, be responsible for) all coursework or educational services to support its educational programs, or demonstrate that any cooperative or contracted coursework or educational services are provided by an outside institution or organization having accreditation as an entity by a nationally recognized accrediting agency.

NASAD recognizes that the terms *diploma* and *certificate* are used for the recognition of collegiate level work.

Standards

The complete standards and guidelines for NASAD, published in the *Handbook* of the Association, provide a basic framework for the accreditation process, thus allowing objective analysis of curricula. They are meant to be the basis for dialogue (a) within an institution as the self-study is being developed, (b) between an institution and the Association (the visiting evaluators and the Commission), and (c) between the Association and the public as a whole.

The Association does not attempt to develop detailed formulas, plans of coursework, or other inflexible specifications that might impinge on the freedom of institutions to develop individual programs. Instead, NASAD has developed standards and guidelines that are specific enough to ensure a certain level of educational quality, but are not so restrictive as to stifle experimentation, innovation, and individuality of program content.

In addition to the Basic Criteria for institutional Membership noted above, the *Handbook* contains standards and guidelines for programs in art and design in the following areas:

- Standards for Purposes and Operations such as Purposes of the Institution and Art/Design Unit; Size and Scope; Finances; Governance and Administration; Faculty and Staff; Facilities, Equipment, Technology, Health, and Safety; Library and Learning Resources; and so forth
- Art and Design Program Components such as Credit and Time Requirements; Time on Task, Curricular Proportions, and Competencies; Forms of Instruction, Requirements, and Electives; Independent Study; Distance Learning; and so forth.
- Undergraduate Programs in the Visual Arts and Design
- Admission to Undergraduate Study
- Two-Year Degree-Granting Programs
- The Liberal Arts Degree with a Major in Art or in Design Studies
- All Professional Baccalaureate Degrees in Art and Design
- Specific Professional Baccalaureate Degrees in Art
- Specific Professional Baccalaureate Degrees in Design
- Professional Combination Degrees in Studio and Art History
- Baccalaureate Degrees in Art Education
- Baccalaureate Degrees in Preparation for Advanced Professional Study
- Graduate Programs in the Visual Arts and Design
- Admission to Graduate Study
- Specific Initial Graduate Degree Programs

- Specific Terminal Degree Programs
- Non-Degree-Granting Programs in Art and Design
- Admission to Non-Degree-Granting Programs in Art and Design
- Specific Professional Non-Degree-Granting Programs
- Specific Operational Standards for All Institutions of Higher Education for which NASAD is the Designated Institutional Accreditor
- Specific Operational Standards for Proprietary Institutions of Higher Education

Code of Ethics

NASAD member institutions have agreed to abide by the Code of Ethics of the Association. It contains statements on ethical concerns in areas such as faculty appointments, financial aid, advertising, and the school's responsibility to the student. The Association has informal procedures for reviewing complaints directed against member institution. All formal complaints are reviewed by the Commission on Accreditation or the Committee on Ethics, composed of representatives elected by or appointed from the membership.

The Governance of the Association

The officers of the Association are the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer, all of whom are elected by the membership, and the Executive Director, *ex officio*. These individuals, along with the Immediate Past President, the Chair of the Commission on Accreditation, six individuals elected by the membership, and two representatives of the general public, constitute the Board of Directors.

The executive body of the Board of Directors is the Executive Committee, whose members are the five officers and the Chair of the Commission on Accreditation.

NASAD maintains a Commission on Accreditation with responsibility for accreditation review. The Commission consists of a chair and ten members elected by the NASAD membership, as well as two representatives of the general public.

The Association also maintains a Committee on Ethics and a Committee on Nominations.

Other Services of the Association

Website. NASAD maintains extensive information and current materials on its website.

National Office. NASAD maintains a professional staff of 15 at its National Office in Reston, Virginia. The staff provides technical services, information, and assistance to members of the Association and interested individuals in areas related to art and design training, education, and the arts. Staff members also carry out the administrative functions of the Association, including accreditation coordination, accounting, correspondence, and policy analysis. The Association offers a comprehensive list of publications on its website. It also collects and makes available comprehensive data regarding art and design programs and institutions.

Directory. The Association publishes a searchable online Directory list that provides the names of all member institutions, their addresses, telephone numbers, art/design executives, and degree programs. The *Directory* is the official accreditation listing for NASAD member institutions. The Association also makes [mailing labels](#) available for purchase through its website.

Handbook. The *Handbook*, published annually in electronic form, includes NASAD standards for non-degree-granting, community/junior college, baccalaureate, and graduate programs in art/design, as well as the Association's Constitution, Bylaws, Code of Ethics, and Rules of Practice and Procedure. When applicable, new or amended standards that have been ratified by the NASAD Membership and/or the Board of Directors are available as addenda to the *Handbook*.

Statistical Services. NASAD participates annually in the Higher Education Arts Data Services (HEADS) project, an ad hoc coalition designed to gather statistics on the arts in higher education. HEADS provides yearly statistical compilations about enrollment, degrees awarded, admission, graduation, faculty, administration, operational expenditures, credit hour production, fees, and student demographics, organized by size and type of institution. Statistics are stored on computer for use in “Special Reports,” a service that allows schools to compare themselves to a selected group of other institutions. “Special Reports” provide comparative statistics for samplings as small as ten institutions in most categories of HEADS data.

Notices. During the academic year, NASAD publishes various items of information, annual meeting content and registration, reports of Commission actions, drafts of proposed changes to the *Handbook*, descriptions of activities of interest to art/design executives, discussions of national arts policy issues, and so forth. Such notices can be found under [About NASAD](#) on the NASAD website.

Annual Meeting. NASAD holds an Annual Meeting in October. Sessions at the Annual Meeting are designed to include topics of interest to individuals involved in art and design training. There are meetings by size and type of institution, interest group sessions, and workshops. Papers presented at the meeting, when available, are published in the [Past Annual Meetings](#) section of the NASAD website.

A Summary of Benefits of Institutional Membership

NASAD offers many services to member institutions:

- Constructive evaluation of programs through the accreditation process.
- Advice and counsel concerning new curricula.
- Periodic research studies of topics pertinent to education in art and design.
- Information concerning developments in art and design, the arts, education, and related matters.
- Data compiled from the annual reports of member institutions filing a comprehensive picture of art and design in higher education.
- Publications containing information and basic standards for the education of visual artists and designers.
- National forums for discussion of issues, concerns, and opportunities.

For further information, please contact:

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