

Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism,  
and Related Professions (COAPRT)

2013 Accreditation Standards  
Frequently Asked Questions—III  
*Spring 2010*

**Definitions**

1. In the 7.00 series, standards and learning outcomes appear to be used interchangeably. What is the distinction and how do the 7.00 series outcomes relate to our Program and institutional outcomes?

Response: 7.01, 7.02, and 7.03 and their respective sub-criteria are foundational learning outcome standards and 7.04 is a standard addressing internships. The learning outcomes define knowledge, skills and abilities students are to achieve while the internship standard defines an expectation each Program must address. A Program defines its overall Program learning outcomes. For the standards in the 7.00 series, the Program defines learning outcomes that articulate the essence of each of the 7.00 learner outcomes and that are consistent with Program-specific learning outcomes. Program faculty define the intent of the Program, and for the COAPRT outcomes, provide evidence that the Program's experiences assure students of the opportunity to realize essential competencies in parks, recreation, tourism and related specialties. The Program's outcomes may be reflective of institutional outcomes with outcomes for the COAPRT 7.00 and 8.00 (if applicable) series encompassed within the context of each; for example, concepts like diversity, global relations, and communication competence may be articulated through learner outcomes in parks, recreation, tourism and related professions as well as outcomes articulated for institutional general education requirements.

2. Are a course objective and a learning outcome one in the same?

Response: Possibly. A learning outcome identifies a measurable knowledge, skill or ability a student acquires and is found in a stated behavioral objective. If a course objective is written as a behavioral objective, a learning outcome should be contained within the statement. Each Program identifies learning outcomes expected of all Program graduates that result from curricular and co-curricular experiences evident across the curriculum. These outcomes may be linked to the institutionally-identified student learning outcomes as well as to the COAPRT standards. To illustrate, critical thinking, theoretical application of foundational concepts, and ethical management practices may be both institutional and Program outcomes derived through experiences in several courses and field-based experiences. These learning outcomes may be included within the course objectives for several classes. The self-study may therefore contain syllabi from courses that address Program learning outcomes with Council and visitor's using the syllabi as one of the artifacts to document that student's have had the opportunity and the experiences to achieve desired Program outcomes. Additional artifacts like student portfolio content may provide

evidence that field-based experiences also present opportunities to achieve desired Program results.

### **Adoption of 2013 Accreditation Process and Standards**

3. When does a Program have to adopt the new standards?

Any institution with a site visit date after January 1, 2013 will be required to adhere to the 2013 standards. Prior to the implementation of the 2013 standards an institution may choose to follow the existing (2004) or new (2013) standards. If an institution chooses to follow the 2004 standards, the criteria for the Options apply, as applicable. If an institution chooses to follow the 2013 standards, the Program addresses the 2013 1.00-7.00 standards; and until 2013 may elect to retain their option(s); when the criteria for the applicable Affiliate Specialty become available after 2013 the Program must transition to the Specialty accreditation when their five-year cycle under the 2004 option standards is completed.

4. If a Program is considering initial accreditation or planning a review prior to 2013, which set of COAPRT standards (2004 or 2013) should they select?

Response: The decision a Program makes is influenced by the status of the institution's transition to student learning outcomes. COAPRT is aware that regional accreditation bodies recognized by CHEA are at varying stages in this transition; consequently, variance exists in Program readiness to measure student learning outcomes. Eventually all Programs accredited by regional bodies and Program accreditors will be required to measure outcomes of student learning.

### **Preparing the Self-Study**

5. If websites are used to post Program documents should they be password protected?

Response: It depends on the privacy, copyright, or contractual considerations as determined by the Program. Materials used to address accreditation compliance must be accessible to COAPRT members and site visitors. Programs are required to send electronic copies of their self-study to the Council Lead and Second, an Associate Evaluator, the visitation team, and the Council Liaison from NRPA who also requires a hard copy. Additionally, Programs are encouraged to retain onsite electronic access and a hard copy for use by the team and to retain for future reference (e.g. eight electronic copies and two hard copies potentially). Sensitive documents like Program generated tests are retained onsite for review with only reference made to their location on websites or in self-studies.

