

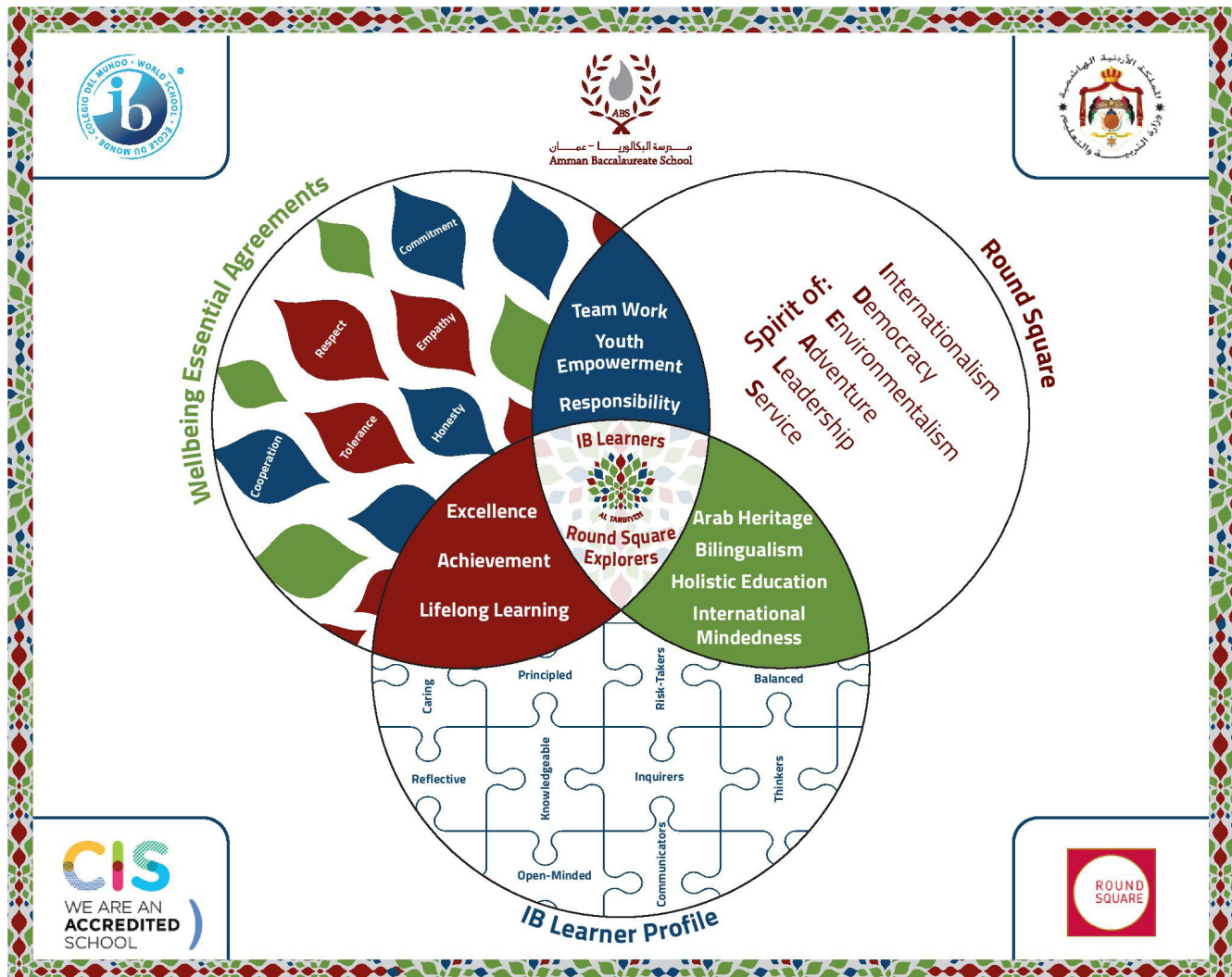
Accreditation, not another accreditation!

