

ISPO EDUCATION STANDARDS HANDBOOK

ISPO Accreditation:
Process and Procedures



INTERNATIONAL
SOCIETY FOR PROSTHETICS
AND ORTHOTICS



Purpose of the document

This document comprises the official operating policies, procedures and practices used by the International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics (ISPO) Education Committee for Education Standards and Accreditation.

The ISPO Education Committee reviews ISPO Education Standards and Accreditation policies, procedures and practices on a routine basis in response to global changes in education, World Health Organisation (WHO) documents, accreditation expectations, and actions specific to accreditation and programme development.

Unless noted otherwise, all policies included herein are effective 30 days after publication.

Version description (e.g. 00.00.00)
1st number: Level of document changes [01 = substantive content changes;
02 = editorial changes only]
2nd number: Month of the year
3rd number: Last two digits of the year
(e.g. 01.04.18; substantive content changes made in April 2018

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Glossary of Terms

Accreditation – a validation process whereby prosthetic and orthotic training programmes or pathways are measured and assessed against the ISPO Education Standards.

Accreditation certificate – a document issued by ISPO to prove that a prosthetic and orthotic training programme or pathway demonstrated compliance with ISPO Education Standards.

Accreditation committee – ISPO Subcommittee responsible for ISPO accreditation processes including Prosthetist/Orthotist, Associate Prosthetist/Orthotist, Prosthetic/Orthotic Technician.

Associate Prosthetist/Orthotist – a health care professional who uses evidence-based practice to provide clinical assessment, technical design, fabrication of prosthetic/orthotic devices and implement the clinical treatment plan. Associate Prosthetists/Orthotists work as part of the health care team under the supervision of the Prosthetist/Orthotist. The health care team sets goals for the use of prosthetic/orthotic devices and deliver services to achieve desired outcomes. This occupation aims to enable service recipients, so they have equal opportunities to fully participate in society.

Auditor – a person who evaluates a prosthetic and orthotic training programme or pathway during a site visit. auditors are volunteers formally trained by ISPO in accordance to the Education Standards.

Consultation – an informal visit to the training programme or pathway designed to provide guidance and advice in advance of the formal accreditation process. Consultations are not mandatory and do not result in accreditation.

Education Standards – ISPO Education Standards specific to the field of prosthetics and orthotics.

Final examination – refers to the summative examination at the conclusion of the prosthetic and orthotic student training.

Graduate certificate – a document issued by ISPO to graduated students from a prosthetic and orthotic accredited training programme or pathway.

Host institution – a term used to describe the training programme or pathway throughout the accreditation process and site visit.

Liaison Officers – representatives of a training programme or pathway who liaise with ISPO Head Office to communicate and coordinate education and accreditation activities.

Pathway – a national authority or organisation that accredits prosthetic and orthotic training programmes that ISPO in turn accredits.

Prosthetic/Orthotic Technicians – non-clinical service providers that support the technical design of prosthetic/orthotic devices and are competent in the fabrication of prosthetic/orthotic devices. Prosthetic/Orthotic Technicians work as part of the health care team. This occupation aims to enable service recipients, so they have equal opportunities to fully participate in society.

Prosthetist/Orthotist – a health care professional who uses evidence-based practice to provide clinical assessment, prescription, technical design, and fabricate prosthetic and/or orthotic devices. Prosthetists/Orthotists work independently or as part of the health professional team. The health care team sets goals and establishes rehabilitation plans that include prosthetic/orthotic services and clinical outcome measures. The profession aims to enable service recipients, so they have equal opportunities to fully participate in society.

Self-Study – a formal process during which a training programme or pathway critically examines its structure and substance, judging the overall effectiveness relative to its mission. It identifies specific strengths and deficiencies and indicates a plan for necessary modifications and improvements.

Site visit – a visit that is arranged in an official capacity to examine a prosthetic and orthotic training programme or pathway to determine its compliance with ISPO Education Standards. Site visits are undertaken by ISPO auditors. ISPO site visits should coincide with the dates of the prosthetics and orthotics training final examination.

