

Standards for Accreditation

(including provisions for graduate program reviews, shown in red)

NOTE: the changes shown in red will go into effect for self-studies in the 2005 – 2006 academic year. They will go into effect for accreditation reviews starting in 2006 – 2007.

Accrediting Standards

Institutional uniqueness:

The Accrediting Council does not define specific curricula, courses or methods of instruction. It recognizes that each institution has its unique situation, mission and resources, and this uniqueness is an asset to be safeguarded. The Council judges programs against the objectives that units and institutions set for themselves and against the standards that the Council sets forth for preparing students for professional careers in journalism and mass communications.

Format for each standard:

Statement of the Basic Principle of the Standard

Indicators

Units should demonstrate that they meet the expectations defined for each of the indicators. However, the site team may recommend a waiver of the expectations for any indicator if the unit provides a compelling reason for the waiver. In such cases, the team must provide justification in the site report for its decision as part of its discussion of the standard. Visit teams will not state compliance/non-compliance for each individual indicator, but will state compliance/non-compliance for each standard as is currently done.

Units that are requesting evaluation of their professional master's program(s) are expected to demonstrate how those graduate programs meet all appropriate indicators.

Evidence

The indicators for each standard describe forms of documentation and evidence. The unit should include this documentation in its self-study report. The site team will supplement this evidence by inspection of the facilities and equipment, by observation of the activities of the unit, by meetings and interviews with university administrators and faculty from other units and with unit faculty, staff and students, and by calls to professionals who hire the unit's students as interns and full-time employees.

The list of evidence for each standard is only a guide to possible forms of evidence.

1. Mission, Governance and Administration

The policies and practices of the unit ensure that it has an effectively and fairly administered working and learning environment.

Indicators:

- (a) The unit has a mission statement and engages in strategic or long-range planning that provides vision and direction for its future, identifies needs and resources for its mission and goals and is supported by university administration outside the unit. **A professional graduate program must have a separate mission statement and designated administrative oversight for that program.**
- (b) The unit has policies and procedures for substantive faculty governance that ensure faculty oversight of educational policy and curriculum.
- (c) The unit's administration provides effective leadership within the unit and effectively represents it in dealings with university administration outside the unit and constituencies external to the university.
- (d) The institution and/or the unit defines and uses a process for selecting and evaluating its administrators.
- (e) Faculty, staff and students have avenues to express concerns and have them addressed.

Evidence:

- A mission statement
- A strategic or long-range plan
- **Documents demonstrating administrative oversight for the professional graduate program**
- A faculty policy manual, handbook or other document specifying the roles of faculty in governance and the development of educational policy
- Minutes of faculty meetings, committee meetings and reports
- Assessment of unit administrator by faculty and by administration outside the unit
- Files on searches and hiring decisions
- Files on concerns and complaints

2. Curriculum and Instruction

The unit provides a curriculum and instruction that enable students to learn the knowledge, competencies and values the Council defines for preparing students to work in a diverse global and domestic society.

Professional Values and Competencies:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to communications;

- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Units requesting evaluation of a graduate program must also demonstrate how their master's graduates attain this additional core competency:

- **contribute to knowledge appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.**

Indicators:

- (a) The unit requires that students take a minimum of 80 semester credit hours or 116 quarter credit hours outside of the unit and a minimum of 65 semester credit hours or 94 quarter credit hours in the liberal arts and sciences (as defined by the institution) outside of the unit. ACEJMC expects at least 95 percent of the graduating classes in the two academic years preceding an accreditation visit to meet this requirement.
ACEJMC requires each unit seeking initial accreditation to include in its self-study report the number of semester or quarter hours taken in non-journalism and mass communications and in liberal arts, sciences and social sciences by all members of each graduating class in the two academic years before an initial accreditation visit.
Units seeking re-accreditation must determine the percentage of students meeting the 80/65 or 116/94 requirement, but they are not required to provide a full census of classes.
- (b) The unit provides a balance between theoretical and conceptual courses and professional skills courses to achieve the range of student competencies listed by the Council.
- (c) Instruction is demanding and current; achievements in teaching and learning are recognized and valued.
- (d) Student-faculty classroom ratios facilitate effective teaching and learning in all courses; a student-teacher ratio of 15-1 in skills and laboratory sections is strongly recommended and the ratio in each section should not exceed 20-1.
- (e) The unit advocates and encourages opportunities for internship and other professional experiences outside the classroom and supervises and evaluates them when it awards academic credit.
Schools may award academic credit for internships in fields related to journalism and mass communications, but credit should not exceed one semester course (or its equivalent) if the internship is away from the institution, and, for the most part, supervised by media professionals rather than academics.

