



Planning  
Accreditation  
Board

# **SITE VISIT MANUAL FOR SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBERS**

*2019 Edition: Clarification of student work expectations*

# SITE VISIT MANUAL – FOR SITE VISIT TEAM MEMBERS

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## PREFACE

The purpose of this manual is to introduce you to the role and responsibilities of a Site Visitor and to assist you in determining assessments of compliance with accreditation standards and criteria. A successful accreditation review depends on the Site Visitors: your preparation; your visit; and your written report. These reviews should provide proactive, constructive, and positive insights focused on improving the quality of planning education.

This manual should be used in conjunction with the following documents, all of which are available on the PAB website:

- *Accreditation Standards*  
This document contains PAB's preconditions to accreditation and the accreditation standards and criteria. All accredited programs and those applying for accreditation must demonstrate substantial compliance with the standards.
- *Policies and Procedures Manual*  
This document describes the policies and procedures used by the PAB in the accreditation of planning programs. It provides guidance on the review process and expectations of the PAB. Additionally, this manual includes policies and requirements that govern the Site Visit Pool.
- *Self-Study Report Manual and Template*  
This document details the process and procedures for writing and distributing a Self-Study Report. The document also contains the rationale for each accreditation standard and guidance for demonstrating compliance with the standards. The sole appendix to the manual is an example of the SSR template.
- *Site Visit Manual for Program Administrators*  
This document contains the processes and procedures used for conducting a Site Visit. It includes guidance for Program Administrators in preparing for the Site Visit.
- *Fee Schedule*  
The fee schedule posted on the PAB website contains the current fees associated with accreditation.

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Questions about the accreditation process as administered by the Planning Accreditation Board should be directed to:

Planning Accreditation Board, 2334 W. Lawrence Avenue, Suite 209, Chicago, IL 60625  
T: (773) 334-7200/10; [www.planningaccreditationboard.org](http://www.planningaccreditationboard.org)

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## ACCREDITATION AND THE PROCESS

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Accreditation concerns itself with quality assurance and quality improvement. *Accreditation* applies to institutions or programs; *certification* or *licensure* apply to individuals. Accreditation from the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) is recognition that a bachelor's or master's degree in planning meets established qualifications and educational standards through initial and periodic evaluations.

To the **public**, the value of accreditation includes:

- an assurance of external evaluation of the Program and a finding that there is conformity to general expectations of the profession.
- identification of programs which have successfully undertaken activities directed at improving the quality of the institution and the education delivered.
- an improvement in the professional services available to the public as accredited programs modify their requirements to reflect changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, abilities and practice.

To **students and prospective students**, accreditation provides:

- an assurance that the educational activities of an accredited program have been found to be satisfactory and, therefore, meet the needs of the students.
- enhanced eligibility relative to the exam qualifications for individual certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP).

**Institutions** benefit from accreditation through:

- self-evaluation and self-directed program improvement.
- the strengthening of program self-evaluation through the knowledge of a subsequent review and counsel by the Site Visit Team.
- the enhancement of the reputation of the Program because of public regard for accreditation.
- the use of accreditation in decision-making for the investment of public and private funds.

And finally, accreditation serves the **planning profession** by:

- providing a voice in identifying knowledge, skills, and values of the profession in the professional degree.
- assuring future practitioners will be adequately prepared.

### The Accreditation Standards

Accreditation standards are statements that define and set expectations about the foundation for quality education. The standards serve as the basis for each program evaluation. They address educational and operational issues associated with generating results while maintaining academic protocol. They reflect the consensus of professionals in the field and experts in higher education. To earn accreditation, programs must demonstrate substantial compliance with the standards regardless of locations or modalities of delivery. Appendix A to this manual includes the full text of the standards and criteria, accompanied by rationale statements and examples of evidence a program may provide to demonstrate compliance.

## The Accreditation Process



### The Self-Study Report (SSR)

The Self-Study Report (SSR) is a critical component of the accreditation process. In it, the Program provides quantitative and qualitative information demonstrating compliance with PAB standards, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and outlines steps necessary for improvement. In addition to responding to the PAB accreditation standards, the Program provides a great deal of data, abbreviated faculty CVs, and syllabi for all courses. SSR preparation begins approximately one year before the Site Visit, and serves, in effect, as a planning document for the Program.

### The Site Visit Team (SVT)

Accreditation is based upon peer review with representation from both the academy and the profession. The SVT is comprised of 3 individuals: 2 planning professors, one of whom serves as the SVT Chair, and 1 professional planner. The SVT for a hybrid or distance education program shall include at least one member with experience teaching in an online modality.

Individuals in PAB's pool of volunteers are nominated by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) and the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). Site Visitors and Site Visit Chairs are trained by PAB. Each team member participates in the evaluation process, and in the verbal and written presentation of findings.

### The Site Visit (SV)

The SVT spends 2.5 days on campus – typically Monday through noon Wednesday. The team arrives on campus on Sunday evening for a team working dinner. Each day is filled with meetings (faculty, senior administration, students, alumni, etc.) in addition to reviewing student work and touring the facilities. While the team is in meetings during the first and second days of the visit, evening include a working session during and after dinner. The final day the SVT conducts exit interviews with the Program Administrator and college/school and university administration to verbally share its findings. In rare instances an alternative schedule (arrival on Tuesday with Wednesday to Friday meetings) may be scheduled.

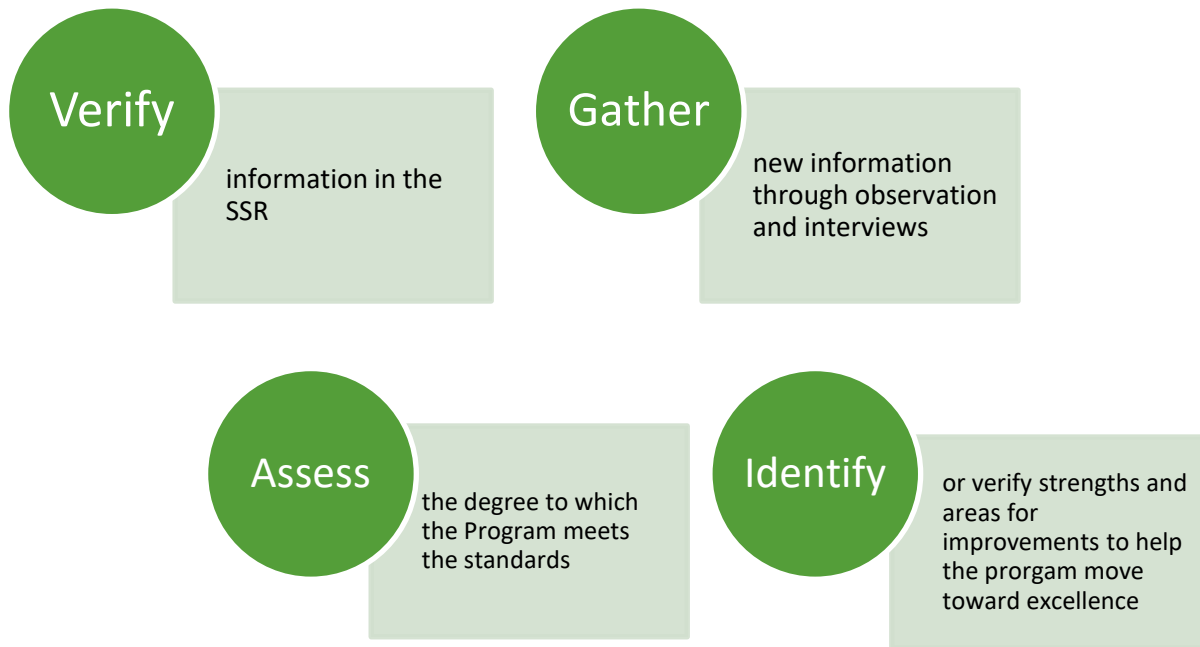
For institutions with both an accredited bachelor's and master's program (known as a dual program review), the Site Visit could be up to one-half day longer to accommodate additional meetings.

### Multi-campus Site Visits

Institutions with multiple campuses will also require a longer Site Visit, as the team must visit all locations. The length of the visit will vary, depending on the number of, and distance between, locations. Autonomous and/or independent campuses, with their own faculty, students, alumni, employers, etc., will require the most time as

the team will, in effect, conduct a mini-visit at each location. Given the complexities involved in scheduling multi-campus reviews, the Program should prepare its draft schedule earlier than the typical 6 weeks before the visit.

### Four Principals of a Site Visit



### The Site Visit Report (SVR)

The SVT writes a formal report wherein it documents strengths of the Program, assessments of compliance with PAB standards and criteria, and recommendations for improvement. The Program has the opportunity to comment on both the draft and final versions of the report.

### PAB Accreditation Review

PAB meets in-person twice annually: in the spring during the APA national conference; in the fall during the ACSP national conference. Programs hosting fall Site Visits are reviewed by PAB for accreditation the following spring; programs hosting spring visits are reviewed the following fall. The Program Administrator and the SVT chair are each scheduled to meet individually with the Board. All accreditation decisions are effective January 1.

## STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

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All PAB members, Site Visitors, volunteers and staff adhere to the Standards of Conduct in all PAB-related activities.

### Conflict of Interest

Conflicts of Interest for a Site Visitor include:

- serving on a previous Site Visit Team (SVT) for the Program under consideration.
- serving with the head of the Program on a previous SVT.

- attending, teaching, or receiving degree from any unit of the host institution.
- teaching at an institution where the head of the Program used to teach or from which the SVT pool member received a degree.
- serving as head of a program visited by a SVT chaired by the Program Administrator.
- residing in the same region or competing within the same geographic market as the Program.

It is the responsibility of the Site Visitor to disclose any conflicts prior to serving on a Site Visit. If a conflict of interest between a program and Site Visitor is discovered before or during a Site Visit, the Site Visitor with the conflict will be immediately replaced, or removed from the team, and will also be removed from the Site Visitor pool. The failure by either a Site Visitor or a Program Administrator to disclose a conflict of interest will be considered cause for disqualification of the Site Visit Report and for the removal of the Site Visitor from the pool.

### Confidentiality

SVT members are expected to maintain strict confidentiality regarding accreditation reviews. The entire Site Visit process, including information shared by interviewees, is confidential. SVTs may discuss the Site Visit with the PAB Board and staff only.

### Professionalism

Site Visitors are invited guests of the University and the Program that serve as representatives of PAB. PAB expects Site Visitors to exhibit professional behavior at all times during the on-site visit. Site Visitors should be competent, considerate, empathetic, courteous, cooperative, and committed. Unprofessional conduct before, during or after the visit will result in removal from the Site Visitor pool.

### Harassment, including Sexual Harassment

PAB is committed to providing a harassment-free environment for all participants in the accreditation process, including Site Visitors, Programs, PAB members, and staff. PAB does not and will not tolerate any form of harassment or discrimination. Any form of harassment or discrimination related to an individual's race, color, religion, pregnancy, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, military status, disability, or any other status or condition protected by applicable state and federal laws, is a violation of this policy and will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

The term "harassment" includes, but is not limited to, slurs, jokes, and other verbal, graphic, or physical conduct relating to an individual's race, color, sex (including same-sex), religion, national origin, citizenship, age, or disability. "Harassment" also includes sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, unwelcome or offensive touching and other verbal, graphic, or physical conduct, or electronic communications (including e-mail) of a sexual nature involving either members of the same sex or opposite sex. Prohibited harassment includes conduct that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a person's work performance or experience or creating an environment that is hostile, intimidating or offensive.

### When Discrimination is Experienced or Suspected

If you believe you have been the victim of harassment by a PAB representative, or while you are representing PAB, report it immediately to the Executive Director. If you are aware of harassment directed at, or by, another PAB representative, report it immediately to the Executive Director. You are protected when filing a complaint of discrimination or assisting in an investigation of discrimination.

If these avenues of reporting are not satisfactory to you, then you can direct your questions, suggestions, problems, or complaints to the PAB Chair. If for any reason you do not want to discuss the matter with this individual, then report to the PAB Vice Chair.

