

ACEJMC ASCENT

NEWSLETTER OF THE ACCREDITING COUNCIL ON EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATIONS

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New standards approach finish line

The Council plans to adopt this fall the most extensive revision of its accrediting standards in nearly 20 years.

At its May meeting, Council members received a revised draft of the new standards from Trevor Brown, chair of the committee charged with revising the standards. Brown is dean, School of Journalism, Indiana University. The new draft took into account comments and reactions the committee received after publicizing the previous draft.

Substantive issues raised

Brown said the committee had received just a dozen responses, which its members interpreted to imply widespread satisfaction with the proposed revisions. Nonetheless, he said some of the responses raised broad issues, and he asked for the Council's reactions to these.

One issue was whether the standards should contain special provisions for differences among schools. Examples are public vs. private schools; small vs. large schools; schools with an easily defined regional service area vs. those with a national draw, more competitive admission and high tuition; the special mission of Historically Black Colleges and Universities; or foreign universities.



Council members Don Flores, Alison Alexander and Jackie Jones study the most recent draft of revised standards at the May meeting in San Jose.

The Council agreed that the standards should be so basic that they apply to all schools. Members pointed out that the indicators attached to each new standard included some flexibility, allowing units to present their own evidence of compliance.

Diversity, scholarship, distance education, internships

Brown said some respondents questioned whether the Council should adopt an expanded definition of diversity or retain focus on the original purpose of the diversity standard. The Council agreed that the standard should retain its primary focus on representation of women and minorities in faculties, student bodies and curricula.

Brown asked how the standard on scholarship and creative and professional activity should accommodate schools with a heavy emphasis on teaching and service. The Council agreed it should retain an expectation of all schools for a level of scholarly and professional activity that fits the school's mission and teaching loads. Members pointed out that, in practice, even schools that cite a primary focus on teaching and service retain an expectation of some scholarly and professional activity in promotion and tenure reviews.

The Council agreed with a suggestion to drop specific references to distance education. Brown said it was probably unnecessary to single out any form of curricular

→ See "New standards," page 4

New standards: the schedule

Discussions at ACEJMC convention

ACEJMC session
(Barnes, Brown, Ceppos, Shaw)
10 – 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday, July 30
Teaching Standards Committee session
7 – 8 a.m.
Thursday, July 31

Adoption by Council
September 2003

New standards become effective
September 2004

New standards applied in visits
2005 – 2006 academic year

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See also: "The new standards," p. 2

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Graduate reviews reviewed

After discussion at its May meeting of a revised draft of methods and criteria for the review of professional graduate programs, the Council seeks a volunteer.

For now, the approach to graduate program reviews remains unchanged. But assuming the Council adopts new evaluation criteria for master's programs next year, the Council hopes to find a school willing to serve as a test case for the new criteria during the 2004 – 2005 academic year.

Members in May reviewed a report from the Graduate Program Review Committee. This document included

editing changes from the previous version and made a stronger emphasis on the building of knowledge.

Mary Ann Ferguson, chair of the committee, said the members thought the Council's already-adopted core competencies for undergraduate education, and most of the indicators proposed for the new standards, should also serve as criteria for reviews of graduate programs. She said that, since the Council had not adopted the new undergraduate standards and indicators, it would be premature to propose their adoption at the graduate level.

The background

The committee has been wrestling with graduate program review for more than two years. The Council in May 2002 decided to direct site visit teams to make separate evaluations of compliance with each standard for graduate and undergraduate programs, and to make separate recommendations of accrediting status at the two levels. However, this policy was suspended until the Council approved criteria for evaluation of master's programs.

The other members of the committee are Will Norton, John Soloski and George Thottam.

The new standards: history and background

In September 2000, the Council adopted a rewritten set of principles of accreditation, which implied changes in the standards. President Jerry Ceppos appointed a committee to examine and revise the standards. He also directed the committee to simplify and streamline the standards.

The committee first tackled the curriculum standard, because the new principles clearly called for revision of this standard. The Council adopted a revised version of this standard in September 2001. The revision incorporated references to the knowledge, values and competencies defined in the principles and changed the 90/65 provision to 80/65.