Students may take up to two semester courses (or their equivalent) at an appropriate professional organization where the unit can show ongoing and extensive dual supervision by the unit's faculty and professionals. Students may take up to three semester courses (or their equivalent) at a professional media outlet owned and operated by the institution where full-time faculty are in charge and where the primary function of the media outlet is to instruct students.

Evidence:

- Student records and transcripts
- Unit bulletins and brochures
- Syllabi and other course materials
- Records of teaching awards and citations, curricular and course development grants, attendance at teaching workshops, and publications and papers on teaching
- Class rosters
- Records and statistics on and evaluations of internships, with and without academic credit

For units requesting evaluation of a professional graduate program:

Indicator:

At least half of the required credit hours must be in professional skills courses that are appropriate to professional communication careers.

Evidence:

- **Course syllabi and other documents demonstrating that the unit has a professional graduate curriculum that prepares master's degree graduates for significant professional careers that provide leadership and influence.**
- **Undergraduate student records and transcripts demonstrating student experience equivalent to liberal arts education.**

3. Diversity and Inclusiveness

The unit has a diverse and inclusive program that serves and reflects society.

Indicators:

- (a) The unit has a written plan for achieving an inclusive curriculum, a diverse faculty and student population, and a supportive climate for working and learning and for assessing progress toward achievement of the plan.
- (b) The unit's curriculum fosters understanding of issues and perspectives that are inclusive in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation.
- (c) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to recruit women and minority faculty and professional staff and provides an environment that supports their retention, progress and success.
- (d) The unit demonstrates effective efforts to help recruit and retain a student population reflecting the diversity of the population eligible to enroll in institutions of higher education in the region or population it serves, with special attention to recruiting under-represented groups.

- (e) The unit has a climate that is free of harassment and discrimination, accommodates the needs of those with disabilities, and values the contributions of all forms of diversity.

Accreditation site visit teams will apply this standard in compliance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

Evidence:

- A written plan
- Syllabi and other course materials
- Records and statistics on faculty and staff hiring and on promotion and tenure decisions
- Records and statistics on student recruitment, retention and graduation
- Records on part-time and visiting faculty and speakers

4. Full-Time and Part-Time Faculty

The unit hires, supports and evaluates a capable faculty with a balance of academic and professional credentials appropriate for the unit's mission.

Indicators:

- (a) The unit has written criteria for selecting and evaluating the performance of all full-time and part-time faculty and instructional staff.
- (b) Full-time faculty have primary responsibility for teaching, research/creative activity and service.
- (c) Credentials of the unit's faculty represent a balance of professional and scholarly experience and expertise kept current through faculty development opportunities, relationships with professional and scholarly associations, and appropriate supplementation of part-time and visiting faculty. **Faculty teaching in the graduate program must meet the criteria for graduate instruction at that university.**
- (d) The unit regularly evaluates instruction, using multiple measures that include student input.
- (e) The faculty has respect on campus for its university citizenship and the quality of education that the unit provides.

Evidence:

- Faculty and staff manuals or relevant policy procedural documents
- Vitae for full-time and part-time faculty
- Course evaluations and other methods of determining teaching effectiveness
- Evaluation process for annual review of faculty contributions and performance
- Search and hiring records

For units requesting evaluation of a professional graduate program:

- **Faculty vitae that demonstrate a clearly defined graduate faculty who meet the criteria for graduate instruction at that university**

5. Scholarship: Research, Creative and Professional Activity

With unit support, faculty members contribute to the advancement of scholarly and professional knowledge and engage in scholarship (research, creative and professional activity) that contributes to their development.

Indicators:

- (a) The unit requires, supports and rewards faculty research, creative activity and/or professional activity.
- (b) The unit specifies expectations for research, creative activity and/or professional activity in criteria for hiring, promotion and tenure.
- (c) Evaluation criteria for promotion, tenure and merit recognition account for and acknowledge activities appropriate to faculty members' professional as well as scholarly specializations.
- (d) Faculty members communicate the results of research, creative and/or professional activity to other scholars, educators and practitioners through presentations, productions, exhibitions, workshops and publications appropriate to the activity and to the mission of the unit and institution.
- (e) The unit fosters a climate that supports intellectual curiosity, critical analysis and the expression of differing points of view.

