



FAQ on ASSP Board Decision to Dissolve the Council on Academic Affairs and Research

At its August 2022 meeting, ASSP's Board of Directors voted to sunset the Council on Academic Affairs and Research (COAAR) and its two committees (on research and educational standards). This document addresses some common questions about that decision.

Why did ASSP conduct a business review of the Council on Academic Affairs and Research?

- Since the launch of the Council on Academic Affairs and Research (COAAR), ASSP's Board of Directors had ongoing concerns linked to outcomes, required resources and program alignment across the Society.
- In early 2021, the Board of Directors established a task force to review COAAR aligned to ASSP's business planning process. The task force was responsible for considering strategic fit, outcomes needed, resources allocated and ability to achieve the goals as defined in ASSP's bylaws.
 - The business review was led by ASSP and then COAAR vice president Dr. Mike Behm, with Dr. Joel Haight as a board liaison. Other task force members included Linda Tapp, CSP, ALCM, CPTD, Vice President of Finance; Jennifer McNelly, CAE, CEO; and Tim Fisher, CSP, CHMM, CPEA, ARM, FASSP, Director of Standards Development and Technical Services. (Dr. Behm resigned from his position as council vice president before the study results were presented.)

Why was COAAR established?

The two primary focus areas for COAAR were identified as:

1. Define best-in-class education standards.
2. Foster and encourage high-caliber research addressing occupational safety and health with the intent of disseminating quality research, including original ASSP research.

The initial design also envisioned that COAAR would bridge across other councils, including the Council on Regional Affairs, to better link ASSP's work with students with the academic community.

What were the results of the review?

The review documented several key facts:

- ASSP spent \$591,000 annually to support education engagement.
 - \$270,000 was directed to administrative support, significantly more than the initial estimate of \$20,000 annually.
 - The balance for direct program support included scholarships, development grants.
 - The program support will continue as part of ASSP's annual operating plan.





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- Over the past three years, ASSP has invested more than \$2 million in our education-related support for educators, students, research and support for education standards under ABET.

Based on this review, the council was paused in June 2021 and in August 2022, following further review and discussion, the Board of Directors voted to sunset COAAR and its two associated committees, namely the Research Committee and the Education Standards Committee.

What additional factors informed the Board of Directors' decision to sunset COAAR and the associated committees?

Based on the business plan review it was determined:

- We did not clearly define outcomes when COAAR was established.
- We implemented a bureaucratic structure approach to support the focus, without considering the resulting impacts on cost, time and ability to deliver to the goals.
- The lack of clarity was the cause of consistent frustration among ASSP volunteers, members and staff.
- As noted, the resource allocations associated with COAAR were significantly more than initially projected.

Given the challenges and the ability to complete the related work in new ways, including ASSP's established task force process, it was determined the council and committees were not needed.

What will happen to the volunteer leaders serving on the councils and committees?

Being mindful of the business review process, the Board of Directors paused the work of the council and research committee in June 2021. As a result, no appointments were made in the 2022 volunteer recruitment cycle.

The board asked the Education Standards Committee to complete work underway with AIHA to review the shared ABET standards. That work is now complete and will not be reviewed again for five years.

What will happen to the Education Standards Committee?

The Education Standards Committee has completed the work requested by the Board.

In addition, they recommended to the board that ASSP develop a body of knowledge unique to ASSP. This concept has informed a workforce development project approved by the ASSP Foundation trustees in June 2022.

- This work will be supported by an outside consultant who will map the journey of the safety professional beyond just entering the career.
- We will establish a task force to engage a large range of stakeholders, including education leaders from ABET and non-ABET schools and employers.
- We will also ask members of the former committee to engage in this important work.





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- In addition, ASSP will establish an ABET task force that can be called on to support the ABET work ASSP staff and volunteers must complete (e.g., PEV-related tasks, ASSP representation on ABET's board).

How will this impact the pipeline of future OSH professionals?

Ensuring we have high-quality professionals is core to the mission of both ASSP and the ASSP Foundation.

However, data indicates that the career path of an OSH professional varies greatly.

- According to ASSP's research, approximately 40% of OSH professionals travel a traditional education pathway from K-12 to postsecondary education and beyond.
- 60% enter the OSH professional from a non-traditional path, coming into safety from other disciplines.

The challenge for companies, individuals, and education and training providers is to ensure all OSH professionals have the skills they need to succeed in the workplace, regardless of how they enter their OSH career, the industry or sector they support, or their individual role in an organization.

ASSP's focus for professional development is helping OSH professionals to learn, adapt, grow and lead in this dynamic and constantly changing work environment. This focus will help ensure we can support OSH professionals regardless of the education path taken.

With the council and committees eliminated, what happens to ASSP's leadership role in defining education standards with ABET and AIHA?

The Education Standards Committee had a primary role of addressing the academic accreditation standards via the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET) as the conformity assessment body.

Prior to 1995, ASSP had its own accreditation program managed and conducted by the Society. Starting in 1995, ASSE/ASSP addressed accreditation via ABET.

Based on ASSP data, between 175 and 200 college programs in the U.S. offer different level degrees in occupational safety and health or an OSH-related field. Currently, only 23 schools and a total of 26 OSH-related programs are accredited under ABET.