Training programme – a school or organisation specifically designed to deliver prosthetic/orthotic education training.

Section 1 - ISPO Accreditation Management Structure

1.1 ISPO Education Core Committee

The Education Core Committee (ECC) establishes educational standards and approves accreditation processes. The ECC formally reviews the recommendations for accreditation put forth by the ISPO Subcommittees for prosthetic and orthotic training programmes or pathways (hereafter programme/s). The level of accreditation awarded to the programme is determined by the ECC. The ECC reviews applications and determines if programmes qualify for a Fee Support Scheme.

1.2 ISPO Standards Subcommittee

The ISPO Standards Subcommittee is responsible for developing and updating ISPO Education Standards as well as supporting documents as directed by the ISPO Education Committee and Executive Board.

1.3 ISPO Subcommittees (Prosthetist/Orthotist, Associate Prosthetist/Orthotist, Prosthetic/Orthotic Technician)

The accreditation committee comprises of three subcommittees that represent the following prosthetics and orthotics professional profiles: Prosthetist/Orthotist, Associate Prosthetist/Orthotist and Prosthetic/Orthotic Technician. These ISPO Subcommittees oversee accreditation processes and ensure that accreditation procedures are followed by training programmes, ISPO auditors and ISPO Head Office before, during and after site visits. The subcommittee is also responsible for overseeing accreditation reports (produced by ISPO auditors) and making recommendations to the ISPO ECC about training programme accreditation.

1.4 ISPO Auditors

ISPO auditors are volunteers with expertise in prosthetics and orthotics. They are responsible for assessing prosthetic and orthotic training programmes against the relevant ISPO Education Standards and making recommendations to ensure compliance with these standards. ISPO auditors are selected and trained by the ISPO Education Committee.

Section 2 - ISPO Accreditation

2.1 Accreditation

Accreditation is a validation process whereby prosthetic and orthotic programmes are measured against quality standards. The ISPO Education Committee grants accreditation to programmes that meet the threshold expectations of quality that is specified in the standards. Objective decision making about programme accreditation depends on the information, data and statements made to the ISPO Education Committee in the context of just, efficient and standardized administrative processes of accreditation. Integrity is the central tenet of the accreditation process and ensures the administration, validation and protection of the rights of all parties.

2.2 Voluntary Accreditation

ISPO accreditation is sought voluntarily by a prosthetic and orthotic training programme to validate against the existing ISPO Education Standards.

2.3 Benefits of Accreditation

Often a sign of good management, accreditation helps identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement based on a series of standards. Often, there is no law requiring accreditation, rather accreditation is an opportunity to seek and secure validation by a recognized external body (ISPO Education Committee) comprised of expert peers. Potential benefits of accreditation include:

- Assurance to students seeking education that a prosthetics and orthotics programme has demonstrated compliance to internationally-accepted standards,
- Emphasis on an integrated and individualized approach to services and outcomes,
- Accountability to students, funding sources, and the community,
- Pedagogical and management models that are efficient, cost-effective, and based on outcomes and student satisfaction,
- Evidence to federal, state, provincial, and local governments of commitment to a quality training programme that receive government funding,
- Guidance for responsible management and professional growth of faculty and staff,
- A tool for marketing training programmes to prospective students, government entities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and funding agencies.

Section 3 - Eligibility Requirements for ISPO Accreditation

3.1 New Applications (First Time ISPO Accreditation)

Prosthetic and orthotic training programmes applying for the first time for ISPO accreditation must:

- Submit a Letter of Intent,
- Submit a completed application,
- Submit the Self-Study at least six months prior to the final examination,
- Pay the application fee,
- Schedule an ISPO site visit at the same time as the final examination in collaboration with ISPO Head Office.

