



ATHEA Accreditation Report

on

International School of Management (ISM)

17 boulevard Raspail

75007 Paris

France

www.ism.edu

November 18th, 2020

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Executive Summary

The International School of Management (ISM) is an international management school based legally in the USA and France with offices in New York City and Paris. They offer Master and Doctorate level degrees as well as joint programs with two French higher education institutions. ISM offers various study options for students to complete their degree requirements including in-person courses in Paris, online courses, and short-duration in-person courses at several other locations around the world.

ISM was granted ATHEA Candidacy Status by the Board of Commissioners on November 18, 2019. ISM subsequently applied for Institutional Accreditation and submitted the self-study and documents.

A site-visit team consisting of representatives from faculty, educational administration, student body, and international policy expertise conducted a virtual site-visit via Zoom on October 14 and 15, 2020.

The team virtually met with campus leadership, faculty, and students examined various supporting documentation, and sought clarification on relevant items from the self-study report. The team concluded that ISM is completely or mostly up to standard in the critical criteria and provided both recommendations for improvement and commendations for exemplary performance.

Upon the recommendation of the Board of Commissioners, ISM was granted Institutional Accreditation on November 18th, 2020.

Section I - Introduction and context

Section 1.1. Institutional background and context

International School of Management (ISM)

The International School of Management (ISM) established itself in Paris and New York as a pioneer in international executive education in the 1990s under the leadership of Professor Jack Forget, who led similar executive programs in Paris and San Francisco in the 1980s and early 1990s. The focus from the beginning was to offer global business education programs providing the opportunity to gain understanding of specific regions and allowing for flexibility suitable to working executives. The first ISM International Executive MBA (IEMBA) program officially began in 1998, and the institute quickly expanded its programs, international presence, and student body so that, by the start of the new millennium, ISM offered both master's and doctoral programs with the possibility of studying in several different countries. Over the years, ISM has offered programs in France, Spain, the United States, Japan, China, South Africa, Brazil, and India.

Since its foundation, ISM's student/alumni body has included over 1,250 people from over 130 different countries. ISM has established programs with accredited universities and private institutes of higher learning including Saint John's University and Baruch College in New York City, Donghua University and Fudan University in Shanghai, Amity University near New Delhi, the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University in South Africa, and HSM Educacao in Sao Paulo. ISM advertises that a focus on small class sizes in combination with the dedication of its staff and faculty make the student experience at ISM intimate, friendly, and highly interactive wherever courses take place.

ISM has also been partnering for several years with the Institut Supérieur de Gestion (ISG) and the Institut Supérieur Européen de Gestion (ISEG) to offer joint MBA programs. Students in these joint MBA programs are recruited by ISG and/or ISEG. Courses take place both at ISG and/or ISEG facilities in Paris, and in New York with partner schools such as Baruch College and/or St. John's University. ISM designs and oversees course curriculum and content for these programs and is also in charge of the instruction.

Section 1.2. Accreditation Self-Study

The Accreditation Self-Study was provided by:

Dr. Matthew Andrews - Self-Study Coordinator and Director of Academic Affairs

Section 1.3. Members of the site-visit team

Site-Visit Chair - Oliver Olson (MSM Maastricht School of Management)

Site-Visit Faculty Member - Oliver Olson (MSM Maastricht School of Management)

Site-Visit Student - Mr. Marvin Erfurth - (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster)

Site-Visit International Expert - Dr. Nitesh Sughnani (Knowledge and Human Development Authority, Dubai Government)

Site-Visit Administrator - Dr. Gunther Singer (Former Dean; ATHEA Executive Director)

Section 1.4. The site-visit - ISM Participants

Site-visit: October 14-15, 2020

Matthew Andrews (Site Visit Coordinator / Director of Academic Affairs) Cesar Baena (Dean & Dir. of Doctoral Research)

Ivonne Chirino-Klevans (Core Faculty, Outcomes Assessment Committee Chair)

Mike Kiely (admissions officer)

Alison Knight (Executive Director)

Maurice Forget (Chair of the Board of Directors)

Aida Maya (Office Coordinator)

Joel Saltsman (Vice Chair)

Clint Turner (Financial Director)

Karla Watson (Digital Marketing Manager)

Student Committee

Herb Chain (DBA student)

Merit Al-Sayed (PhD student)

Julian Kunz (IMBA student)

Students (MBA, DBA, PhD)

Faculty Members

Section II - Assessment of each standard

Introduction

This section is limited to a summary of the findings from the site-visitor's report. See Section III for the recommendations and commendations made by the Board of Commissioners.

