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**NASPAA Site Visitor Training  
Workbook**

**ARNOVA Annual Conference 2017  
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**SERVING AS A SITE VISITOR**

* **Pre Visit Preparation** (http://accreditation.naspaa.org/resources/official-standards-policies/)
  + Review NASPAA Standards and corresponding videos: http://accreditation.naspaa.org/for-site-visitors/site-visitor-training/
  + Review Self-Study Instructions
  + Review Site Visit Manual
  + Review current COPRA Policies (Policy Statements)
  + Perform conflict of interest check when matched to program

* **Pre Visit Preparation, Program-specific in NASPAA Data Center** (naspaa.civicore.com)
  + Review Self-Study Report and appendices
  + Review Interim Report and program response
  + Connect with Chair on Responsibilities
    - Draft Preparatory Questions
    - Consider needed meetings, documents to review
  + Coordinate travel with team (and program)
    - Chair tasked with setting on-the-ground schedule
* **The Site Visit** (2.5 days on-the-ground)
  + Connect with team re: strategy, conduct
  + Faciliatate formative and collegial discussions with all stakeholders
  + Confirm and clarify, inquire; Do not judge or evaluate
  + Review evidence (source documents) related to program evaluatation, student learning assessment, mission, etc.: confirm processes, progress
  + Focus on public service values
  + Draft report findings
    - Document evidence and conversations related to Interim Report concerns
* **Site Visit Report**
  + Coordinate Report through the Site Visit Chair
  + Indicate concerns/no concerns, as supported by evidence
    - Make no final judgments
  + Respnd to COPRA concerns
    - Focus on evidence, what was observed, not pre-judgment
  + Review (all) accreditation standards
  + Report through NASPAA Data Center
* **Chair Responsibilities**
  + Contact COPRA Liaison
    - Understand goals of visit
  + Work with Program Representative to arrange schedule and secure stakeholder meetings and documents
    - Communicate goals and role of visit
  + Assign the workload for the visit appropriately with the team
  + Direct the onsite meetings, including the exit interview, making sure attention is given to COPRA priorities
    - Introduce team and purpose for the visit and each meeting
  + Coordinate site visit report
    - Notify program of draft and finalize report post-program review

**SITE VISIT REFERENCE MATERIALS**

[**https://accreditation.naspaa.org/for-site-visitors/**](https://accreditation.naspaa.org/for-site-visitors/)

* **Preparation Materials – Prior to Visit**
  + NASPAA Standards
  + Preparation Videos
  + Self-Study Instructions
  + COPRA Policy Statements
  + Site Visit Manual
* **Program Documents – Prior to Visit**
  + Program Self-Study Report (including appendices)
  + Interim Report from COPRA
  + Program Response to COPRA Interim Report
* **Site Visit Activities**
  + Drafting Preparatory Questions (and Lead Roles)
  + Review Program Documents
  + Meeting with Stakeholders with Questions
  + Developing a Site Visit Report
* **Developing the Response for the Report**
  + Making Connections
    - Standard(s)
    - Self-Study Report
    - Interim Report
    - Program Response
    - Observations
    - Findings
    - Recommendations
  + Language in the Findings

**CASE QUESTIONS**

Using the Example Interim Report below, review the Program’s Mission Statement and Items 1, 2, and 3. After you have reviewed each item, **discuss as a group** and consider the following questions. Once you have completed, discuss the items as a group and share your responses.

1. What are the strengths of the mission statement provided in relation to the Standards? What are the weaknesses?
2. During the Site Visit, who would you want to meet with to address COPRA’s Interim Report concerns? What questions might you ask them?
3. What supporting documentation might you need to see to explore the issues raised in the interim report and provide evidence back to COPRA? How would you draft the report?

EXAMPLE INTERIM REPORT

**Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation**

**Interim Report to the**

**Master of Public Administration Program  
NASPAA University**

November 23, 2015

The Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation has reviewed the Self Study Report (SSR) for the Master of Nonprofit Management (MNM) Program at NASPAA University. The Commission commends the program for strengths evident in the Self-Study Report and requests further information on the following point for its review. If the program proceeds to a site visit, particular attention should be paid to the items listed below. Please relate any responses to the program’s specific mission and goals.