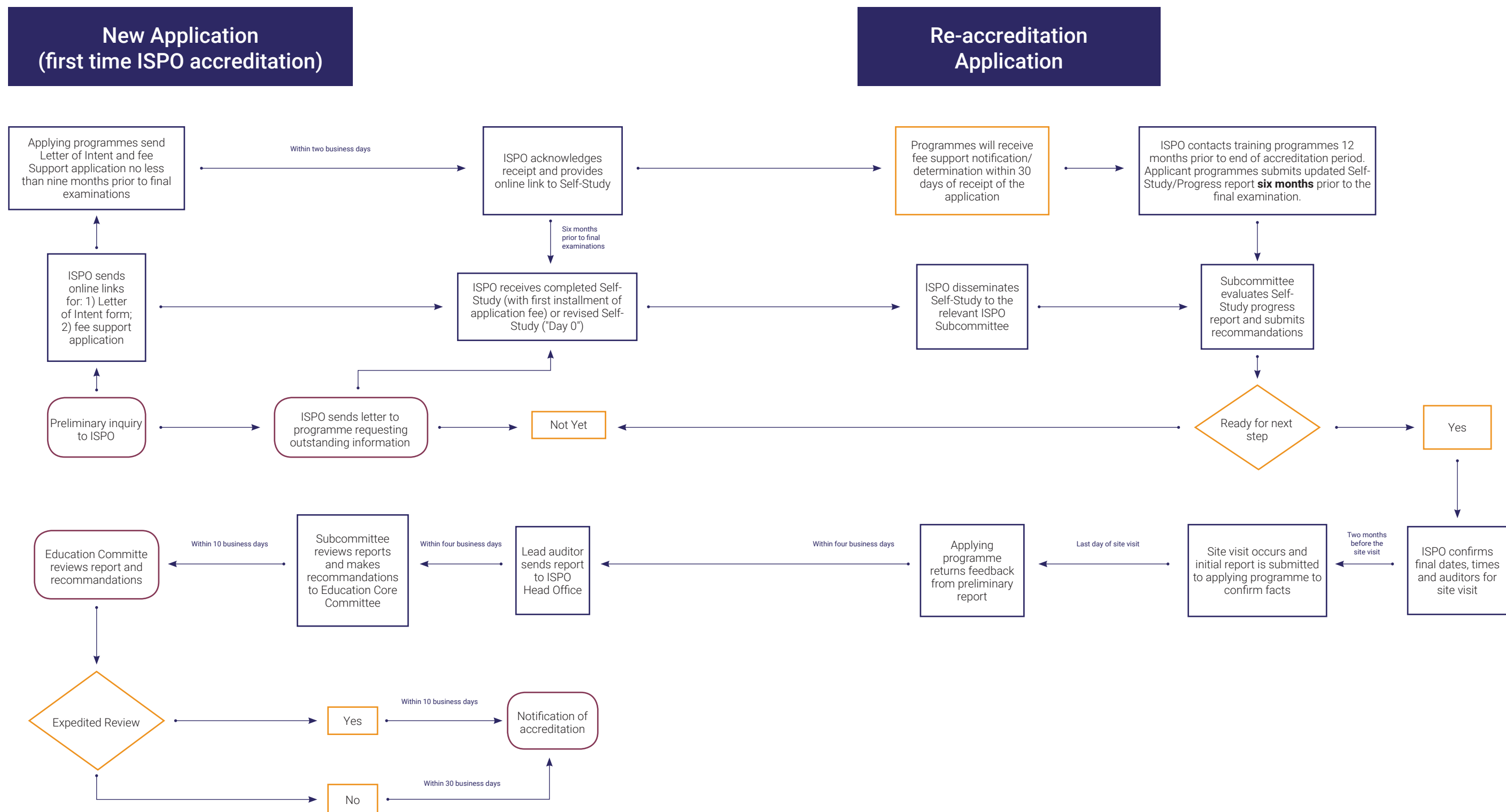
3.2 Applying for Re-accreditation

Prosthetic and orthotic training programmes applying for ISPO re-accreditation must be in good standing. The following criteria are required for re-accreditation:

- Annual fees must be current,
- Annual reports throughout the awarded accreditation period must be up to date,
- Submit the re-accreditation request to ISPO at least **six months** prior to the final examination,
- Submit a completed application,
- Schedule an ISPO site visit at the same time as the final examination.

