

THE SITE VISIT TEAM REPORT

The final and crucial product of the site visit is the team's report to the NASPAA Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation.

A. Team Consensus

The team will begin to assemble its impressions as early as the evening of Day II of the visit. As suggested previously in the proposed site visit schedule, the team should arrange to meet alone before departing from the campus to develop a consensus and a draft of the team's report. It may wish to meet a second time after having met with the program faculty and dean.

All members of the team should be involved in the development of the report, even though ways of allocating drafting responsibilities will vary. The final wording of the report should be reviewed by all team members before it is forwarded.

If it should happen that a consensus cannot be arrived at, then all members of the team should have the same perception of the inhibiting causes, and an agreement should be arrived at on how the failure to achieve consensus will be overcome. In the event that consensus cannot be achieved on an assessment of an individual standard, then a statement on the diversity of judgment should be included in the discussion of that item in the team's report along with as much factual data as possible.

Neither the team's consensus nor lack of it should ever be conveyed to anyone at the host institution. This admonition is consistent with Part I.A. of this Manual.

B. Draft Site Visit Team Report to Program Head

Within 30 days of the site visit the program head will receive from the chairperson of the Site Visit Team a copy of the draft Site Visit Team Report. It may be transmitted electronically.

C. Final Site Visit Team Report

The final report of the Site Visit Team should contain five sections: I.--Introduction; II.--Background and Mission III.--Item-by-Item Analysis of Concerns Raised by the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation; IV.--Standard-by-Standard Assessment; and V.--Recommendations to Strengthen the Program.

It is extremely important to call attention to the fact that the Site Visit Team is asked to make presentations of the facts and assessments. It will NOT recommend either for or against inclusion on the NASPAA roster of conforming programs. Final assessment and recommendations on overall program conformity, inclusion or exclusion on the NASPAA Annual Roster of Accredited Programs, is the responsibility of the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation alone. This procedure has been adopted

to ensure that NASPAA Standards are applied in precisely the same way to every program which applies for peer review.

D. Site Visit Team Report Outline

The following is an outline of the final site visit report. This section may be used as a template, filled in, and transmitted electronically.

SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

A. Summary of site visit activities

1. Members of site visit team
2. Dates of the site visit
3. The site visit schedule (Should include the titles of all university, school and program officers interviewed.)

B. Summary of basic facts about the institution

1. The type of institution and school (public/private; exclusively graduate school, etc.)
2. Date the program was established.
3. A list of the undergraduate and graduate degree programs offered by the program.

SECTION II. BACKGROUND AND MISSION

In Section II, The Site Visit Team should indicate whether the program's mission and related activities are appropriate for providing professional education for leadership in public service. The SVT should provide COPRA with information about the particular mission of the program, the general approach to carrying out that mission, the procedures for periodic self-evaluation and planning. The SVT should also indicate if planned program changes have been implemented and what their effect is on the program.

SECTION III. ITEM-BY-ITEM ANALYSIS OF CONCERNS RAISED BY COMMISSION ON PEER REVIEW AND ACCREDITATION

Each item raised by the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation in its interim report to the program should be addressed in detail. The Site Visit Team should report the facts relevant to the questions raised by the Commission and provide an analysis of the program's relative performance with respect to the standard cited in each item. This assessment should assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program's performance with respect to the standard in question. However, the Site Visit Team should not reach final conclusions concerning conformity versus non-conformity with respect to the item and standard in question. Final decisions on conformity versus non-conformity should be made by the Commission based on clear assessments from the Site Visit Team.

SECTION IV. STANDARD-BY-STANDARD ASSESSMENT (Standards not covered in Section III above)

In addition to addressing the concerns raised in the interim report, the Site Visit Team should here present its evaluation of the program's performance on each of the standards not specifically mentioned by the Commission. As in Section III above, this assessment should discuss the relative performance of the program with respect to each NASPAA standard, citing relative strengths and weaknesses. While evaluation and interpretation of "the facts" will be necessary and important in this section (as in the previous sections above), the Site Visit Team should not reach final conclusions concerning conformity versus non-conformity with respect to the standard in question. Final decisions on conformity versus non-conformity should be made by the Commission based on clear assessment from the Site Visit Team.

