



# The Role of Accreditation in Driving Quality Improvement in Higher Education

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## ABSTRACT

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Accreditation, Higher Education, Quality Assurance, Internal Quality Assurance System

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This study aims to explore the comprehensive process and stages of accreditation in higher education institutions, particularly focusing on the role of accreditation as an external quality assurance mechanism. The research also examines the strategies used to enhance the quality of education through institutional accreditation. This paper employs a qualitative approach, utilizing a literature review and document analysis to explore the accreditation process. The study systematically analyzes the stages of preparation, including strengthening the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI), digital data management, improving the performance of the tri dharma of higher education, and involving the entire academic community in fostering a quality culture. The findings indicate that accreditation serves not only as an institutional feasibility assessment tool but also as a strategic means to drive continuous improvement. It supports governance enhancement, capacity building for human resources, and the development of the tri dharma. The stages of accreditation, from self-evaluation to field assessments and accreditation ranking determination, are critical to institutional progress. This research highlights the importance of accreditation in strengthening higher education institutions' competitiveness, improving academic reputation, and ensuring the delivery of high-quality education that is adaptive to evolving global trends.

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## INTRODUCTION

Accreditation in higher education is essential for maintaining educational standards and ensuring the quality of learning provided by institutions (Amaral & Norcini, 2023; Khomairotusshiyamah, 2025; Mussawy & Rossman, 2021). As global competition in education intensifies, universities are required to adhere to quality standards set by national bodies such as the Indonesian National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT) (Salamah et al., 2022). Accreditation serves

as a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of educational delivery, focusing on institutional capacity and academic outcomes (Fernandes & Singh, 2022; Frank et al., 2020). In this context, accreditation becomes not only an external evaluation but also a strategic tool for institutions to align with global standards, ensuring their competitiveness (Acevedo-De-los-Ríos & Rondinel-Oviedo, 2022; Jasti et al., 2022; Nugraha et al., 2021). Evidence from various international studies shows that accredited institutions tend to attract more students, improve their reputation, and foster better academic performance. Therefore, this research is crucial for understanding how accreditation processes impact institutional development and quality improvement, ultimately enhancing higher education's contribution to societal advancement.

Higher education institutions in Indonesia face numerous challenges in maintaining and improving the quality of their educational services. A significant issue is the inadequate implementation of accreditation processes, which often results in institutions struggling to meet the required standards. Many universities lack a robust internal quality assurance system and face challenges in managing data, implementing effective governance practices, and adapting to the demands of global competition. These obstacles hinder their ability to secure high accreditation ratings, which impacts their academic reputation and ability to attract international partnerships (Amaral & Norcini, 2023; Hoare & Goad, 2022). Thus, understanding the preparation and evaluation processes of accreditation is vital for overcoming these challenges, ensuring that Indonesian universities remain competitive and aligned with global standards.

In practice, many Indonesian higher education institutions experience difficulties when it comes to accreditation preparation and the subsequent assessment processes (Mohamed & Yusoff, 2021; Wahyudi, 2020). For example, institutions often face challenges in preparing the required accreditation documents and ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned in their understanding of the accreditation criteria. Moreover, the lack of efficient digital systems for data management and internal quality assurance often causes delays and miscommunication, impacting the final accreditation results. In some cases, universities also struggle with the involvement of academic staff and management in fostering a culture of continuous improvement, which is critical for sustaining high-quality education. These phenomena highlight the need for a more structured approach to accreditation preparation and a deeper understanding of the process as a means to enhance overall institutional quality.

Previous research has explored various aspects of accreditation in higher education, focusing on its role in improving institutional quality and competitiveness. Studies by Aristya and Mahmud (2023) have emphasized the challenges faced by universities in the context of the Society 5.0 era, where technological advancements demand a new approach to accreditation and quality assurance. Similarly, Rahelli et al. (2025) have explored the role of internal quality assurance in the accreditation process and its direct impact on the institutional quality of higher education. While these studies provide valuable insights, there remains a gap in understanding the comprehensive process of accreditation preparation, including the role of digital data management, stakeholder involvement, and the integration of the tri dharma of higher education. The research thus far has been limited in addressing how these factors contribute to the accreditation outcome.

Moreover, much of the existing literature has focused on the theoretical aspects of accreditation, without sufficiently addressing the practical challenges faced by universities during the actual accreditation process. This research gap is significant, as it prevents a deeper understanding of the on-ground implementation of accreditation practices in Indonesian higher education institutions. Many studies have not fully explored the strategic role of accreditation as a tool for long-term improvement and institutional competitiveness. Therefore, this research seeks to fill the gap by providing a detailed analysis of the stages of accreditation preparation and how these processes contribute to sustainable institutional quality improvement. The practical insights gained from this study will help universities refine their accreditation strategies and address the challenges identified in previous research.