You are not required to directly confront the person who is the source of your report, question, or complaint before making a report of harassment. But if you are harassed, you are required to make a reasonable effort to make harassment known should it exist. Discussing or reporting acts of harassment to any person not listed above does not constitute a report of harassment.

Retaliation or discrimination for making a good faith report or participating in an investigation of harassment is also strictly prohibited.

PAB will investigate allegations of discrimination, including harassment. PAB may use third parties to assist in such investigations.

#### Disciplinary Action

If harassment is found to have occurred, appropriate corrective and/or disciplinary action will be swiftly taken including, but not limited to, removal from the Site Visitor Pool. Disciplinary and/or corrective action will also be taken against individuals who make knowingly false or frivolous accusations including accusations made maliciously or recklessly.

#### Serving as an Independent Consultant

Planning programs accredited by or seeking accreditation with PAB occasionally ask PAB Site Visitors to serve as independent consultants. Site Visitors may accept independent compensated consulting assignments to accredited programs or those seeking accreditation; however, a Site Visitor may not accept a compensated or non-compensated consulting assignment if he or she previously evaluated the program as part of a PAB Site Visit for a minimum of three years after the PAB accreditation action. The complete policy governing this arrangement can be found in Section 3.15 of the *PAB Policies and Procedures Manual*.

## TRAVEL AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

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### Travel and Reimbursement

SVT members are responsible for making their own transportation arrangements to and from the institution and should do so as early as possible in order to take advantage of low-cost fares. SVT members are encouraged to take cost saving measures when making their travel arrangements. Team members pay their own travel costs in advance. After the Site Visit, PAB reimburses the team for all travel and out-of-pocket expenses associated with the Site Visit. Expenses not submitted to PAB within 90 calendar days of the visit will not be reimbursed.

#### *Air and Rail Travel*

SVT members are encouraged to use the lowest available coach fares. Fees for checked baggage will be reimbursed, but discretionary fees (seating upgrades, early check-in, earlier seat assignment) will not be reimbursed.



### *Travel by Privately-Owned Automobile*

Reimbursement for privately-owned automobile travel is figured at the current IRS per mile rate. SVT members should itemize expenses for tolls, ferries, and parking fees in order to be reimbursed for them. If automobile parking would be more expensive than round-trip taxi or limousine fares, SVT members should use the latter.

### *Transportation within the Locale, and to and from Carrier Terminals*

The Program is responsible for informing the SVT members about ground transportation arrangements. A rental car for the SVT is usually not needed during the Site Visit; the Program is normally able to accommodate specific transportation requests of the SVT. When the institution location mandates a rental car, the SVT is expected to coordinate travel arrangements such that only one rental is required.

Reimbursement is allowed for taxi and limousine fares between common carrier terminals. Travel expenses by automobile to and from the terminal, and/or parking at the terminal, are allowed as outlined in the above section on automobile travel.

### *Lodging Arrangements*

The Program is responsible for making the SVT's lodging arrangements and for informing the team promptly about them. The Program may choose to have the SVT members pay for their own lodging on the front end (to be reimbursed later by PAB), or the Program may arrange for direct billing. Whichever the case, the Program should let the SVT members know what to expect regarding billing.

The lodging for SVT members should be reasonably accessible to the campus. The hotel arrangements should provide for a working room in the hotel for the team's evening work sessions. The hotel business center may accommodate team needs; an alternative is a suite-type room for the team chair. A regular hotel room is not acceptable for this purpose.

### *Meals*

While limits are not established for the cost of meals, SVT members are always expected to exercise discretion and to be fiscally conservative. Remember to keep receipts for all meals

## Dress Code

SVT members are expected to dress in business casual attire for all Site Visit activities; a full suit is not required. Appropriate attire includes: slacks, khakis, or skirts; blouses or shirts with collars; a necktie and sport coat (for men); sweaters; and closed-toe shoes.

## Time Commitment

When contacted to schedule a Site Visit, Site Visitors need to assure they have adequate time in their calendar to devote to the entire Site Visit process, including writing the report. The visit lasts two and a half days. Additional time for the entire process should also be factored into your decision, such as the time it will take to review the Self-Study Report, travel time, and the generation of the final report. The time spent can vary, but minimally a Site Visitors should allot five days for the whole process.

## Remaining Current on Issues of Accreditation

PAB recommends all active Site Visitors periodically visit the PAB website to remain up-to-date on accreditation policies and the Site Visit process. PAB continually monitors the effectiveness of its policies and procedures and

revises them as appropriate. Site Visitors who have not participated in a training session or on a Site Visit in a five-year period must participate in a refresher training session before participating on a Site Visit Team.

### Contacting the PAB Office

If you are on a Site Visit and a situation arises or you have questions regarding compliance with a Standard, please contact the PAB office.



#### Reading the Self-Study Report

1. Read and review the SSR well in advance of the visit. Pay particular attention to the sections that may be assigned by the SVT Chair
2. Read Appendix A to this manual for insight into the rationale for the standards and criteria

## PREPARING FOR THE SITE VISIT

### Self-Study Report

The first step in the accreditation process is the Program's Self-Study Report (SSR), wherein compliance with accreditation standards is documented and evidenced. The SSR template is available as the appendix to the *Self-Study Report Manual*.

The SSR is provided to the members of the Site Visit Team in electronic format by PAB. Each member of the team is expected to read and be familiar with the SSR well in advance of the visit itself.

Program materials provided by PAB to Site Visit Teams include:

- Current Self-Study Report
- Prior Site Visit Report
- Progress Report (if applicable)
- Significant correspondence since the prior SV

The burden of proof for documenting compliance rests with the Program submitting the SSR. PAB's Self-Study Report Manual assists programs in preparing a well-written and comprehensive document. Attached as Appendix A is a detailed excerpt from that manual, to assist and guide the SVT in determining compliance.

### Pre-Site Visit Conference Call

About two to three weeks before the visit, PAB staff will arrange a pre-Site Visit call with all team members. The purpose of the call is to introduce and familiarize members with one another; coordinate the initial on-site meetings; and discuss preliminary findings based on your review of the Self-Study Report and historical documents. The Site Visit Team Chair may assign each member specific standards before or during this call. PAB will provide an agenda for the call to help guide the discussion.

#### Site Visit Team Expectations

1. Read and review all documents well in advance of the visit. The SVT chair may assign team members to "manage" certain accreditation standards.
2. Organize the information and your thoughts according to the accreditation standards.
3. Identify key issues before all interviews and know which questions to ask whom.

## The Pre-Site Visit Timeline

SVT receives information and electronic materials from PAB staff

PAB staff arranges initial conference call for SVT



\*PAB staff works directly with the program to prepare the schedule. SVT members have no formal communication with the program regarding the schedule.

## THE SITE VISIT AND INTERVIEWS

The manner in which the team conduct interviews, reviews work and facilities, takes care in determining findings and drafting the SVR, and the way that findings are presented to the various constituents of the host institution impact the perception, quality and, thus, the success of the visit. Every step in the process requires a thoughtful professional demeanor.

### Interviews

It is important that the interviews be consistent. PAB has a book of sample questions for each individual and/or group (administrators, faculty, students, alumni and practitioners) with whom the SVT team will meet. The team should agree in advance on the core questions to be asked in each interview. Teams should identify the most important areas to cover, leave time in each interview to probe areas of concern, and allow the interviewee the chance to ask any questions [s]he may have. The team should extend an invitation to all faculty and students to meet with the team or a member of the team individually (under conditions of anonymity) to discuss specific issues of concern.

### Initial Interview with the Program Administrator

The Site Visit schedule begins with a 1-hour introductory interview with the Program Administrator, followed by the Department Chair (if the Program is located within a department). Interviews with the Dean, Provost (optional), and President (optional) will follow.

Begin with introductions: describe who you are and why you are there. The team chair sets the ground rules, including the timeframe and an assurance of confidentiality.

The objectives of this introductory meeting are threefold: clarify any special needs or concerns with regard to the Site Visit schedule and/or anyone with whom the team is scheduled to meet; resolve any ambiguities or uncertainties based on the Self-Study Report and/or request additional materials that may be missing from it;

learn of any changes the Program has undergone since the SSR was written (e.g., faculty hires, etc.). This meeting also serves as the interview of the Program Administrator in his/her role as a faculty member.

The Program Administrator will check in with the team from time to time during the Site Visit, to address any outstanding issues and/or questions that arise from any of the team's scheduled meetings.

### Interview with the Dean

The Site Visit Team's introductory meeting with the Dean will follow the one with the Program Administrator [and/or Department Chair]. The length and range of topics to cover will vary from program to program, depending on how closely involved the Dean is with it. Many Deans appreciate the insights a Site Visit provides into their planning programs and the field of planning more generally. The Site Visit often presents an opportunity for Deans to gain a broader perspective on planning education.

Begin with introductions: describe who you are and why you are there. The team chair sets the ground rules, including the timeframe and an assurance of confidentiality.

Topics typically discussed with Deans include the functioning of the Program within the institution and the Dean's perception of opportunities and/or constraints regarding the Program's future. The SVT should ask the Dean if there are any particular items [s]he would like the SVT to specifically examine or address during the visit.

### Interview with the Provost and President (optional)

Initial contact with one or both of these administrators is optional and brief. The initial meeting introduces the SVT members and their activities during the visit. The SVT often uses this time to provide the administrators with a general overview of the accreditation process and PAB's standards, as well as any other matters that will help the administrators understand the purposes, benefits, and potential outcomes of the Site Visit.

This meeting can also help the SVT understand the institution.

### Interview with Office of Information Technology

The SVT shall meet with the relevant institutional, collegiate, and/or departmental office to assess institutional support for programs delivered via hybrid or distance education.

### Faculty Interviews

During the Site Visit, team members will meet with the program faculty in three groups: full-time tenured faculty; full-time tenure-track faculty; and part-time/ adjunct/contract faculty. However, programs have some flexibility in the composure of group meetings. Programs delivered via hybrid or distance education shall arrange to have all full-time and part-time faculty present to meet with the SVT in person.



### Conducting a Successful Site Visit

1. *Be objective: your role is to observe, analyze and report.*
2. *Listen more than you talk.*
3. *Have a positive attitude and tone in the interviews; do not express views that could be interpreted as biased regarding program content and outcomes.*
4. *Remind those you interview that what they say is confidential.*
5. *Focus on important issues related to accreditation standards; avoid small problems.*
6. *Be thorough; ask the same questions of many people to get a balanced view of the situation.*
7. *Ongoing communication with the Program Administrator during the visit is very important. Misunderstandings can be corrected quickly and greater time is available to gather additional information as needed.*
8. *Stay on schedule.*
9. *Prepare as much of the Site Visit Report as possible while on campus.*

Begin with introductions: describe who you are and why you are there. The team chair sets the ground rules, including the timeframe and an assurance of confidentiality. The faculty members may provide a brief introduction to supplement the abbreviated CV in the SSR if warranted.

Be prepared for a wide variety of personalities from faculty, ranging from quiet or withdrawn behavior (requiring more probing by the team) to assertive behavior (requiring redirection or restraint by the team). The objectives of the team include the verification of statements and impressions presented in written materials (Self-Study Report, supplemental information) or in general group sessions during the Site Visit.

The SVT should prepare questions in advance for each faculty group meeting, to maximize information from different perspectives based on seniority, responsibility, etc. This is often a challenge given the limited amount of time scheduled, so preparation is the key.

Faculty members should also have an opportunity to address issues and questions. Certainly, those in the Program should have an opportunity to respond when negative impressions were received from those outside the Program. Helping the Program see itself as others in the university see it may constitute an important dimension of the team's consultative role.

Faculty members may request to meet with the team individually and/or the team may request to meet with a faculty member or staff outside of the group meetings. The team will have a three-hour working session on the second day where any individual faculty/staff meetings can be scheduled.

#### Meeting with the Students

Sessions with students provide an opportunity for students to present their perspectives and concerns regarding the Program. Students are to be self-selected for participation in these sessions; it is important to verify exactly how this selection was made. In addition to the on-site meeting with students, the student association is asked to provide written comments two weeks before the Site Visit.

Initiate the session with introduction, the objective of the meeting, and the format to be used. It is helpful if students indicate their class level and provide an indication of their interests and goals (i.e., career aspirations, post-graduate education, etc.) as a component of their introduction. Names of attendees are asked to be made available to the team in advance of the meeting, if possible.