Section 4 - ISPO Accreditation Application Process

4.1 ISPO Accreditation Process Overview



4.2 Preparation

Training programmes interested in pursuing ISPO accreditation are encouraged to review the following documents prior to submitting a Letter of Intent:

- International Standards for Professional Education in Prosthetic/Orthotic Occupations
- International Standards Handbook

4.3 Letter of Intent Submission – First time ISPO Accreditation

Prosthetic and orthotic training programmes interested in applying for ISPO accreditation must first submit a Letter of Intent via the [online application form](#). All of the following applies when submitting the Letter of Intent:

- Include relevant information: training programme details, official name, brief description of the programme, the professional prosthetics and orthotics category for which accreditation is sought and contact details of the programme liaison officers,
- Indicate if the programme intends to request partial support for application and annual fees,
- Complete applications should be sent to ISPO Head Office at least **nine months** prior to the final examination of the prosthetic and orthotic training/course.

The ISPO Head Office will acknowledge receipt of the application within two business days. Along with the acknowledgement of receipt is a link to a Self-Study template and supporting documentation that must be completed in order to initiate the accreditation process.

4.4 Re-accreditation

The ISPO Head Office will contact programmes **12 months** prior to the end of the accreditation cycle. The head office will confirm accreditation expiration date and request that an updated Self-Study be completed six months prior to the final examination. Programmes are required to complete an [online form](#) to request the accreditation renewal.

4.5 Intent of the Self-Study

The Self-Study is an objective, comprehensive evaluation of the training programme with the aim of self-improvement. The Self-Study is a longitudinal process of formal self-reflection that emphasizes the strengths and “self-identified” areas for improvement. Training programmes must submit their completed Self-Studies to the ISPO Head Office six months prior to the final examination.

Please note: Submitting the Self-Study signals the beginning of the accreditation process. Recommended guides on how to prepare a Self-Study are provided in Appendix I below.

4.6 Receipt of Self-Study

Completed Self-Studies will be processed by the ISPO Head Office and disseminated to members of the accreditation committee (subcommittee of the Education Committee) within **seven business days** of receipt of the document.

4.7 Self-Study Review

Each member of the ISPO Accreditation Committee must carry out an independent review of the Self-Study prior to the committee convening to discuss the findings. The collective findings and recommendations are forwarded to the Education Committee for final decision.

Notifications will be sent to the training programme within **one month** of the Self-Study submission date with the following determination:

- Self-Study was reviewed and the training programme is ready for a site visit,
- Additional information is required before a site visit can be scheduled.

Training programmes providing additional information will have **30 business days** from the receipt of the notification to resubmit the updated Self-Study. Depending on the nature and extent of the outstanding items the revised Self-Study will either go through a full review as described above or an expedited review within **10 days** of receipt.

4.8 Site Visit Preparation

Upon completion and acceptance of the Self-Study by the Education Committee, the ISPO Head Office will work with the host site to finalise the site visit date.

The site team (auditors) will be selected in the following manner:

- ISPO office selects a maximum of four prospective auditors with the guidance of the subcommittee who has no conflict of interest with the programme,
- ISPO office contacts the selected auditors and confirms availability for the specified site visit,
- ISPO proposes three auditors for the schools (two primary auditors and one substitute) and asks for conflict of interest details from the host site,
- If one of the three evaluators represent a conflict of interest, ISPO Head Office will remove the individual where a conflict was noted and replace him/her with the fourth auditor initially selected by the subcommittee.

4.9 Consultations

Training programmes may decide to request an ISPO consultation. **Consultations are not a mandatory element of the ISPO accreditation process** and not counted against the training programme. Programmes that elect to pursue a consultation will be charged full cost recovery rates.