6. Since hotlinks to other documents permit a greater array of evidentiary materials, is more information better?

Response: Not necessarily. To aid reviewers and visitors in accessing information, it is important to provide a link directly to the relevant part of the document rather than to the entire document or to its table of contents.

7. How will the content of the standards appear when affiliates present specialty standards and outcomes compatible with COAPRT and in compliance with CHEA?

Response: The following responses are contingent upon completion of the pilot Program for the 2013 standards.

The 1.00 standards are the eligibility standards and must be met by every Program applying for COAPRT accreditation. Standard 1.03 requires 2.0 full-time faculty members and 1.0 additional full-time equivalent (FTE) of all Programs desiring accreditation. If specialty accreditation also is requested, additional faculty are not required. A Program desiring accreditation with a specialty must address Standards 1.00 – 7.00 and specialty accreditation standards under the 8.00 criteria with 2.0 full-time faculty members and 1.0 additional FTE. The composition of “Full-Time” and “Full Time Equivalent” is determined by the institution and the Program and is explained in the Program’s self-study.

Series 2.00-6.00 are standards identifying CHEA content areas. Those Programs requesting accreditation without additional specialty accreditation (i.e., seeking accreditation for the 1.00-7.00 standards only), must address the 2013 standards. If a Program seeks accreditation of a specialty (8.00), the SAC may wish to enhance the standards. For example, for standard 2.02, the specialty affiliate may require curricular development or improvement in the content area of the specialty; this may also be true with standards 3.05, 4.07, and 5.06.

The 7.00 standards are the foundational standards and outcomes.. Standards 7.01, 7.02, and 7.03 are outcomes that refer to criteria in a particular Program area, the focus of which is on the Program’s philosophy, practice, and management. Evidence is gathered to describe and affirm that students achieve the desired outcome for each identified focus (e.g. commercial recreation, therapeutic recreation, community recreation). Standard 7.04 references an internship and must be met by all Programs. If a Program does not adopt a Specialization, only 1.00-7.00 are addressed in their self-study and considered for the Program review.

The 8.00 standards will be developed through the Affiliate SAC representing a particular specialty profession. A Program that elects to seek accreditation of a specialty will address standards 1.00-7.00 AND the applicable (based on the specialty) 8.00 standards. The 8.00 standards become available after an affiliate has created and validated the standards, and developed a SAC to oversee the 8.00 specialty criteria.

## **Curricular Impacts**

8. Can more than one course or different courses that meet the requirements for various majors be used to satisfy criteria in 7.01, 7.02, and 7.03?

Response: Yes. The important factor is whether all students within the Program have opportunities to achieve the Program’s learning outcomes rather than which course is

designed to achieve a particular learning outcome. Thus, evidence of the learning outcome may be derived from several courses as well as co-curricular experiences. It is incumbent upon the Program to demonstrate that all students have met their Program learning outcomes and the outcomes identified for 7.01, 7.02, 7.03.

9. Will curricular changes occur and will they change what faculty do?

Response: Possibly. Curricular experiences and faculty responsibilities may change to better reflect student-centered learning and measurement of student outcomes. Engagement of students during curricular and co-curricular experiences may necessitate differing classroom management strategies and measurement rubrics. A desirable approach to assessment of learner outcomes is to remain as minimally intrusive as possible.

10. Can the 400 clock hour internship occur across more than one semester; for example, splitting the 400 hours in half (200 hours one semester, 200 next)?

Response: No. The intent is to offer a comprehensive, structured experience through hours that occur uninterrupted over the duration of the experience. The experience should represent tasks illustrative of full-time professional level responsibilities with commensurate time frames and work schedules.

### **Site Visitation Changes**

11. Will changes occur in future visitation processes?

Response: Yes. Commencing with the 2013 standards, all visits will be made by a minimum of two visitors. Initial and 10<sup>th</sup> year reviews will be conducted by three visitors. When Specialty accreditation(s) is desired, the team will be comprised of persons with expertise in each specialty, which may necessitate additional team members. Effective fall 2010, visits will be scheduled between October and April and one annual meeting with hearings will occur in the fall of each year.

12. Will changes occur in how Council and Visitation Team members approach evaluation of the 2013 outcomes and assessment criteria?

