



## **Memorandum of Understanding between NASPAA and EAPAA Regarding Coordinated Accreditation**

November 15, 2011

### Introduction

This document outlines a cooperative agreement between the National Association of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) and the European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA) regarding the accreditation of graduate public service degrees in Europe.

### Rationale

The quality assurance processes of NASPAA and EAPAA have shared goals and procedural overlap. A cooperative agreement between the organizations would reduce procedural redundancies and the overall burden to programs that may seek to obtain both accreditations. A cooperative partnership is a major step forward for high-quality accreditation internationally and has the potential to strengthen both organizations through a sharing of knowledge, expertise, and resources.

### Background

With NASPAA initiating peer review of graduate degrees in public administration in 1977, and EAPAA commencing its accreditation in 1999, the organizations together have an established history of providing quality accreditation for public service degree programs. The accreditation processes of both organizations derive from a commitment to improving education for public service, and with similar goals, such as valuing program diversity and mission-based accreditation. The commonalities between the two accreditors are extensive, including a high-quality and formative review facilitated by trained volunteers conducting themselves with the highest integrity.

### Conditions For Partnership

NASPAA and EAPAA regard the following conditions essential to the pursuit of this accreditation partnership. Both accrediting bodies aim to ensure educational quality for professional degrees for public service and share a commitment to public service values, broadly defined. Within the context of mission-based accreditation, both value rigorous, accountable accreditation *processes*:

- High standards and comprehensive criteria for the accreditation program.
- The applicant program to complete a reflective self-study report that assesses information related to the major areas such as but not limited to: management of the program; faculty governance and administration; resource adequacy; communications about the program; serving the students; curriculum, student learning and outcomes; and faculty performance.
- An on-site visit and assessment conducted by a team of peers and experts.
- An impartial committee of peers to deliberate and consider all the evidence from the self-study and the site visit, make an informed decision about the program's accreditation, and communicate that clearly to the program, including recommendations and follow-ups.
- Due process opportunities for programs to appeal decisions and provide feedback on the review.

In addition, while EAPAA and NASPAA have different sets of accreditation standards, the criteria of both organizations share *substantive quality concerns* for:

- the existence of adequate faculty with appropriate qualifications;
- the presence of opportunities for students to engage with the practice, such as internship opportunities or practitioners in the classroom;
- adequate resources to conduct the program and an accreditation review;
- clearly defined admissions standards;
- a strong commitment to faculty diversity; and
- a strategic planning process that includes a feedback loop based on assessment of performance.

This MOU between NASPAA and EAPAA creates a straightforward structure of cooperation, one in which we can share our expertise and commitment to excellence in quality assurance, and by working together we can forge a new understanding of public service education quality in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

1. NASPAA presupposes EAPAA accreditation as the 'normal' state for programmes from European countries applying for NASPAA accreditation.
2. When a European programme applies to NASPAA and doesn't have EAPAA accreditation, NASPAA will encourage the European programme to pursue EAPAA accreditation through coordinated accreditation<sup>1</sup> with NASPAA.
3. If the European programme does not want EAPAA accreditation, NASPAA will ask for the reason(s). NASPAA will inform EAPAA and get their viewpoint. However, NASPAA will follow its stated procedures and make an independent decision as to whether and when a programme can apply for accreditation.

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<sup>1</sup> Joint procedure, one self-evaluation, one site visit, separate decisions with communication before informing the programme.

Specific coordinated accreditation application and required information processes, and onsite-visits for the accreditation review will need to be worked out between EAPAA and NASPAA as we go forward.

The program may choose to pursue coordinated accreditation or may pursue accreditation from either accreditor independently. Coordinated accreditation, as defined by NASPAA and EAPAA, is a process by which the accreditors will cooperate to review a program, while maintaining independence in the decision-making process.

The NASPAA-EAPAA coordinated accreditation process will seek to reduce the reporting burden on applicant programs by introducing a streamlined self-study process and a single site visit. Programs will still be judged on conformance by each accreditor's review board independently, against each accreditor's respective set of standards or criteria. Note that a positive accreditation decision in one review process does not necessarily presage a positive review in the other, as standards/criteria are not identical and each review board operates independently to make a final accreditation decision.

NASPAA and EAPAA will attempt to ensure flexibility in timing and deadlines, in order to facilitate the review cycle. The parties will assist programs in syncing up reaccreditation deadlines where reasonable, and where such adjustments are not expected to impact the quality or consistency of the review.


NASPAA and EAPAA will share resources, including technology systems, staffing, and volunteers, as appropriate and to the extent outlined in implementation documents. NASPAA and EAPAA will agree on a reasonable financial structure to accompany such reviews.

#### Terms

This agreement is subject to review by the participating organizations and may be terminated at any time. This agreement will be effective for a period of five years from the date of signing by below, and may be renewed. Additionally, NASPAA is currently piloting non-U.S. accreditation review and the implementation of this agreement is subject to a positive outcome of that initiative

  
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NASPAA Executive Director

15 Nov, 2011  
date

  
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EAPAA Secretary General

15 Dec, 2011  
date