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive approach to the accreditation process, focusing not only on the theoretical framework but also on the practical steps required for successful accreditation in Indonesian higher education institutions. This research goes beyond the traditional understanding of accreditation as a mere administrative task and positions it as a strategic tool for institutional development and long-term quality improvement. Furthermore, this study introduces an analysis of how digital systems and internal quality assurance mechanisms can enhance the accreditation process, making it more efficient and effective. By examining the role of these modern tools in the accreditation process, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on the evolution of accreditation in the digital era. The importance of this research lies

in its ability to provide actionable insights that can directly impact the quality of higher education in Indonesia.

The primary research problem addressed by this study is how Indonesian higher education institutions can better prepare for and navigate the accreditation process to enhance their quality and competitiveness. This research will examine the stages of accreditation, including self-assessment, documentation preparation, and external evaluation, with a focus on identifying the challenges and opportunities for improvement. The argument proposed is that accreditation should be viewed not only as a requirement but as a strategic opportunity for universities to strengthen their internal governance, enhance their quality assurance systems, and improve their overall academic standing. By addressing these issues, this research will contribute to a better understanding of the accreditation process and provide universities with practical guidance to enhance their performance and reputation in the global higher education landscape.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research design, chosen for its suitability in exploring complex concepts, procedures, and policies related to accreditation in higher education. The focus of this research is on understanding the accreditation process, particularly the mechanisms and standards set by the Indonesian National Accreditation Board for Higher Education (BAN-PT) and the Independent Accreditation Agencies (LAM). A qualitative approach allows for an in-depth examination of the accreditation framework, its procedural steps, and its impact on institutional quality improvement. By adopting this design, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how accreditation serves as a tool for enhancing educational quality in Indonesian higher education institutions.

Data for this study were gathered through library research, involving a systematic review of relevant written sources. These include academic books, scholarly journals, research articles, and previous studies that discuss quality management in higher education, Internal Quality Assurance Systems (SPMI), and accreditation processes. Official documents such as the Accreditation Forms (Borang) and BAN-PT evaluation instruments were also analyzed to understand the assessment criteria and indicators in place. The collection of secondary data from these sources ensures a well-rounded understanding of the accreditation process and its role in quality enhancement.

The data collected were analyzed using content analysis, a technique that

allows for the identification of themes and patterns within the literature. This method involves organizing and interpreting the data by grouping it into relevant categories based on key issues related to accreditation. The content analysis approach also facilitates the interpretation of findings in the context of the accreditation practices in higher education. The focus of the analysis is on understanding the necessary preparations for accreditation, the formal accreditation procedures according to BAN-PT, and the role of accreditation in driving continuous quality improvement within institutions.

This library research methodology is conceptual and descriptive, providing a thorough and detailed understanding of the accreditation process in higher education. By analyzing existing literature and official documents, the study offers insights into the steps involved in accreditation, the challenges faced by institutions, and the potential for accreditation to drive sustained improvements in educational quality. The research contributes to the broader academic discourse on higher education accreditation, offering practical knowledge for policymakers and university administrators seeking to strengthen their institutions' quality assurance systems.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Preparation for Accreditation in Higher Education Institutions**

The preparation for accreditation in higher education institutions is a critical stage that requires a systematic and well-planned approach. This phase is not merely a routine administrative task but an opportunity for institutions to assess and reflect on their educational quality and institutional commitments (Najiburrahman et al., 2025; Zamroni et al., 2025). The preparation process involves collecting and organizing data related to key areas such as the institution's mission and vision, governance, curriculum, faculty, students, research, community service, infrastructure, and internal quality assurance systems. Ensuring the active involvement of all members of the academic community—from leadership to faculty, staff, and students—is essential to creating synergy in preparing accreditation documents and presenting relevant evidence. A well-prepared institution does not only aim to achieve a favorable accreditation rank but uses the process as a strategic moment for institutional reflection, identifying weaknesses, enhancing service quality, and strengthening its competitiveness both nationally and internationally.

Moreover, the preparation process involves strengthening the Internal Quality Assurance System (SPMI) through academic and non-academic quality audits. These audits are crucial in ensuring that all educational processes comply with established standards. Academic audits focus on curriculum, teaching and

learning, research, and community service, while non-academic audits evaluate administrative management, student services, facilities, and institutional governance. These audits provide a clear picture of the institution's current performance, helping to identify areas for improvement. By addressing the gaps found through these audits, universities can ensure that they meet the standards required for accreditation and further refine their processes for sustainable quality enhancement.