Response: Yes. The shift to measurement of learner outcomes transitions accreditation from a focus on input and process evaluation to outcome evaluation. As a consequence, the significance of documents like syllabi, number of library and technology resources and faculty competence are reduced, while the documentation of student engagement and results of their accomplishments are critical. Council and visitor efforts focus on artifacts and information that record and report student learning.

A Program's self study will appear similar in format to self-studies submitted according to 2004 standards. The length of the self-study will be reduced by the use of links and data bases that visitors may access on the Program's website or through onsite review of artifacts and interviews. To protect the integrity of Program assessment tools, documents

like pre- and post-course tests or entry-exit Program surveys will be referred to in the self-study yet not included. Rather, these documents will be kept on campus for onsite review, further reducing the length of the self-study.

The Visitor's Report of their review of the 1.00-6.00 standards will be documented using the same notations (not met, partially met, met, exceeded, substantially exceeded) as used with the 2004 and previous accreditation standards. For the 7.00 and, if applicable, the 8.00 learner outcomes and assessment, the Visitor Report will document evidence gathered using the following questions. Additionally, a Behaviorally Anchored Rating System (BARS) will be used to score visitor responses to the following questions.

- 1. Are the students provided with sufficient opportunities to achieve the outcomes stated in responses to the 7.0 series?**
- 2. What evidence is provided demonstrating the existence of quality assessment measures being used to assess the outcomes?**
- 3. What do the results of the assessment measures indicate with respect to students' achievement of outcomes?**
- 4. How does the Program use the assessment results for continuous Program improvement?**

The visitors will gather evidence for each of these guiding questions through triangulated assessment methods. Evidence collected from interviews, review of student artifacts, data from direct and indirect measures (e.g. national examination scores, Program-constructed entry-exit tests, pre-post course tests, graduate surveys, and internship supervisor evaluations) become the basis for visitor response to each of the above questions. Assessment techniques are determined and properly justified by each Program. Council and visitors consider the quality of the processes used and the Program's response to results received from ongoing assessment activities.

13. What activities will COAPRT undertake to train potential visitors and Program faculty and staff on the 2013 accreditation processes?

Response: A train-the-trainer approach is being designed to prepare visitors to address the learner outcomes and conduct an accreditation assessment. Council members are participating as reviewers in cooperation with the pilot schools. Each pilot school will involve at least one faculty member as a COAPRT visitor trainee. Training materials will be developed for electronic and in-person dissemination, with the requirement that all Programs have at least one member of their faculty trained on the 2013 visitor review processes prior to their initial review under the 2013 outcomes. Prospective visitors will serve as mentored visitors during a minimum of one scheduled visit following completion of a COAPRT training after which they will be approved and certified by Council as a Visitor or a Lead Visitor.

## **Council Operational Policies and Procedures**

14. What activities will COAPRT undertake to disseminate information on the accreditation process that focus on student learning outcomes?

Response: Seven pilot schools have been asked to share relevant documents at their discretion. A faculty member from each Program who is responsible for preparation of the Program's self study and all prospective visitors must participate in training on the 2013 standards. Newsletters to currently accredited Programs will continue to include sample resources. Information will be posted on the COAPRT website.

15. What is the membership of COAPRT?

Response: The membership of COAPRT includes five educators from accredited Programs, three professionals, one administrator in higher education and one consumer or public representative. The Council is formed by individuals who have elected to place their names before the Council, which selects members for each of these positions. When affiliates become active, a representative from the SAC appointed by the Affiliate and approved by COAPRT will sit on the Council and address matters affecting the specialty.

16. Will changes occur in the hearing process?

Response: Yes. Commencing in fall 2011, the Council will conduct two hearings simultaneously during the annual meeting. Five Council members typically will be present at each hearing, with variations in that number owing to recusals or scheduling that permits the entire Council to participate. When a Specialty (8.00) is reviewed, at least one Council member, e.g. SAC representative, will be included, which may necessitate the addition of another person to the Council during the hearing.