ASSP will continue to support ABET, and that work will be conducted via a task force when updates and review are required.

- ASSP will continue to lead in the development of ABET standards for safety under the Applied and Natural Science Accreditation Commission.
- ASSP will continue to partner with AIHA to develop ABET standards addressing environmental health and safety, also under the Applied and Natural Science Accreditation Commission.

Because of this commitment, ASSP will maintain its membership in ABET and will manage the engagement via ASSP's operating budget and staff assignments. This includes the identification and



development of program evaluators, who are assigned each year to assess academic programs seeking accreditation or reaccreditation.

When and how will ABET standards be reviewed?

Based on guidance from the Education Standards Committee, ASSP will review the ABET standards every five years.

To accomplish this review, ASSP will establish a task force to guide the process; their appointment will follow the Society's established appointment process. Task force members will be solicited from current and potential ABET programs of study as well as other stakeholder groups.

Is there another type of recognition that is more appealing to institutions with safety degree programs?

One recognition for academic programs has emerged in recent years: BCSP's GSP Qualified Academic Program (QAP). Presently, BCSP reports that more than 100 colleges and universities hold this recognition.

- Under BCSP guidelines, a GSP QAP is a bachelor's, masters or doctorate degree program in the OSH field whose required course curriculum has been reviewed by BCSP and been found to be a substantial match to the current associate safety professional (ASP®) examination blueprint.

The ASP is a designation approved by ASSP to represent professional membership when accompanied with 5 years of experience. This status demonstrates that ASSP has already affirmed the QAP minimum standards as a mark of a quality education program.

BCSP promotes these benefits to institutions that receive the QAP designation:

1. Graduates of a QAP school are eligible to apply for the graduate safety practitioner designation (GSP®), a BCSP-approved credential that meets the credential requirement for the certified safety professional (CSP®) once the individual meets the other requirements.
2. The GSP® is only available to graduates from degree programs that meet BCSP's QAP standards.
3. College and university faculty teaching at an institution with a QAP designation may qualify for a free ASP and CSP application and free exams.
4. QAPs are eligible for a gift of up to \$10,000 toward full accreditation or reaccreditation by ABET.

The ASP and CSP are both approved designations that qualify someone for professional membership in ASSP. Again, This status demonstrates that ASSP has already affirmed the QAP minimum standards as a mark of a quality education program.

Is the learning of a student graduating from a non-ABET school compromised?

As noted, ASSP has long advocated that colleges and universities with safety-related degree programs should pursue ABET accreditation. We remain committed to that ideal, but we recognize that





accreditation is not an avenue all institutions can or will pursue. We also acknowledge that the QAP designation signals a standard of quality aligned to our professional membership designation, specifically the qualifications required to attain the ASP certification.

So, the short answer on whether learning is compromised is no. The longer answer is students should research their prospective choices. In addition to ABET accreditation and BCSP's QAP databases, we highly recommend that students use the database maintained by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) when researching prospective schools. Selecting a program listed in this directory provides a level of confidence that the institution meets recognized standards for providing quality higher education. It's important to note that many current ASSP members did not graduate from an ABET-accredited school but are succeeding and leading as OSH professionals.

It's also important to recognize that while education and certification are important steps and career milestones for many, neither is enough in today's workplace. Our members need sector-, function- and role-specific support. This includes our continued efforts to advocate for the best practices documented in voluntary consensus standards.

Our Board of Directors set a strategic direction in 2020: Meet OSH professionals where and when they need development to ensure a sustained pipeline of high-quality professionals who can respond in real time to the changing nature of work. Given the dynamic nature of safety learning, we continue to focus our professional development to provide OSH professionals the just-in-time training they need to be successful in the workplace.

What about ASSP's role in research?

The business review task force recognized that ASSP plays a critical role in informing research and helping to move research to practice.

It was recognized that ASSP's strength is in disseminating research findings to our members. This is done in several key ways:

1. ASSP moves research to practice through the peer review of articles published in PSJ.
 - This content makes research actionable to safety professionals
 - It also informs the development of additional tools and resources such as podcasts, checklists and guidance documents.
2. Through its work to develop consensus standards, ASSP also works to incorporate the latest developments in research, technology and equipment into industry practice.
3. Under ASSP's formal agreement with NIOSH, we inform the investment the federal government is making in sound safety research.
 - NIOSH's mission is to develop new knowledge in the field of occupational safety and health and to transfer that knowledge into practice.
 - ASSP has a formal memorandum of understanding to support outreach, education and information sharing.
 - These actions are part of ASSP's ongoing business operations and do not require a council or committee to meet this obligation.





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4. Through partnerships and collaboration with other organizations, ASSP is supporting research.

Examples include:

- Current study underway by INSHPO.
- Formal MOU with NIOSH – TWH network to leverage outcomes from NIOSH investments.
- Collaboration with AIHA under our MOU to share best practices.
- Support for BCSP’s initial research summit in 2019.
- Collaboration with CPWR on construction-related research activities.
- Collaboration with OSHA on study of OSH management systems.
- Collaboration with O*NET to inform updated descriptions for key labor database.