The management of data and information, especially through digital technologies, plays a vital role in accreditation preparation (Ugrekheldze, 2024; Martinelli, 2024). Implementing an integrated information system to manage data related to faculty, students, curriculum, research, and facilities ensures accuracy and consistency in the reports submitted to accrediting bodies. This not only streamlines the process of data collection and verification but also reduces errors and inconsistencies that might occur due to manual data handling. Additionally, leveraging digital tools promotes transparency and accountability, as all relevant data can be accessed and verified in real time, ensuring the reliability of the information presented during the accreditation process. By integrating technology into the preparation process, institutions can build a strong foundation for continuous improvement and create a culture of quality that is responsive to the evolving demands of higher education.

Finally, the active involvement of the academic community is essential for fostering a culture of quality. Accreditation is not just about meeting administrative requirements but also about embedding quality in the daily activities of the institution. Faculty members play a significant role in enhancing the quality of teaching, research, and community service. Students contribute through academic and non-academic achievements, while administrative staff ensure that services are delivered efficiently and professionally. Alumni and stakeholders provide valuable feedback on how well the institution's graduates meet the demands of the job market. This holistic involvement creates a sustainable ecosystem of quality, ensuring that the institution is not only ready for accreditation but also capable of maintaining and improving its educational standards over time.

### **The Accreditation Process in Higher Education Institutions**

The accreditation process for higher education institutions involves a series of evaluations conducted by accreditation bodies such as BAN-PT (Indonesian National Accreditation Board for Higher Education) or LAM (Independent Accreditation Agencies) (Azizah, 2025). The process aims to measure the quality, relevance, and performance of the institution, with the goal of ensuring that the institution is meeting established standards of education.

One of the first steps in this process is the preparation of a self-assessment report, which reflects the real conditions of the institution in relation to the accreditation standards. This self-assessment is followed by the submission of documents via the online accreditation system (SAPTO) and, ultimately, a site visit by an accreditation team to verify the institution's compliance with quality standards.

The preparation of the self-assessment report is crucial as it provides the foundation for the entire accreditation process (Chasokela, D., & Manokore, K. (2025). This report is a comprehensive document that covers various aspects of the institution, including its mission, governance, human resources, curriculum, teaching and learning processes, research, community service, and infrastructure. The self-assessment process is not merely an exercise to fulfill administrative requirements but also serves as an internal reflection tool for the institution. It allows the institution to assess its strengths and weaknesses, providing a basis for continuous improvement. The thoroughness and accuracy of this report are essential as they serve as the primary source of information for the accreditation team during the evaluation.

Once the self-assessment report is submitted through SAPTO, the next step is the Desk Evaluation, in which the accreditation team evaluates the submitted documents for their completeness, consistency, and alignment with the accreditation standards. This evaluation phase involves a detailed review of the institution's performance across various domains. The desk evaluation helps to identify any gaps or inconsistencies in the submitted documentation, which may require clarification or further evidence. Based on this evaluation, the institution may either advance to the next phase of the process or be asked to provide additional documentation before proceeding to the on-site assessment. This stage ensures that the institution meets the necessary standards before the team visits the campus.

The site visit, or field assessment, is a crucial component of the accreditation process. During the site visit, the accreditation team verifies the information provided in the self-assessment report by directly observing the institution's operations and interacting with key stakeholders, including the leadership, faculty, staff, students, and alumni. This visit provides an opportunity for the team to assess the actual implementation of the institution's practices and to ensure that the reports submitted accurately reflect the institution's operations. It is also a platform for the team to discuss best practices, innovations, and areas for improvement with the institution's leadership. The site visit is not only a verification step but also a reflective moment for the institution to gain valuable feedback that can be used to further enhance its quality.

## **Accreditation as a Tool for Continuous Quality Improvement**

Serves as more than just a process for evaluating institutional eligibility; it is a strategic tool for fostering continuous quality improvement within higher education institutions (Aithal, 2023). By undergoing accreditation, institutions are compelled to reflect critically on their strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to implement improvements in governance, teaching, research, and community service. Accreditation provides institutions with a structured framework for assessing their performance and aligning it with national and international standards. The findings from the accreditation process enable institutions to create a roadmap for quality development, targeting both short-term and long-term goals. This continuous improvement model ensures that institutions remain competitive, adaptable, and relevant in an ever-evolving global education landscape.

