

Revised standards sent for response



Trevor Brown, chair of the Committee on Standards and Assessment, discusses the draft of new standards at the September meeting with Council members Isobel Parke, left, and Peggy Dotson.

The Council at its September meeting unanimously approved a draft version of new standards that incorporate the most sweeping changes in the standards since the previous full review of standards in 1995 – 1996.

It's important to emphasize that the document the Council accepted was a draft to send to schools and member organizations, and that numerous steps remain before the new standards become effective.

In developing the draft, the Committee on Standards and Assessment reduced the overall number of standards to nine from 12. No area of consideration has been dropped altogether; the reduction was accomplished by combining several pairs of

topics into single standards. The draft creates one entirely new standard devoted to assessment of learning outcomes.

In addition to that standard, the draft standards throughout place a greater emphasis on the assessment of outcomes than do the current standards. Consideration of distance learning also appears specifically for the first time in several standards.

The draft standards retain two basic aspects of ACEJMC accreditation with a long-established history: the emphasis on liberal arts education as the foundation of journalism and mass communications education, and the respect for institutional uniqueness.

What now?

The Council intends to encourage the broadest possible discussion of the proposed standards and to solicit responses. The draft accepted by the Council has been sent to accredited schools and member organizations. The Council will discuss responses and other developments at its meeting in May 2003. Responses should be directed to Susanne Shaw (address on p. 2) and should be received by Dec. 16, 2002.

The draft also appears on the Council's website, with a prominent link displayed on the home page (www.ukans.edu/~acejmc).

The document will be discussed at the ACEJMC convention in August 2003 and at

the mid-winter ACEJMC/ASJMC meeting (see "Session on standards," below). After taking all responses and discussion into account, the committee will prepare a final draft.

If the Council adopts the new standards at its meeting in September 2003, the new standards will be effective in September 2004 and will apply in accreditation reviews starting in the 2005 – 2006 academic year.

How come outcomes?

An increased focus on the assessment of learning outcomes is a trend in accreditation of higher education in virtually all fields. Both the federal government and most regional accrediting agencies

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Session on standards

The proposed new standards will be the topic at a breakfast session during the ACEJMC/ASJMC mid-winter meeting at the Sheraton in Palo Alto, Calif. Trevor Brown, chair of the Committee on Standards and Assessment, and Ham Smith, a committee member, will respond to questions about the proposals.

The session will run from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 7.

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Graduate program review: toward definitions, criteria

The Council in September moved a step closer to revamping its methods for reviewing professional master's programs. The Graduate Review Committee presented a detailed analysis of existing accredited master's programs and a set of proposals for review methods and criteria.

The Council discussed the proposal at length but did not act formally to accept it. The committee will rework the proposal, taking the discussion into account, and present a new draft for discussion at the May 2003 meeting. If the Council adopts the draft then, it will be sent to schools and member organizations for discussion and response.

The proposed criteria, and the underlying definition of a professional graduate program, emphasize excellence. The committee derived them from its analysis of the goals and criteria published by the 48 units that currently offer accredited master's programs. The committee proposed the definition of a professional degree program as one that "prepares the student to excel in significant and noteworthy professional careers to positions of leadership and influence."

The committee further proposed that students would reach this preparation "by learning to 1) think intel-

ligently, strategically, and critically about the fundamental and complex social and cultural issues of the profession; 2) master the activities and responsibilities of the profession with grounding in noteworthy professional experience; 3) perform its roles ethically; and 4) meet ACEJMC's basic competencies defined in the Principles of Accreditation."

Mapping the territory

The committee analyzed current master's-level offerings. It based its analysis of existing programs on information published on schools' Web pages. The 48 schools offer a total of 64 degree programs, which the committee found to be quite diverse. Thirty-four schools grant master of arts degrees, 17 grant master of science degrees and smaller numbers grant degrees designated in other ways. The committee found more than 15 names for the content of the degree, with the majority either Journalism (23 programs) or Mass Communication (13 programs).