Standard 1 - Policy for Quality Assurance

The institution has a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of the institution's strategic management. Internal stakeholders develop and implement this strategy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders. This strategy should be included in the institution's strategic planning process. All transnational activities of the institution including joint programmes, partnership arrangements, branch campuses, etc. should also be included within the strategy for quality assurance.

Background information and analysis

As a guiding principle, all of ISM's degree programs are subject to the standards set by various international accrediting bodies such as the International Accreditation Council for Business Education (IACBE) and The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP).

ISM has degree granting authority from France and from the state of Delaware in the USA. However, the latter has—reportedly—not yet been highlighted. Nonetheless, both entities grant authority for MBA, DBA and PhD degree issuance.

On a national level, all degree programs (MBA, DBA and PhD) offered at ISM's main campus in Paris, France, do not carry French accreditation, but are authorized by France to 'deliver Institutional Diplomas'¹. ISM has robust internal quality assurance processes and regularly monitors, revises, and implements programmatic learning outcomes. Two standing committees, the Academic Committee and the Outcomes Assessment Committee, which are run by teaching and research faculty, regularly review the goals, measurement tools, and results of ISM's quality assurance processes.

ISM's Quality Assurance Policy complies with the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area and its implementation covers both the institutional and the programmatic level.

Recommendations

ATHEA recommends that ISM should consider designating a staff member or department with independent authority and oversight specifically for monitoring and implementation of the QA policies.

¹ The French Ministry of Education has no national accreditation schemes for part-time executive programs.

Standard 2 - Design and Approval of Academic Programmes

The institution has processes for the design and approval of their academic programmes. The programmes are designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme is clearly specified and communicated and referred to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Background information and analysis

ISM's Academic Committee sets the overall academic direction for the institute. The Academic Committee consists of three to five members of ISM's stakeholder groups including faculty and members of the academic/administrative personnel. The Outcomes Assessment Committee, the Academic Committee, and the Committee for Doctoral Studies are most directly involved in developing programmatic and intended learning outcomes.

The Academic Committee reviews all aspects of the degree program curricula to ensure that the learning objectives and goals of each program are achieved and that they are consistent with the mission statement of the school, as well as with the five-year strategic plan.

Feedback from ISM stakeholders is analyzed by standing committees such as the Academic Committee, the Committee for Doctoral Studies, or the Strategic Management Committee. Feedback may come from the curriculum survey, exit surveys, alumni surveys, and/or meetings with student representatives.

Recommendations

ATHEA recommends that ISM develops a process for systematic curricular review of all programs as part of the quality assurance system.

ATHEA recommends that ISM diversifies operational responsibilities as these are currently heavily reliant on the Director of Academic Affairs. This is intended to mitigate potential operational risk in the case of any personal or unforeseen events and/or changes.

Standard 3 - Student-Centred Learning, Teaching, and Assessment

The institution's academic programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process and the assessment of student learning reflects this approach.

Background information and analysis

ISM has developed different modes of learning to adapt to different needs which are all primarily geared towards working adults. There are intensive all-day, face-to-face courses which make use of the online learning management system as a support platform. In addition, ISM offers e-learning courses which are 100% online.

Staff are trained to adopt a student-centered approach in their interactions with ISM students. Feedback from students and alumni regularly affirms the students' appreciation for ISM's reactive, flexible, and helpful staff members.

Students in all of ISM's programs have a significant number of choices in their courses and flexibility regarding how they progress through the requirements.

Faculty teaching is monitored thanks to a mix of continuous student feedback, student success in courses, and student learning outcomes. Student feedback is expressed both informally and formally.

ISM is not an exam-based institution; the preference in its assessment strategy is for critical-thinking, written and/or oral expression, original research, and soft skills.

Course evaluation scores completed by students are taken into consideration in how faculty are evaluated annually

Recommendations

Students should be stronger involved in the existing boards/committees (e.g. representation on existing boards).

Standard 4 - Student Admission, Progression, Recognition, and Certification

The institution consistently applies pre-defined and published regulations and policies covering all phases of the student "life cycle" including student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.

Background information and analysis

Admission guidelines for each of the programs are published in both the print and digital brochures as well as on the website. There is a careful and selective admissions process at ISM to make sure that students who enroll in the program are motivated and capable of succeeding. Every candidate has an initial interview with an admissions officer and then a full interview with a member of the academic staff and/or faculty. Past academic performance as well as professional accomplishments are assessed along with the candidates' written and oral expression.

