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 related to its mission and public service values. The required competencies will include five domains: the ability

- *to lead and manage in public governance;*
- *to participate in and contribute to the policy process;*
- *to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions;*
- *to articulate and apply a public service perspective;*
- *to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.*

5.2   Mission-specific Required Competencies: The program will identify core competencies in other domains that are 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 learn to apply their education, such as through experiential exercises and interactions with practitioners across the broad range of public affairs, administration, and policy professions and sectors.

Rationale:

An accredited program should implement and be accountable for delivering its distinctive, public service mission through the course of study and learning outcomes it expects its graduates to attain. The curriculum should demonstrate consistency and coherence in meeting the program's mission. While an accredited degree program must meet basic minimal performance criteria, NASPAA recognizes that programs may have different profiles with varying emphases. The program being reviewed should demonstrate how its curricular content matches the profile emphasized in its overall mission. Whatever competencies the program designs, the learning outcomes should reflect public service values. Programs should strive to assure that their students can apply to real world problems the concepts, tools, and knowledge they have learned.

Graduate competencies equip the student to demonstrate knowledge and understanding that is founded upon, extends and enhances that typically associated with the Bachelor's level, and provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and applying ideas. Students should be able to apply their knowledge, understanding and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader or multidisciplinary contexts related to public affairs, administration, and policy. They have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity. For example, they can formulate judgments with incomplete information, including reflection upon social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments.

Self-Study Instructions: Standard 5.1

Self-Study Instructions:

Consistent with **Standard 1.3 Program Evaluation**, the Program will collect and analyze evidence of student learning on the required competencies and use that evidence to guide program improvement. The intent is for each program to state what its graduates will know and be able to do; how the program assesses student learning; and how the program uses evidence of student learning for program improvement.

In preparing its SSR for Standard 5, the Program should consider the following basic question: does the program sustain high quality graduate educational outcomes? This question has three major parts:

- PART A: How does the program define what students are expected to know and to be able to do with respect to the required universal competencies and/or required/elective competencies in ways that are consistent with its mission?
- PART B: How does the program know how well its students are meeting faculty expectations for learning on the required (or other) competencies?
- PART C: How does the program use evidence about the extent of student learning on the required (or other) competencies for program improvement?

The program's answers to these three questions will constitute the bulk of the self-study narrative for Standard 5.

COPRA requests that programs submit within their Self Studies, a written plan or planning template that addresses how they plan to assess each competency, when they will be assessing each competency, who is responsible for assessing each competency, and what measures will be used to assess each competency. The plan may be articulated within the appropriate text boxes and questions below or uploaded as a pdf at the bottom of the online web form. The plan should be connected to the program's overall mission and goals and should be sustainable given the resources available to the program.

PART A. Defining competencies consistent with the mission

Section 5.1 Universal Required Competencies

Self-Study Narrative Section 5.1 addresses how the program defines what students are expected to know and to be able to do with respect to the required universal competencies in ways that are consistent with its mission.

Within the context of your program's mission, how does your program operationally define each of the universal required competencies (in this section you should be defining the competency not

providing examples of its assessment)?[1] Limit 500 words each.

To lead and manage in public governance

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To participate in and contribute to the public policy process

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To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions

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To articulate and apply a public service perspective

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To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

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Rationale:

Graduate level education should enable the student to demonstrate knowledge and understanding that is founded upon, extends, and enhances that typically associated with the bachelor's level, and provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and applying ideas. Graduate students should be able to apply their knowledge, understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments, and within broader or multidisciplinary contexts related to public affairs, administration, and policy. They should have the ability to deal with incomplete information, complexity, and conflicting demands. Graduate students should reflect upon social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments.

An accredited program should implement and be accountable for delivering its distinctive mission through the course of study it offers and through the learning outcomes it expects its graduates to attain. While all accredited degree programs must meet these standards, NASPAA recognizes that programs may have different missions with varying emphases. The curriculum should demonstrate consistency and coherence in meeting the program's mission. The program being reviewed should

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[1] A list of possible phrasing of competencies can be found in Appendix B.

demonstrate how its curricular content matches the emphasis of its overall mission.

