ARTICLE 23
CRITERIA
FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF
FIRE-RELATED DEGREE GRANTING-PROGRAMS
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL FIRE SERVICE
ACCREDITATION CONGRESS
DEGREE ASSEMBLY

Philosophy: IFSAC recognizes diversity in the provision and standards of education worldwide. It is our intent to establish the appropriate equivalency based on knowledge level, rigor and related factors, rather than on program titles or terminology.

The documents requested or provided in support of the following criteria should be those used as a standard within the country in which the program being evaluated is presented.

ARTICLE 23 - ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

23.0   Definitions

23.1   The institution shall have clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with the program's mission and appropriate to an institution granting postsecondary degrees in a fire-related field of study.

23.2   The institution shall be organized in such a manner that it is able to effectively accomplish its educational and other stated purposes.

23.3   The institution shall have the human, physical, and financial resources necessary to accomplish its stated purposes.

23.4   The institution shall demonstrate integrity in its practices and relationships.

23.5   The institution shall be accomplishing its educational and stated purposes.

23.6   The institution shall be able to continue to accomplish its stated purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

This criteria was designed to answer these requirements of accreditation in the most effective format for the membership. This criteria has provided examples for each requirement. These examples are not an exhaustive list and each institution may have alternative names for many of these documents. The documents requested or provided in support of the following criteria should be those used as a standard within the country in which the program being evaluated is presented.

SECTION G23.0

DEFINITIONS

IFSAC recognizes that many definitions apply generally to programs in the USA and Canada but confirm that they will be applied and interpreted positively in whatever geographic, national or international environment that these criteria are used. All definitions are found in the IFSAC Bylaws section "Terms and Definitions".

SECTION G23.1

The institution shall have clear and publicly stated purposes consistent with the program's mission and appropriate to an institution granting postsecondary degrees in a fire-related field of study.

G23.1.1 The institution shall have a written, publicly stated purpose.

G23.1.2 The institution shall have a written, publicly stated purpose for the fire related program.

G23.1.3 The institution shall have a written, publicly stated description of the degree or degrees offered.

G23.1.4 The institution's structure shall be such that the fire related degree program is recognized.

G23.1.5 The institution shall publish all admission requirements.

G23.1.6 The program level shall be documented.

G23.1.7 The program length shall be documented.

> *Examples of supporting documentation:*
> - *Mission statement*
> - *Information on the website, faculty or student handbooks, or academic catalog*
> - *School Policy & Procedure*

SECTION 23.2

The institution shall be organized in such a manner that it is able to effectively accomplish its educational and other stated purposes.

G23.2.1 **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

> (a) The program administrator for the degree program shall have the authority, responsibility, and privileges necessary to manage the program to ensure the attainment of program goals.
>
> (b) The institution shall have a detailed job description of the program administrator.
>
> (c) The program administrator shall be provided with time for program operation, supervision, evaluation, and revision.

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Amended October 2023

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Job description*
- *Information obtained from onsite interviews*

G23.2.2 BUDGET

(a) The program administrator shall have direct input in the development of the program budget.

(b) The program shall follow a formal budget process.

(c) The budget shall be sufficient to meet the needs of the program.

(d) The degree-granting entity shall provide documentation to describe the sources(s) of its funding.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Copy of the budget*
- *Documentation of the budget process*
- *Information obtained from onsite interviews*

G23.2.3 INSURANCE

(a) The institution shall provide faculty liability coverage for events occurring in the educational setting.

(b) The institution should provide opportunity for students to acquire insurance coverage for personal injury or property damage occurring as a result of training and educational experiences.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Copy of the insurance policy*
- *Policy and procedure*
- *Information in the student handbook*

G23.2.4 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES DOCUMENTATION

(a) Each program shall have access to the institution's policy and procedures.

 (b) Each program shall have access to the faculty/staff handbook. If a faculty/staff handbook is not used by the institution, an alternative method of providing this information shall be identified.