Standard

1.0 Eligibility for Peer Review and Accreditation

1.1 Eligibility. These standards assume a commitment to the use of peer review procedures to assess educational quality. Formal peer review and accreditation processes of NASPAA are open to programs which meet the following criteria;

1.2 Institutional Accreditation. The parent institution is accredited by its regional association;

1.3 Professional Education. The primary objective is professional education preparing persons for leadership and management roles in public affairs, policy, administration;

1.4 Program Length. The program must have been in operation at least four years to provide adequate data for evaluating program policies, procedures, and placement of graduates.

2.0 Program Mission

2.1 Mission Statement. The program shall state clearly its educational philosophy and mission and have an orderly process for developing appropriate strategies and objectives consistent with its mission, resources, and constituencies.

2.2 Assessment. The program shall assess its students' performance and the accomplishment of its objectives. Assessment procedures and measures may take any form appropriate to the program and its circumstances, but each program shall develop and use procedures for determining how well it carries out its mission.

2.3 Guiding Performance. The program shall use information about its performance in directing and revising program objectives, strategies, and operations.

3.0 Program Jurisdiction

3.1 Administrative Organization. Effective public policy and public administration programs may exist in several forms - sometimes as an autonomous department or school, sometimes as an accountable portion of some larger unit such as a school of administration or a department of political science. Within the framework of university organization, responsibility for the professional masters degree program in public affairs and administration should rest with an identifiable component of faculty and an administrative organization capable of conducting the program effectively. Recognizing wide variations in university structures, the intent is to achieve an appropriate focus of attention, direction, and accountability for the program without prescribing any particular form of organization.

3.2 Identifiable Faculty. There is a public affairs and administration program with identifiable faculty membership, whose primary responsibility for the program is recognized at the next higher level of university organization.

3.3 Program Administration. Responsibility for program administration is assigned to a dean, chairperson, director, or other single administrator who is appointed after appropriate consultation with the program faculty.

3.4 Scope of Influence. Within the framework of organization and process peculiar to the institution, the public affairs and administration faculty and/or administrator exercises initiative, and substantial determining influence with respect to:

- general program policy and planning
- degree requirements
- new courses and curriculum changes
- admissions
- certification of degree candidates
- course scheduling and teaching assignment
- use of financial and other resources
- appointment, promotion, and tenuring of program faculty.

4.0 Curriculum

4.1 Purpose of Curriculum. The purpose of the curriculum shall be to prepare students for professional leadership in public service.

4.2 Curriculum Components. The curriculum components are designed to produce professionals capable of intelligent, creative analysis and communication, and action in public service. Courses taken to fulfill the common curriculum components shall be primarily for graduate students. Both the common and the additional curriculum components need to be assessed as to their quality and consistency with the stated mission of the program.

4.21 Common Curriculum Components. The common curriculum components shall enhance the student's values, knowledge, and skills to act ethically and effectively:

In the Management of Public Service Organizations, the components of which include:

- Human resources
- Budgeting and financial processes
- Information management, technology applications, and policy.

In the Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis, the components of which include:

- Policy and program formulation, implementation and evaluation
- Decision-making and problem-solving

With an Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment, the components of which include:

- Political and legal institutions and processes
- Economic and social institutions and processes
- Organization and management concepts and behavior

These area requirements do not prescribe specific courses. Neither do they imply that equal time should be spent on each area or that courses must all be offered by the public affairs, public policy or public administration programs. Nor should they be interpreted in a manner that might impede the development of special strengths in each program.

4.22 Additional Curriculum Components. Each program shall clearly define its objectives for additional work and the rationale for the objectives, and shall explain how the curriculum is designed to achieve those objectives. The statement of objectives shall include any program specializations or concentrations and the main categories of students to be served (e.g., pre-service, in-service, full-time, part-time).

If a program advertises its ability to provide preparation for a specialization or concentration in its catalog, bulletin, brochures, and/or posters, evidence shall be given that key courses in the specialization or concentration are offered on a regular basis by qualified faculty. Specialization or concentration courses may be offered by units other than the public affairs or administration program. The specialization and concentration courses shall not be substitutes for the common curriculum components.

