

# Questions

## About Accreditation Answered

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The question of whether it is beneficial to the membership and the association to offer an accreditation program to individual members is under consideration by the American Statistical Association. In 2005, as part of his presidency, Fritz Scheuren created a task force to examine how the ASA was meeting the needs of professional statisticians in business. That task force looked at the accreditation programs offered by the Royal Statistical Society, the Statistical Society of Australia, Inc., and the Statistical Society of Canada. The task force also conducted focus groups of ASA members and included questions on member surveys. The task force determined there was potential benefit to the ASA and a segment of its membership and recommended to the board of directors the establishment of a committee to develop specifics about an accreditation program. In March 2007, the board approved the formation of the ad hoc Committee on Accreditation of Individual Statisticians to define the details of an accreditation program, such as criteria for granting accreditation and the application process.

The committee has developed a list of frequently asked questions, which appears below.

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### *Why accredit individuals when there is accreditation for academic institutes?*

Other professionals with whom statisticians work have individual accreditation that goes beyond formal learning from academic institutions to integration of knowledge into specific area(s) of practice. For equivalent professional recognition, statisticians also should have such a mechanism.

#### *What is accreditation for individuals?*

It is peer recognition that an individual has statistical training/knowledge and experience in applying that expertise, maintains appropriate professional development, practices ethically, and has good oral and written communication skills. It is not certification or product guarantee. The accrediting body offers networking, interaction, mentoring, and remedial advice, along with facilitating sound practice.



### ***What are the risks, legal or otherwise, to the ASA and its membership?***

In a legally well-defined program, risks to the ASA and its membership are expected to be minimal. An individual is responsible for his/her work. The accrediting body acts only as a facilitator for sound practice. Accreditation is not certification.

### ***Have other statistical societies instituted accreditation programs. If so, which ones? Which would fit the ASA membership culture and needs?***

Chronologically, the following statistical programs were instituted: Royal Statistical Society (RSS) Chartering, Statistical Society of Australia, Inc. (SSAI) Accreditation, American Society for Quality (ASQ) Accreditation, and Statistical Society of Canada (SSC) Accreditation. SSC accreditation is expected to be the closest model for the ASA, as it represents North-American practice and received favorable responses in ASA-sponsored focus groups held across the United States in 2005.

### ***What would be the benefits to the ASA, its membership, the statistical community, and the community in general?***

The ASA's societal role as supporter and facilitator of sound statistical practice would be enhanced. The ASA would be home for a broader spectrum of statisticians and a natural linkage across this broader spectrum. Applied statisticians, sometimes in isolated practice, would have improved resources and recognition. Employers would be encouraged to and helped with hiring statistical professionals.

### ***What would be the cost of an accreditation program?***

After set-up, the accreditation program should be self-sustaining, although extra marginal revenue generated by compulsory ASA memberships and continuing professional education should be considered to enrich both the accreditation and general ASA programs.

### ***Has grandfathering of recognized experts been considered?***

Yes; however, it is not favored. We think there should be recognition of common elements from other accreditation programs, should individuals accredited by those programs apply for ASA accreditation.

### ***Would accredited individuals need to renew periodically?***

Filing of annual maintenance of accredited practice details (practice areas, professional development, mentoring, and willingness to mentor) with the accreditation body would substitute for renewal.

### ***Would accredited individuals be tied to mentoring, one way or the other?***

Mentoring should be compulsory for all new practitioners. The choice of a mentor would be theirs, as mentoring involves developing a relationship; as required, matching would be facilitated. Mentoring should be optional for the mentor, although it is expected that many will want to participate. There would be annual declaration of willingness to mentor.

### ***Have other ASA committees weighed in on this issue?***

Input is being sought from ASA committees and sections.

### ***In what way would accreditation unify ASA membership and statisticians at large?***

We expect accreditation would increase networking between current ASA members and nonmembers and encourage membership.

### ***Would an accreditation program increase ASA membership enrollment?***

A robust accreditation program with new professional services would be attractive to many current nonmembers.

### ***What were the major issues identified by the focus group studies?***

Accreditation needs to be meaningful and affordable. It should have a variety of paths to achieve to account for the diversity of statisticians, be a tiered program, and include recertification and evidence of professional development.

### ***Would accreditation bring clarity and definition to the statistical profession?***

The full range of exciting careers held by statisticians should raise the societal profile of statistics.

### ***How can a documented ethics statement improve the behavior of individual statisticians?***

Frequently, statisticians require guidance about appropriate conduct, or external validation for their actions, particularly if they are working in isolation from other statisticians. An ethics statement will provide this.

### ***Would accreditation of individuals create different classes of statisticians?***

Accreditation is expected to be most useful for applied practicing statisticians and academics with an interest in applied work. It is not mandatory. An accreditation program with new professional services would be attractive to many current nonmembers.

### ***If my degree is not in statistics, can I still become accredited?***

Certainly, if you can demonstrate the acquisition of equivalent knowledge.

### ***Why should exams not be required?***

An exam would be reduced to basic principles, as each applied area of statistics is different. Qualification through evidence of sound integration of methodology to practice may be sufficient to demonstrate knowledge.

### ***How would those with an education from outside the United States be assessed?***

U.S. academic institutions are frequently required to assess the equivalency of international degrees. World Education Services provides such an assessment to those from Canada for the SSC accreditation, as well as for U.S. institutions. At this point, the best mechanism for equivalency has not been determined, but solutions exist. ■