

August 30, 2021

Dear PAB Accreditation Standards Review Task Force:

Thank you for your leadership and careful update of the PAB accreditation standards, including expanded discussion of diversity and inclusion. While you have incorporated the words “climate change” into the standards, we write to urge you to strengthen the language in the standards on the urgency of climate action and the necessity of including climate pedagogy in planning programs. Below, we articulate why the current language is inadequate and suggest alternative language.

As science has long projected and the daily news reflects, climate impacts are a reality of the present moment, impacting every aspect of the natural and human world, including ecological systems, infrastructure systems, immigration patterns, politics of inclusion and social support, and the rise, fall, and recovery of the built environment. The field of urban planning plays a central role in helping to transform the built world for rapid decarbonization, even as it anticipates human mobility at all scales and redesigns society for life under a changing climate. Planning research, along with that of other fields, increasingly demonstrates that climate impacts are highly inequitably distributed, that decarbonization benefits and resources disproportionately benefit wealthier and whiter groups, and that climate resiliency initiatives are more likely to exclude, displace, or further marginalize Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other disadvantaged groups. Climate change is not a niche, elective topic. It is the context within which all planners in the future will practice. Without pedagogy on climate science, decarbonization, adaptation, and climate justice, we will not empower the next generation of planners to respond to the climate crisis, much less combat the realities of how inequality, racism, and marginalization become replicated and perpetuated on the ground.

Given the magnitude of climate impacts and the scale of response required, it is inadequate for PAB language to include climate change as a dependent clause of sub-bullets under Standard 4 section b1a (“the role of planning in responding to the global climate crisis”) and b1c: “relationships between the built and natural environments and individual and community health and well-being, especially in the face of the global climate crisis.” Moreover, nowhere else do the standards indicate how planning curricula should respond to such a crisis.

We propose that PAB elevate climate issues in the following sections:

Standard 4A Guiding Values 2: “Sustainability **and Climate Change Responsibility**: environmental, economic, and social/political factors that contribute to sustainable communities, **reducing the impacts of climate change**, and **creating sustainable, equitable, and climate-adapted** futures.”

Standard 4B1 General Planning Knowledge: Add climate change knowledge as a separate bullet.

Climate Science, Impacts, and Responses: interpretation and use of climate science for urban and regional planning; planning responses to mitigate climate change,

decarbonize urban systems, and reduce risks and recover from climate-exacerbated impacts; causes of historic and present day climate injustices and the economic, social, political, and spatial climate actions that respond to remedy them.

Standard 4B2 Skills and Tools for Planning Practice:

- a) Planning Process and Engagement: Planning process and community and stakeholder engagement; plan creation and implementation; methods of design and intervention to understand and influence the future.
- b) Analytical Skills and Tools: Research and critical analysis skills for preparing and conducting research; quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, analysis, and forecasting; methods of geo-spatial analysis, mapping and data visualization.
- c) Professional and Communication Skills: Ability to work in teams and with professionals in allied fields; professional leadership in the planning context, including under conditions of uncertainty, trauma, and disruption; written, oral, and graphic communication.

We believe these proposals thread climate change throughout the curriculum without adding lengthy or overly prescriptive text. Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your positive response.

Sincerely,

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