5.0 Basic Assumption:

NASPAA intends the accreditation process under the new standards to be developmental, that is, to advance the public esteem for all the degree programs it accredits as well as to improve the educational effectiveness of each degree program. Programs that provide accurate information on student learning and student attainment of required competencies will not be held to an ideal standard of perfection. Rather, programs will be expected to demonstrate that they understand the competencies expected of graduates, that they have instituted teaching and learning methods to ensure that students attain these competencies, and, where evidence of student learning does not meet program expectations, that action has been taken to improve performance.

PART A:

5.1 Clarifying Examples:

> Program A's mission is to educate managers for state and local government. It lists at least one mission related learning objective under each of the five universal required competencies. Under "to participate in and contribute to the policy process," it lists two specific learning objectives: that students should be able to correctly interpret state policy when designing and delivering a local government program, and that students should be able to prepare memoranda describing the implications of state court rulings for local government. Program A is in conformance with Standard 5.1 for this competency.

> Program B's mission is to educate managers for international governmental and nongovernmental organizations. It lists learning objectives under each of the five universal required competencies. Under "to participate in and contribute to the policy process," it lists aligning regional and national programs with international treaty obligations. Under "to lead and manage in public organizations," it lists accommodating program operations to local customs and mores. Program B is in conformance with Standard 5.1 for this competency.

> Program C does not list any learning objectives under the competency of "to incorporate public service values into decisions." The other learning objectives listed are not consistent with the program's mission. Program C will need to justify how is in conformance with Standard 5.1.

> Program D operationally defines each required competency, however; these operational definitions do not relate to the program's mission. The program's mission states that it will "prepare students to work in local government". The program does not at any point when operationalizing the required competencies make reference to local government and the unique skills it is ensuring its student are getting to be prepared to work in that context. The program is not in compliance with Standard 5.1.

> Program E's mission is to educate effective leaders for the nonprofit sector. For each of the five universal required competency domains, it details specific learning objectives, which are assessed directly on a regular timeframe. For the domain "to lead and manage in public governance", the program operationalizes the student learning outcome "the student will demonstrate effective volunteer management skills, in support of achieving the nonprofit's mission." The program is in conformance with Standard 5.1 for this competency.

5.1 Basis of Judgment:

It is expected that all students in degree programs accredited by NASPAA will have the opportunity to develop skills on each of the five universal required competencies. The program shows that it requires the five universal competencies of public affairs, policy and administration and links them to the program mission. The program defines each of the required competencies in terms of at least one student learning objective (but there may be more than one). The emphasis that a particular program places on each of these competencies is consistent with its mission. An accredited program need not assess all competencies every year or cohort, but rather at a frequency appropriate for its mission and goals. However, assessing each competency only once during a seven year accreditation cycle would not likely be sufficient for conformance in most programs.

Self-Study Instructions: Standard 5.2

Section 5.2 Mission-Specific Required Competencies (if applicable)

Self-Study Narrative Section 5.2 addresses how the program identifies mission-specific required competencies that are deemed necessary and appropriate for its mission.

If your program offers any mission-specific competencies required of all students (beyond those competencies entered in 5.1 on universal competencies), then for each one offered please describe how it supports the program mission and state least one specific student learning outcome expected of all students in that required competency. (Limit 500 words) *If none, please state "none."*

5.2 Basic Assumption:

While not all programs will have them, mission-specific required competencies can reflect the unique mission of the program and identify what sets it apart from other programs.

5.2 Clarifying Examples:

> Program D prepares students to become public administrators and managers in border regions. The program requires students to demonstrate competency in one language other than English. The program justifies this mission-specific required competency in terms of its stated mission. Program D is in conformance with Standard 5.2 for this competency.

> Program E re-defined its mission to prepare students for high-level policy positions in the federal government. The program still requires students to demonstrate competency in municipal law through a series of three courses taught by a long-time professor. This program will need to justify why this mission-specific required competency is mandatory for all students or why the courses are required.

> Program F offers an executive MPA program. The program defines a mission-specific required competency as the ability to plan and carry out organizational change at an executive level, and defines the competency in terms of specific student learning outcomes. Program F is in conformance with Standard 5.2 for this competency.

5.2 Basis for Judgment:

The program states each mission-specific required competency and links them to the program mission. The program defines each of the mission-specific required competencies in terms of at least one student learning outcome (but there may be more than one). The emphasis that a particular program places on each of these competencies is consistent with its mission.

Self-Study Instructions: Standard 5.3

Section 5.3 Mission-Specific Elective Competencies (if applicable)

Programs are expected to demonstrate their capacity to offer the concentrations and specializations they advertise to students.