To the extent feasible, students should be put at ease with respect to confidentiality. They should also be encouraged to ask for private time with the SVT if they have comments they are not comfortable making in front of their peers. In some situations, with large student groups or over a meal, it may be necessary for the SVT chair to split the group into sub-groups based on year of study, specialization or some other basis, with individual team members meeting with each sub-group. This will also generate more detail and information. The recommended format, however, is for the full team to meet with the entire student group.

Programs delivered via hybrid or distance education shall arrange to have a meaningful number of students available to meet with the SVT in person, and/or via video-conferencing. While the student experience will be different for the distance education students, it's important for the Program to demonstrate that thoughtful consideration has been given to what is appropriate for these students and to explain where and why it may differ.

#### Meeting with Alumni, local APA Chapter and Employers

One group/joint meeting will be held with alumni, representatives of the local APA Chapter and employers. Each stakeholder has different experiences and perspectives about the program, so it is important that the SVT structure and focus the conversation to accommodate this. A group/joint meeting should contain both Chapter members who are not employers or alums, and employers who are not APA members or alums. For Institutions with two accredited

degrees, this joint meeting should include an equal representation of alumni from both the undergraduate and graduate programs.

Alumni provide an opportunity for former students to present their perspectives on the quality of their educational experience, quality of learning, and preparedness to enter the workforce and contribute to the profession. Alumni will be recent, most often those who graduated since the most recent Site Visit. The impact of education only to one's professional abilities is most easily observed the closer to the time of graduation. After about 5 years, work experience will impact skills and knowledge in a much more meaningful way.

The APA chapter and employer group provide the profession with a formal voice to the accreditation review. The Program is expected to have a relationship with the profession, the local planning community (at the programmatic, faculty and student levels), and the local APA Chapter. Employers provide added insight as they can contribute evidence and judgments regarding the qualifications of the Program's interns and graduates. Initiate the session with introduction, the objective of the meeting, and the format to be used. It is helpful if alums indicate their year of graduation and the job title for which they were hired after graduating from the Program. Names and titles of attendees, and employers' names are to be made available to the team in advance of the meeting.

Programs delivered via hybrid or distance education shall arrange to have a meaningful number of alumni available to meet with the SVT in person, and/or via video-conferencing.

Engagement with the profession will differ for distance education students, depending on the nature of the classes. The Site Visit Team will need to determine if the differences are appropriate. Students who are employed as planners while enrolled in the program meet the requirement of engagement in the profession.

#### Tour of Facilities

The SVT should visit classrooms, studios, student work areas, and computer facilities. Depending on time constraints, the SVT Chair may assign one SVT member to tour one or more of the facilities.

The SV schedule for programs delivered via hybrid or distance education shall include a meeting with the people responsible for maintaining the technology used for the educational delivery, training and supporting the faculty and students on its use, as well as a tour of the facilities housing the equipment itself.

#### Review of Student Work

An important part of every accreditation visit is the team's review of student work, including theses, research projects, term papers, studio projects and in-class exams. The program will provide a range of student outputs to assure the SVT that it is successfully delivering its curriculum and meeting its educational mission, goals, and objectives. The program will allocate two separate one-hour time slots for the teams' review of a variety of student products. The first hour will include a presentation by the Program Administrator on the Program's approach to the assessment of student learning and achievement.



#### Reviewing Student Work

1. Determine an overall general competence level based on samples reviewed. Evaluate the Program's assessment of student learning outcomes.
2. Look for samples with appropriate grading and feedback provided.
3. Consider the quality and range of: analytic/quantitative work; writing quality; and inclusion of a comprehensive approach.
4. Verify that the examples provided cover the entire curriculum for required courses and, if relevant, specializations, as detailed in Standard 4/Curriculum.
5. Make sure the examples show integration of planning knowledge and application.

The specific student work provided is at the Program's discretion. The aim should be twofold: 1) Showcase or highlight what students are capable of doing and 2) show how students progress in meeting the learning objectives set forth by the program. This progression should include work during a single semester (e.g.: improvements from a first draft to a final product) and progress through the years (e.g.: student work from the first semester to their final semester). The aim is not to find fault with student works. The aim is to learn more about the competencies that students graduate with, in light of the program's strategic plans and learning objectives.

The program should provide a range of work that is representative of the full curriculum and should span multiple years within the current seven-year accreditation cycle. It is always the SVT's prerogative to request to see additional work while on campus, and/or to request the inputs corresponding to each project (e.g., assignment instructions, limitations on student access to information, etc.) if necessary. If the work to be reviewed is accessible online, the SVT should be provided with the appropriate ID and passwords for convenient access.

### SVT Work Sessions

The team has 3 work sessions: the arrival day (arrival), the evening following the first full day of meetings (day one), and the afternoon and evening following the second day on campus (day two).

#### Arrival

The SVT's first on-site meeting is a working dinner, designed to allow the members of the SVT get to know each other and continue the discussion begun via pre-visit communications. Once the visit begins on day one there is little-to-no time available to prepare for interviews, so the SVT should use this evening to prepare questions for the day one meetings. The SVT Chair should ensure that each SVT member understands his/her role in the upcoming interviews. The SVT should also use this time to develop a list of additional information it may need to evaluate the Program under PAB accreditation standards.

As a result of the pre-SV conference call and the working dinner, the team should have a good sense of which criteria are not fully met based solely on the SSR. Getting sufficient detail on compliance with those criteria will drive the questions asked on day one.

#### Day One

During the evening work session, the team should be able to assess (met, partially met, not met) the Program in as many PAB criteria as possible and also determine what additional information it still needs to gather in order to fully evaluate the Program. The SVT should also develop its game plan for the next day (i.e. decide how it will obtain the information it still needs – through written materials, subsequent interviews, physical tours, etc.) and assign specific tasks to each SVT member.

#### Day Two

The team is allotted approximately three hours in the afternoon to work on campus. The SVT should use this time to finalize its assessment of Program compliance with any outstanding criteria, alter previous evaluations as necessary, and develop a list of the Program's strengths, additional recommendations and scripts for the exit interviews. The team should begin to draft the Site Visit Report on site. The team may also use the evening for a work session. At the conclusion of day two, the SVT should agree on a timetable for completing the SVR. The SVT Chair should assign each member responsibility for completing specific portions of the SVR by a specified date and for reviewing the draft SVR.



## End of the Site Visit: Exit Interviews

At the conclusion of the Site Visit, there are **four exit interviews: the Program Administrator** [followed by the department chair, if relevant]; **the Dean; the Provost or designee; and the President (optional)**. Each of the exit interviews should take place independently and none of the individuals involved should be present at any interview other than his/her own. The team meets with the Program Administrator first as [s]he can correct any possible misinterpretations prior to the other interviews.

The exit interview is one of the most impactful moments of the Site Visit at each level, particularly with the Provost and the President. Begin each interview by thanking each individual who met with or otherwise contributed information to the SVT. Emphasize the exit interview includes a summary of the SVT's preliminary assessments. It is important to present a balanced view of the Program: summarize strengths, including areas of excellence and possibilities for excellence, in addition to challenges. Reiterate the SVT assessments are not final until the written report is finalized, which includes a review and comment period by the Program. Reinforce that the PAB has the ultimate authority for determining compliance and determining the period of accreditation, and that the written report is but one of several pieces of information the Board will review in order to make its decision.

While the detail supporting compliance with standards decrease in specificity as the team "ascends" the administrative hierarchy, the topics themselves do not. Share a verbal summary of problems and/or deficiencies as identified by the SVT. If the SVT has determined that one or more of the criteria is not adequately met, that should be clearly stated. Reiterate that the Program will have several opportunities to respond. If there is bad news for the Program, it is best to simply state it as early in the exit briefing as possible. If the SVT is not certain about a program's compliance with a criterion, it is best to state clearly that the team has concerns but has not yet reached a conclusion. Reiterate program strengths and state positively those areas in need of improvement, or shortfalls in compliance with the standards can be addressed. Remind listeners that these observations are provided to give a sense of the SVT's impressions but are neither comprehensive nor final. Thank each individual again, and cordially leave.

All SVT members participate in exit interviews. The exit interviews should provide a balanced picture of the team's findings. Observations and recommendations should be reported to all individuals. Use the draft SVR to ensure consistency across presentations.

This will also help ensure that no findings and/or recommendations in the written report are left out of the exit interviews. The greatest mistake that can be made in an exit meeting is to give the Program the impression that things are at least OK, and then identify important problems or deficiencies in the written report. It is

### Strong Exit Interviews

1. *Different messages are tailored to the "altitude" of the audience. Interviews go from specific (Program Administrator) to general (President).*
2. *Give upper administration insight into the Program's position within the university, the surrounding community and the broader field of planning education.*
3. *Identify areas of strength and increasing potential for the Program.*
4. *Be candid and constructive when discussing problem areas. In its exit meetings the SVT is laying the groundwork for the Program and/or the institution to determine the solutions.*
5. *Be prepared to discuss the rationale for any recommendations or suggestions.*
6. *Be consistent: information shared in the interviews should match the details presented in the SVR.*
7. *Remain neutral in communicating the SVT assessment.*
8. *Respect confidentiality by not referring to specific individuals during exit interviews.*

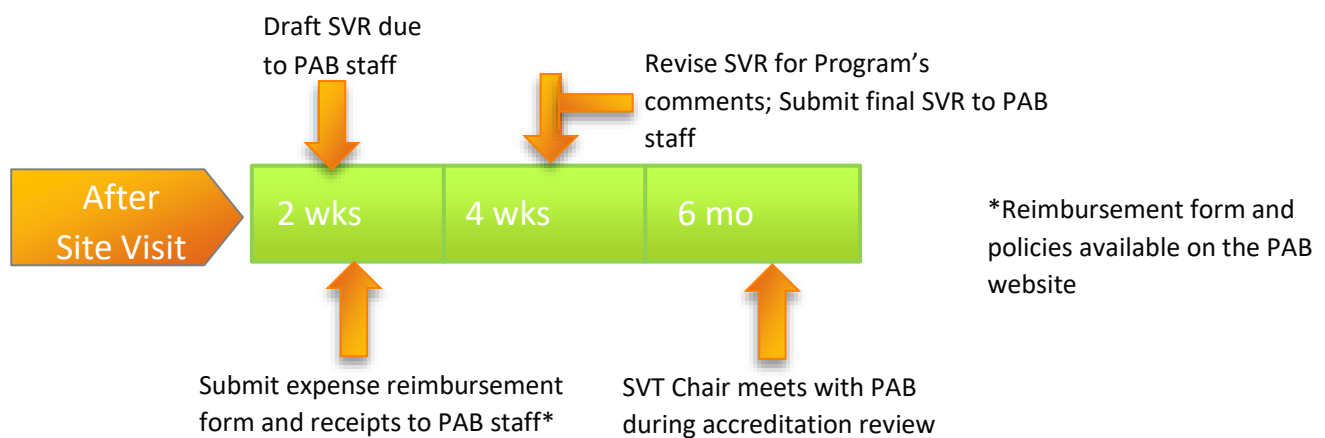


imperative that the exit meetings are an accurate reflection of the impending SVR. While not easy, making the Program aware of any/all accreditation deficiencies as soon as possible is the responsibility of the SVT.

### Motivating Programs to Achieve Excellence

While an accredited program designation means the public can rely on a certain level of educational quality with regard to teaching, learning, and student achievement, a program should aspire to continuous quality improvement. PAB seeks to recognize and promote those programs whose results are truly exceptional. To the extent a SVT identifies excellence in a program, the team should share that information during exit interviews and document it in the Site Visit Report. PAB will collect such examples of noteworthy practices for dissemination.

#### Post-Site Visit Timeline



## THE SITE VISIT REPORT

The SVR is but one discrete, albeit important, evaluative step in the accreditation process. The report details areas of strength and non-compliance with the standards, as the team assessed them. In the report, the team also provides recommendations for improvement for both the standards and overall academic excellence. The Program can respond to both the draft and final versions of the report prior to PAB's decision. The PAB, in its review, will make use of all the available information: the Self-Study Report, the Site Visit Report, any interim Progress Report, and any interim communication.