In May 2002, the committee presented to the Council

a first-draft restatement of the remaining standards, without explanatory sections or lists of evidence. By combining the topics of several pairs of standards, this draft reduced the current 12 standards to nine. It also added one entirely new standard devoted to assessment of learning outcomes.

In September 2002, the committee delivered a draft complete with indicators and evidence items. The Council adopted this draft for discussion and distributed it widely. It was discussed at the winter meeting of ACEJMC/ASJMC, and committee members also received comment privately.

At its May 2003 meeting, the Council accepted a new version of the draft, which had been revised in response

to comments. See "New standards: the schedule," p. 1, for the remaining steps in the revision process.

Standards Review Committee

Trevor Brown (chair), dean, School of Journalism, Indiana University; Beth Barnes, director, School of Journalism and Telecommunications, University of Kentucky; Steve Geimann, team leader, U.S. Politics and Policy Team, Bloomberg News; Sandra Keyes, editor, The Honolulu Advertiser; Lana Rakow, professor, School of Communications, University of North Dakota; and Hampden Smith, head, Department of Journalism and Mass Communications, Washington and Lee University.

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Fall meeting to address more topics than new standards

The agenda for the Council's fall meeting is filling rapidly. The meeting will be Sept. 5 – 6 at the Michigan Ave. Westin Hotel, Chicago.

The lead item will be final consideration and adoption of a set of new standards. See "New standards," p. 1, for more information.

Some additional proposals could structure the Council's assessments more clearly; others could change the period of accreditation.

Raise the bar

The new standards total nine compared to the current 12. Council members and others have pointed out that, with fewer standards, non-compliance with any standard might carry more weight than in the past. Partly in response to this observation, members agreed to discuss in September proposals for policies that would more clearly define the Council's response to non-compliance findings.

One proposal calls for schools undergoing accreditation reviews for the first time to demonstrate compliance with all standards. Currently, new schools frequently are accredited despite non-compliance with one or two standards. Council members have pointed out that, by bringing schools with noncompliances into the system, the Council may undercut its ability to encourage improvement in these schools.

Another proposal calls for schools found out of compliance with the same standard in two consecutive reviews, for essentially the same reason, to be presumed to receive provisional accreditation. Currently, the visit team evaluates the school's response to the previous accreditation review findings, and teams usually highlight repeated non-compliances, but policies do not suggest any specific response. As with the previous suggestion, Council members expressed concern that the Council might be weakening its own influence.

Lengthen the period

Two proposals concern the period of accreditation. One would extend the period of accreditation to eight years from the current six. This proposal was made in the interest of minimizing the burden of accreditation and bringing the Council more in line with the practices of other agencies.

The other proposal would change the term of provisional accreditation to two years, allowing the school the option to schedule the revisit after one year. Current policy states that provisional accreditation can last only one year. This proposal is intended to recognize that some weaknesses, while not serious enough to prompt denial of accreditation, cannot be addressed effectively within a single year. Some Council members are concerned that schools sometimes are removed from provisional and fully accredited when they have made progress but have not fully addressed weaknesses.

Council elects new Committee members

The Council in May elected two new members, and re-elected three current members, to three-year terms on the Accrediting Committee.

New members are **Karen Brown Dunlap**, dean of faculty and president-elect, Poynter Institute, St. Petersburg, Fla.; and **Paul S. Voakes**, dean-designate, School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Colorado.

Re-elected members are **Kathleen Kelly**, chair, public relations department, College of Journalism and Communications, University of Florida; **Wanda Lloyd**, executive director, Freedom Forum Diversity Institute, Vanderbilt University; and **James Spaniolo**, dean, College of Communication Arts and Sciences, Michigan State University.

That's a wrap: team training program

Even good things must pass, and one of the Council's most successful recent initiatives has ended.

The Council conducted the last in its series of site team training sessions in Portland, Ore., in April. The 34 trainees, including 14 professional practitioners, raised the total trained to 169. Nearly half the total, 75, were practicing professionals. A major goal of the training program was to increase the number of professionals prepared to participate in site visits.