An approximate cost for a three-day consultation fee with one ISPO-nominated consultant is 4,000 EUR, but will vary according to the location, costs of travel, accommodations, etc. Steps towards consultation include:

- Consultations will be arranged by written request to the ISPO office,
- The same process used to select auditors for formal site visits will be used to select the consultant with the exception that only one consultant will be selected for the consultation,
- The timing of consultations is **at the discretion of programmes**, but usually occurs before completing the Self-Study and application for accreditation,
- For consultations, programmes can decide to seek advice from ISPO or externally,
- Consultation visits do not result in full report or accreditation,
- A full evaluation visit will be required after the consultation to achieve accreditation.

It is expected that ISPO will move towards a flat-rate consultation in due course, to further simplify the process.

Section 5 - Accreditation Fees

5.1 New Applications Fees

The application fee is 1,000 EUR. After submission of the Self-Study and to finalise the application, applying training programmes are required to remit to ISPO a non-refundable deposit equal to 50% of the application amount (i.e. 500 EUR). The remainder of the application fee shall then be paid if the training programme is considered eligible for ISPO accreditation. Payments shall be remitted to ISPO within 30 business days from the application submission. The application fee is a one-off fee.

5.2 Annual Fee – Accredited Programmes

To maintain accreditation status, ISPO accredited programmes must pay an annual fee of 1,000 EUR throughout the accreditation period, upon the submission of the annual report. Programmes can elect to pay on an annual basis or a one-lump sum for the designated period of accreditation (e.g. one 5,000 EUR payment for an accreditation period of five years, instead of annual payments of 1,000 EUR over five years).

For pathways only: An additional 50 EUR fee shall be charged for each individual programme that is accredited at the same category level under the pathway. ISPO has no position on how the pathway authority recovers these costs from its recognized programmes.

Payments shall be remitted to ISPO within 30 business days from the annual report submission.

5.3 Fees with Multiple Category Levels

As each category level requires individual accreditation, administration and site visits, institutes or schools with more than one “category level” programme shall pay the annual fee **for each accredited programme.**

5.4 Applying for Fee Support

Any training programme seeking fee support must submit a pro forma and application (see application forms in sections 4.3 and 4.4). Programmes that fulfil the conditions set by ISPO will be granted one of two fee reductions:

- 50% reduction on application fee and annual fees
- 75% reduction on application fee and annual fees

Detailed information on the eligibility criteria and selection process may be found in Annex V below.

5.5 Summary of Fees

ISPO Accreditation Fees Scheme		
	Application Fee one off	Accreditation maintenance fees (full accreditation)
Standard Fees	1,000 EUR 50% deposit non-refundable at Self-Study document submission	1,000 EUR ¹ annual fee to be paid to maintain accreditation +50 EUR for each training programme that is accredited under a pathway
Reduced fee 50%	500 EUR 50% deposit non-refundable at Self-Study document submission	500 EUR
Reduced fee 75%	250 EUR	250 EUR

5.6 General Payment Conditions

- Accreditation fee payment options: payment on an annual basis, or the entire sum is paid upfront for designated period of accreditation (e.g. three-year accreditation = 1,000 EUR annually over three years or a single payment of 3,000 EUR),
- Failure to pay application fees/annual fees or late payments to ISPO will result in delay of Self-Study or report review process and ISPO accreditation activities,
- Programmes that do not pay the annual fee (beyond the grace period) will have the accreditation status removed until payment is made. Once payment is made accreditation will be reinstated,
- Payment of ISPO accreditation application and renewal fees as well as annual fees should take place within 30 days after receiving the invoice,
- If a training programme accreditation lapses due to non-payment, a new application fee will be required,
- Costs related to the site visit, such as accommodation for ISPO auditors, travel and daily allowance are included in the application fee or annual fee,
- For a consultation ISPO will charge full cost recovery rates,
- To offer flexible payment options, fees shall be payable annually or once for the entire accreditation period. The programme should nominate their preferred payment method at the time of application. Fees are the same in either case,
- ISPO will review the accreditation fees every five years. ISPO reserves the right to change accreditation fees.

1. Programmes with multiple accredited "category levels" shall pay an annual fee for each accredited level (e.g. a university that has an accredited prosthetist/orthotist training programme and an accredited prosthetic/orthotic technician training programme would pay a total annual fee of 2,000 EUR; 1,000 EUR for each accredited category level. The same university, if awarded a 50% reduced fee, would now pay an annual fee of 1,000 EUR; 500 EUR for each accredited category level).