(c) The policies and procedures of the program shall be compatible with the philosophy and goals of the institution.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Hard copy of the Policy & Procedure manual and/or handbooks*
- *Policy and procedure manual access on the college website*
- *Copies of program policies, procedures, or processes*

IFSAC Degree Accreditation Criteria
Amended October 2023

G23.2.5   RECORD KEEPING

    (a) The program shall establish and maintain record keeping systems to ensure adequate student and program information for faculty and staff.

    (b) Records shall be kept that accurately reflect the academic accomplishments of students in the program.

    (c) Student records shall be maintained in a manner to ensure confidentiality and security.

    (d) Access to records shall be in accordance with applicable laws or regulations.

    (e) Employment records for faculty and staff shall be maintained in a manner to ensure confidentiality and security.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Access to the student records management system or hard copy records*
- *Hard copy records are stored in locked file cabinets/areas*
- *Electronic records are password protected*
- *Documentation that the institution is knowledgeable of the applicable laws or regulations (FERPA)*

SECTION G23.3

The institution shall have the human, physical, and learning resources necessary to accomplish its stated purposes.

G23.3.1   HUMAN RESOURCES

G23.3.1.1 Faculty

    (a) The program shall have a sufficient number of faculty to implement program objectives.

    (b) Faculty duties and responsibilities shall be defined.

    (c) Instruction shall be provided and evaluated by program faculty.

    (d) Faculty workload shall be defined including program administration duties, online instructional load, and other duties as assigned.

    (e) Faculty training, education, and expertise shall be appropriate to assure high quality learning experiences in all phases of the program.

    (f) There shall be opportunities for program faculty to be represented on institutional committees, as well as those in the program.

    (g) Faculty should be formally represented on all committees, groups, or organizations concerned with the development, implementation, evaluation, and revision of program curriculum.

    (h) Faculty shall meet the regional accrediting agency's requirements for all courses that they are assigned to teach for institutions located in the United States and its territories.

(i) Faculty shall meet the requirements of the regional or institutional organization of said country or by state sanction of said country, for institutions not located in the United States and its territories.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *List of department faculty and their credentials*
- *Job descriptions*
- *Excerpts from policy and procedure or faculty handbook*
- *Collective bargaining agreement*
- *Documentation of professional development opportunities*
- *Regional accreditation/governing body requirement for faculty credentials*

G23.3.1.2 Hiring and Selection

(a) The program shall have a documented formal system for selecting faculty.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Policy and Procedure*
- *Faculty handbook*

G23.3.1.3 Evaluation of Faculty

(a) There shall be a documented system for performance evaluation.

(b) There shall be a documented system for instructional evaluation for both traditional classroom and distance delivery.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Faculty handbook*
- *Policy and procedure*
- *Collective bargaining agreement*

G23.3.1.4 Professional Development and Continuing Education

(a) A formal system of faculty training and orientation should be documented.

(b) In-service programs for faculty should be held regularly to promote individual and professional development and program improvement.

(c) A system for professional and personal development should be available for faculty.

(d) All faculty should receive ongoing professional opportunities to increase knowledge and skill in technical and educational areas.

(e) Faculty providing instruction via Distance Learning shall be provided the opportunity for appropriate additional training in instructional methodology and course delivery related to the area of delivery. For example, faculty providing web based instruction via Blackboard, WebCT, or other platform should be specially trained in course design and/or delivery (as applicable) via said program.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Faculty handbook*
- *Policy and procedure*
- *Listing of professional development activities or training opportunities*

G23.3.1.5 Staff

(a) The program shall have a sufficient number of staff to implement program objectives/outcomes.

(b) Staff duties and responsibilities shall be defined.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Staff handbook*
- *Policy and procedure*
- *Onsite interviews*

G23.3.2 SUPPORT SERVICES

(a) Institutional support services shall include student recruitment, admission activities, and career placement and guidance assistance.

(b) Information Technology (IT) resources shall be sufficient to provide reliable delivery of courses.