PAB considers the Site Visit Report (SVR) to be confidential, and the property of the University or College/School. Once PAB has taken action, a program may make its SVR public, but only in its entirety.

The Site Visit Report is written for several audiences: the PAB, the faculty in the Program, University administrators, and those with whom the Program may share the report with after PAB's decision. Although accreditation is a threshold test, its aspirational objective is the quest for academic excellence. While the SVT has latitude to formulate recommendations for improvement that go beyond the standards for accreditation, PAB's accreditation actions are more narrowly constructed based on the accreditation standards.



### Writing a Good SVR

1. Provide as much detail as necessary to explain the team's assessment of any partially-met or unmet criteria.
2. Write for 4 audiences: the Program; university administrators; PAB; other affiliated groups (student representatives, local APA chapter representatives, alumni advisory boards, etc.).
3. Remember most SVR readers are not familiar with the prior SVR or the SSR; write a self-contained document that does not over-reference other documents.
4. Avoid individual names and superlatives, even when describing very strong or very weak aspects of a program.
5. Address the Program's progress towards compliance on issues raised by the prior team in the prior SVR.
6. Aim to get all of the report, or as much as possible, written during the SV itself.

An outline of the SVR and agreement on major findings should be completed by the conclusion of the on-site visit. Ideally, the team will have a rough draft of the report before they leave campus. The draft report is due to PAB staff two weeks after the SV. It is critical that the initial draft be completed in the timeframe provided. Late or delayed reports reflect poorly on the PAB, may adversely affect the Program's ability to provide meaningful comments, and may contribute to diminished recall on the part of the SVT to effectively address those comments.

The SVR has 6 sections:

- Part I - Compliance Checklist
- Part II - Program Overview and Progress
- Part III - Assessment and Recommendations
- Part IV - Program Strengths
- Part V - Furthering Excellence
- Part VI - Appendix

#### Part I - Compliance Checklist

In this matrix the team indicates whether the criteria were assessed as met, partially-met, or unmet. No detail or explanation is provided here.

#### Part II - Program Overview and Progress

The introduction sets the tone of the report, gives the reader a sense of the Program's institutional and regional context, and includes a brief summary of the team's findings. The assessment should include a statement about the focus of the Program, its unique characteristics, and a summary of its strengths and challenges.

In this section, the SVT should also cite specific criteria from the prior Site Visit which were less than fully-met and share the team's assessment of whether the issues have been addressed. If any of these items are still of concern, they should be addressed in the appropriate section of the report.

#### Part III - Assessment and Recommendations

The team should provide a brief explanation of how the Program meets, partially-meets, or does not meet each criterion. The team must provide an explicit rationale for each of its assessments.

- **Met:** Evidence shows that overall program performance in this area meets PAB minimum standards and criteria. The SVT's rationale may appropriately cite areas of strength as well as concern.
- **Partially-met:** Deficiencies exist in an area directly bearing on accreditation. The problem or problems have observable effects on compliance with the specified criterion. A finding of "partially-met" must be supported by evidence the team considered, the deficiencies found, and why, in the team's view, the deficiencies have an impact on overall program quality.

- **Not Met:** The cited deficiency is so severe that the overall quality of the Program is compromised and its ability to deliver adequate planning education is impaired. A finding of "not met" must be supported by evidence that the deficiency(ies) in the area are so severe that overall program quality is unacceptably compromised.

Recommendations affecting the quality of the Program are derived from the identified areas of weakness as they relate to a specific accreditation criterion. The SVT should take care to not prescribe the solution(s) or action(s) that should be taken – that determination should be left to the Program based on its unique mission and its context within the larger university environment. As an example:

An inappropriate recommendation would be:

*“Make planning law a required course to ensure that the subject matter is better covered in the required curriculum.”*

A better way of stating the recommendation would be:

*“The Program could assign planning law a higher priority in a variety of ways, including: making it a required course; devoting a substantial portion of the required course on planning administration to the subject of planning law; or providing for coverage of planning law in several required courses, each focused on different aspects of the subject.”*

#### **Part IV - Program Strengths**

In this section the SVT may commend the Program on outstanding efforts and accomplishments. Include areas of excellence, if they exist, as well as the potential for excellence. Within the framework of peer review and accreditation (and without compromising the judgment to be made by PAB), it is appropriate for the SVT to identify items that are done well or that are innovative in the field. This recognition of attainment and success can build upon items covered in Part III - Assessment of Compliance.

#### **Part V - Furthering Excellence**

This section consists of suggestions for improvement that go beyond the scope of PAB’s accreditation standards.

Suggestions for improvement include areas where the Program can build on its strengths or address an area of concern or opportunity that does not directly affect accreditation. Some recommendations may derive from the SVT’s view that, if left unattended, these concerns could lead to a future determination of “partially-met” or “unmet.” Other suggestions may derive from items that, in the SVT’s opinion, can become stronger or provide improvement to the Program. These recommendations must flow from the mission of the Program and must avoid personal opinions of how things should be done.

#### **Part VI - Appendix**

At a minimum the SV schedule is included as an appendix to the report. Any relevant information provided directly to the team that was not included in the SSR should also be attached as an appendix.

#### **SVR Submission and Distribution**

The draft SVR is due to PAB staff two weeks after the SV. It is critical that the initial draft be completed in the timeframe provided. Late or delayed reports reflect poorly on the PAB, may adversely affect the Program Administrators’ ability to provide meaningful comments, and may contribute to diminished recall on the part of the SVT to effectively address those comments. PAB staff will review the draft report to determine it is complete and in good order; staff comments will be shared with the team. PAB staff will forward the revised

draft to the Program Administrator.

Within two weeks of receipt, the Program Administrator will submit comments regarding accuracy, omission, and substantive matters discussed in the report. The comments will be forwarded by PAB staff to the Site Visit Team, who will revise the report as appropriate, for the final Site Visit Report. The Program's comments on the preliminary version will be considered by the team only.

The final SVR will be submitted to PAB within two weeks of the SVT's receipt of the Program Administrator's comments. The final version of the SVR will be sent to the Program Administrator, for transmission to the planning student organization, the Dean (or next higher administrator), the chief academic officer, and the chief executive officer of the university, with invitations to comment within a period of one month. This review period is for the purpose of addressing substantive matters discussed in the report. All comments received to the final SVR will be forwarded to the Site Visit Team and to the PAB.

## PAB ACCREDITATION REVIEW

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PAB meets in-person twice annually to conduct accreditation reviews: in conjunction with the APA conference in the spring and the ACSP conference in the fall. PAB will review all the materials the Site Visit Team reviewed, as well as the final Site Visit Report, and any comments to it by the Program Administrator or others. During the bi-annual meetings PAB will meet with both the Program Administrator and the SVT Chair individually. PAB deliberates once the meetings are over and makes its accreditation decision. The accreditation decision is formally communicated to the university President (with copies to the Provost, Dean, Program Administrator and/or Department Chair) within 30 calendar days of the meeting. Once the Program is notified of the decision, all Site Visit Team members will be notified of the Board's decision.

Accreditation may be granted up to seven (7) years or for a minimum of two (2) years; a 2-year term is accompanied by a Probationary Accreditation designation. Any timeframe between these two endpoints is possible. A program receiving accreditation may be required to submit an interim "Progress Report" with a possible extension of accreditation if sufficient progress towards compliance is documented. Decisions on accreditation terms of less than seven years may not be appealed. PAB can also revoke accreditation, deny accreditation or defer the decision pending additional information. The *Policies and Procedures Manual* contains further detail on the accreditation decision categories.



### The Team's Recommendations for Improvement

1. *Do not issue prescriptive recommendations; it is ultimately the responsibility of the Program to determine how to best address an out-of-compliance situation. Respect the autonomy and academic freedom of the Program and the institution; assume the Program will be able to establish the best method to address shortfall in compliance.*
2. *Limit recommendations to those affecting the Program. Do not present recommendations for other parts of the institution.*
3. *Be very cautious regarding recommendations required increased funding. Such comments should be reserved for instances of unusual need, or in instances when the impact of the lack of financial resources directly impairs student learning and achievement.*
4. *Be creative; recommend improvement through the reallocation of funds, or better utilization of existing resources.*

# Appendix A: Self-Study Report Manual Excerpt

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## PRECONDITIONS TO ACCREDITATION

All programs applying for accreditation review must meet five preconditions. Programs must demonstrate in their Self-Study Reports that they meet the preconditions of accreditation at each accreditation review. The existence of a campus-based program which meets all preconditions is a prerequisite for an application from a program delivered via distance education. For accreditation purposes, programs are evaluated in the same way regardless of locations or modalities of delivery.

As PAB encourages innovation and experimentation in planning education, programs which do not meet the preconditions in a strictly literal sense, but which meet the spirit of these provisions, may petition PAB for special consideration. Such petitions and Self-Study Reports must provide evidence that the Program meets the spirit of the preconditions.

### 1. Program Graduates

Programs shall have granted the degree for which accreditation is sought to at least 25 students.

***Rationale:** This precondition ensures that a program seeking candidacy status or initial accreditation has sufficient program experience for the evaluation of the Program's performance relative to the accreditation criteria.*

### 2. Accreditation Status of the Institution

The Program's parent institution shall be accredited by an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or by its successor organization.

### 3. Program and Degree Titles

Formal titles of programs and degrees shall contain the word "planning."

***Rationale:** This precondition encourages institutions to employ nomenclature which accurately indicates the Program's emphasis. The nomenclature is an important identifier for prospective students, as well as for the employers of the Program's graduates. Evidence of course coverage and faculty qualifications shall be submitted that justifies the Program and degree titles.*

### 4. Length of Program

Undergraduate degree programs shall require a minimum of four academic years of full-time study or the equivalent. For students for whom the graduate degree constitutes the first professional degree in planning, a minimum of two academic years of full-time study or the equivalent in planning is required.

***Rationale:*** This precondition ensures that the Program has the flexibility to offer the full curriculum of planning and related courses which are appropriate for an accredited degree.

**Guideline: Residency.** A program, whether undergraduate or graduate, shall normally require students' presence at the accredited program institution for a minimum of two academic years, or its equivalent. The intentions of this guideline are to ensure significant interaction with other students and with faculty, hands on collaborative work, socialization into the norms and aspirations of the profession, and observations by faculty of students' interpersonal and communication skills. Programs departing from campus-centered education by offering distance learning, international exchanges, or innovative delivery systems must demonstrate that the intentions of this guideline are being achieved, and that such programs are under the supervision of fully qualified faculty. Such determination may include, but is not limited to, evidence of faculty of record, and communications between faculty and students.

**Guideline: Fast-tracking.** Programs that combine undergraduate education with a graduate degree in planning in a total of less than six academic years or the equivalent shall meet the standards of an accredited graduate degree.

**Guideline: Dual Degrees.** Programs may allow a degree in planning to be earned simultaneously with a degree in another field, in less time than required to earn each degree separately. All standards of an accredited graduate degree in planning must be met and the electives allowed to meet requirements of the other degree must be appropriate as electives for a planning degree.

## **5. Primary Focus**

The degree program's primary focus shall be that of preparing students to become practitioners in the planning profession.

***Rationale:*** Only those degree programs which are engaged explicitly in the education and training of professional planners are eligible for accreditation. Specifically excluded are: (1) Ph.D. programs; (2) undergraduate programs which are pre-professional, rather than professional, in intent; (3) programs which teach planning as a subject interest, rather than as a field of professional practice; (4) urban studies or urban affairs programs; and (5) programs with a primary mission other than that of training professional planners (for example, programs in which planning is a major or specialization available to students pursuing a degree in a related field).

## **ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AND CRITERIA**

### **1. Strategic Planning and Progress**

The Program or the Department in which it resides shall strive for self-improvement using an intentional process of goal articulation, planning, outcomes assessment, reflection and correction.