Stuart Bryan explains how his school utilised the accreditation and curriculum review process to ensure that student learning and wellbeing remain at the core of school life

Teachers and administrators (and students!) in schools offering international programmes are often subject to a bombardment of international accreditation standards and practices, resulting in some cases in almost one accreditation or evaluation visit per school year. In such instances, the inevitable temptation is to focus all energies on the impending visit and lose sight of the bigger picture of the

students' learning and their wellbeing – which is, of course, the ultimate aim of the accreditation process in the first place. At the Amman Bacculaureate School (ABS), as a four programme International Bacculaureate (IB) World Continuum School (Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme, Diploma Programme and Career-related Programme), as a pilot school for the World Academy of Sport Athlete Friendly

The Amman Bacculaureate School Experience



Education Centre accreditation, and as a pioneer for the implementation of the Round Square Discovery Framework – not to mention as the very first school in the world to embark on the revised and much more rigorous Council of International Schools (CIS) accreditation process – it was imperative that the school found a way to navigate the various, and on occasions conflicting, accreditation demands in the best interests of the students.

Through review of the Guiding Statements

Since all international accreditation and evaluation standards relate to the school's own Guiding Statements, otherwise known as Vision, Mission and the like, it was decided that the most appropriate, and indeed essential, starting point in the rationalisation process was to review the school's own statements of purpose and intent and to ensure that they were not only still valid, but also easily communicable and their degree of implementation and impact open to quantifiable evaluation. A full review of the ABS Guiding Statements was, therefore, conducted in March 2015, which involved a wide range of ABS stakeholders, and resulted in the creation and adoption of the *Al Tarbiyeh* acrostic (shown here), which immediately became the focus of a whole school initiative to ensure that the ABS Guiding Statements were fully embedded in all aspects of school life. Since ABS was one of the first IB bilingual Arabic and English schools in the world, it was deemed essential that this summation acrostic of the Guiding Statements reflect the core *raison d'être* of the school and provide a unique symbol of the special nature of the school, which is why the Arabic term meaning 'quality upbringing' was selected, but with the core aspirations of the school relating to the acrostic in English.

Through linking all aspects of an ABS education

Following the creation and adoption of such a powerful encapsulation of the purpose and intent of the school, it was now imperative to find a way to relate in a meaningful way *Al Tarbiyeh* to the various core accreditation standards that the school would be evaluated against in the many forthcoming evaluation self-assessments and visits. Thus, it was agreed to plot the various aspects of the *Al Tarbiyeh* acrostic against the IB Learner Profile, the School's Essential Agreements and the Round Square Discovery Framework attributes. For the first time, therefore, all ABS stakeholders – but especially students – were given a comprehensive visual image of what an ABS education really stood for, and the *ABS Educational Experience Model* was born (see previous page). The aim of this model was to ensure that all members of the community were fully *au fait* with how all the different facets of an ABS education linked together and, of course, how the different features of our education programmes were underpinned by our *Al Tarbiyeh* acrostic.

Through review of the Whole School Strategic Planning process

So, the school was now in a position where it had both the *Al Tarbiyeh* acrostic and the *ABS Educational Experience* model throughout the school in every corridor and in almost every classroom. How did the school know, though, that it was really using these documents to support student learning and wellbeing? In addition, although the *ABS Educational*



Arab Heritage

Lifelong Learning

Team Work

Achievement

Responsibility

Bilingualism

International Mindedness

Youth Empowerment

Excellence

Holistic Education

التراث العربيّ

التعلم مدى الحياة

العمل الجماعيّ

الإنجاز

المسؤوليّة

ثنائيّة اللّغة

الأفق الدّوليّ

تمكين الشّباب

الامتياز

التّعلّم الشّموليّ

Experience Model highlighted the links with the IB and the Round Square, how would the revised CIS International Accreditation protocol relate to all that the school was doing? The starting point, of course, was a full review of the ABS Strategic Planning process. The ABS Five-Year Strategic Plan had already been based upon the accreditation standards of the CIS Eighth Edition Accreditation protocol, and in May 2017, the whole plan was updated in light of the revised domains and standards of the new CIS International Accreditation protocol. This review enabled the ABS Strategic Plan objectives to be related not just to the reviewed appropriate CIS accreditation standards, but also now to the main features of the *ABS Educational Experience Model* which, of course, meant the IB and Round Square Learner Profile and Discovery Framework Attributes respectively.