Seven programs require professional experience, either as an entry requirement or during the program.

The committee's analysis included several other parameters, including course hours required for the

degree, required courses, admission requirements and average time to complete the degree.

Impetus for change

The proposal represented a step in a long process. At its May 2002 meeting, the Council voted to fold a more rigorous review of master's programs into the current process. Site visit teams will make evaluations of standards compliance, and separate overall recommendations on accrediting status, separately for undergraduate programs and master's programs. The Council stipulated that the new policy would not be put into action until it had approved a set of criteria to be applied to master's programs.

The committee was assigned to the review because of continuing concerns over the rigor of ACEJMC's reviews of graduate programs; perceptions that some relatively weak graduate programs were accredited because they were associated with stronger undergraduate programs; and the inability to separate evaluations at the two levels.

Members of the Graduate Review Committee are: Mary Ann Ferguson, chair, Will Norton, John Soloski and George Thottam.

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Draft standards, continued

have placed greater emphasis on assessment in the past 10 years. When the Council adopted a revised set of Principles of Accreditation in 2000, it set its own course in that direction.

At the meeting, committee chair Trevor Brown noted there had been some concern among ACEJMC's constituents that learning outcomes would absolutely define accreditation. He said that was not the case, although ACEJMC would establish a different balance in its focus on inputs and outcomes.

Listed in order

The draft lists the standards as follows: 1. Mission, Governance and Administration; 2. Curriculum and Instruction;

3. Diversity and Inclusiveness; 4. Full- and Part-Time Faculty; 5. Scholarship, Creative and Professional Activity; 6. Student Services; 7. Resources, Facilities and Equipment; 8. Assessment of Learning Outcomes; 9. Professional and Public Service.

The structure of the standards is superficially similar to that of the current standards, but there are differences. Each standard begins with a simple, one-sentence statement of the basic principle; the longest is 27 words. Each is followed by a set of five or six indicators, which are statements with which units will be expected to comply. An example, from Student Services: "Faculty and/or professional staff are available and accessible to

students for career and academic advising."

Finally, each standard concludes with a list of evidence that a unit could use to establish its compliance with the indicators. Units will include this documentary evidence in their self-studies, to be supplemented by the site teams' on-site observations. The evidence lists are intended as suggestive guides, and units could present other forms of evidence.

History of the change

Members of the Committee on Standards and Assessment are: Brown, chair; Beth Barnes, Steve Geimann, Lana Rakow and Ham Smith. They have worked since the adoption of the principles in 2000 to develop standards that put

the principles into action, particularly the statement on professional values and competencies.

The committee had two additional aims. The Council charged it to clarify, simplify and streamline the standards. An example: The current Governance/Administration standard, with its explanation and evidence list, runs to 292 words. The proposed new Mission, Governance and Administration standard is barely 200 words long.

A third goal was to define the standards so that site visit teams, the Accrediting Committee and the Council itself could more easily arrive at fair, uniform and consistent evaluations of programs.

Researchers visit ACEJMC offices to study effects of Standard 12



From left, Carolyn Stroman, Chetachi Egwu and Felecia Jones Ross pore over self-studies and team reports in search of information on diversity.

Researchers recently spent a week at the ACEJMC offices, combing self-studies and team reports for information about the effects of Standard 12: Diversity. Their work was part of Phase II of a study titled "A National Study on Diversity in

Journalism and Mass Communication Education." The study is funded by a grant from ACEJMC.

"One thing we're looking at is the percentages of minority faculty and students in accredited programs, and another is

the presence of diversity in the curriculum," said Carolyn Stroman, associate professor, Department of Communication and Culture, Howard University.

"The key impact of Standard 12," Stroman said, "is that schools cited for Standard 12 have had to act."

Felecia Jones Ross said, "We're finding that schools that are given provisional accreditation are forced to take immediate action, and most that were cited with non-compliance on Standard 12 corrected that." Ross is an associate professor, School of Journalism and Communication, The Ohio State University.