One of the key outcomes of the accreditation process is the identification of areas for institutional development, such as enhancing governance practices, improving curriculum design, and strengthening faculty qualifications (Jafarov, 2024). By utilizing the feedback from accreditation evaluations, institutions can prioritize areas that require immediate attention while also setting long-term development goals. For example, accreditation results may highlight the need for better faculty development programs, which can be addressed by investing in training, certifications, and research opportunities for academic staff. Similarly, the accreditation process may identify gaps in research output or community engagement, prompting the institution to allocate resources towards strengthening these areas to enhance its academic reputation and societal impact.

Furthermore, accreditation plays a crucial role in shaping the institution's strategic direction, particularly in terms of internationalization. Achieving high accreditation ranks can enhance an institution's global standing, making it more attractive to prospective students, faculty, and international partners. Accreditation can also open doors for collaborative research projects, student exchanges, and joint degree programs with institutions worldwide. By positioning accreditation as a tool for internationalization, universities can expand their networks, improve their global competitiveness, and create a richer academic environment for their students and faculty. This international outlook aligns with the broader goals of higher education, which includes preparing students for the challenges of a globalized workforce.

Lastly, accreditation encourages the development of a quality culture within the institution. It instills a collective responsibility among all members of the academic community—from administrators to faculty, staff, and students—to continuously strive for excellence in all aspects of institutional life. Accreditation is no longer seen as a one-time administrative task but as an ongoing commitment to maintaining high standards of education, research, and service. This culture of quality ensures that the institution remains focused on its mission of providing high-quality education and making meaningful

contributions to society. Ultimately, accreditation becomes a powerful driver for institutional transformation, enabling higher education institutions to thrive in an increasingly competitive and complex global environment.

### **Results of Accreditation: Impact on Institutional Development**

The results of the accreditation process have significant implications for the development and growth of higher education institutions (Duarte & Vardasca, 2023). Achieving a high accreditation rating not only validates the institution's compliance with established standards but also serves as a catalyst for continued improvement and growth. A strong accreditation outcome enhances the institution's reputation, increasing its attractiveness to prospective students, faculty, and researchers. It also fosters greater confidence among stakeholders, including government bodies, industry partners, and the general public, that the institution is committed to maintaining high educational standards. This enhanced reputation can translate into increased funding opportunities, partnerships, and collaborations, further advancing the institution's mission and goals.

Furthermore, the results of the accreditation process provide institutions with a clear picture of their strengths and areas for improvement. This feedback is invaluable for the institution's leadership as they make decisions regarding strategic planning and resource allocation. Accreditation results often highlight areas such as faculty development, curriculum design, and administrative processes that require attention, enabling the institution to prioritize efforts that will yield the greatest impact on educational quality. By continuously addressing these areas of improvement, the institution can create a sustainable cycle of quality enhancement, ensuring that it remains competitive and responsive to the needs of students, faculty, and society.

Another important result of the accreditation process is the identification of institutional best practices and areas of excellence. These practices can be shared with other institutions to foster a broader culture of quality in higher education (Joshua, 2025). For example, an institution that excels in student support services, research output, or community engagement can serve as a model for other universities looking to enhance similar aspects of their operations. By disseminating best practices, accreditation helps to elevate the overall quality of the higher education sector, benefiting not only individual institutions but the broader academic community as well.

The results of the accreditation process are instrumental in shaping the future trajectory of higher education institutions. High accreditation ratings validate the institution's commitment to quality and provide a foundation for further development and growth. By using accreditation as a tool for continuous

improvement, institutions can enhance their educational offerings, strengthen their research capacity, and build stronger ties with the global academic community. The outcome of accreditation, therefore, is not merely a reflection of current quality but a strategic step towards ensuring long-term sustainability and excellence in higher education.

## CONCLUSION

The accreditation process for higher education institutions serves as a crucial mechanism for ensuring the quality, relevance, and performance of educational services. It is not merely an administrative procedure but a strategic tool for continuous improvement. By systematically preparing for accreditation through strengthening internal quality assurance systems, leveraging digital technologies for data management, and fostering active participation from all academic stakeholders, institutions can enhance their overall educational quality. Accreditation provides a comprehensive evaluation that identifies strengths and areas for improvement, which institutions can use to develop targeted strategies for long-term growth and competitiveness, both nationally and internationally.

Furthermore, the results of the accreditation process offer valuable insights into institutional performance, providing a clear roadmap for improvement and fostering a culture of quality. High accreditation outcomes strengthen an institution's reputation, enhance its global competitiveness, and ensure its alignment with national and international educational standards. Ultimately, accreditation is a vital tool for institutional reflection, accountability, and strategic development, enabling higher education institutions to maintain their relevance in a rapidly evolving global education landscape.

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