Throughout the student lifecycle, students have regular contact with key administrative and academic staff to monitor their progress. The student lifecycle is presented in the student handbook. Moreover, all students in all programs have individual advising/coaching sessions with a member of the academic staff before they start their Case Analysis 2 exercise. Finally, IMBA students' progress is assessed before they start their final projects, and doctoral students' progress is similarly assessed before they begin the process of dissertation topic approval. A graduation audit takes place before program requirements are validated as final, which denotes eligibility for the diploma.

Students who fall behind or struggle, as identified by the Academic Review Board, may be assigned a mentor and/or provided academic advising.

As an institute which caters primarily to full-time working adult professionals, ISM has limited interactions with students outside of their academic activities. ISM cultivates long-lasting relationships with alumni by offering a Lifelong Learners Program allowing alumni to audit a certain number of courses per year at any location where courses are offered free of charge

Commendations

ATHEA notes the progress in terms of improvements in progression and completion rates and encourages ISM to continue working towards strengthening this objective

Standard 5 - Teaching Staff

The institution ensures that its teachers, are appropriately qualified and competent to teach the assigned courses. The institution applies fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the teaching staff. The institution performs research appropriate to the institution's mission.

Background information and analysis

When faculty positions open, the Recruitment Committee members meet to discuss recruitment methods including reaching out to existing contacts and faculty for referrals and advertising online to widen the search. An evaluation rubric is used during the formal interview; candidates are scored according to relevant areas such as their qualifications, scholarly activities, teaching experience, other academic experience, professional experience, and experience teaching small, diverse groups of adults in intensive seminar formats. Faculty must have terminal degrees and areas of expertise which correspond to the courses they teach. This applies to all ISM's programs and to study options in all locations. One finding of the site-visit is that ISM's faculty is characterized by having particularly strong, above-expectations academic and professional backgrounds.

New instructors are assigned faculty mentors who help them get acquainted with the institution's culture and teaching expectations. Basic faculty development such as training on the ISM learning platform, training for the Turnitin antiplagiarism software, and assistance using the Zoom virtual meeting/lecture platform and other teaching technology is made available to all faculty.

Core faculty are expected to contribute to ISM through scholarly and professional activities. Moreover, evidence of these activities is part of how core faculty are evaluated annually. The annual evaluation of core faculty is also an opportunity for faculty to express feedback about their experience with ISM, as well as to make suggestions for improvement and faculty development.

ISM's scholarly expectations of its faculty are overseen jointly by the Dean and Director of Doctoral Research, and by the Director of Academic Affairs.

The ISM Journal of International Business was first launched in 2010. The journal, which is multidisciplinary in scope, content, and methodology, aims to have a lasting impact on organizations and society. The primary contributors are ISM faculty and alumni.

Actions required

The currently allocated 20 individual supervision hours for Doctoral students are significantly below common international standards. ISM is required to bring this in line with an appropriate international standard in the context of their support model for doctoral students (group supervision, courses, etc.)

Recommendations

ATHEA recommends that ISM ensures that there is sufficient teaching capacity to provide students with sufficient supervisory support for DBA and PhD students.

Standard 6 - Learning Resources and Student Support

The institution has appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and provides adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support.

Background information and analysis

ISM is a privately funded institute with two primary income streams: student tuition and educational service provision through partnerships with other institutions.

ISM has a full-time Financial Director who has weekly budget and cash flow meetings and projections with the Executive Director. These projections are then reviewed at the annual meeting of the Board of Directors. Balance sheets and profit and loss statements can be consulted onsite. ISM also employs the services of an external auditing firm.

Current financial, physical, learning, and technological resources are adequate to support the portfolio in business education and research.

ISM's learning management platform (MyISM) is custom designed for ISM stakeholders. This platform is used for every course taught at ISM whether in Paris, at another location, or online. E-learning courses build on the learning management platform functions for a more complete online experience by making use of other tools such as discussion forums and Zoom meetings for live and/or recorded lectures and discussions.

An electronic library provides ISM students with 24/7 access to EBSCO's Business Source Complete research database, as well as links to academic e-journals and e-books through our EBSCO subscription. ISM students based in Paris, France, are eligible to apply for membership to the American Library in Paris, and all applicable fees are paid by the school. All students, studying online or in-person, can approach ISM's librarian for assistance.

Recommendations

ATHEA recommends the provision of access to a broader range of electronic databases (such as JSTOR, among others) and resources, in particular because ISM has a large group of doctoral students.