(c) For programs or courses delivered via Distance Learning appropriate Help Desk or similar support services shall be provided.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Information on the website*
- *Onsite interviews with faculty and department head*
- *Onsite interviews with students*

G23.3.3 LEARNING RESOURCES

G23.3.3.1 Library Resources

(a) The library shall include a wide range of research materials and resources available for utilization by students and faculty.

(b) There should be a mechanism for faculty to periodically review and select current titles for acquisition.

(c) Library hours and policies should be conducive to faculty and student use of the resources.

(d) Students and faculty at off-campus sites shall have access to library resources.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Information on the website*
- *Onsite interviews with faculty and students*

G23.3.3.2 Tutorial Resources

(a) Tutorial services shall be available to support student learning needs.

(b) Tutorial services shall be available to support students with special needs in accomplishing learning objectives.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Information on the website*
- *Information in the college catalog*
- *Onsite interviews*

G23.3.4 PHYSICAL RESOURCES

G23.3.4.1 On-Campus Instructional Space (N/A for 100% online programs)

(a) The institution shall demonstrate that adequate classroom instructional space is available to achieve stated objectives for each program.

(b) Instructional spaces shall be designed and appropriately equipped for effective instruction to meet the needs of the program.

(c) Facilities should meet applicable fire and building code provisions.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Site maps*
- *Onsite verification*
- *Onsite interviews*
- *Statement of compliance, fire inspection report, or certificate of occupancy*

G23.3.4.2 Off-Campus Instructional Space (N/A for 100% online programs)

(a) Off-campus facilities shall be adequate to achieve course objectives and outcomes.

(b) There shall be a written agreement between the educational institution and the facility.

(c) Instructional space shall be evaluated by program faculty.

(d) Facilities should meet applicable fire and building code provisions.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Site maps*
- *Onsite verification*
- *Onsite interviews*
- *Copy of agreements and contingency plans*
- *Statement of compliance, fire inspection report, or certificate of occupancy*

G23.3.4.3 Office Space

(a) Adequate office space shall be provided for the program administrator.

(b) Adequate office space shall be provided for the faculty. (N/A for 100% online programs)

(c) An area for conducting private or confidential business shall be provided.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Site maps*
- *Onsite verification*
- *Onsite interviews*

G23.3.4.4 Instructional Equipment, Supplies, and Materials (N/A for 100% online programs)

(a) Adequate equipment and supplies shall be available to the program to effectively achieve educational goals.

(b) There should be adequate space available for storage of equipment, supplies, and materials.

(c) The program administrator should periodically assess the instructional equipment, supplies, and materials and make recommendations for modification or replacement of instructional equipment, supplies, and materials.

(d) There should be adequate provision for updating equipment in response to changing practices in technology.

(e) Sufficient expendable materials should be available to accomplish learning outcomes defined in program documents.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Equipment list*
- *Record of equipment/supply requests or purchases*
- *Budget information*
- *Onsite interviews*

G23.3.4.5 Maintenance of Instructional Resources (N/A for 100% online programs)

(a) Evidence that adequate resources are provided to maintain facilities and equipment.

(b) Resources subject to regulatory or specific industry standards shall be maintained in accordance with said standards.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Evidence that maintenance meets industry standards*
- *Maintenance records*
- *Budget information*
- *Onsite interviews*

G23.3.5   ADVISORY COMMITTEE

(a) Program advisory committees shall be established to provide an active mechanism for liaison with the community served by the degree program representative of the population served.

(b) The advisory committee shall be involved in the process of reviewing program outcomes.

(c) There shall be written documentation that details the membership, role, function, terms of the advisory board, committees, and meetings.

(d) Advisory committee minutes should be kept and available for five years.

(e) The program advisory committee or equivalent shall be involved in the evaluation of instructional equipment, supplies, and materials.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Record of advisory minutes for 5 years*
- *List of advisory members and representation*
- *Advisory committee handbook*
- *Onsite interviews with advisory members*

SECTION G.23.4

The institution shall demonstrate integrity in its practices and relationships.