***Rationale:*** Rationale: The strategic plan provides overall guidance for Program implementation by articulating what the Program is, who it serves, what it seeks to accomplish and how that is and will be done within its context. The Program should be using the results of its programmatic assessment efforts to make enhancements to its curriculum,

*the delivery thereof, and the overall level of student learning and program effectiveness. Systematic resetting of aspirational goals based on programmatic assessment should be demonstrated.*

*The Self-Study Report and the accreditation review are framed by the Program's mission, goals and objectives, as articulated in a strategic plan. Programs must demonstrate that principles of good planning have been applied to the Program itself, including the elements described herein regarding the planning process.*

- A. **Prior Strategic Plan and Accreditation Review:** The Program should be engaged in continuous improvement based on ongoing planning activities, and responses to prior accreditation reviews. The Program shall demonstrate progress since the last accreditation review in meeting the goals and objectives articulated in the strategic plan in place at the prior accreditation review, and document progress towards compliance in meeting accreditation standards assessed as partially-met or unmet at the last Site Visit.

***Rationale:*** *Regular monitoring of progress toward achieving Goals and Objectives ensures that programs have the information necessary to implement improvements, keep the Program on course, and inform future Program planning efforts.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Provide the Program's prior strategic plan. Provide detail on the historic assessment of progress toward meeting plan goals as well as progress towards compliance with PAB standards and criteria.*

- B. **Current Strategic Plan:** The Program shall have a strategic plan for achieving its goals and objectives – either as a free-standing plan or part of a broader departmental strategic plan – and must be able to demonstrate progress towards goal attainment.

The strategic plan must address: The Program's vision; its definition of mission fulfillment; the elements identified as necessary to carry out the plan (including financial resources); the process by which the strategic plan is developed, refreshed, and disseminated; and a method for evaluating progress and making improvements. Programs must document participation in plan development by faculty, students, alumni, and practitioners. It is suggested that practitioners include a broad spectrum of the profession who can be resources for the Program during plan development and implementation.

***Rationale:*** *Meaningful stakeholder participation in the planning process plays an essential part in developing the strategic plan. Ongoing program change and improvement is a regular part of maintaining the quality of the Program. Documenting recent/ongoing programmatic changes provides a written record for review by PAB and provides the Program the opportunity to demonstrate progress toward continuous improvement.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Briefly analyze the consistency of the Program's plan with its mission including the preparation of professional planners. Provide evidence that stakeholders were involved in the development of the*

*plan and are familiar with it. Provide evidence the plan is being followed in addition to the rationale for the recent/ongoing changes being implemented and identify the anticipated impact of these changes to advance program outcomes.*

- 1) **Mission Statement:** The Program or the Department in which it resides shall have a clear and concise mission statement that expresses its core values and fundamental purpose and role in training professional planners.

***Rationale:*** *The mission statement provides essential guidance to program planning and implementation, and it communicates to stakeholders what is most vital.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Provide the Program's mission statement. Briefly analyze the consistency of the Program's mission with the preparation of professional planners. The mission should provide clear direction. Stakeholders are aware of it and it is demonstrably consistent with what the Program actually does.*

- 2) **Program Goals and Measurable Objectives:** The Program's strategic plan shall identify goals and measurable objectives that advance the Program's mission. The goals shall identify the Program's future aspirations in the context of its mission and that of the University and shall aim toward excellence beyond that which may already exist. Goals shall reflect the Program's intent to achieve and maintain diversity in its student body and faculty, and to incorporate into the curriculum the knowledge and skills needed to serve a diverse society.

***Rationale:*** *Program goals should reflect its long-range aspirations and must be stated in terms that are sufficiently clear and concrete for use in generating shorter-range objectives and in assessing the success of the Program. Measurable objectives should follow from goals and be sufficiently concrete to be measurable.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Provide a listing of program goals; briefly demonstrate that program goals follow from the mission and that they provide clear direction to the Program. Provide evidence that stakeholders were involved in goal development, that stakeholders are aware of the goals, and that the goals are consistent with what the Program actually does. Provide measurable objectives and briefly illustrate how they provide clear direction and are consistent with what the Program actually does. Provide evidence that stakeholders are aware of the objectives.*

- C. **Programmatic Assessment:** The Program, or the Department in which it resides, shall have a clearly defined approach, methodology, and indicators for measuring the Program's success in achieving the goals articulated in its strategic plan. Specifically, performance indicators and their results shall be reported at each accreditation review in the areas listed below, in addition to those that are contained within the Program's strategic plan.



***Rationale:*** Assessment is the systematic gathering, interpretation, and use of information about student learning and other indicators intended to determine the impact of the Program on students. The primary purpose of assessment is the improvement of teaching and learning and enhanced program effectiveness. Student outcomes assessment is goal driven, empirically based, and improvement oriented.

The term “outcomes” relates to quality assurance in more than one way: the results of program performance (e.g. the number of students who graduate) and/or; student achievement or learning gains (e.g. competencies that students can demonstrate); and/or the processes that institutions undertake to achieve a particular result (e.g. faculty development to improve student learning).

- 1) **Graduate Satisfaction:** The Program shall document the percentage of graduates who, 2 to 5 years after graduation, report being satisfied or highly satisfied with how the Program prepared them for their current employment.

***Rationale:*** One measure of program quality and effectiveness is graduate satisfaction with regard to how well the Program prepared them for employment. Programs should regularly monitor graduate satisfaction to identify potential issues with program curriculum and delivery which need redress.

***To demonstrate compliance:*** Programs should provide evidence of graduate satisfaction in specific areas with regard to their preparation for their employment. Documentation provided should include how the data were collected and the degree to which the survey results reflect a representative sample.

- 2) **Graduate Service to Community and Profession:** The Program shall provide evidence of graduates’ contributions to meeting community needs and to providing service to the planning profession. Evidence for these shall be obtained between 2 and 5 years after graduation.

***Rationale:*** Program graduates’ subsequent service to the community can take many forms, as defined by the Program, while honoring the planning profession’s desire to advance both the quality of communities in which planners work and the planning profession itself. This measure documents contributions of program graduates to meet these valued goals.

***To demonstrate compliance:*** Program graduates should be surveyed periodically to determine the extent to which they are involved in community service activities and/or professional services activities and results should be provided in the SSR. Documentation provided should include how the data were collected and the degree to which information gathered accurately and completely represents the Program.

- 3) *Student Retention and Graduation Rates:* The Program shall report student retention and graduation rates (including number of degrees produced each year) relative to the program enrollment and to targets set by the Program.

***Rationale:*** *Retention and graduation rates provide evidence that the Program is admitting students who are able to benefit from the Program and that students are being provided sufficient support to successfully complete it.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Present a brief narrative discussion regarding the student retention and graduation data contained in the SSR. Describe any special conditions or targets unique to the Program.*

- 4) *Graduate Employment:* The Program shall document the percentage of fulltime graduates who are employed within one year of graduation in professional planning, planning-related or other positions, and the definitions thereof.

***Rationale:*** *Successful employment in a planning or planning-related field is one commonly-used a measure of program effectiveness.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Programs should provide evidence of graduate employment in planning, planning-related, or other fields. The employment rate includes all graduates, regardless of part-time and fulltime enrollment status, in a part-time and fulltime planning or planning-related jobs. Documentation provided should include how the data were collected and the degree to which information gathered accurately and completely represents the Program.*

- 5) *Graduate Certification:* The Program shall document the percentage, based on the number who take it, of master's graduates who pass the AICP exam within 5 years of graduation, and/or the percentage of bachelor's graduates who pass the AICP exam within 7 years of graduation. If the Program believes that alternative credentials are meaningful to its goals and objectives, the program may supplement its AICP data.

***Rationale:*** *The AICP credential is a recognized professional credential in the U.S. planning profession. As such, information regarding program graduates pass rates can provide a measure of program quality and effectiveness in the preparation of local planners. Because it is a universal and uniform measure it allows those who deem it important (including prospective students and employers) a relevant means of understanding the profile of the School's graduates with respect to content learning and certification.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *The Program will provide a history of pass rates in the SSR. The narrative should supplement that information. If a program's graduates obtain other credentials that demonstrate professional accomplishment, the Program is free to include that information as additional evidence of such accomplishment.*

- 6) **Strategic Plan:** The Program shall document any other outcomes identified in its strategic plan.

***Rationale:*** Programs have the opportunity to identify other outcomes to demonstrate the effectiveness of their program in preparing successful planners.

***To demonstrate compliance:*** Programs can draw from a variety of sources to establish additional outcomes measures including their strategic plan and associated program goals and objectives. The primary requirement in documenting compliance is that the outcomes and their valid measures serve to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Program in preparing professional planners.

- D. **Student Learning Outcomes Assessment:** The Program, or the Department in which it resides, shall have a clearly defined approach, methodology, and indicators for measuring student learning outcomes for the expected knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies, and habits of mind that students are expected to acquire. Evidence should clearly identify the learning outcomes sought and achieved for students at either cohort or year level over the accreditation review period.

***Rationale:*** Identifying student learning outcomes associated with the required knowledge, skills, and values of the profession (Criteria 4A 1-3) ensures that the Program is focused on producing well-prepared entry level professionals. The attainment of these learning outcomes demonstrates to program stakeholders that the Program is meeting the goal of preparing students for professional practice.

***To demonstrate compliance:*** The Program should identify student learning outcomes associated with the required knowledge, skills, and values of the profession, and develop valid measures of student attainment of these learning outcomes. The SSR should provide concrete results from these measures and analysis regarding the extent to which students have attained each learning outcome.

- E. **Strategic Issues for the Next 5-7 Years:** The Program shall identify the critical steps consistent with its mission needed to advance its goals and progress during the next accreditation period.

***Rationale:*** Identification of emerging strategic issues over the next few years demonstrates that the Program is engaging in ongoing planning with regard to meeting its Goals and Objectives. Documenting the steps to advance these Goals demonstrates an active process for improvement.

***To demonstrate compliance:*** The Program should outline specific strategies to be implemented between the current and next accreditation review to address identified strategic issues.

- F. **Public Information:** The Program shall routinely provide reliable information to the public on its performance. Such information shall appear in easily accessible locations including program websites. In addition to the following information, programs are encouraged to showcase student achievement, however it may be determined.
- 1) *Student Achievement:* student achievement as determined by the program;
  - 2) *Cost:* the cost (tuition and fees) for a full-time student for one academic year;
  - 3) *Retention and Graduation:* student retention and graduation rates, including the number of degrees produced each year, the percentage of first-year students who return in the 2nd year for graduate students, and/or the percentage of students enrolled one year after declaring their major for undergraduate students, the percentage of master's students graduating within 4 years, and/or the percentage of bachelor's students graduating within 6 years;
  - 4) *AICP Pass Rate:* the percentage, based on the number who take it, of master's graduates who pass the AICP exam within 5 years of graduation, and/or the bachelor's graduates who pass the AICP exam within 7 years of graduation; and
  - 5) *Employment:* the employment rate of fulltime graduates in professional planning, planning-related or other positions within 1 year of graduation.

***Rationale:*** *There is growing pressure from the federal government, the public, and regional and professional accreditors for transparent and reliable information on the quality of learning delivered at institutions of higher education, the cost of the education, and the prospects for graduates therefrom. Programs are required to publish the qualitative and quantitative data above to satisfy this demand and expectation.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Provide current evidence regarding items 1-5, above. The employment rate includes all graduates, regardless of part-time and fulltime enrollment status, in a part-time and fulltime planning or planning-related jobs. Provide the URL to the Program's website where the information above is presented clearly and succinctly. PAB will monitor compliance with this criterion every year through the Program's Annual Report and as the Program progresses through an accreditation review.*

## **2. Students**

The Program shall attract a sufficient number of well-qualified students from diverse backgrounds and shall adequately prepare, support, and advise these students to pursue and contribute successfully to the field of urban and regional planning. Accordingly, the Program shall demonstrate that its students upon graduation possess the knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to secure professional employment, to perform effectively as planners, and to participate meaningfully in the planning profession. Among the foremost responsibilities of the Program are to reject discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, and other classes protected by law - *within the Program itself* - and to advance diversity and a culture of inclusion among the planning profession's future practitioners in the Program, particularly with regard to historically underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities.