Section 6 - Site Visit

6.1 Site Visit Preparation

Once the Self-Study has been reviewed and site visit approved, ISPO Head Office will notify the programme of tentative dates and the preliminary site visit team **within 60 days** of the initial notification. Programmes will have **10 business days** to respond to the head office with the following information:

- Confirm dates, times,
- Reject dates, times and include alternative dates/times,
- Confirm site visit team,
- Identify conflicts of interest with a member or members of the proposed site visit team.

Programmes requesting alternative dates and/or different members of the site team will be notified within **30 days** if the request is approved. Programmes will have **10 days** to confirm the dates and acknowledge that the conflict of interest has been removed.

6.2 Intent of the Site Visit

The site visit is a most critical and sensitive part of the review and accreditation process. This is a cooperative event. Recognising that excellence in education can be achieved in diverse ways is fundamental to peer review. Both the site visit team (ISPO auditors) and members of the host institution must appreciate that ISPO auditors have two roles in determining the quality of the applying programme:

- Serve as the enquiring arm for the ISPO Education Committee,
- Evaluate the programme against the International Standards for Professional Education in Prosthetic/Orthotic Occupations.

It is very important that all participants embrace this understanding and approach the site visit with trust and goodwill. It is assumed that it is within the reach of reasonable people to translate these attitudes into appropriate site visit performance.

During the site visit, administrators, faculty and students of the host institution, and members of the site visit team, will be in frequent contact with one another. The site visit will be the occasion for the host institution to create the best possible impression on its visitors, and the visiting team will want to understand the breadth and depth of the programme under review.

6.3 Site Visit Objectives

The main objectives of the site visit are to:

- Confirm that the programme has a clear mission and goals that it regularly assesses,
- Verify and clarify the description of the programme as presented in the Self-Study,
- Assess the programme against its own stated goals,
- Assess the programme against the ISPO Standards,
- Establish a basis for an evaluative report by the site visit team to ISPO,
- Provide an occasion for the exchange of information among colleagues and for learning about innovative developments responsive to common problems and opportunities in a common field,
- Demonstrate that graduates meet the competencies outlined in the Standards.

The site visit is part of a larger peer review/accreditation process by which members of this field endeavour to discover and share a continuing development of quality and excellence in prosthetics and orthotics education.

Section 7 - Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 ISPO Auditors

ISPO auditors are appropriate professionals selected by the ISPO Education Committee¹.

They must have:

- Appropriate knowledge of/and expertise in the ISPO Education Standards,
- Appropriate knowledge of/and expertise in the ISPO accreditation process,
- Successfully completed training and participated as an observer during a formal site visit,
- Accepted and agreed to the ISPO non-disclosure agreement,
- Signed a conflict of interest document,
- Successfully complete training every five years.

Lead auditor

- Most experience within the audit team
- Directs the entrance/exit interview with programme leadership
- Directs/facilitates all meetings
- Responsible for finalising of on-site agenda and required modifications
- Write the site visit report
- Make final recommandation in consultation with the audit team
- Check facts contained in the initial report with the school (four days maximum)
- Responsible for contacting the head office/ECC chair and or vice-chair when unforeseen and emergent issues arise that require immediate decisions from the education committee leadership level

Second auditor

- Assist the lead auditor
- Participate in final decision making
- Participate in meetings
- Help develop reports

1. ISPO reserves the right to remove auditors that are not in good standing as related to issues of training, performance and ethics.

Substitute auditor

The substitute auditor will undertake the site visit in case the lead auditor or second auditor are unavailable due to personal reasons or visa refusal to host institution country.

ISPO auditors do not participate in student examinations. Though they may observe the exam process, their role is to assess the programme not individual students.