G23.4.1 FACULTY AND STAFF RIGHTS

(a) There shall be published policies to protect the rights of faculty and staff in regard to academic freedom.

(b) Institutions shall openly publish all limitations on freedom of inquiry or expression.

(c) There shall be published policies to deal with theft of intellectual property.

(d) The institution shall publish Codes of Conduct covering fair practices, non-discrimination and equal opportunity policies for faculty and staff.

(e) Codes of conduct, ethics and standards of behavior shall reflect requirements of applicable law and regulation.

(f) Codes of conduct, ethics and standards of behavior shall detail procedures which assure timely and just consideration and disposition of complaints.

(g) There shall be published policies to protect faculty and staff. These policies shall provide avenues for appeal and due process.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Policy and procedures*
- *Faculty and staff handbooks*

G23.4.2 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

(a) There shall be published policies that prohibit faculty, staff, and advisory committee members from having financial or other interests that conflict with the proper discharge of their duties.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Policy and procedures*

- *Faculty and staff handbooks*
- *Advisory committee handbook*

G23.4.3   STUDENT RIGHTS

(a) There shall be published policies to protect the rights of students.

(b) There shall be published policies to deal with cheating, plagiarism and theft of intellectual property.

(c) The institution shall publish Codes of Conduct, ethics and standards of behavior required of students during their time on-campus and in classes.

(d) Codes of conduct, ethics and standards of behavior shall reflect requirements of applicable law and regulation.

(e) Codes of conduct, ethics and standards of behavior shall detail procedures which assure timely and just consideration and disposition of complaints.

(f) There shall be published policies to protect students. These policies shall provide avenues for appeal and due process.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Policy and procedure*
- *Student handbook*

SECTION G23.5

The institution shall be accomplishing its educational and other stated purposes.

G23.5.1   PROGRAM DOCUMENTATION

(a) The curriculum shall include a written master course document.

(b) Each master course document shall have a list of measurable instructional objectives and/or outcomes.

(c) Each master course document shall include a topical outline to achieve the goals and objectives.

(d) Evaluation procedures designed to assess students shall be identified on each master course document.

(e) A current course syllabus shall be on file for each course during the semester it is being taught.

Examples of supporting documentation:

- *A master course outline, master course document, course continuity guide, or equivalent, is a document that outlines the course description, course goals, and objectives, course topics, instructional methodology, and recommended means of testing students. This document is not specific to anyone given academic quarter or semester and is usually approved by an advisory committee and any other applicable collegiate committee or administrators.*

- *A syllabus, class schedule, or course schedule is a document provided by the instructor to the students. It is specific to a given semester. It is expected that every student shall be provided with this document for every course in which he/she is enrolled. The syllabus should contain a schedule of reading assignments and any quizzes, exams, or other assessments for the semester.*

- *It is recognized that different institutions may use the document terminology interchangeably or even by other names. The Basis for Judgment is both types of documents shall be on file regardless of institutional terminology.*

G23.5.2 COURSE AND PROGRAM CONTENT

G23.5.2.1 Program Content

(a) Content areas shall include those generally accepted, or required by law or recognized standards of good practice with input of the advisory committee.

(b) Curriculum should follow a logical sequence.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *If the program has implemented and is following the current version of the Fire & Emergency Services Higher Education (FESHE) Model curriculum, then IFSAC accepts that all sections of 23.5.2.1 have been met.*
- *Advisory committee minutes*

G23.5.2.2 Course Content

(a) Simulations of real life encounters and 'hands-on' activities should accompany theory courses when appropriate.

(b) Where appropriate courses should include and advocate the evaluation of current literature.