**Program Mission Statement (as reported in the SSR):**

*The MNM Program at NASPAA University seeks to prepare students for significant professional and managerial positions in the nonprofit sector in the Washington D.C. metro region. The curriculum is designed to equip students with the necessary skills to be successful in contemporary public service and provide a sound foundation in ethics and social equity.*

**Item 1: Standard 1.1 – Mission Statement**

Standard 1.1 states, “The program will have a statement of mission that guides performance expectations and their evaluation, including:

* its purpose and public service values, given the program’s particular emphasis on public affairs, administration, and policy
* the population of students, employers, and professionals the program intends to serve, and
* the contributions it intends to produce to advance the knowledge, research, and practice of public affairs, administration, and policy.”

The Self Study Report indicates that the Alumni, Advisory Board, Employers, and Faculty are involved in the development of the mission statement. However, it is not clear how these stakeholders are involved (or will continue to be involved in its review):

“In preparation for the self-study report, a committee of the faculty reviewed the current mission statement and suggested adjustments to better reflect the program into which we have grown. We engaged our alumni, advisory board, a group of potential employers, and the entire faculty to review the proposed new mission statement. The mission statement was ratified in March 2014.”

The Commission requests additional information regarding the process that was used in the development and continued evaluation of the mission statement. The Commission requests that the Site Visit Team explore this issue with the program during the site visit, paying particular attention to the specific process that was used in developing the mission statement, its continued evaluation, and how stakeholders are involved in that process.

**Item 2: Standard 1.3 – Program Evaluation**

Standard 1.3 states, “The program will collect, apply, and report information about its performance and its operations to guide the evolution of the program’s mission and the program’s design and continuous improvement with respect to standards two through seven.”

Section 1.3.2 of the Self-Study Report the program indicates that its program evaluation approach is centered on student learning assessment, specifically the capstone course and several course-embedded assignments in core courses. The program mentions a student exit survey and faculty and course evaluations, as well: “To evaluate our mission, we use data from student learning assessment, as well as responses from our student exit survey and student feedback on faculty and courses, to determine areas for improvement. At this point, these data have signaled that students would enjoy more engagement with alumni and employers.” However, the program does not provide an example of how this evidence led to programmatic impact.

The Commission requests the program provide additional information about its overall program evaluation, of which student learning assessment is a component. Based on the tools detailed in the self-study report, how does the program systematically determine opportunities for continuous improvement at the program level? How does the program collect and analyze information from the survey and evaluations? Specifically, how have these assessment activities together contributed to the program’s overall evaluation process? In other words, while the program indicates an opportunity to enhance external program involvement, it is unclear how the data identified this opportunity and if steps have been taken to do so. How has the program “closed the loop” as a result of these evaluation measures?

Further, the Commission requests how the program’s goals are reflected in its program evaluation approach. For instance, the program has a mission-based focus on preparing students for nonprofit management. What outcomes does the program systematically track to determine if it is meeting its mission-based goal?

**Item 3: Standard 4.3 – Support for Students**

Standard 4.3 states, “The program will ensure the availability of support services, such as curriculum advising, internship placement and supervision, career counseling, and job placement assistance to enable students to progress in careers in public affairs, administration, and policy.”

In Section 4.3.4 the Self-Study Report states, “All students without professional work experience (pre-service) are required to complete at least one internship during their course of study….in Spring 2015, 69% of graduating students had participated in an internship.” Table 4.2.2a of the Self-Study Report indicates the vast majority (95 percent) of students are pre-service.

The Commission requests a fuller description of how the program defines professional work experience and clarification of the exemptions granted to the 31% of students who did not complete an internship, specifically those preservice students who appear to have been waived from the requirement. How does the program ensure students without professional experiences are completing internships? What is the program’s waiver policy? For example, are students required to have work experience specific to the not-for-profit sector or does post-baccalaureate work would suffice?

**Item 4: Standard 5.1 – Universal Required Competencies**

Standard 5.1 states, "As the basis for its curriculum, the program will adopt a set of required competencies related to its mission and to public service values. The required competencies will include five domains: the ability

* to lead and manage in public governance;
* to participate in and contribute to the public policy process
* to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions;
* to articulate and apply a public service perspective;
* to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.”

The program in its elf-study report has chosen to elaborate on its assessment of the universal competency “to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.”