Ross said the research also showed that not any one standard out of compliance resulted in denial of accreditation, but schools with one or

two standards in addition to Standard 12 out of compliance were vulnerable.

Stroman said the team planned to present the final report to the Oversight Committee and report its findings at the ACEJMC 2003 convention in Kansas City, Mo.

In addition to Stroman and Ross, two other researchers worked on the review of documents: Linda Florence Callahan, associate professor, Department of Speech, Communication and Theater Arts, North Carolina A&T State University; and Chetachi Egwu, graduate student, Department of Communication and Culture, Howard University. Council member Jannette Dates, dean, School of Communications, Howard University, is another member of the research team.

Flores wins diversity award

Council member Don Flores, editor and executive vice president of the El Paso Times was one of two people recognized by three national journalism groups Oct. 24 for contributions to diversity in media.

The Associated Press Managing Editors, the American Society of Newspaper Editors and The Freedom Forum presented the first Robert G. McGruder Awards for Diversity Leadership during APME's annual convention in Baltimore. Flores, who has been at the Times since 1993, was the winner for papers with more than 50,000 daily circulation. Flores represents the Newspaper Association of America on the Council.

Jim Strauss, editor of the Great Falls Tribune in Great Falls, Mont., won in the under-50,000 circulation category.

The honor is named for Robert McGruder, a former editor of the Detroit Free Press who died earlier this year. McGruder was a leader in efforts to employ more minorities in newsrooms and to get newspapers to include more people of color in their coverage of communities.

Calendar

March 15 – 16, 2003
Accrediting Committee
Michigan Avenue Westin
Chicago

April 26 – 27, 2003
Site team training
Westin Hotel
Portland, Oregon

May 2 – 3, 2003
Accrediting Council
San Jose Marriott
San Jose, California

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

Appeals Board appointed

The president of ACEJMC appoints a three-member Appeals Board each October to handle appeals of accreditation decisions. This board meets only if a school appeals a decision of the Council. In such cases, the board considers arguments and submits a recommendation to the Council, which renders the final decision.

The board consists of one practitioner and two educators in journalism/mass communications.

Members of the 2003 – 2004 Appeals Board are: **Ron Yates** (chair), head, Department of Journalism, University of Illinois – Urbana/Champaign; **Dawn Garcia**, deputy director, Knight Fellowships for Professional Journalists, Stanford University; and **Jim Van Leuven**, Ballmer Professor of Public Relations, School of Journalism and Communication, University of Oregon.

Diversity booklet on track

Freelance writer and editor Beverly Kees reported to the Council in September that she was making good progress on a diversity best-practices book. She said the goal of the project was to gather good ideas that had been tried and proved so that other schools could adopt them.

She said she had contacted every accredited program and hoped to include at least one idea from each one.

Publication is expected early in 2003. The Council will distribute the book to professional organizations as well as accredited and non-accredited schools. The project is supported by a \$100,000 grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.



Freelance writer Beverly Kees is assembling the best-practices book.

Team training: one more time

The Council seeks suggestions for participants in its fifth site-team training session April 26 – 27, 2003, in Portland, Ore. This session will take place at the Westin Hotel in downtown Portland.

The training is intended to concentrate on professional practitioners. Academics will be invited, but one primary purpose of the training program is to increase the pool of practitioners who participate in ACEJMC's accreditation process.

Please contact potential participants before nominating them to ensure their interest and availability on that weekend. The Council arranges and pays for travel and lodging for participants in these sessions.

Please send nominations to Susanne Shaw by Dec. 16. For more information, contact her or Charles Higginson (addresses on p. 2).

Member and program updates

New e-mail contacts —

University of Alaska Anchorage:
fpearce@jpc.uaa.alaska.edu
Howard University:
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Northwestern University:
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Black College

Communication Association

The BCCA has a new chair and new contact information:
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