5.3.1   Discuss how the program's approach to concentrations/specializations (or broad elective coursework) derives from the program mission and contributes to overall program goals.

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5.3.2   Discuss how any advertised specializations/concentrations contribute to the student learning goals of the program.

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5.3.3   Describe the program's policies for ensuring the capacity and the qualifications of faculty to offer or oversee concentrations/specializations (or broad elective coursework).

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5.3.4   *Optional*: If the program would like to add any add any additional information about specializations to support the self-study report or provide a better understanding of the program's strategies (such as success of graduates, outcomes indicators, innovative practices, etc.) please do so here or upload an attachment. [upload]

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5.3 Basic Assumption:

While not all programs will have concentrations or specializations, mission-specific elective competencies can reflect the unique and/or specialized knowledge and expertise available to students in the program.

5.3 Clarifying Examples:

Program G has a mission focused on regional issues within its state and offers an international development concentration. The program does not indicate faculty with expertise in development, nor does it clearly articulate how this concentration relates to the program's mission. Most of the program's

graduates work in local and regional government positions within the program's state. This program has not yet demonstrated conformance with 5.3.

Program H offers students five concentrations related to its local government management mission. In addition to the main campus, the program is also offered at an off-campus downtown location to a cohort of fire and police professionals. The only specialization offered to this cohort is emergency management. The program provides clear information to the unique cohort as to the options available at that location and has policies in place to ensure that the students can graduate with their concentration in a timely manner. The program is in conformance with 5.3.

Program I has a wide array of faculty resources and lists multiple areas of student focus on its website. The program states in its Self Study Report that it does not have official specializations for purposes of accreditation. On the site visit, students complain that they do not have access to enough elective courses to complete their specializations and have worries about graduating on time. The program has not yet demonstrated conformance with 5.3.

Program J offers students the opportunity to design their own concentrations or take one offered in the university's urban planning department. The program provides clear information to students regarding how concentrations can be formed, including a limit on non-programmatic credit hours and syllabi oversight for any courses outside of the public administration department. In addition, the program maintains oversight over the approved courses for the urban planning concentration through a professor holding a dual appointment in both public administration and urban planning. The program is in conformance with 5.3.

5.3 Basis for Judgment:

The program articulates how elective offerings contribute to the achievement of program mission and goals. The program demonstrates that it has the capacity and properly qualified faculty to deliver all specializations or concentrations it offers to its students.

Self-Study Instructions: Standard 5, Part B

- **Part B: How does the program know how well its students are meeting faculty expectations for learning on the required (or other) competencies?**

The program is expected to engage in ongoing assessment of student learning for all universal required competencies and all mission-specific required competencies. The program does not need to assess student learning for every student, on every competency, every semester. However, the program should have a written plan for assessing each competency on a periodic basis.

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Basis for Judgment

At a minimum, the program has defined each universal required competency in terms of student learning outcomes. Over one accreditation cycle, the program will have completed all four stages of the assessment process for each universal required competency. An accredited program need not assess all competencies every year or cohort, but rather at a frequency appropriate for its mission and goals. However, assessing each competency only once during a seven year accreditation cycle would not likely be sufficient for conformance in most programs.

Basis for Judgment

At a minimum, the program has defined each mission-specific required competency in terms of student learning outcomes. Over one accreditation cycle, the program will have completed all four stages of the assessment process for each mission-specific required competency. An accredited program need not assess all competencies every year or cohort, but rather at a frequency appropriate for its mission and goals. However, assessing each competency only once during a seven year accreditation cycle would not likely be sufficient for conformance in most programs.

Self-Study Instructions: Standard 5, Part C

- Part C: How does the program use evidence about the extent of student learning on the required (or other) competencies for program improvement?