The sessions began in 2000, and about 35 people who attended a session have since served on site teams. Team chairs have said they see the difference.

"These people came in as if they had been on three or four visits," Doug Anderson said. He is dean, College of Communications, Pennsylvania State University, and has served as team chair on 15 of his 18 site visits.



Tom Griscom, left, executive editor, *Chattanooga Times Free Press*, listens as facilitator Jannette Dates explains a point in a case study at the training session in Portland. Dates is dean, School of Communications, Howard University.

The training effort was supported by a three-year, \$300,000 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. The original plan called for four sessions, but the grant proved sufficient to support five. Two sessions were in Portland, two in Arlington, Va., and one in San Diego.

New standards, continued

delivery, especially because the regional accrediting agencies are examining distance education.

Another comment suggested dropping the current limits on internship credit hours. This idea assumed that the Council's defined competencies and values and the required assessment of student learning would in themselves inhibit schools from allowing excessive credit in internships. The Council rejected this idea for the time being, although some members said a few years' experience with the new standards might allow for reconsideration.

Ethics on the table

The Council asked Brown to strengthen references to ethics education in the list of competencies. This concern was prompted by recent revelations of ethical lapses on the part of reporters at nationally prominent newspapers.

Calendar

September 5 – 6, 2003
Accrediting Council
Michigan Avenue Westin Hotel
Chicago

March 13 – 14, 2004
Accrediting Committee
Michigan Avenue Westin Hotel
Chicago

April 30 – May 1, 2004
Accrediting Council
Lippmann House,
Nieman Foundation
Cambridge, Mass.

In brief

Diversity book

The Council will send a free copy of the diversity best-practices book to accredited schools, its member organizations and other professional organizations. Additional copies may be ordered for \$4 each.

Newsletter to web-only distribution

The Council plans to convert this newsletter to a Web-only document and cease printing paper copies. Current recipients will be notified by e-mail when a new issue is posted.

ACCRED-L list discontinued

The Council has shut down its e-mail discussion list, ACCRED-L, because of lack of participation. The list has never caught on, and the most recent posting was more than two years ago.

Member and program updates

National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association

The Accrediting Council voted in May to accept the membership application of the NLGJA. **Robert Dodge** will represent the 1,100-member organization on the Council. He is national economics correspondent at The Dallas Morning News and immediate past president of NLGJA.

American Advertising Federation

The AAF has discontinued its membership on the Council.

Public Relations Society of America

John Paluszek, senior counsel, Ketchum, has replaced **Isobel Parke** as Council representative of PRSA. He has held numerous offices in PRSA, including the national presidency.

Accreditation decisions

The Council accredited four new schools, provisionally accredited one new school, provisionally re-accredited three schools and re-accredited 18 schools at its May meeting in San Jose, Calif.

The Council now accredits 107 programs in the United States and outside the country.

Initial accreditation

Department of Journalism, University of Connecticut; Department of Mass Communication, Iona College; Department of Mass Communication, Southwest Texas State University

Initial accreditation after removal of provisional accreditation

Department of Journalism and Mass Media Studies, Hofstra University

Initial provisional accreditation

Department of Communications, University of Southern Indiana

Provisional re-accreditation

Department of Journalism, Baylor University; Department of Mass Communications, Jackson State University; Department of Contemporary Media and Journalism, University of South Dakota

Re-accreditation

College of Communication and Information Sciences, University of Alabama; Department of Journalism, University of Alaska - Fairbanks; School of Communication, American University; College of Communication, Arkansas State University; Department of Communications, Brigham Young University; Department of Communications, California State University - Fullerton; Department of Journalism, Central Michigan University; School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Florida International University; School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Kent State University; School of Journalism and Telecommunications, University of Kentucky; W. Page Pitt School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Marshall University; School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of North Carolina; Department of Journalism, Northwestern State University; Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Oklahoma; School of Journalism, University of Texas; Journalism Program in the Department of Communication, University of Washington; Department of Mass Communication, Winthrop University; Communication and Journalism Department, University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire

Accreditation lapsed

Department of Communication and Journalism, University of New Mexico