The program operationally defined the competency as the ability to:

* organize, develop, and communicate complex ideas in a clear and logical manner, both orally and written
* listen effectively to diverse viewpoints
* understand the impact of diversity on successful civic engagement
* adapt to cultural interactions and dynamics
* recognize the importance of cultural aptitude in the delivery of nonprofit services
* develop service delivery which reflects cultural sensitivity

The self-study report states that “Because of our mission focus on nonprofit organizations, and our students working in the nonprofit field, our student learning outcomes focus on knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in nonprofits in our community.” The program uses the Capstone course and papers, one core class PA657, and a student exit survey as its measures for student learning outcomes. However, the program was not clear on why these measures were chosen and how they specifically relate to the student learning outcomes expected of the students. Further, the program indicates that these measures were analyzed and the program was able to identify areas for improvement. However, the program did not indicate specifically how these measures were analyzed, by whom, and what specific evidence led to determining that “adjustments in our program and its delivery of educational services” were needed. Further, the program indicated that “during the Self-Study year the Assessment Committee determined that cultural competency is not adequately addressed in the current curriculum.”

The Commission requests the program provide further information on: why the Capstone projects, PA657, and exit survey were chosen as measures; how they specifically relate to the student learning outcomes defined by the program for the chosen cultural universal competency; and the systematic process by which the faculty analyzed these measures to determine areas for programmatic improvement. Specifically, how did the program’s direct assessment of student learning determine the inadequacy of the cultural competency learning outcomes? How does it plan to enhance its attention to cultural competency?

**CASE QUESTION – Writing A Response**

Using the same example Interim Report above, review Item 4 of the Interim Report from COPRA. Then, review the Program Response to COPRA on Item 4 (below). After this review, with those at the table, develop a Site Visit Team Comment to this Item to be included in the Site Visit Report.

**From the Program’s Response to COPRA’s Interim Report**

To date, the program has completed one cycle of assessment. As discussed in the self-study report, during the 2014-15 academic year, we reviewed Competency #5— “to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.” We did this by applying a rubric to a sample of papers students had written in our Course PA657 (Ethics), as well as completed capstones. We supplemented our analysis with student exit surveys. Our data show that students generally felt good about the communication skills they acquired in these courses, including in their ability communicate with diverse audiences. We did see one item of concern—students reported that while they felt confident they could communicate clearly both orally and written, they felt less confident knowing how to develop service delivery in ways sensitive to cultural nuances. This is especially critical for our graduates working in nonprofit settings, who consistently engage with changing communities in the urban center of Washington DC. Based on this, we have revised the way we teach our core courses to incorporate more attention to working within diverse settings. Otherwise, we have been pleased with the way we teach ethics and the capstone course, and have made no other changes as a result of our analysis.

**From the Site Visit Team Report:**

Standard 5.1 √ Cited by COPRA

Have No Concerns   
Have Concerns

Standard 5.1 Comments

**SCENARIOS**

**On-the-Ground Conduct**

1. **At a meeting of students assembled at the team’s request by the Program Administrator, the student comments are uniformly positive praising the program for its strengths.**
2. The Interim Report indicates the Program submitted no diversity plan. The Program has a diverse student body.
3. Key members of the nucleus faculty are not available during the site visit.
4. **At a meeting with students, another member of the Site Visit Team begins to lecture about public service values.**
5. At a meeting with the program chair, a member of the Site Visit Team begins talking about the value of the Site Visit Team member’s home program’s approach to curriculum design. What do you do?
6. The program offers courses online, moving toward offering its entire degree online. How can the team review compliance?
7. **Program faculty are resisting developing student learning assessment above and beyond grading students.**
8. The Program is notably lacking in obvious student and faculty diversity. How can the team approach discussing the same topic with different programmatic stakeholders? For instance, if the program is struggling to articulate its climate of inclusiveness, how do you facilitate a conversation with students? Faculty? The provost?

**Site Visit Report**

1. **The Team has found evidence that the program has not met the expectations with regard to assessing the universal required competencies, as appropriate for its accreditation cohort. How does the Team communicate this in the Report? To the program in person?**
2. **The students indicate that they are dissatisfied with the level of internship and career support provided by the program. The alumni echo this concern.**
3. The Team believes the program is doing an excellent job with regard to student support. Likewise, the Team thinks there are large opportunities to improve faculty support. How does the Team communicate this in the Report? To the Program in person?
4. **As a Site Visitor, what if you have a concern with conformance to a standard not raised by COPRA? What do you do?**
5. As a Site Visitor, what if a concern from COPRA is not a concern for you? What do you do? How is it reported?