Introduction to Student Learning Assessment

NASPAA Assessment Workshop

NASPAA Annual Conference, Washington DC

10/12/2013

Standard 5: Self-Study Instructions

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:

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 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.

5.1 Basis for 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.

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.

5.3 Basic Assumption:

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

5.3 Clarifying Examples:

> The mission of Program G is to prepare students for management and administrative positions in government and not-for-profit organizations. Program G offers a concentration in non-profit management. Students are required to demonstrate a working knowledge of government regulations regarding non-profits. Program G is in

conformance with Standard 5.3 for this competency.

Program H requires students to select one of three "specializations" offered by the program: non-profit; finance; or generalist. The program defines student learning outcomes for the non-profit and finance specializations but the not generalist. The program will need to state the competency expected of students in the generalist specialization.

5.3 Basis for Judgment:

The program states how each mission-specific option, track, concentration, or specialization is linked to program mission and provides at least one example of a student competency for each option. The options or specializations offered are consistent with the program's mission.

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.

PART B:

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.

Basis for Judgment

At a minimum, the program has defined each mission-specific elective 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 elective 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.

PART C:

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.

Basis for Judgment

The program demonstrates evidence of student attainment of the expected learning outcomes for the mission-specific elective competencies described in the self-study. (The SVT has auditing authority at NASPAA and may review any mission-specific elective 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.

Examples Of Defined Competencies

Have the programs identified specific, observable behaviors in its definition? Are these competencies as defined measurable? Which appear to be well defined? Not well defined?

To articulate and apply a public service perspective:

- Embody a sense of service, ethics, responsibility, vision, integrity, competence and efficiency in all tasks
- Understand institutions and processes of political oversight
- Identify specific strategies to enhance equity and representativeness in the public sector
- Take responsibility for their decisions
- Think critically about both short-term and long-term actions
- Able to balance competing values and articulate which public(s) are advantaged or disadvantaged by emphasizing certain values over others

Leading and managing in public governance:

- Capacity to understand accountability/ democratic theory
- Capacity to understand the governance structures of government, non-profits and for-profits
- Capacity to identify and eventually manage public, private, non-profit collaboration/overcome

conflicts
- Capacity to understand and apply administrative authority (top down/bottom up/lateral)
- Capacity to apply knowledge of system dynamics and network frameworks in PA practice
- To lead and manage in public governance is defined in terms of student learning as follows:
- Students will demonstrate normative knowledge of the principles of leadership and management.
- Students will possess the ability to exercise a balance between formulating and articulating an accountable, effective vision of practice.
- Students will exhibit strong public service values (as described in our operational definition of this competency) when participating in experiential learning activities.
- Demonstrate leadership behavior through application of organizational and managerial theories.
- To appreciate the complexities of decision making within public service
- Identify effective leadership in practice
- Describe superior performance of a diverse workforce and the contribution to this of managerial action and institutional supports.
- Identify and discuss the role of public leaders toward recognizing and instituting the principles of democratic governance in public organizations and community-based initiatives.
- Develop expertise on local government.
- Develop an ability to lead within multiple networks of stakeholders.
- Reinforce democratic principles and practices.
- Produce consensus among diverse stakeholders.
- Model the skills and power of leadership, including transformational, transactional, and servant.

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

- Develop ability to recognize, consider, respect, and balance competing majority and minority perspectives related to administration and policy
- Communicating the results of analysis to diverse audiences verbally and/or in writing
- Ability to think critically regarding the ethical implications of policy and administrative choices with respect to multiple groups and stakeholders
- Ability to work effectively as a member of a diverse group in both a leader and follower role

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

- Assessing, analyzing, and evaluating the key elements of a problem, issue, or situation; understanding the parts of system as well as the whole
- Framing issues clearly, directly, and coherently
- Seeking, organizing, assimilating, synthesizing, and using information, including recognizing trends, patterns, and generalizations
- Developing well structured, logical, systematic, and accurate responses that 1) examine and analyze the application and relationship of management policies to the contemporary economic, political, and social institutions and ethical dilemmas faced in today's society, and 2) exhibit a knowledge of traditional behaviors, values, individuals and concepts associated with public administration and incorporating those into

responses and proposals
- Using traditional pubic administration mechanisms (e.g., the budget, human resource plans) to analyze proposals, critically assess costs and benefits, determine viability, and make and evaluate choices.
- Students utilize analytical and statistical tools to collect, analyze, and interpret data.
- Students apply the legal context of public and nonprofit administration.
- Students synthesize information in order to address problems and make decisions in response to those problems.
- Students recognize ethical problems and are sensitive to the nuances and ambiguities of ethical situations.
- Ability to choose/select and apply/implement an appropriate data collection methodology given the resource constraints of a small local or nonprofit organization

To Participate in and Contribute to the Policy Process

- Ability to take a community based problem through the policy process (Given our mission we are working from the small "p" use of the word policy to include administrative and organizational policies)
- Identify and explain the institutional, structural, and political contexts of policy making;
- Identify and explain the policymaking process, including problem definition, agenda setting, policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation;
- Incorporate interest groups, executive-legislative relationships, judicial decision-making, and the media in the policy process;
- Understand and apply the legal context of public affairs, administration, and policy

Exercises

State your programs mission:

Universal Competency:

Define mission-specific competencies: What types of behaviors/ skills would a professional/student with this competency exhibit in the context of your mission?

Establish measures: What specific direct (and indirect) measures would you use to evaluate the above competency?

Collect Data: What data would you collect as a result of the above measures? How can you strengthen existing evaluation tools?

Analyze Data: How would you use the data to impact the program? How would you close the feedback loop? What can you assess given your evaluation tools?

Introduction to Learning Assessment
Evaluation

We ask you take a moment to respond to the following statements:

On a scale of 1-5 with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, please circle the number that best expresses your opinion.

1. I found this session to be useful in improving my comfort level with Standard 5.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I found this session to be useful in improving my understanding of defining the universal competencies.

1 2 3 4 5

3. What did you find most useful about this session?

4. What did you find least useful about this session?

5. Please write any additional comments, suggestions, or questions here: