NASPAA STANDARDS

Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation

Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS
For Master's degree programs

Adopted October 16, 2009 at the NASPAA Annual Business Meeting in Arlington, VA

Amended November 6, 2014 at the NASPAA Annual Business Meeting in Albuquerque, NM

Amended October 18, 2019 at the NASPAA Annual Business Meeting in Los Angeles, CA

Preconditions for Accreditation Review

A program applying for accreditation review must demonstrate in its Self-Study Report that it meets four preconditions. Because NASPAA wants to promote innovation and experimentation in education for public service, a program that does not meet the preconditions in a strictly literal sense, but which meets the spirit of these provisions, may petition for special consideration. Such petitions and Self-Study Reports must provide evidence that the program meets the spirit of the preconditions.

1.   Program Eligibility

Because an accreditation review is a program evaluation, eligibility establishes that the program is qualified for and capable of being evaluated. The institution offering the program should be accredited (or similarly approved) by a recognized regional, national, or international agency. The primary objective of the program should be professional education. Finally, the program should have been operating and generating sufficient information about its operations and outcomes to support an evaluation.

2.   Public Service Values

The mission, governance, and curriculum of an eligible program shall demonstrably emphasize public service values. Values are important and enduring beliefs, ideals and principles shared by members of a community about what is good and desirable and what is not. Public service values consist of the values that should guide public and nonprofit professionals. NASPAA's public service values are consistent with globally recognized sustainable development goals to build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. NASPAA's public service values include, but are not limited to: pursuing the public interest with accountability and transparency; serving professionally with competence, efficiency, and objectivity; acting ethically so as to uphold the public trust; cultivating global, regional, and local awareness; and promoting participation and inclusiveness by demonstrating respect, equity, and fairness in dealings with members of society, stakeholders, and fellow public servants. NASPAA expects an accreditable program to define the boundaries of the public service values it emphasizes, be they procedural or substantive, as the basis for distinguishing itself from other professional degree programs.

3.   Primary Focus

The degree program's primary focus shall be that of preparing students to be leaders,

managers, and analysts in public service, specifically the professions of public and nonprofit affairs, public administration, and public policy and only master's degree programs engaged in educating and training professionals for the aforementioned professions are eligible for accreditation. Variations in nomenclature regarding degree title are typical in the field of public service education. Related degrees in policy and management are eligible to apply, provided they can meet the accreditation standards, including advancing public service values and competencies. Specifically excluded are programs with a primary mission other than that of educating professionals in public and nonprofit affairs, administration, and policy (for example, programs in which public and nonprofit affairs, administration, and policy are majors or specializations available to students pursuing a degree in a related field).

4   Course of Study

Students should interact and collaborate extensively with faculty and each other, engage in hands on collaborative work, be socialized into the public service values of the profession, and be able to develop their interpersonal and communication skills through ample faculty observation and feedback. The normal expectation is that professional degrees in public service require at least 36 semester credit hours of study, or the equivalent. Programs departing from campus- centered education by offering distance learning, international exchanges, or innovative delivery systems must demonstrate that the intentions of this precondition are being achieved and that such programs are under the supervision of fully qualified faculty. This determination may include, but is not limited to, evidence of faculty of record, and communications between faculty and students.

Special Condition: Fast-tracking Programs that combine undergraduate education with a graduate degree in public service in a total of less than six academic years or the equivalent are not precluded from accreditation so long as they meet the criteria of an accredited graduate degree.

Special Condition: Dual Degrees Programs may allow a degree in public service to be earned simultaneously with a degree in another field in less time than required to earn each degree separately. All criteria of an accredited, professional, graduate degree in public service must be met and the electives allowed to satisfy requirements for the other degree must be appropriate as electives for a degree in public service.

Special Condition: Executive Education Programs may offer a degree in public service designed especially for college graduates who have had at least five years of cumulative experience in public service, including at least three years at the middle-to- upper level. The degree program

must demonstrate that its graduates have emerged with the universal competencies expected of a NASPAA-accredited program, as well as with the competencies distinctive to executive education.

Standard 1 Managing the Program Strategically

1.1 **Mission Statement: The program will have a statement of mission that guides performance expectations and their evaluation, including**

- **its purpose and public service values, given the program's particular emphasis on public service,**
- **the population of students, employers, and professionals the program intends to serve, and**
- **the contributions it intends to produce to advance the knowledge, research, and practice of public service.**

1.2 **Performance Expectations: The program will establish observable program goals, objectives, and outcomes, including expectations for student learning, consistent with its mission.**

1.3 **Program Evaluation: The program will collect, apply, and report information about its performance and its operations to guide the evolution of the program's mission and the program's design and continuous improvement with respect to standards two through seven.**

Standard 2 Matching Governance with the Mission

2.1 **Administrative Capacity: The program will have an administrative infrastructure appropriate for its mission, goals, and objectives in all delivery modalities employed.**

2.2 **Faculty Governance: An adequate faculty nucleus—at least five (5) full-time faculty members or their equivalent—will exercise substantial determining influence for the governance and implementation of the program.**

Standard 3 Matching Operations with the Mission: Faculty Performance

3.1 **Faculty Qualifications: The program's faculty members will be academically or professionally qualified to pursue the program's mission.**

3.2   **Faculty Diversity: The program will promote equity, diversity, and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, retention, and support of faculty members.**

3.3   **Research, Scholarship and Service: Program faculty members will produce scholarship and engage in professional and community service activities outside of the university appropriate to the program's mission, stage of their careers, and the expectations of their university.**

Standard 4 Matching Operations with the Mission: Serving Students

4.1   **Student Recruitment: The program will have student recruitment practices appropriate for its mission.**

4.2   **Student Admission: The program will have and apply well-defined admission criteria appropriate for its mission.**

4.3   **Support for Students: The program will ensure the availability of support services, such as curriculum advising, internship placement and supervision, career counseling, and job placement assistance to enable students to progress in careers in public service.**

4.4   **Student Diversity: The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, admissions practices, retention efforts, and student support services.**

Standard 5 Matching Operations with the Mission: Student Learning

5.1   **Universal Required Competencies: As the basis for its curriculum, the program will adopt a set of required competencies determined by its mission and public service values. The required competencies will include five domains: the ability**

- **to lead and manage in the public interest**
- **to participate in, and contribute to, the policy process;**
- **to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make evidence-informed decisions in a complex and dynamic environment;**
- **to articulate, apply, and advance a public service perspective;**
- **to communicate and interact productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large.**

5.2   **Mission-specific Required Competencies: The program will identify core competencies in other domains necessary and appropriate to implement its mission.**

5.3   **Mission-specific Elective Competencies: The program will define its objectives and competencies for optional concentrations and specializations.**

5.4   **Professional Competencies: The program will ensure that students apply their education, such as through experiential learning and interactions with practitioners across the broad range of public service professions and sectors.**

Standard 6 Matching Resources with the Mission

6.1   **Resource Adequacy: The program will have sufficient funds, physical facilities, and resources in addition to its faculty to pursue its mission, objectives, and continuous improvement.**

Standard 7 Matching Communications with the Mission

7.1   **Communications: The program will provide appropriate and current information about its mission, policies, practices, and accomplishments—including student learning outcomes--sufficient to inform decisions by its stakeholders such as prospective and current students; faculty; employers of current students and graduates; university administrators; alumni; and accrediting agencies.**