ATHEA recommends that access is offered to additional research-specific software (specifically data analysis software; qualitative and quantitative; SPSS, MAXQDA, Stata, etc.)

Commendations

The e-learning system is supporting the teaching and learning activities in an efficient way.

Standard 7 - Information Management

The institution collects, analyses, and uses relevant information for the effective management of their academic programmes and other institutional activities with appropriate policies and procedures to facilitate clear communication with all stakeholders.

Background information and analysis

ISM collects data in various ways depending on the end goal. For data collection regarding the French higher education authority's annual reports, and/or for data regarding ISM's diversity and inclusion efforts, CSV templates have been built into the internal database in order to rapidly capture and download the reports. For more specific goals like graduation or enrolment figures for example, the database has filter options that can help facilitate these searches. ISM collects data related to student satisfaction in the form of curriculum surveys, exit surveys, and course evaluations.

The internal database tracks student progress from admission through to graduation. Dropout rates can be assessed using this system. Filters allow for records to be searched by status like active student, graduate, or drop out. Records of academic advising are stored on the internal database and the student's academic record is also accessible.

ISM uses a variety of tools to track stakeholder satisfaction and many of these tools are used in the institute's Quality Assurance Plan and Quality Assurance Report. Students complete evaluations of every individual course they take at ISM at any study location, including online courses. The scores for these evaluations are compiled and published online:

<http://www.ism.edu/Outcomes-Assessment-Measures/student-evaluations-of-seminars.html>.

The public ISM website (www.ism.edu) is a resource for all stakeholders and includes pages targeting specific stakeholder groups (e.g. application procedures and program information for potential candidates; learning outcomes information for the public, and for accrediting bodies).

Information about the career progress of alumni is published on the ISM public website at <https://www.ism.edu/programs/outcomes-assessment-measures.html#employment-advancement-of-alumni>.

Recommendations

None

Standard 8 - Public Information

The institution publishes information about its activities, including academic programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date, and readily accessible. The institution also publishes information regarding its ethical standards and conduct, community engagement activities, and social responsibilities.

Background information and analysis'

ISM publishes clear and specific information concerning the institution's programs on its website, including the intended learning outcomes and the qualifications awarded. Students can also access information about learning outcomes and graduate employment information on ISM's public website.

Stakeholder participation in conferences, publications, and the industry help to share ISM's vision and dedication to excellence. ISM also publishes a yearly academic journal (<https://www.ism.edu/research/the-ism-journal-of-international-business.html>), the ISM Journal of International Business, which extends industry research in topics relevant to ISM's mission and values.

Ethical codes of conduct guidelines are published in the Faculty Handbook, the Student Handbook, the Course Syllabi and the Employee Handbook.

ISM produces two annual newsletters to keep its community informed of new happenings and also to share professional achievements of its students, alumni, and faculty. In addition, ISM publishes an academic journal of peer-reviewed articles written by thought leaders in the community. Finally, this year, the Diversity and Inclusion Working Group published ISM's first online magazine on the theme of diversity and inclusion with narrative articles written by staff, faculty, students, and alumni.

Recommendations

ATHEA recommends that for better transparency ISM improves on information for students on the national legal status and the recognition of the degrees being offered.

ATHEA notes the extensive range of international partnerships offered by ISM and would advise that the institution provides more detailed information on their website to enable students to benefit from these opportunities (2-week programs in particular).

ATHEA recommends that for the MBA program ISM provide more detailed information regarding the degree requirements on their website.

ATHEA recommends that memberships on website banners or other communication or locations (such as Brochures) not be given equal status with Accreditations, especially memberships with accreditation bodies such AACSB.

Standard 9 - Ongoing Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programmes

The institution monitors and periodically reviews their programmes to ensure that the programmes achieve the objectives set for them and are responsive to the needs of students and society. Periodic reviews lead to continuous improvement of the academic programme. Actions planned or taken because of the periodic reviews are communicated to all those concerned. A periodic review is also completed on the comprehensive quality assurance plan.

Background information and analysis

ISM has a Quality Assurance Policy in place with a comprehensive process of review and improvement involving the Board of Directors, Executive Leadership Team, Academic Standing Committees (per program), Diversity & Inclusion Committee, Alumni Committee and Strategic Management Committee. In addition, academic review boards meet annually to evaluate student academic performance.

Learning outcomes are assessed regularly by the Outcomes Assessment Committee. This committee also discusses the effectiveness of procedures for the assessment of students, especially as the assessments pertain to the effective measurement of learning outcomes. The Committee for Doctoral studies evaluates the effectiveness for assessment of doctoral students.

