

Global Recognition of CIS International Accreditation

For schools,
parents, and
students

Q What is CIS International Accreditation?

A CIS International Accreditation is a rigorous school-wide evaluative process that measures alignment with internationally-benchmarked standards and provides guidance for continuous improvement.

Through their achievement of these standards, CIS-Accredited schools have been verified as delivering high-quality international education focused on the development of knowledge, skills and attributes necessary to prepare students as global citizens. Students educated at CIS-Accredited schools are sought after by universities around the world due to the rigour of their international education and their preparation for life no matter where their paths may take them.

Q What kind of assurance does accreditation provide? Do CIS or national accreditation agencies validate a school's curriculum or the conferral of a diploma?

A It is important to recognize that accrediting bodies (including the U.S. accreditors CIS regularly partners with - NEASC, MSA and WASC) accredit the school, not the curriculum or diploma. While we each verify that a rigorous curriculum and student assessment system are in place, we do not prescribe nor verify the curriculum or high school diploma. As accreditors, we evaluate whether or not systems and structures are in place to ensure the curriculum is well articulated, taught, understood, and the outcomes are properly assessed. Further, CIS and each U.S. accrediting body is curriculum neutral. It is up to the school itself to determine which curriculum to follow and how it is assessed.

A frequent misunderstanding is that an accreditation agency “accredits” or validates a high school diploma. This view can form internationally due to the fact that some countries do validate secondary leaving credentials, for example in the UK via an inspection model which includes a review of assessment based upon UK-wide exams. This is not true in the U.S. given its federally devolved system of education, where authority is held at the state level and there is no national exam. Instead, universities in the U.S. and globally may consider external exams as part of the admission process, for example, the U.S.-based SAT or ACT exam, an IB exam, or other national and international exams. Adding further confusion is the fact that some accrediting bodies have authorised schools to use their association logo on student diplomas. (Something CIS does not do.)

Q If a student graduates and receives a high school diploma from a CIS-Accredited school, are they eligible for admission to U.S. colleges and universities?

A Yes. Each university decides whether or not to consider accreditation of a student applicant's school as a requirement for admission. For U.S. universities that do take school accreditation into consideration as part of their admission requirements, CIS International Accreditation is recognized as equally valid as accreditation conferred by an U.S. regional accreditation organization.

The Council of International Schools is an approved accrediting agency for private elementary and secondary schools as identified by the [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement](#) Student and Exchange Visitor Program.

Q If a student transfers from a CIS-Accredited school to a school that is accredited by the local government, how will their transcript be viewed by their new school?

A The school can refer to the CIS website (www.cois.org) to verify that the student has been educated at a school that has achieved high standards in all aspects of international education. CIS International Accreditation itself has been validated and is accepted by governmental agencies and associations internationally as a mark of quality assurance.

Q How is CIS International Accreditation different from accreditation conferred by U.S. accreditation agencies?

A CIS developed its international accreditation protocol independently to enable schools to benchmark the quality and improvement of their educational programmes with leading international practice. The CIS International Accreditation protocol is based upon the CIS Mission, Values and Code of Ethics, embracing the UN Declaration of Human Rights as a clear statement of moral purpose, and incorporating the recommendations of the International Taskforce on Child Protection.

Our accreditation standards are unique, with an international focus on a school's unique purpose and direction, student learning, student well-being and global citizenship. A school's achievement of CIS International Accreditation is recognized by governmental Ministries and Departments of Education around the world based upon the verified quality and rigour of the education it provides, complementing the recognition a school receives through a national quality assurance agency.

When a school requests dual accreditation from CIS and for example, a U.S. accreditation agency (MSA, NEASC, or WASC), the CIS International Accreditation Protocol is the framework and protocol used as the basis for the joint evaluation of international schools.

The impact and range of use of the CIS International Accreditation Protocol spans across 123 countries in 500 schools. An additional 100 schools are currently working towards initial accreditation.

Q Do universities recognize CIS International Accreditation?

A CIS Higher Education members join CIS to actively seek out and consider students from CIS-Accredited schools for admission. CIS hosts virtual and regionally-focused University Exploration Days where students from CIS-Accredited schools gather information and meet university admissions representatives from around the world.

Q If a university recognizes CIS International Accreditation does this mean that the student will be accepted at that university?

A No. Even if a university recognizes CIS International Accreditation as part of their admission criteria, they have additional requirements for admission to assess students individually. It is important to verify each university's minimum admission requirements to determine how they will assess a student's performance in school and fit for a specific institution.

Q What is the relationship between CIS and the International Baccalaureate (IB)?

A As a membership and accreditation organization, CIS evaluates all aspects of school life, educationally and operationally through the accreditation process using international standards. The [IB](#) authorizes schools to adopt the IB curriculum and subsequently evaluates its implementation and use at a school.

CIS and the IB work together so that schools can align their IB re-authorization visits at the same time as their CIS International Accreditation evaluation visits, saving the school effort and time. We merge our respective evaluation processes, with the IB evaluating its curriculum and how it has been implemented as part of the CIS International Accreditation protocol.

Q Do national governments recognize CIS International Accreditation?

A CIS International Accreditation is recognized by many governments in the world. For more information about a specific government, please review the Global Recognition page our website or contact CIS at info@cois.org.

Each university or Ministry of Education internationally establishes admission requirements for their institution(s). In the event a school does not offer a national or international leaving exam to its students, then a governmental body or university will seek other evidence as they consider the rigour of the academic programme at the school the student attended, including whether or not the school is accredited and by whom.

To sum up, the act of accreditation by any accrediting body, including those in the U.S., does not authorise a school to issue its leaving diploma, nor does it validate a student's diploma.

Q How is the quality of the CIS International Accreditation protocol validated?

A CIS is recognized professionally as an accrediting body by the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation ([ICAISA](#)), a professional association for accreditors. CIS is a member of ICAISA to influence and improve the accreditation of independent schools. Following a rigorous and impartial review of the CIS international accreditation process, ICAISA has commended and confirmed its confidence in the quality of CIS accreditation and has verified CIS compliance with ICAISA's Criteria for Effective Independent School Accreditation Practices.

For more information contact CIS at info@cois.org.