17. How will decisions on Program and/or Specialty accreditation be reported?

Response: The full Council will deliberate and vote on all Program accreditations. Since two hearings will occur simultaneously, the full Council will convene to deliberate and vote on Program accreditations. This is a significant change, resulting in accreditation decisions being delayed for up to 48 hours following the hearing. The final Council decision will be communicated to each program via email within 15 days, followed by communication of the Council decision to the institution's President with 30 days.

One of the current three outcomes will be applied: Accreditation of the Professional Program; Accreditation of the Professional Program and Professional Specialization(s); Not accredited (e.g. Specialization(s) may not be accredited unless the 1.00-7.00 criteria are met). If Specializations are sought, the SAC representative(s) will deliberate with the Council and vote on actions affecting their professional specialty.

18. If my Program requests accreditation of a specialty, how will this affect the Program fees?

Response: At this time there are no additional fees to the Program seeking specialty Accreditation; however, should additional site visitors be necessary, for example when more than one specialty accreditation is desired, the Program will be required to cover the associated travel expenses.

19. Will changes occur in the documentation required for continuing accreditation?

Response: Yes. Programs will report on the continuous improvements in their Programs. The narrative will be due annually on September 1. This report may be the Program's response to their institution's annual assessment requests. Supplemental information on assessment activities pertaining to 1.00-7.00, including data and measurements maintained/updated during the previous academic year, may be necessary.

### **Specializations and Affiliates**

20. Do Programs develop learning outcomes for specializations under which they are currently accredited?

Response: No. Commencing in 2013, only specializations developed by professional Specialty Accreditation Committees (SACs) established by respective professional organizations and approved by COAPRT will be available for accreditation. Those Programs with options prior to 2013 or under the 2004 criteria will be permitted to retain the option(s) per their accreditation cycle. If there are no approved professional specializations when the five-year period ends, the Program's accreditation will encompass standards and criteria in 1.00 through 7.00. Available professional specializations will be listed under the 8.00 series and titled by the specialty presenting the learner outcomes for their profession.

21. What is an affiliate?

Response: An affiliate is a professional organization or organizations that represent(s) a professional practice and career for bachelor's degree graduates in parks, recreation, tourism and related professions. The affiliate enters into a mentoring agreement to define standards and learning outcomes for a professional specialization. Upon acceptance of the criteria, the affiliate participates in Council processes related to the specialization accreditation and protocols governing the affiliate relationship for a period of five years, subject to renewal. Specifics of the relationship are described through signed policy and agreement documents. A mentoring fee, currently \$500.00, is paid annually by the Affiliate and covers the additional COAPRT operational costs.

Affiliate agreements have been signed by the Resort and Commercial Recreation Association and the Academy for Park and Recreation Administration. Other affiliation agreements are being negotiated.

22. What is a SAC?

Response: Specialty Accreditation Committee (SAC). This is the oversight committee identified by the Affiliate to develop specialty accreditation standards. Members of this committee, selected by a specialty profession, are content experts who develop, monitor, update, and manage professional specialty accreditation standards. One member of the SAC represents the specialty profession on the COAPRT. SAC members participate in visitor training and identification of visitors with expertise in the specialty. A SAC provides general marketing for the specialized accreditation and seeks to inform stakeholders about accreditation. In essence, the SAC is the specialization profession's accreditation committee. Members of the SAC collaborate with COAPRT to assure compatibility of standards and operational documents and compliance with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation recognition criteria. Operational costs of the SAC are assumed by the Affiliate(s).

23. What if our Program offers additional curricular experiences that are not identified specifically in the 2013 standards?

Programs may elect to offer curricular experiences not encompassed by 1.00-7.00 and 8.00 if applicable; COAPRT accreditation will recognize only those outcomes and assessment identified in the COAPRT standards at the time of the Program's initial application with other curricular experiences identified as non-accredited Program components.

24. How will the operational structure of COAPRT reflect the addition of the affiliate relationships and their respective SACs?

Response: There will be three levels of recognition. Tier One: Through regional accrediting bodies, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) accredits institutions. Only Programs operating in regionally accredited institutions may seek Program or specialty accreditation. Tier Two: COAPRT is recognized as a Program accreditor. Tier Three: The addition of Specialty accreditation provides a third level of accreditation (see the following figure). This COAPRT structure is similar to Program accreditors that award multiple specialty accreditations like business and technology and health-related professions.