Student feedback is monitored formally through course evaluations, curriculum surveys and exit surveys. In addition, there is a Student Committee with members drawn from each program. Students are encouraged to communicate issues and problems to this committee.

Recommendations

None

Standard 10 - Cyclical External Quality Assurance

The institution undergoes external quality assurance in accordance with ATHEA Standards on a cyclical basis.

Background information and analysis

ISM's academic headquarters are in France where the institute is registered as a private establishment of higher learning ("établissement d'enseignement supérieur privé") under the authority of the Paris Rectorate and the Ministry of Education (Appendix 1). ISM is also registered as a training institute ("association de formation") in Paris (Ile de France) under the authority of the local training and labor entity (DIRECCTE). ISM's status as an institution in the French higher education system requires annual reporting to the ministry of education about the institute's programs, policies, processes, governance, enrolment, graduation, and teaching staff.

ISM's authority from the State of Delaware in the US to issue degrees requires a periodic review process to maintain this status.

ISM's programs are accredited by the IACBE and the ACBSP. Both of these accrediting bodies, recognized by the Council for Higher Education (CHEA) in the US, require robust self-studies, site-visits and peer reviews to grant accreditation. IACBE accreditation was obtained in 2017; ACBSP accreditation was originally obtained in 2005, reaffirmed in 2008, and reaffirmed again in 2017.

ISM is listed in the World Higher Education Database as a USA institution operating outside the United States (IAU-024606). This list is extracted on a periodic basis from the database maintained by the International Association of Universities on higher education institutions and systems worldwide and includes higher education institutions offering at least a postgraduate diploma/degree.

Commendations

ATHEA commends ISM's commitments to external quality assurance as seen in their ACBSP and IACBE accreditations.

Section III: Summary of Actions Required, Recommendations and Commendations

Actions Required

Standard 5

The currently allocated 20 individual supervision hours for Doctoral students are significantly below common international standards. ISM is required to bring this in line with an appropriate international standard in the context of their support model for doctoral students (group supervision, courses, etc.)

Recommendations

ATHEA recommends that ISM should consider designating a staff member or department with independent authority and oversight specifically for monitoring and implementation of the QA policies.

ATHEA recommends that ISM develops a process for systematic curricular review of all programs as part of the quality assurance systems.

ATHEA recommends that ISM diversifies operational responsibilities as these are currently heavily reliant on the Director of Academic Affairs. This is intended to mitigate potential operational risk in the case of any personal or unforeseen events and/or changes.

Students should be stronger involved in the existing boards/committees (e.g. representation on existing board).

ATHEA notes the progress in terms of improvements in progression and completion rates and encourages ISM to continue working towards strengthening this objective.

ATHEA recommends that ISM ensures that there is sufficient teaching capacity to provide students with sufficient supervisory support for DBA and PhD students. The currently allocated 20 supervision hours are below common international standards.

ATHEA recommends the provision of access to a broader range of electronic databases (such as JSTOR, among others) and resources, in particular because ISM has a large group of doctoral students

ATHEA recommends that access is offered to additional research-specific software (specifically data analysis software; qualitative and quantitative; SPSS, MAXQDA, Stata, etc.)

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ATHEA recommends that memberships on website banners or other communication or locations (such as Brochures) not be given equal status with Accreditations, especially memberships with accreditation bodies such AACSB.

Commendations

ATHEA notes the progress in terms of improvements in progression and completion rates and would encourage ISM to continue working towards strengthening this objective.

ATHEA commends ISM's commitments to external quality assurance as seen in their ACBSP and IACBE accreditations.

The e-learning system is supporting the teaching and learning activities in an efficient way.

The faculty is experienced, committed and diversified.

ISM has a strong leadership team managing the core functions of the institution.

There is a general satisfaction among students who view the institution as high quality and offering a premium service.

ISM has strong programmatic policies and procedures to ensure quality and consistent delivery of the curriculum.

ISM has an excellent documentation and report system.

Section IV: Accreditation

International School of Management was found "Substantially Compliant" in all 10 Standards of Accreditation.

Upon the recommendation of the Board of Commissioners, ISM was granted Institutional Accreditation on November 18, 2020

Section V: Validity of the accreditation

The accreditation is valid until November 17, 2027 based on the condition that the institution continues to fulfil the accreditation requirements.

Section VI: Publication requirement

This report will be published at ATHEA's and ISM's webpages.

The current accreditation status of the institution will be listed at ATHEA's webpage.

Publisher

This report is published by



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