(c) When multi-delivery methods are used, the courses shall be similar in goals, objectives, and content, to the traditionally delivered program.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Onsite interview with students and faculty*
- *Examples of case studies or other student assignments that require NFPA codes, news articles, journals, etc.*
- *Comparison of the same class using different delivery methods if applicable*

G23.5.3 INSTRUCTION

(a) All students shall receive comparable instruction in the program.

(b) Program should make reasonable accommodations of student needs in scheduling of required courses.

(c) A course syllabus shall be provided to students at the beginning of each course.

(d) Information regarding system requirements, software, and other needed resources for computer based learning shall be provided to the student prior to the beginning of the term.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Students who are taking evening classes or at remote locations should receive comparable instruction and the use of libraries, audio-visual equipment or computer modules. All students should receive the same final, or exit examination so that the learning results can be compared.*
- *Onsite/online interviews with students*

G23.5.4 STUDENT ASSESSMENT

(a) Student assessment criteria and procedures shall be developed to assess course objectives and learning outcomes.

(b) Student assessment should be conducted formatively and summatively as feedback mechanism for the student.

(c) Student assessment criteria shall be predetermined, consistent and communicated to students.

(d) On the basis of designated criteria, faculty shall provide students a mechanism for assessing student progress during the course in relation to the stated objectives/outcomes of the course.

(e) If a student does not meet assessment criteria, provisions should be made for remediation and reassessment or dismissal.

(f) Where appropriate, third-party evaluation should be provided, such as IFSAC Certificate Assembly or other accredited certifying agencies.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Assessment criteria and outcomes shall be documented.*
- *Course syllabus*
- *Online learning platform*
- *Evidence that the instructor is providing timely feedback to each student on student progress in the course*
- *Onsite/online interviews with students and faculty*

G23.5.5 COURSE EVALUATION

(a) Students shall have an opportunity to complete a course evaluation.

(b) Course evaluations should include an evaluation of the facilities. (N/A for online programs)

(c) Course evaluation shall include evaluation of instruction.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Access to course evaluations*
- *Onsite/online interviews with students*

G23.5.6   OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Definitions related to G23.5.6 (a) and G23.5.6 (b):

<u>Student Outcomes</u>: *Student outcomes describe what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time of graduation. These relate to the knowledge, skills and behaviors that students acquire as they progress through the program.*

<u>Assessment</u>: *Assessment is one or more processes that identify, collect and prepare data to evaluate the attainment of student outcomes. Effective assessment uses relevant direct, indirect, quantitative and qualitative measures as appropriate to the outcome being measured. Appropriate sampling methods may be used as part of the assessment process.*

(a) The program shall have written program outcomes that successful students will possess upon completion of the degree or program of study.

(b) The program shall demonstrate that the outcomes assessments are being applied to the further development and improvement of the program.

(c) The program shall provide reliable information to the public on their performance, including student achievement. This information shall be provided on a yearly basis.

(d) Program outcomes and documented results for student achievement will be posted on the accredited program's website or landing page.

(e) Program outcomes for IFSAC-DA-accredited programs shall be separated out by each respective credential (e.g., AAS, BS) as well as by program area (e.g., Emergency Services, Emergency Management).

(f) The program shall provide reliable information to the public on their performance, including student achievement.

(g) Student achievement data shall include information from a minimum of three of the following areas:

    a.   attrition and retention

    b.   graduation rates

    c.   licensure pass rates

    d.   job placement

    e.   employment advancement

    f.   transfer rates

    g.   graduate survey results

    h.   report of student performance of program outcomes

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Documentation of the program outcomes and how the outcomes are being assessed and used to improve the program. Outcomes must be listed on the institutions program website.*