Universal Required Competencies: One Assessment Cycle

For the self-study narrative, the program should describe, for <u>one</u> of the required universal competencies, one complete cycle of assessment of student learning. That is, briefly describe 1) how the competency was defined in terms of student learning; 2) the type of evidence of student learning that was collected by the program for that competency, 3) how the evidence was analyzed, and 4) how the results were used for program improvement. *Note that while only one universal required competency is discussed in the self-study narrative, COPRA expects the program to discuss with the Site Visit Team progress on all universal competencies, subject to implementation expectations in COPRA's official policy statements.*
1. Definition of student learning outcome for the competency being assessed:
2. Evidence of learning that was gathered:
3. How evidence of learning was analyzed:
4. How the evidence was used for program change(s) or the basis for determining that no change was needed:

Mission-Specific Required Competencies: One Assessment Cycle

For the self-study narrative, the program should describe, for <u>one</u> of the mission-specific required competencies, one complete cycle of assessment of student learning. That is, briefly describe 1) how the competency was defined in terms of student learning; 2) the type of evidence of student learning that was collected by the program for that competency, 3) how the evidence was analyzed, and 4) how the results were used for program improvement.
1. Definition of student learning outcome for the competency being assessed:
2. Evidence of learning that was gathered:
3. How evidence of learning was analyzed:
4. How the evidence was used for program change(s) or the basis for determining that no change was needed:

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Basis for Judgment

The program demonstrates evidence of student attainment of the expected learning outcomes for the universal required competencies described in the self-study. (The SVT has auditing authority at NASPAA and may review any of the required universal competencies). The program shows that it collects direct evidence of student learning and analyzes the evidence in terms of faculty expectations. If the results of assessment do not meet faculty expectations, the program shows how it has used the results of assessment for program change to improve student learning.

Basis for Judgment

The program demonstrates evidence of student attainment of the expected learning outcomes for the mission-specific required competencies described in the self-study. (The SVT has auditing authority at NASPAA and may review any mission-specific required competencies). The program shows that it collects direct evidence of student learning and analyzes the evidence in terms of faculty expectations. If the results of assessment do not meet faculty expectations, the program shows how it has used the results of assessment for program change to improve student learning.

Self-Study Instructions: Standard 5.4

The program should provide information on how students gain an understanding of professional

practice.

Please describe, with respect to your mission, the most important opportunities available for students to interact with practitioners across the broad range of the public service profession. Be certain to indicate the relative frequency of each activity.

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5.4 Basic Assumption:

Practitioners make unique contributions to the educational program as role models, career advisors, and individuals who convey lessons from experience in public affairs, administration, and policy. The program should provide some opportunities for students to gain an understanding of and interact with practitioners across the broad range of professions and sectors associated with public affairs, administration, and policy. These may include client-based, field projects within regular courses; internships; instructors from the profession; guest speakers; ongoing relationships with public service employers; and so forth.

5.4 Clarifying Examples:

> Program J provides all students with four guest lecturers from the public sector during the required, semester-long introductory course. For the required policy analysis course, all students must work in groups to provide a policy analysis to a local government agency. An optional course in non-profits requires students to volunteer for 20 hours during the semester. All students are invited to social mixers with practitioners from the community. Program J is in conformance with Standard 5.4

> Program K offers a fully on-line MPA program. The courses consist of downloading and reading the materials, and then taking on-line exams or e-mailing papers in each subject. Students are widely distributed geographically and do not ever have to visit the campus. No internship is required.   The program advises students to "surf the web" for advice on professionalism. The program will need to justify how it meets the standard 5.4 with respect to professional competence. Program K does not appear to be in conformance with Standard 5.4

> In the past five years, Program L has not been able to hire any practitioner faculty due to

budget constraints. Given that the campus is not near an urban center, and suffers harsh weather conditions, it is difficult to get guest speakers to attend evening classes. There are no case studies, simulations, or group projects; no courses require the student to interview a public administrator or to shadow a public official. The program will need to justify how it meets the standard 5.4 with respect to professional competence, with practitioners from the community. Program L does not appear to be is in conformance with Standard 5.4

5.4 Basis for Judgment:

The program assures that all students will have at least one experiential learning exercise and/or interaction with practitioners. The program may indicate that additional opportunities are available to students but not required.

Glossary

Accountability: Having identifiable responsibility for making a decision or taking an action with the capacity to supply a justifying analysis or explanation.

Competencies: Expected skills, knowledge, aptitudes, and capacities. Student competencies must be defined by each program consistent with its mission. Goals to be considered when developing competencies can include, but are not limited to:

1. the extent to which the competencies contribute to a collective identity in education for public service, broadly defined;
2. the extent to which the competencies acknowledge and encourage diversity;
3. competencies should ensure that students will be capable of acting ethically and effectively in pursuit of the public interest.

Specialization: is used to refer to all advertised areas of emphases, whether they are called specializations, concentrations, foci, areas, cognates, etc.