NBA Accreditation Guidelines: Comparison of NBA 2015 and NBA 2025 Criteria

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Abstract: *The National Board of Accreditation (NBA), India, plays a pivotal role in ensuring quality assurance in technical education. With the evolution of global standards, technological shifts, and sustainable development imperatives, NBA has significantly revised its accreditation framework in the NBA 2025 guidelines. This article presents a detailed comparison of NBA 2015 and NBA 2025 accreditation criteria, highlighting the progressive transition towards outcome-based, industry-integrated, and sustainability-driven education.*

Keywords: National Board of Accreditation

I. INTRODUCTION

The NBA accreditation system provides a framework to evaluate and assure the quality of engineering and technical programs. The NBA 2015 guidelines laid the foundation for Outcome-Based Education (OBE). However, in response to NEP 2020, industry 4.0 trends, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the NBA 2025 guidelines have introduced a more holistic, measurable, and forward-looking approach to accreditation.

II. OVERVIEW OF NBA 2015 FRAMEWORK

The NBA 2015 framework was structured around the principles of Outcome-Based Education (OBE), emphasizing the formulation of Program Educational Objectives (PEOs), Program Outcomes (POs), and Course Outcomes (COs) to assess the quality of technical programs. It focused on traditional academic metrics such as faculty qualifications, student performance, curriculum coverage, infrastructure, and continuous improvement. The assessment was largely driven by compliance-based documentation and outcome mapping, with limited integration of industry trends, sustainability, or global benchmarking. While NBA 2015 initiated the shift towards competency-based learning, it lacked explicit alignment with emerging challenges like sustainable development, digital transformation, and entrepreneurship development, which are now addressed in NBA 2025.

The NBA 2015 framework focused primarily on:
- Program Educational Objectives (PEOs)
- Course and Program Outcomes (COs & POs)
- Student performance, faculty qualifications, and infrastructure
- Limited emphasis on sustainability or global benchmarking

While it emphasized OBE, the implementation lacked depth in terms of sustainability, digital transformation, and industry integration.

III. TRANSITION TO NBA 2025 GUIDELINES

The transition to NBA 2025 guidelines marks a significant evolution in India's technical education quality assurance system, responding to global shifts such as Industry 4.0, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unlike the compliance-driven NBA 2015 model, NBA 2025 adopts a performance-oriented, future-ready framework that emphasizes outcome measurement, digital and experiential learning, entrepreneurship, and sustainability integration. The new guidelines introduce structured rubrics, direct and indirect assessment tools, and a stronger focus on faculty development, industry collaboration, and innovation

ecosystems. This transition ensures that graduates are not only academically competent but also socially responsible, globally aware, and equipped to address real-world challenges.

NBA 2025 introduces a refined and structured approach to quality assurance. Key drivers include:

- Integration of SDGs in curriculum and institutional policies
- Industry 4.0 readiness through digital tools and AI
- Stronger assessment rubrics for outcomes, internships, and research
- Focus on innovation, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning

IV. CRITERIA-WISE COMPARISON: NBA 2015 VS. NBA 2025

The criteria-wise comparison between NBA 2015 and NBA 2025 reveals a shift from a traditional academic evaluation model to a more holistic, outcome-driven, and future-focused framework. While NBA 2015 centered on parameters like faculty strength, infrastructure, and academic delivery, NBA 2025 redefines these through the lenses of sustainability, innovation, industry relevance, and global competencies. Several criteria have been expanded—such as curriculum design now including SDG alignment, and student performance now factoring in entrepreneurial outcomes and global exposure. Redundant or overlapping criteria like First-Year Academics and Governance have been merged or restructured to streamline the evaluation process. Additionally, NBA 2025 introduces new sub-criteria, such as academic audits, benchmarking, and green infrastructure, ensuring institutions are not only educating but also contributing meaningfully to global development goals.

TABLE I

Criterion	NBA 2015	NBA 2025	Key Differences
Vision, Mission & PEOs	Focused on institutional goals	Explicit alignment with SDGs	Introduced SDG mapping
Curriculum & Teaching	OBE-based teaching	Digital, experiential, and industry-integrated learning	Use of MOOCs, AI, simulation tools
CO-PO Attainment	Measured but not rigorously assessed	Rubrics-based assessment, direct & indirect tools	Strong attainment tracking
Student Performance	Focused on placements and higher studies	Added entrepreneurship, patents, innovation	Broader evaluation scope
Faculty Information	Count, qualification, experience	Retention, FDPs, certifications, consultancy	Continuous development focus
Facilities & Labs	Lab availability and maintenance	Includes green labs, digital tools, and safety	Sustainability-focused infrastructure
Continuous Improvement	Reactive improvements	Structured audits, benchmarking	Data-driven progress
First-Year Academics	Separate criterion	Merged into others	Removed
Student Support Systems	Basic mentoring & support	Leadership, wellness, governance, financial aid	Holistic support
Governance & Financial Support	Basic financial governance	Merged into continuous improvement	More strategic integration

V. INCLUSION OF SDGS IN NBA 2025

A major shift in NBA 2025 is the integration of Sustainable Development Goals. Criteria explicitly aligned with SDGs include:

- Criterion 1: Mapping of PEOs with SDGs
- Criterion 2: Curriculum integration of sustainability concepts
- Criterion 3: SDG-linked Course Outcomes and assessments

- Criterion 4: Evaluation of student involvement in sustainability projects
- Criterion 5 & 9: Research and startups focusing on clean energy, green technology
- Criterion 6 & 10: Infrastructure sustainability, green campus policies

This alignment ensures that engineering graduates are equipped to tackle climate change, inequality, energy challenges, and urbanization, as envisioned by Agenda 2030.

VI. KEY ENHANCEMENTS IN NBA 2025

NBA 2025 introduces several key enhancements that significantly elevate the standards of technical education in India. It emphasizes a stronger outcome-based approach, integrating structured rubrics for assessment, direct and indirect attainment tracking, and data-driven continuous improvement. A major enhancement is the incorporation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into curriculum design, research, and institutional policies, promoting socially responsible engineering. NBA 2025 also prioritizes industry-academia collaboration, encouraging internships, industry-led projects, and consultancy work. In addition, it places greater focus on faculty development, entrepreneurship, digital pedagogy, and AI-driven learning, preparing institutions and students for the challenges of Industry 4.0 and global competitiveness. These enhancements reflect a shift from compliance-based evaluation to a performance and impact-oriented model.

- Structured Outcome-Based Framework with measurable attainments
- Greater weightage to innovation, sustainability, and entrepreneurship
- Enhanced industry-academia integration
- Promotion of lifelong learning and faculty development
- Inclusion of digital tools, simulations, and blended learning

VII. CONCLUSION

NBA 2025 is a significant step forward in aligning Indian technical education with global benchmarks. By integrating SDGs, digital pedagogy, industry engagement, and assessment refinement, it sets a new standard for accreditation. Institutions aspiring for NBA accreditation must strategically adopt NBA 2025 practices to enhance educational outcomes and societal impact.

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