- *Other information provided to the public may include but is not limited to job placement rates, graduation rates for the program, pass rates of professional certification exams, and average starting salaries of jobs related to the program.*
- *The information must be made publically available such as posting on the program website, college catalogs, local/regional newspapers, trade journals or publications.*
- *Two web links are required listing both a program outcomes assessment process and areas of student achievement.*
- *Website links are to lead directly to the accredited program's website or landing page; a link to general information or to an institutional website is not acceptable.*
- *For active program links for all IFSAC-DA-accredited programs shall be separated out by each respective credential (e.g., AAS, BS) as well as by program area (e.g., Emergency Services, Emergency Management).*
- *Suggestions for student outcomes data that might be used include: attrition and retention, graduation, licensure pass rates (as applicable), job placement (as appropriate), employment advancement (as appropriate), acceptance into graduate programs, successful transfer of credit, or other reliable information.*

G23.5.7 AWARDING CREDIT FOR PRIOR LEARNING OR EXPERIENCE OR TRANSFER CREDIT

(a) The quality and outcomes of experiential learning, when considered for credit, shall be verified.

(b) Credit for prior learning or experience shall be related to the degree being sought.

(c) The degree-granting entity and program shall have a policy and procedure to evaluate transfer credits, credit for prior learning, and experiential learning.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Policy or procedure documenting the process*

G23.5.8 COOPERATIVE EDUCATION/INTERNSHIP

(a) If the opportunity for experiential learning exists, the faculty shall implement a mechanism for planning, supervising, and evaluating cooperative education.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Policy or procedure documenting how cooperative learning experiences will be supervised and evaluated.*

G23.5.9 CONTINUATION OF FORMAL EDUCATION

(a) The curriculum shall be designed to provide maximum opportunity for students to continue their formal education with a minimum loss of time and duplication of learning experiences.

(b) Institutions with degree programs at the 2-year level should establish articulation agreements with 4-year baccalaureate level degree programs to provide for maximum transfer of related course work.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *State transfer agreements*
- *Transfer agreements with other universities*

G23.5.10 MANAGEMENT OF EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

(a) Policy and procedures, consistent with requirements of statute or regulation and recognized standards, shall exist to manage emergency situations.

(b) Faculty shall be trained and prepared to manage emergency situations arising in the laboratory and at other training sites.

(c) Emergency equipment shall be readily accessible and functional.

(d) Students that will be onsite shall be trained in emergency procedures.

(e) Students shall be advised of dangers associated with psychomotor skill development activities and physical demands, which will be placed upon them. (N/A for 100% online programs)

(f) All training for emergencies should be documented.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Policy and procedure relating to emergency situations*
- *Onsite verification of equipment and placement of equipment*
- *Onsite interviews with students and faculty*
- *Website information*

SECTION G23.6

The institution shall be able to continue to accomplish its stated purposes and strengthen its educational effectiveness.

G23.6.1 CONTINUATION OF THE STATED PURPOSE

G23.6.1.1 Planning

(a) Short and long range planning shall include input from the administration, faculty, and the program advisory committee.

(b) There shall be mechanisms for ongoing curriculum evaluation, revision, and implementation.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Documentation shall be available indicating that annual meetings are conducted for short and long range plans for the program. The meetings shall include program faculty and the advisory committee.*
- *The resulting plans shall be disseminated to all program faculty and advisory committee members.*
- *Meeting minutes shall be maintained for a period of at least five years; or as required by the institution or applicable laws.*

G23.6.1.2   Needs Assessment/Surveying

(a) Needs assessment should be a major component in changing curriculum.

    1. Should not be limited, but encourage innovation as needed for stakeholders.

    2. Provide evidence of ongoing attention to appropriate innovation.

(b) The institution should maintain surveys of graduates.

(c) The institution should maintain surveys of employability of students.

(d) Needs assessment should be a major component in establishing new programs or options.

Examples of supporting documentation:
- *Documentation shall be provided that shows a needs assessment is conducted on a routine basis (for example, once every two or three years) for the program and courses.*
- *Any changes to the program or course curriculum shall be accomplished by a needs assessment.*
- *The needs assessment may be conducted by the institution's research office, program faculty, and/or program advisory committee.*
- *Published documentation of graduation rates and employability of students will be available which present, analyse and evaluate data, gathered over periods of time sufficient to indicate trends, directions and change.*