7.2 Host Institution

The host institution will have undertaken extensive preparatory work before the site visit (see host checklist in appendix). To ensure that the site visit goes smoothly the following is suggested:

- The host institution should submit to the site visit team a tentative but detailed schedule of persons to be interviewed, their names and the places to be visited. Preferably, this schedule should be submitted two weeks in advance of the visit.
- Individuals who will be in charge of the site visit at the host institution should brief all participating administrators, faculty and students on what to expect. It might be useful to discuss some of the questions site visitors are likely to ask.
- Materials that were gathered and used in preparing the Self-Study, such as the files (or a sample) of an entering cohort that were used to report on attrition, should be gathered in a central location and be readily available for review.
- In cases where countries have complex disclosure regulations, representatives at the host institution should be prepared to explain these regulations and how the Self-Study process has coped with this problem.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that the site visit is a cooperative, collegial experience and not an adversarial encounter. The officials in charge of the Self-Study preparation and the site visit should take every possible occasion to reinforce this understanding. ISPO is dedicated to the proposition that openness, candour, and trust at the host institution must, in turn, generate goodwill, sensitivity, and dispassionate evaluation on the part of the site visitors.

Section 8 - Accreditation Outcome

Possible outcomes for ISPO accreditation:

Quality Indicator	Description	Sample
Exemplary	Evidence indicates that the program demonstrates excellence in all areas	The programme demonstrates commitment and leadership in achieving advanced competencies and/or programme development
Distinguished	The program provides evidence that is specific, comprehensive with innovation and excellence in some areas	There is complete, detailed, and clearly articulated information as to how the standard is met. The evidence presented is well-conceived, thoroughly developed and/or innovative.
Proficient	The program provides evidence that standards are being met and that innovation and excellence are emerging	The programme is able to demonstrate that the standard is met or that activity is ongoing in the development and/or implementation of activities that exceed the standard.
Compliance	The program provides evidence that the minimum standard has been meet	The programme provides evidence that the minimum standard has been met. The evidence suggests that the programme is limited by various barriers (eg. time, budget, human resources, training etc.) but is making meaningful effort to advance beyond the minimum standard.
Not complying	The programme provides evidence that does not meet many of the accepted standards or competencies.	The programme provides inaccurate information or provides information that requires substantial clarification as to how the standard is met; lacks meaningful detail; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the programmes understanding of concept and/or ability to meet the requirement in practice.
No evidence	Little or no evidence provided, the programme does not address the standard.	The programme provides no evidence, incomplete evidence, incorrect and/or unreliable evidence.

Section 9 - Reporting

9.1 Full Accreditation Reporting

Training programmes that have been awarded a full ISPO accreditation must submit a report to ISPO Head Office on an annual basis during and for the whole accreditation period. ISPO Head Office will provide programmes with report templates at least three months prior to the end of the host institution's academic year.

9.2 Unsuccessful Outcome

Training programmes that fail to receive ISPO accreditation can re-apply, provided they submit an action plan within **six months** after the site visit. Application fee will not apply.

9.3 Reporting Substantive Changes

ISPO accredited programmes are required to report any substantive changes within programmes to the ISPO Head Office by completing this [online form](#).

Programme changes may include:

- Governance restructuring,
- Change of Liaison Officers,
- Loss of funding,
- Change in degree awarded,
- Change in location,
- Curriculum changes e.g. change of the curriculum or method of delivery that effects 10% or more of the syllabus.

Section 10 - Certificates

ISPO accredited training programmes will be officially notified by ISPO Head Office on the outcome of the accreditation.

Accredited programmes will receive the accreditation package that will include:

- A confirmation letter and indication of accreditation period,
- ISPO certificate,
- ISPO auditors' report.

ISPO will produce certificates to be distributed to graduated students. The host institution shall provide to ISPO a list of students including: names, contact details and date of birth.

APPENDICES

Appendix I – Support Guide for the Self-Study Process

[Download Document](#)

Appendix II – Site Visit Checklist

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Appendix III – Code of Ethics for ISPO Accreditation Participants

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Appendix IV – Conflict of Interest and Non-Disclosure Agreement

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Appendix V – Cost Support Applications - Review Criteria

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