4.23 General Competencies. The common and additional curriculum components

shall develop in students general competencies that are consistent with the program mission.

4.3 Minimum Degree Requirements. Students with little or no educational background or professional experience in the common and additional curriculum components are expected to devote the equivalent of two academic years of full-time study to complete the professional masters degree program. Where students have had strong undergraduate preparation in the common curriculum requirements or have been engaged in significant managerial activities, some of the subject matter requirements might be appropriately waived or reduced. Even in such cases, students ordinarily must spend the equivalent of a calendar year of full-time study in formal academic work, exclusive of an internship, to obtain the professional masters degree. A calendar year is defined as two semesters and a summer session at least eight weeks in duration or four quarters (exclusive of internship) of full-time academic work.

4.4 Internships. A carefully planned internship experience shall be made available by the program and students who lack a significant professional work background shall be strongly encouraged to take advantage of it. The program shall provide on-going academic supervision. Internship programs shall generally reflect NASPAA's internship guidelines.

5.0 The Faculty

5.1 Faculty Nucleus. There must be a faculty nucleus that accepts primary responsibility for the professional graduate program. This regular faculty should consist of a sufficient number of full-time faculty significantly involved with the program to support the set of teaching, research and service responsibilities appropriate to the size and structure of the program. In no case should this faculty nucleus be fewer than five (5) full-time persons. The institution should specify how each regular faculty member is involved in the teaching and related research and service aspects of the program. At least 50 percent of the courses offered in the curriculum as well as at least 50 percent of the courses covering the common curriculum components shall be taught by full-time faculty of the institution.

5.2 Professional Qualifications. At least 75 percent of the professional graduate program's full-time faculty should hold an earned doctorate or other equivalent terminal professional degree in their field. Any full-time faculty member lacking the terminal degree must have a record or outstanding professional or academic experience directly relevant to the faculty member's assigned responsibilities. Full-time faculty actively pursuing appropriate terminal degree are to be included in the 25 percent not holding a terminal degree.

5.3 Practitioner Involvement. The involvement of practitioners is integral to the activities of a professional masters degree program. The institution shall specify how it involves practitioners in its program.

Where practitioners teach courses, there shall be satisfactory evidence of the quality of

their academic qualifications, professional experience, and teaching ability.

5.4 Faculty Quality. In addition to the above, the qualitative adequacy of faculty members shall be demonstrated by their previous and current:

5.41 Instruction. Efforts to improve the instructional program, including student advisement, teaching methods, course content, and innovative curricula development;

5.42 Research. Research, writing, and publications;

5.43 Experience and Service. Professional experience and public service with government, industry, non-profit agencies, or consulting assignments.

5.5 Faculty Diversity. There should be evidence that specific plans are being implemented to assure the diversity of the composition of the faculty with respect to the representation of minorities, women, and persons with disabilities. Programs and plan to insure faculty diversity shall generally reflect NASPAA's Diversity Guidelines.

6.0 Admission of Students

6.1 Admission Goals and Standards. Admission goals, policy and standards, including academic prerequisites, should be clearly and publicly stated, specifying any differences for pre-service, in-service or other categories of students, and reflecting specific concern for the representation of minorities, women, and persons with disabilities. Programs and plans designed to insure student diversity shall generally reflect NASPAA's Diversity Guidelines.

6.2 Baccalaureate Requirement. Admission shall normally be limited to applicants with a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution and appropriately evaluated applicants from non-U.S. universities.

6.3 Admission Factors. Admission shall be limited to applicants showing good potential for success in professional graduate study and public service. Admission standards shall include several of the following factors about each applicant: (a) performance on the aptitude part of the Graduate Record Exam or the Graduate Management Admissions Test, or equivalent tests; (b) undergraduate grade point average and trend of grades; (c) rank in graduating class; and (d) biographical and career interest data and essays; and (e) evaluation of the quality of professional experience. These admissions standards should recognize the need for different measures to establish the criteria of excellence between pre-service and in-service students. Final judgment on admission shall be based on a combination of several of the above indicators rather than on a single criterion in order to increase the quality of professional personnel entering the public service.