Through review of Whole School Curriculum Planning

The school was now in a position where its Guiding Statements were visibly and accessibly displayed and its strategic plan was cogently related both to these and to the accreditation standards. But was this enough to ensure that student learning and wellbeing were really being impacted in a positive way? The next stage was to carry out a full audit

CIS International Accreditation 2016	Objectives (based on CIS Standards)	Major Actions	Persons Taking Action	Timeline	Resources Needed	Criteria for Completion / Success	Impact on furthering the school's guiding statements	ABS Experience Links			Status
								AT	RS	LP	
Standard A5 All school constituent groups are involved and engaged with the development and review of the Guiding Statements on a planned and regular basis.	A3) To carry out a full review of the School's Guiding Statements in light of the objectives identified in the new Strategic Plan in preparation for the CIS/NEASC Ten-Year Accreditation Visit. Principal Vice Principal (Arabic)	a) A committee consisting of all stakeholders examine the validity of the Guiding Statements by gathering the necessary data through all audit methodologies. b) Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the modified Guiding Statements through the formal process as per policy. c) To carry out a review of the Al Tarbiyeh acronym as per the CIS Preparatory recommendation.	Principal All members of the ABS Community	By June 2017	Meeting times.	Modified Guiding Statements document that is shared with all stakeholders. Findings and action plan are shared with all stakeholders.	"Develops well-rounded responsible world citizens".	Excellence	Self-Awareness	Reflective	Completed Full review of the Guiding Statements completed in March 2016 in advance of CIS Preparatory Visit. Al Tarbiyeh Review completed – June 2017

of whole school curriculum planning, as displayed on the school's Atlas Rubicon site, in order to ensure that all the key features of the *ABS Educational Experience Model* and the CIS revised accreditation standards were being fully integrated into curriculum mapping at all the different stages of the school's educational provision. An audit process tool was devised which included highlighting the appropriate IB Standard, the CIS accreditation link, the *Al Tarbiyeh link* and finally the Round Square Discovery Framework Attribute link. This provided an appropriate and readily available means of evaluating and quantifying the impact of the various accreditation standards through the curriculum mapping of the school.

Through review of Whole School Learning and Teaching

The school was now in a position where its Guiding Statements were visibly and accessibly displayed, its strategic plan was cogently related to both these and the accreditation standards, and the whole school curriculum mapping had been fully reviewed. Was this enough, though, to ensure that student learning and wellbeing were really being impacted in a positive way? The answer was, of course, no. It was decided that one further, but probably most important, stage was necessary to fully ensure that all the above aspects were really impacting student learning at ABS. On an annual basis, as part of its Self-Evaluation strategy, ABS has for many years carried out whole school Learning and Teaching audits. In March 2017, it was therefore decided to create a revised learning and teaching audit tool, which also incorporated all the IB, CIS and Round Square standards and attributes, as well as the essential *Al Tarbiyeh link*. So it was now possible for the school to evaluate its learning and teaching in the knowledge that it was gaining evidence on its degree of success in implementing not only its own Guiding Statements, but also its degree of alignment in terms of student learning with all the accreditation and evaluation standards of its membership organisations.

Through a Joint IB (Four Programme) / CIS Synchronised Evaluation Visit in September 2018

So the school was now just left with the final stage in the process – the accreditation/evaluation visit itself. As noted above, ABS had been selected as a pioneer school for the revised CIS International Accreditation protocol. Following a very successful Preparatory Visit, led by the CIS Director of School Support and Evaluation, ABS had become the very first school worldwide to undergo the full Team Evaluation stage. This, coupled with a Four Programme Five-Year IB Evaluation, meant that no fewer than 17 peer-evaluators, including the CIS Associate Director, reviewed all aspects of the school in relation to the school's self-study documents. It is not the remit of this retrospective to comment in depth on the outcomes of this visit, but in brief the school's preparations were judged as 'meticulous' and the ABS community was commended 'for creating an outstanding whole school climate and a highly positive learning community, which fully reflects the Guiding Statements'.

In conclusion, at the Amman Baccalaureate School the potential of accreditation overload was managed in such a way as to secure genuine school improvement in the interests of the learning and wellbeing of all its students. There was, nevertheless, an inevitable collective sigh of relief when it was all over, in the knowledge of a successful process completed, with a renewed focus on student learning and teaching ready for the next accreditation event in the continued cycle of school improvement. Oh – did I forget to mention the one year CIS Evaluation Report which is now due, the Five-Year Re-accreditation with the World Academy of Sport coming in September 2018, and the Five-Year Re-affirmation with the Round Square on the horizon?!

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