***Rationale:*** *The enrolled student body should be of sufficient size, quality and diversity to form a functional group, which is able to work collaboratively among themselves and with faculty. Student diversity should contribute to the preparation of students for future diverse work settings and should relate to the reach of the Program's service population. Providing access for individuals historically under-represented in higher education and the field should also be a consideration.*

*Data provided in the SSR will include student composition, enrollment, graduation and retention rates, number of degrees awarded, student employment and AICP exam pass rates. The Program should not repeat or restate this information but should reference and summarize it.*

- A. **Student quality:** The Program shall admit students whose educational attainment, previous academic performance, work experience, aptitude, maturity, and motivation indicate potential for success in their studies and in professional practice. Toward that end, the Program shall establish admission standards that reflect the institution's policies and the Program's goals, and the Program shall apply those standards fairly and consistently. The Program shall document its admission standards and the extent to which its current students meet or exceed those standards.

***Rationale:*** *The Program shall have and apply appropriate admissions standards that ensure students have the necessary skills and background to succeed. A well-articulated combination of academic and non-academic admissions criteria is appropriate in achieving the mission, goals and objectives of the Program.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Within the boundaries of the academic and other standards of the university in which it is situated, the Program must briefly but completely articulate its admission standards and how they are applied. Evidence regarding the extent to which current students meet or exceed these standards should be presented. Evidence demonstrating fair and consistent application of admissions standards should also be presented.*

- B. **Student diversity:** Consistent with applicable law and institutional policy, the Program shall establish strategic goals that demonstrate an active commitment to attracting and retaining a diverse student population and are informed by the characteristics of the populations that the Program's graduates generally serve. The Program shall collect and analyze data on student demographics to inform and enhance its efforts to identify effective and appropriate methodologies for achieving diversity in its student body. Furthermore, the Program shall establish assessment mechanisms for each of its strategic goals that are focused on achieving diversity. Because diversity is not a static concept, and because all planning programs should seek to improve the diversity of the graduates entering the profession, the Program shall provide evidence of continuous improvement in achieving its diversity-related strategic goals.

***Rationale:*** *Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central values of planning. As stated in the preamble, among the foremost responsibilities of the Program is to advance diversity and a culture of inclusion among the planning profession's future practitioners in the Program, particularly with regard to historically underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities. In an increasingly diverse world, programs should be at the forefront in educating ethically and culturally competent planners and establishing access points for educational opportunities and mobility through the field of planning. Students, faculty, and the profession benefit from the opportunities to learn and interact with people*

*of varying backgrounds and perspectives. Through this enriched learning environment, students are better prepared to contribute to the profession and create equitable and just communities. A crucial step in achieving long-term success in diversifying its student body is defining diversity goals, strategies and assessing efforts.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *The Program shall provide evidence of a commitment to recruit diverse students, including data to support those efforts. The program's strategic plan should contain goals and measurable objectives aimed toward improving student diversity. The Program shall provide its working definition of diversity and a rationale for that definition, information on how the Program is implementing their efforts to achieve diversity, and data and information on goal achievement. The Program will provide demographic data regarding student composition in the SSR.*

- C. **Student advising, services, and support:** The Program shall provide students with competent academic advising, progress appraisal, and career guidance, as well as access within the institution to any personal counseling that students might need. Furthermore, the Program or its institution shall provide students with career services that assist students in securing suitable internships and jobs. The Program shall also support its students by providing them with financial aid opportunities that are sufficient in number and amount to achieve the Program's strategic goals for a well-qualified and diverse student body. The Program shall publish its criteria for the allocation of such financial aid.

***Rationale:*** *Access to quality advising, career services, and financial aid are key to support student success before and after graduation. These services should reflect the Program's goals and objectives and to be adapted to the characteristics of the students (e.g. part-time, international, prior professional planning experience, etc.).*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *The Program should provide evidence regarding how it provides quality academic advising, student progress appraisal, and career guidance through the use of faculty and/or professional advisors including resources both within and outside the Program. Evidence should be provided regarding program support for internship and job placement and how students are provided such information. Evidence of the publication of financial availability and criteria for awarding financial aid should be provided.*

- D. **Student engagement in the profession:** The Program shall provide opportunities for student engagement in the profession, including but not limited to participation in a planning student organization affiliated with the Program, in the local chapter of the American Planning Association, in professional mentoring programs, in other professional societies and activities, and in work, internships, community-based planning activities, or project experiences that develop their skills as planners. The Program shall also promote socialization into the planning profession by encouraging students to attend APA's planning conferences and other events in which students might interact with professional planners from a variety of backgrounds.

***Rationale:*** *Student engagement in the planning profession is an essential component in the preparation of future planners. Further, program-encouraged activities directly with the profession (e.g., work, internships, real-life studios and community-based activities) engage students in the values and knowledge of the planning profession.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** The Program should provide evidence that students are involved in a range of activities which provide meaningful engagement with the profession and/or larger community. Such activities include internships, student organizations, professional organizations, community initiatives, student-organized charrettes or projects, studios with real clients, participation in/attendance at public hearings, attendance at/participation in local, state and national APA and other planning-related conferences.

### 3. Faculty

The Program shall employ a sufficient number of qualified, productive, and engaged faculty members to permit the achievement of program goals and objectives. Among the foremost responsibilities of the Program are to reject discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, and other classes protected by law - *within the Program itself* - and to advance diversity and a culture of inclusion among the faculty who shape the future of the planning profession, particularly with regard to historically underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities.

***Rationale:*** The assessment of faculty is a collective review of the faculty's capacity, as a group, to deliver degree program(s) that meet the Program's Goals and Objectives as well as accreditation expectations.

*Data provided in the SSR will include a faculty roster, listing of AICP membership, summary of extent of involvement with the Program. Summary curricula vitae are included as well. The Program should not repeat or restate this information but should reference and summarize it.*

- A. **Faculty quality:** The fulltime and adjunct faculty of the Program shall have educational and professional backgrounds, a relevant mix of credentials (i.e., accredited degrees in planning, significant experience in planning, PhDs in planning, degrees and experience in related fields, and AICP membership), be qualified to serve the Program's mission and capable of executing the Program's goals and objectives, particularly as they pertain to teaching, research, and service.

***Rationale:*** The Program's faculty should have the qualifications necessary to achieve the Program's goals and objectives, while simultaneously serving the institution's mission and reflecting national norms of planning education.

***To demonstrate compliance:*** Programs will summarize relevant information in data uploaded in the SSR. Tables or figures that show combined accomplishments during the most recent seven years (or a similar time frame for which data are better available) provide evidence to assess the Program's currency in the field and ongoing contributions. Distinguish credentials and accomplishments by the three faculty categories of full-time in Program, full-time in institution but part-time in Program, and contract/adjunct.

- B. **Faculty diversity:** Consistent with applicable law and institutional policy, the Program shall establish strategic goals that demonstrate an active commitment to attracting and retaining a diverse faculty and are informed by the characteristics of the populations that the Program's graduates generally serve. The Program shall

collect and analyze data on faculty demographics in order to inform and enhance its efforts to identify effective and appropriate methodologies for achieving diversity among its faculty. Furthermore, the Program shall establish assessment mechanisms for each of its strategic goals that are focused on achieving diversity. Because diversity is not a static concept, and because all faculty representation within each planning program should seek to contribute to the diversity of the learning environment and improve the diversity of graduates entering the profession, the Program shall provide evidence of continuous improvement in achieving its diversity-related strategic goals.

***Rationale:*** *Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central values of planning. As stated in the preamble, among the foremost responsibilities of the Program is to advance diversity and a culture of inclusion among the faculty who shape the future of the planning profession, particularly with regard to historically underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities. In an increasingly diverse world, Programs should be at the forefront in educating ethically and culturally competent planners and establishing access points for educational opportunities and mobility through the field of planning. Students, faculty, and the profession benefit from the opportunities to learn and interact with people of varying backgrounds and perspectives. Through this enriched learning environment, students are better prepared to contribute to the profession and create equitable and just communities.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *The Program shall provide evidence of a commitment to recruit diverse faculty, including data to support those efforts. The program's strategic plan should contain goals and measurable objectives aimed toward improving faculty diversity. The Program shall provide its working definition of diversity and a rationale for that definition, information on how the Program is implementing their efforts to achieve diversity, and data and information on goal achievement. The Program will provide demographic data regarding faculty composition in the SSR.*

- C. **Faculty size:** The faculty shall be of a sufficient size to accomplish the Program's mission and goals, administer the Program, and teach the curriculum. The Program shall have a faculty of such size that the full-time faculty are able to teach required courses and direct all areas of specialization. The Program shall have no greater than a 15/1 ratio of undergraduate student FTE to instructional faculty FTE, and a 10/1 ratio of graduate student FTE to instructional faculty FTE.

***Rationale:*** *While sufficient faculty size can be met by a combination of full-time, part-time and/or adjunct faculty, the presumption is that the foundation of the core curriculum will be taught primarily by full-time faculty. Should the Program rely heavily on part-time and adjunct faculty, such faculty should be appropriately engaged in the Program and should have documented continuing commitment to the Program.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Programs should summarize and reference relevant information from the data uploaded to the SSR. Where there is substantial reliance on part-time faculty, the faculty member's involvement with student advising and research supervision should be clearly documented. If a program exceeds the student/faculty ratio, the Program's response should address the extent to which adequate instructional quality and student support is provided.*



- D. Engagement with students: The faculty shall be engaged with students beyond the classroom as mentors, advisors, and/or committee members or committee chairs on thesis, reports and dissertations. Faculty shall provide career advice and assist in job placement in ways that coordinate appropriately with the efforts of staff and academic professionals.

***Rationale:** Faculty involvement in the supervision of students outside the classroom, including the areas of research and career development, is an important part of professional education. Programs have the responsibility to ensure the adequacy of such involvement and how it is shared among faculty.*

***To demonstrate compliance:** The Program should document the customary expectations of faculty with respect to advising, committee activities, mentoring and engaging students in non-classroom activities. Where there are differential workloads among individual faculty with respect to student engagement (for example, specific faculty have more advising responsibility), the nature of these assignments should be specified, along with how these activities are incorporated in faculty performance reviews. Programs should provide evidence that such engagement is adequate to meet the needs of students.*

- E. Research, Scholarship, and Other Creative Activity: Faculty teaching and administrative assignments provide for engagement in research, scholarship, and/or outreach reflective of the stage of their careers, the mission of the Program, and expectations of the University. Faculty creative activities will undergo peer review appropriate to the scholarly or practice orientation of the work, including, but not limited to, appropriate journals or other publication outlets, conferences, or other venues allowing dissemination of the work.

***Rationale:** An active program of research, scholarship, and/or outreach is important to: maintain currency and contribute to the development of new knowledge in the field of planning; advance the state of the art in the field; enhance the educational quality and applicability for students; and provide programmatic resources such as financial aid.*

***To demonstrate compliance:** Summary curricula vitae are provided in the SSR, in addition to a table summarizing faculty productivity in the most recent 7 years. The narrative should supplement the chart in order to capture the range and/or depth of accomplishments. The Program's approach to assessing research/scholarship/outreach productivity of faculty should be explained. Where there are differential expectations among faculty, these should be explained. It should also be noted when the Program's expectations differ from the institution's.*

- F. Professional involvement and community outreach: Faculty demonstrate involvement in the profession through participation in national organizations and/or participation in local, state, regional, and national professional conferences, workshops and other sponsored activities including activities of professional planning organizations. They shall demonstrate community outreach through continuous engagement in activities leading to the advancement of the profession, the University, and progress toward meeting the needs of the broader society.

***Rationale:** An active program of professional involvement and/or outreach is important to maintaining currency in the field of planning and helps to advance the state of the art in the field. These activities can also enhance the quality and applicability of the educational experience for students and provide financial aid and/or other resources. A faculty's professional involvement and outreach should address the Program's goals and objectives while*

*simultaneously serving the institution's mission and reflecting national norms of planning education. Variation among faculty within a program is expected as a function of subject competencies, assigned responsibilities, and stage of career.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Summary curricula vitae are provided in the SSR, in addition to a table summarizing key professional involvement/outreach and outputs. The narrative should summarize and supplement these materials. The Program's approach to assessing professional involvement and outreach productivity of faculty should be detailed. Where there are differential expectations among faculty, these should be explained. It should also be noted when the Program's expectations differ from the institution's.*

- G. **Professional development:** Faculty shall be provided opportunities to continue to develop themselves professionally. Work assignments and other development opportunities shall be such that skills in teaching, research, leadership, professional practice and other creative activities are sufficiently maintained and developed. Adequate resources shall be available to support faculty professional development, including training with respect to institution policies, student needs, and the use of appropriate instructional technology.

***Rationale:*** *All faculty members need to engage in professional development activities to maintain and advance their teaching and research skills. The Program should provide opportunities for such development.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *The Program should demonstrate how faculty professional development needs are addressed and supported. Policies should be cited, the relative incidence of use of policies should be explained, and specific examples should be presented. The extent to which professional development activities are supported by institutional versus by individually-developed resources should be made clear. When special policies apply to junior faculty, or other sub-groups, these should be identified.*

#### **4. Curriculum and Instruction**

Planners integrate knowledge, skills and values to anticipate the future and improve the quality of decision-making affecting people and places. They understand the dynamics of cities, suburbs, regions, and the theory and practice of planning. They attend to the diversity of individual and community values. They develop and implement ethical plans, policies and processes. The minimum curriculum criteria below reflect these educational goals. Programs are expected to be innovative and to experiment in developing curricular approaches that achieve the objectives of this standard.

The curriculum should demonstrate consistency and coherence in meeting the Program's mission, goals, and objectives. While an accredited degree program must meet basic minimal performance criteria, PAB recognizes that programs may have different profiles with varying emphases. The Program being reviewed must demonstrate how its curricular content matches the profile emphasized in its overall mission. For example, a program emphasizing urban design would meet a different test than one emphasizing small town and rural planning.

The curriculum must include instruction to prepare students to practice planning in communities with diverse populations and to develop skills necessary to create equitable and inclusive planning processes. Consistent with the Program's mission and strategic plan, course content and co-curricular activities should seek to broaden understanding of historical and contemporary factors across the full range of practice settings in which program graduates work, including national, demographic and political variation, and to promote awareness and respect for differing beliefs, values and expectations of populations served by the profession.

The Program shall provide a curriculum and offer instruction to best assure achievement of the knowledge, skills, and values that qualify graduates of accredited degree programs to enter professional planning practice. While programs may adopt such established and familiar learning activities as courses and internships, PAB is also receptive to program innovations that prove effective in meeting the criteria.

An accredited degree program must ensure that each graduate demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for competent professional planning in diverse occupational and institutional settings. The criteria below provide a framework for judging the scope and quality of minimum educational outcomes.

***Rationale:*** *The curriculum must reflect today's planning profession, the profession's aspirations for the future, and the Program's primary objectives. While core principles, ideas and tools apply across the profession, individual programs may illustrate and detail these broad concepts in different ways depending on the populations they serve and their Mission, Goals and Objectives.*

*PAB encourages the pursuit of excellence through innovation. Meaningful use of learning outcomes is expected in order to assess the degree to which curricular efforts, including innovative efforts, are successful in achieving objectives.*

- A. Required Knowledge, Skills and Values of the Profession: The Program shall offer a curriculum that teaches students the essential knowledge, skills, and values central to the planning profession. These required components will be taught in such a manner that it is possible to demonstrate that every graduate has studied them. Ordinarily, this means that they are included in courses required of all students, although other approaches are possible. Specifically:
1. *General Planning Knowledge:* The comprehension, representation, and use of ideas and information in the planning field, including appropriate perspectives from history, social science, and design and other allied fields.
    - a) Purpose and Meaning of Planning: why planning is undertaken by communities, cities, regions, and nations, and the impact planning is expected to have.
    - b) Planning Theory: behaviors and structures available to bring about sound planning outcomes.
    - c) Planning Law: legal and institutional contexts within which planning occurs.
    - d) Human Settlements and History of Planning: growth and development of places over time and across space.

- e) The Future: relationships between past, present, and future in planning domains, as well as the potential for methods of design, analysis, and intervention to influence the future.
  - f) Global Dimensions of Planning: interactions, flows of people and materials, cultures, and differing approaches to planning across world regions.
2. *Planning skills*: The use and application of knowledge to perform specific tasks required in the practice of planning.
- a) Research: tools for assembling and analyzing ideas and information from prior practice and scholarship, and from primary and secondary sources.
  - b) Written, Oral and Graphic Communication: ability to prepare clear, accurate and compelling text, graphics and maps for use in documents and presentations.
  - c) Quantitative and Qualitative Methods: data collection, analysis and modeling tools for forecasting, policy analysis, and design of projects and plans.
  - d) Plan Creation and Implementation: integrative tools useful for sound plan formulation, adoption, and implementation and enforcement.
  - e) Planning Process Methods: tools for stakeholder involvement, community engagement, and working with diverse communities.
  - f) Leadership: tools for attention, formation, strategic decision-making, team building, and organizational/community motivation.
3. *Values and ethics*: Values inform ethical and normative principles used to guide planning in a democratic society. The Program shall incorporate values and ethics into required courses of the curriculum, including:
- a) Professional Ethics and Responsibility: key issues of planning ethics and related questions of the ethics of public decision-making, research, and client representation (including the provisions of the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, and APA's Ethical Principles in Planning).
  - b) Equity, Diversity and Social Justice: key issues in equity, diversity, and social justice that emphasize planners' role in expanding choice and opportunity for all persons, plan for the needs of the disadvantaged, reduce inequities through critical examination of past and current systems and disparities, and promote racial and economic integration.
  - c) Governance and Participation: the roles of officials, stakeholders, and community members in planned change.
  - d) Sustainability and Environmental Quality: environmental, economic, and social/political factors that contribute to sustainable communities, and the creation of sustainable futures.
  - e) Growth and Development: economic, infrastructure, social, and cultural factors in urban and regional growth and change.
  - f) Health and Built Environment: planning's implications on individual and community health in the places where people live, work, play and learn.

***Rationale:*** *The learning experiences engendering the required knowledge, skills, and values must be included in the Program's curriculum. While individual programs will differ in how they ensure coverage of these individual elements in the delivery of the curriculum, graduates should evidence mastery of each independent element.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Evidence will include information on inputs, outputs and outcomes; when the outcomes measurement system is well developed, such evidence will take precedence. Input evidence will include course syllabi. Output evidence will include a representative sample of student work made available during the Site Visit. The*

*narrative should make clear how the Program interprets and operationalizes the knowledge, skills and values requirements and summarize the evidence that they are delivered and mastered.*

*When the curriculum includes courses required of all students, the course prefixes and numbers of those courses should appear in boldface font in the narrative so that it is not necessary to repeatedly state that these courses are required.*

B. **Areas of specialization and electives:** The Program shall have sufficient depth in its curriculum and faculty in the specialization areas and electives it offers to assure a credible and high quality offering.

1. **Specializations:** When a program includes specialization fields, it is assumed that they are built on top of the general planning foundation and that courses in the areas of specialization add significantly to the basic planning knowledge, skills and values. Programs must demonstrate that there are enough courses in the areas of specialization that students get the depth and range of materials to give them a level of expertise.

***Rationale:*** *PAB does not require specializations for accreditation, but recognizes that they can provide students with a concentrated mastery in a specific area. A program is considered to have a specialization when it offers students the option of taking a defined set of courses for purposes of providing students with a deeper and broader expertise in a domain of planning (e.g. Concentrations, focus areas, regardless of nomenclature).*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *The narrative should describe area(s) of specialization and provide evidence that the knowledge, skills, and values gained are of sufficient depth and breadth beyond the Program's required curriculum. While there is no minimum requirement for the number of classes, the specialization curriculum should be structured to include, at a minimum, material that will provide a foundation for expertise in the specific area, the methods and tools used by planners in this area of planning, and relevant applications. References should be made to course syllabi provided in Part IV.B. When specialization courses are shared with other degree programs, evidence that the planning content is true to planning contexts and sufficiently in depth should be provided.*

*The Program should also demonstrate that it has sufficient faculty, curricular offerings, and other resources to adequately prepare graduates for practice in each of its specializations.*

2. **Electives:** The curriculum shall contain opportunities for students to explore other areas such as exposure to other professions, other specializations, and emerging trends and issues.

***Rationale:*** *Elective courses provide valuable application of general planning knowledge, skills and values, and can expand students' horizons in various ways, including multi-disciplinary perspectives. Electives should be relevant to planning and they should be of sufficient quality to add meaningfully to the students' understanding and abilities.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Drawing on syllabi, the narrative should summarize the range and content of electives available and provide the context necessary to understand the approximate frequency with which the electives are subscribed by planning students, whether the teaching faculty are familiar with planning, and the extent of planning content in the electives.*

- C. Instructional delivery and scheduling: Courses shall be taught by qualified faculty, and appropriate instructors shall be assigned for required, specialized and elective courses. In general, most required courses will be taught by fulltime planning faculty. Courses shall be offered in formats and times to assure appropriate student access to them and timely completion of program requirements.

***Rationale:** In all cases, faculty must be fully qualified for the instruction roles to which they are assigned and scheduling should be such that students are able to graduate on the expected schedule without compromising the integrity of the degree studies. Course staffing and scheduling will often vary with a program's mission and circumstances.*

***To demonstrate compliance:** The Program should summarize the information found in the table listing of courses taught in the past 2 years and provide any relevant information to demonstrate the incidence of timely graduation.*

- D. Facilities: Students, faculty and staff shall have access to sufficient physical resources and facilities to achieve the Program's mission and objectives. The facilities shall be appropriate for the level and nature of required classrooms, studio workspace, and offices.

***Rationale:** Facilities must be adequate for quality instruction, individual and group work, and should allow for the interactions necessary among work team members. The Program is expected to make efficient use of facilities provided and to seek to improve and expand facilities through means such as development activities, contracting work and partnerships.*

***To demonstrate compliance:** The narrative should summarize the nature of facilities used and briefly assess their adequacy to the Program's needs.*

- E. Information and technology: Students, faculty and staff shall have access to sufficient information systems and technology, and technical support, technical equipment and training thereon to achieve the Program's mission and objectives. Information and technology include, but are not limited to, maintained computer hardware, software and access, library resources and collections.

***Rationale:** Despite potential challenges in providing state-of-the-art technology, the readiness of graduates for practice depends heavily on the adequacy of program information and technology resources. The information and technology environment changes rapidly and is a costly component of education; discrepancies between need and available resources are common but the need for adequacy is still a requirement.*

***To demonstrate compliance:** The narrative should summarize information and technology resources available to Program students and faculty and briefly assess their adequacy to the Program's needs.*

## 5. Governance

The Program shall make administrative decisions through a governance process that exhibits a high degree of transparency, inclusiveness, and autonomy. The Program shall be located within an identifiable and distinct academic unit, such as a Department or School of planning, and the Program's faculty shall be clearly identifiable as such. The Program shall involve faculty and students, as appropriate, in administrative decisions that affect them and shall demonstrate that those decisions serve to implement the Program's strategic plan.

***Rationale:*** *The Program should have sufficient autonomy, suitable governance, and competent leadership to support and advance its goals and objectives and to enhance its overall quality. Organizational placement and governance structure should facilitate the oversight of the Program and attainment of its goals.*

- A. **Program autonomy:** In accordance with customary university procedures, the planning program will normally be headed by its own administrator, who will report directly to a dean or an equivalent academic official faculty. The Program shall have responsibility for the design of its curriculum and shall have an independent voice in the appointment, promotion, tenure, and evaluation of its faculty, and the admission and evaluation of its students. The planning faculty and students shall be involved in the development of the Program's Self-Study Report and shall be made aware of the content of all submissions by the Program to PAB as well as reports and decisions by PAB concerning the Program.

***Rationale:*** *The Program should have sufficient decision-making discretion, within customary university procedures, to govern itself effectively.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *The Program should clearly outline its organizational placement and governance structure within its larger organization. This discussion should clearly demonstrate that the Program has sufficient authority, resources and institutional support to achieve its educational objectives, including program curriculum, faculty recruitment and retention and student, faculty and program effectiveness. The discussion of these resources should clearly indicate which are fully dedicated to the Program and which are shared with other units. Limits in program authority in these areas should also be identified.*

- B. **Program leadership:** The administrator of the degree program shall be a planner whose leadership and management skills, combined with education and experience in planning, enables the Program to achieve its goals and objectives. The administrator shall be a tenured faculty member with an academic rank of associate professor or higher.

***Rationale:*** *The administrator of the Program should be capable and effective.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Provide evidence of the administrator's qualifications to effectively lead the Program and document effectiveness.*

- C. **Communication:** The Program shall use a variety of media to provide effective and regular two-way communication with current and prospective students, faculty, alumni, employers, professional associations,

practitioners, and other stakeholders about the Program's goals and objectives and about its progress toward achieving those aims. The administrator of the Program shall be regularly accessible to these stakeholders, providing them with suitable opportunities for interaction.

***Rationale:*** *Accurate and complete information regarding the Program should be provided according to the diverse needs of a wide base of program stakeholders within and outside the sponsoring institution. Methods of providing and receiving information should support effective communication and interaction.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Provide evidence of regular communication, including social media and more traditional mechanisms, employed to maintain communications with all stakeholders.*

- D. **Faculty and student participation:** The Program shall provide fulltime and adjunct faculty, individual students, student organizations, and other interested parties with opportunities to participate fully and meaningfully in administrative decisions that affect them. When interested parties raise substantive issues, the Program shall demonstrate that it has responded appropriately to those issues, and communicated the outcomes in such a fashion that the interested parties understand how the decisions were made.

***Rationale:*** *Program stakeholders should have input in the decisions that affect them. Documented mechanisms for gathering and responding to stakeholder input facilitate meaningful participation in administrative decisions.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Briefly describe how the Program provides opportunities for faculty and student involvement in programmatic decisions that affect them. Provide specific examples of how such opportunities are provided and how information regarding the final outcome is disseminated. Evidence provided should cover a range of time and kinds of decisions.*

- E. **Promotion and tenure:** The Program shall publish policies and procedures for making decisions about the promotion and tenure of faculty, and shall provide junior faculty with the support that they need to advance professionally within the Program. The Program shall provide mentorship opportunities for all junior faculty, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, and members of other under-represented groups.

***Rationale:*** *Faculty should have access to policies that affect their academic careers, particularly promotion and tenure. For these processes to be fairly implemented, junior faculty should be sufficiently advised and supported through the process.*

***To demonstrate compliance:*** *Evidence of a clear promotion and tenure process should be presented, in addition to evidence that it has been consistently applied. A description of resources and mentoring available to junior faculty and concrete evidence that senior faculty are attending to the development of junior faculty should be provided.*

- F. **Grievance procedures:** The Program shall publish policies and procedures for resolving student and faculty grievances, and shall appropriately disseminate such policies and procedures to students and faculty. The Program shall maintain records to document the number and kinds of grievances it has received and the manner in which it has resolved those grievances.



***Rationale:*** Students and faculty should have access to due process when they have grievances, including, but not limited to, sexual harassment and discrimination. Appropriate procedures should be in place to address these grievances. These processes should be documented and provided to all potentially concerned parties. Regular recordkeeping regarding grievances allows the Program to analyze areas of concern for potential improvements.

***To demonstrate compliance:*** Evidence of policies and procedures to address grievances how these policies are disseminated should be provided in the SSR. This includes procedures related to harassment and discrimination. Records of grievances should be maintained along with their resolution, including review within the administrative unit, and other vehicles for resolution and mediation within the university. These records should be available for examination by on-site reviewers.

- G. **Online Integrity:** The Program shall have in place effective procedures through which to ensure that the student who registers in an online course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the academic credit. The Program makes clear in writing that these processes protect student privacy and notifies students at the time of registration or enrollment of any projected additional costs associated with the verification procedures.

***Rationale:*** A program offering online courses must have in place a system of checks and balances to ensure honesty and protect academic integrity.

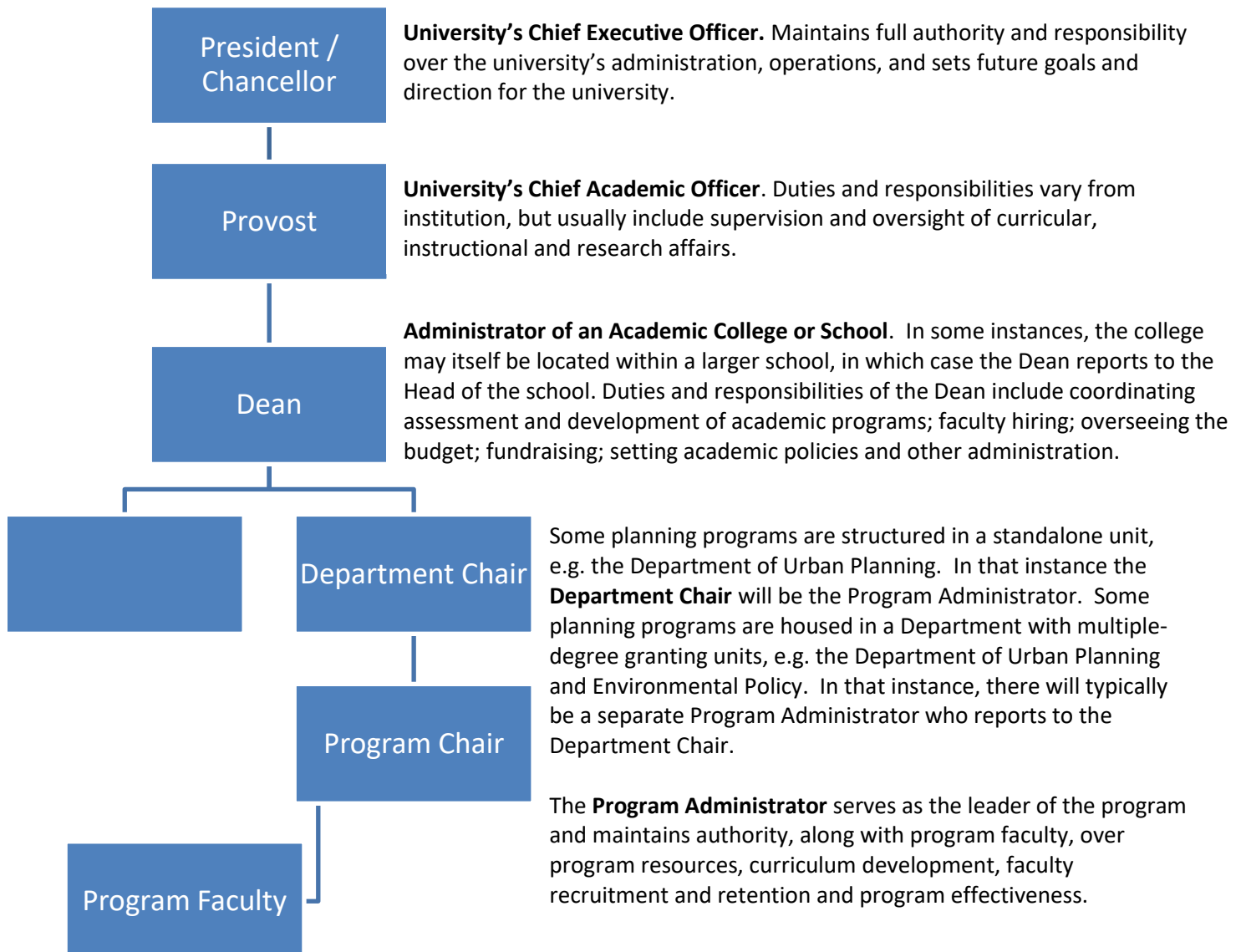
***To demonstrate compliance:*** Evidence of policies and procedures to ensure online integrity shall be provided. Evidence that students are notified of processes to protect privacy shall be provided. Evidence that any additional costs are communicated to students shall be provided.

## Appendix B: Practitioner’s Guide to the Academic Culture

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As a professional planner, you are familiar with writing and evaluating RFPs, long and short-term plans, administering projects and supervising staff. Outside of your experience as a University student, you may not be familiar with the structure and organization of the academic world. This guide is designed to provide a brief overview of that world.

### Typical University Organizational Structure



## Faculty

Faculty are responsible for teaching, research and delivering the degree program such that it meets the Programs goals and objectives. There are several levels of faculty:

- Tenured: Professor and Associate Professor
- Tenure – Track: Assistant Professor
- Non-tenured /contract: Adjunct, Lecturer, and Instructor

An appointment of **Professor** or **Associate Professor** requires a doctorate or terminal degree or equivalent and demonstrated sustained high-quality teaching, recognition for scholarly activities, and service to the university and community. An appointment at the rank of Professor is usually made only after extended service as an Associate Professor.

An appointment to **Assistant Professor** requires a doctorate or terminal degree or equivalent and potential for excellence in teaching and research. This is typically an entry-level position.

Non-tenured or contract faculty consists of **Adjuncts, Lecturers and Instructors**. These faculty members require at least a master's degree or equivalent professional qualifications. They generally are involved in the Program on a part-time basis - teaching one or two courses. Programs generally hire professional planners as adjuncts, so they can share their real-world experience with students and infuse the program with the current trends in the practice of planning.

## Tenure

Tenure, associated with the titles of Professor and Associate Professor, is a form of job security that is granted to faculty who have demonstrated a strong record of published research, grant funding, teaching, and service to the University and community. Academic tenure is intended to guarantee faculty the right to academic freedom. The process and requirements of obtaining tenure differ from university to university. Generally, an Assistant Professor must meet the goals of the university and the program through publications, research, teaching etc. Emphases vary across universities. If the assistant professor satisfies the requirements for promotion and tenure (known as P&T) as specified by the universities policy, then a P&T committee reviews the dossier and votes to promote and grant tenure.

The program faculty have collective responsibility for planning and delivering the program to the students. All members of the faculty are expected to have reasonable teaching loads based on responsibilities in other areas such as research, service and advising. All should be accessible by the students and all should take appropriate steps to remain current in their fields. An adjunct faculty member is not necessarily less qualified than a tenured faculty member by virtue of his/her rank. They generally have both technical or content specific knowledge as well as practical experience.

Given the inter-disciplinary nature of planning education, the planning program may draw on faculty from other degree-granting units (e.g. urban design; geography) to assist in delivering the curriculum.

## Types of Universities

Research universities and teaching universities typically have different missions. A research university sets high expectations of the faculty for research productivity. The research focus enables the faculty to stay current in the field and engage students in scholarly work. A teaching university is primarily focused on teaching; however, there are some research expectations associated with tenure. Teaching universities expect faculty to stay

current in their field through other means, such as membership and activity with their member professional organizations (i.e. American Planning Association, American Institute of Certified Planners), involvement with the profession in the local community, and attendance at academic and content related conferences, such as the national conferences of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning and the American Planning Association.

### **University Classifications**

During a Site Visit, you may hear the terms “Tier I” or “Research I” Institution. This is in reference to the university’s Carnegie Classification. The Carnegie Classification, created by the Carnegie Foundation, is the most recognized classification system designed to “recognize and describe institutional diversity in U.S. higher education” (<http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/>).

The classification system was created primarily for universities engaged in research but has evolved to include other areas of classification. The classification system has been revised at least 6 times since its creation in 1973. The 1994 edition, which used the classification system of Tier I and Tier II, was discontinued to avoid the inference that the categories signify quality differences. The current classification categories, created in 2010, include the following terms (<http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/>):

For doctorate granting universities:

RU/VH: Research Universities (very high research activity)

RU/H: Research Universities (high research activity)

DRU: Doctoral/ Research universities

For master’s colleges and universities:

Master’s/L: Master’s College and Universities (larger programs)

Master’s/M: Master’s Colleges and Universities (medium programs)

Master’s/ S: Master’s Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)

It is important to note, that there are shortcoming and biases associated with any classification system. Institutions may use Carnegie Classifications as a means of identifying peers for benchmarking. Site Visitors should not rely solely on classification systems, as they tend to be retrospective and static data.

Source:

McCormick, A. and Zhao, C. (2005). Rethinking and Reframing the Carnegie Classification. *Change*. Retrieved February 21, 2013, from <http://classifications.carnegiefoundation.org/>