Evidence:

- Faculty guides or manuals on tenure and promotion
- Records of sabbatical and other leaves, travel funds and grant support
- Records on faculty promotion, tenure and other forms of recognition
- Faculty vitae and unit reports on research and creative and professional activities

6. Student Services

The unit provides students with the support and services that promote learning and ensure timely completion of their program of study.

Indicators:

- (a) Faculty and/or professional advising staff ensure that students are aware of unit and institutional requirements for graduation and receive career and academic advising.
- (b) Faculty are available and accessible to students.
- (c) The unit keeps students informed about the activities, requirements and policies of the unit.
- (d) The unit and the institution provide students with extra-curricular activities and opportunities that are relevant to the curriculum and develop their professional as well as intellectual abilities and interests.
- (e) The unit gathers, maintains and analyzes enrollment, retention, graduation rates and other aggregate information for improving student services and reducing barriers to student success.

Evidence:

- Student records, transcripts and files
- Advising guides, manuals, newsletters and internal communication
- Statistics on enrollment, scholarships, retention and graduation
- Examples of student media and information about student professional organizations

For units requesting evaluation of a professional graduate program:

- **Documents and records demonstrating that the graduate program has appropriate admissions and retention policies.**

7. Resources, Facilities and Equipment

The unit plans for, seeks and receives adequate resources to fulfill and sustain its mission.

Indicators:

- (a) The unit has a detailed annual budget for the allocation of its resources that is related to its long-range, strategic plan.
- (b) The resources that the institution provides are fair in relation to those provided other units.
- (c) The facilities of the unit enable and promote effective scholarship, teaching and learning.
- (d) The institution and the unit provide faculty and students with equipment or access to equipment to support its curriculum and the research, creative and professional activities of the faculty.
- (e) The institution and the unit provide sufficient library and information resources to support faculty and student research and professional development.

Evidence:

- A detailed budget
- Inspection tour of the library, facilities and equipment

8. Professional and Public Service

The unit advances journalism and mass communication professions and fulfills its obligations to its community, alumni and the greater public.

Indicators:

- (a) The unit is actively engaged with alumni, professionals and professional associations to keep curriculum and teaching current and to promote the exchange of ideas.
- (b) The unit provides leadership in the development of high standards of professional practice through such activities as offering continuing education, promoting professional ethics, evaluating professional performance and addressing communication issues of public consequence and concern.
- (c) The unit contributes to the improvement of journalism and mass communication as academic disciplines by supporting the faculty's involvement in academic associations and related activities.

- (d) The unit contributes to its communities through service projects, internship and job placements, and faculty involvement in civic activities related to journalism and mass communication.
- (e) The unit supports scholastic journalism through such activities as faculty workshops, visiting lectures and critiques of student work.

Evidence:

- Faculty vitae
- Unit records, brochures and publications of public service activities related to its mission and strategic plan
- Alumni newsletters, surveys, reunions and other activities
- Travel and other support for faculty involvement in academic and professional organizations
- Information about courses and services available to professionals and the public

9. Assessment of Learning Outcomes

The unit regularly assesses student learning and uses results to improve curriculum and instruction.

Indicators:

- (a) The unit defines the goals for learning that students must achieve, including the “Professional Values and Competencies” of this Council. (See 2. Curriculum and Instruction .)
- (b) The unit has a written assessment plan that uses multiple direct and indirect measures to assess student learning.
- (c) The unit maintains contact with its alumni to assess their experiences in the professions and to gain feedback for improving curriculum and instruction.
- (d) The unit includes members of journalism and mass communication professions in its assessment process.
- (e) The unit collects and reports data from its assessment activities and uses the data to improve curriculum and instruction.

Evidence:

- A written statement on competencies
- A written assessment plan
- Alumni newsletters, surveys, reunions and other activities
- Records on information collected from multiple measures of assessment and on the application of this information to course development and improvement of teaching

For units requesting evaluation of a professional graduate program:

- **Outcomes appropriate to a professional graduate program could include: a professional project, thesis or comprehensive exam that demonstrates that graduate students have developed analytical and critical thinking abilities appropriate to the profession.**