7.0 Student Services

7.1 Advisement and Appraisal. Strong and continuous program advisement, career guidance, and progress appraisal shall be available for all students from the point of admission through graduation.

7.2 Placement Service. The program and/or the institution shall provide an adequate placement service oriented to public affairs and administration.

8.0 Supportive Services and Facilities

8.1 Budget. The program shall have financial resources sufficient to support its stated objectives.

8.2 Library Services. All students and faculty shall have reasonable access to library facilities and services that are recognized as adequate for master's level study in public affairs and administration. This would normally include texts, monographs, periodicals, serials, pamphlets, and research reports. The program faculty should have a major role in selecting library acquisitions for its program.

8.3 Supportive Personnel. Adequate secretarial and clerical personnel should be available to enable the program to meet its educational objectives.

8.4 Instructional Equipment. Program faculty and students should have access to appropriate equipment for coursework and research, including computer facilities, visual aid devices, audio and video tapes and films.

8.5 Faculty Offices. The offices for faculty should provide adequate space and privacy for student counseling, course preparation, and other faculty responsibilities.

8.6 Classrooms. Appropriate classrooms should be available for the courses being offered. This would normally include rooms suitable for seminars, case discussions, simulation exercises, and lectures.

8.7 Meeting Area. An appropriate area should be available for students and faculty to meet informally and discuss class projects, internship experiences, and other program matters.

9.0 Off-Campus and Distance Education

9.1 Definition and Scope

Off-campus and distance education programs are programs in which (a) students are located in facilities or at sites other than the main [parent] campus of the program, and/or

(b) the students do not engage regularly in face-to-face interaction with an instructor who is in physical proximity. Off-campus and distance education programs can satisfy legitimate educational needs. When they serve different missions, student populations, or utilize different educational technology or learning methods from the parent campus, however, the burden is on the program to provide adequate information that demonstrates:

- the extent to which educational offerings are consistent with and contribute to the mission; the extent to which assessment and guidance processes ensure the comparability of the education offered;
- the effects of these differences on students, faculty, administrators, systems, processes, and the allocation of program resources and, therefore;
- the effects of these differences on the education received by all students in the program seeking accreditation regardless of where they are located.

9.2 Program Mission, Assessment, and Guidance

The program shall present a statement of rationale that specifically addresses off-campus and distance education courses, sites, and programs and that explains how this rationale emerges from and contributes to the mission, goals, and objectives of the institution's MPA program. The rationale for off-campus and distance education offerings shall be based on the distinctive aspects of the student population to be served and regional needs. The rationale also shall demonstrate its contributions to the mission, goals, objectives of the program on the main (parent) campus.

9.3 Program Jurisdiction

The program shall explain how and by whom educational, student services, and administrative policies and practices relate to off-campus and distance learning courses, programs, sites, and arrangements are formulated, administered, and assessed, including how comparability is assured.

9.4 Curriculum

The core curriculum shall be comparable to the curriculum in the main campus (parent) program. The program shall demonstrate the pertinence of the curriculum design and educational technologies to the program's mission, assessment, and guidance processes as well as with educational goals of specific offerings; comparability of offerings and requirements; compatibility of the educational technology with course goals and content; and the nature and availability of academic supports.

9.5 Faculty

The faculty shall be comparable to the faculty in the main campus (parent) program. The program shall demonstrate how: the main campus faculty maintains control over planning, design, delivery, and assessment of curriculum, courses, and instructions; off-

campus and distance education offerings affect faculty workloads and assignments; instruction of off-campus and distance education courses is factored into the institution's retention, promotion, tenure, and merit review processes and decision criteria and; and policies and practices that promote faculty equity and diversity, and prohibit discrimination in off-campus and distance education, are comparable to those on the main campus.

9.6 Admission of Students

Admission standards, procedures and criteria shall be comparable to those used on the main campus.

9.7 Student Services

Students shall have access to academic and administrative support services that are comparable to student services available to students on the main campus.

9.8 Support Services and Facilities

Support services and facilities shall be comparable to those on the main campus. The program should identify contracts and arrangements that assure the on-going availability, access, and performance of services and facilities.

SECTION V. COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, the site visit team may commend the program on outstanding efforts and accomplishments and may recommend actions to strengthen the program. First, within the framework of peer review and accreditation (and without compromising the judgment to be made by COPRA), it is appropriate for the SVT to identify items that are well done or that are innovative in the field. This recognition of attainments and successes can add to the items covered in the review of standards. Second, the site visit team may develop recommendations or suggestions which it believes will strengthen the program. These recommendations should flow from the mission of the program (and should avoid personal views of how things should be done).

E. Guidelines for Writing the Final Report

In writing the final report, the authors must bear in mind that the applicant program administrators will be given the entire draft of the Site Visit Team's report at the same time that it is made available to the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation. The authors must clarify any factual questions raised by the Commission and go on to provide their own assessment of these facts. However, the Site Visit Team's report must stop short of making a final assessment of conformity versus non-conformity. That decision should be reserved for the Commission.

Section III of the final report should address the specific questions raised by the Commission in its interim report. Section IV should continue this item-by-item assessment by covering standards not specifically cited by the Commission in its interim report. A fine line may exist from time to time between reporting the facts, "assessing the facts" yet not making a final determination of conformity versus non-conformity. The following examples are designed to illustrate some of these distinctions.

Section III and IV Coverage: An Example. Standard 6.3 lists five factors to be taken into account in making an admissions decision. It states: "admission shall be limited to applicants showing good potential for success in professional graduate study and as practitioners..." This section should report on the distribution of undergraduate grade point averages observed in a sample of admissions files. This section would also report whether or not information relating to other criteria--e.g., professional goals and experience--was assembled and taken into account in the admission decision. For example, site visit notes relating to the admissions decision might read "average undergraduate GPA is slightly low (2.8), but records of applicants show good professional growth and an average of three years of experience." Thus, the general entry in this part of the report would be of the facts related to admissions procedures.

Continuing in their interpretation of these facts, the Site Visit Team might report that the persons making admissions decisions weighed all of the information carefully and admitted only persons with good potential for success. Conversely, the Site Visit Team might conclude that the admissions committee appeared to be too generous in its interpretation of non-academic supporting evidence, so that for all practical purposes the program operated on an open admissions basis. However, the site visit team should stop short at declaring the program either in or out of conformity--that final judgment is reserved to the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation.

To illustrate further, the Site Visit Team would report in a matter-of-fact style on the evidence relating to academic and professional experience of adjunct teachers. Whether or not these teachers as a group presented an image of excellence would be stated in the item-by-item analysis. However, if it were to be reported that 60 percent of all courses were taught by adjuncts, then the clear implication should be obvious to the Commission and the host institution, i.e., that the "no more than 50 percent" requirement of the standard was being violated. Again, the site visit team should stop short of making a final decision concerning conformity.

In addition, the Site Visit Team is reminded that when drafting the report, care should be taken to select a style of writing and an approach that emphasizes an impartial reporting of the evidence. Finally, it is worth repeating that the Site Visit Team will not recommend for or against listing the applicant program on NASPAA's roster of accredited programs in conformity with the standards.

Section V of the report should be one or two pages in length, and is devoted to developing a set of recommendations that the Site Visit Team believes will strengthen the program. These recommendations must be couched in terms of the NASPAA Standards

and not the public service philosophy of individual Site Visit Team members. Section V should capture the consultative dimension of the site visit process. It should reflect the genuine concern each visitor should have for the welfare and development of the host institution and its program(s). It is, however, clearly impossible for site visitors to become, in a couple of very busy days, as knowledgeable as are their host about special local influences which must be taken into account when policy and innovation are at issue.

In the event that the Site Visit Team is unable to reach consensus on a set of recommendations to strengthen the program, it is appropriate to report divergent recommendations, taking care that the recommendation is couched in terms of the NASPAA Standards and not the public service philosophy of the individual team members.

Accordingly, the Site Visit Team Report must be sensitive and tactful when specific solutions are advocated in those areas where improvement is deemed to be important.