

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

## *Learning Outcomes Standards and Assessment*



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

## **Outcomes Standards and Assessment**

### **Introduction**

This document presents the standards with which programs shall comply to qualify for accreditation. These standards are organized into seven sections: Eligibility Requirements; Mission, Vision, Values, and Planning; Administration; Faculty; Students, Instructional Resources; Learning Outcomes; and Specialty Profession Learning Outcomes. Programs seeking accreditation or re-accreditation are also strongly advised to visit the Council on Accreditation for Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions website: <http://www.nrpa.org/COA/> . Specific policies, procedures, and forms can be accessed at <http://www.nrpa.org/Content.aspx?id=4952>. One particularly helpful document is the COAPRT Handbook, which is available at that site, under the heading, “Policies, Procedures, and Forms.”

### **COAPRT Accreditation Standards**

Programs seeking accreditation must demonstrate compliance with each of the standards that follow. For many standards, self-study authors will find that evidence demonstrating compliance resides within an existing, on-line institutional policy and procedure manual or related document. In such cases, authors may (a) copy the relevant material and paste that information into a “hard copy” self-study, or (b) provide the URL address of the specific on-line information that addresses the standard. **If the URL approach is used, authors shall provide URLs pointing directly to the specific evidence requested for each standard, rather than to a more general document.**

Standard 4.03, for example, indicates: *The program shall utilize strategic hiring practices intended to result in a faculty that varies in education, training, institutions attended, gender, ethnicity, race, age, and other elements of diversity.* Such information might be available in an on-line policy and procedure manual of the institution. In that case, the self-study author may provide the URL to that specific policy within the manual (e.g., directly linked to the page and paragraph); this may be accomplished most effectively through the use of hotlinks within the self-study. **It is not acceptable to provide the URL to the general policy and procedure manual, leaving reviewers to find the relevant policy within that more general document. Programs are also fully responsible for assuring that all links are viable. Authors shall verify that all links are active at the time the self-study is forwarded to COAPRT and visitors.** Reviewers will not search further for evidence of compliance if links are not working or if links do not reveal information related to the standard being evaluated.

## 1.0 Eligibility Criteria

A unit will be considered for accreditation only when the following 1.0 series of standards are met. Eligibility criteria apply throughout the accreditation period. Thus, institutions should note that upon notification of a deficiency in the 1.0 series, the Council may withdraw accreditation at any time.

- 1.01 The academic unit and curriculum concerned with parks, recreation, tourism, and related professions shall have been in operation for three years and be clearly identifiable to the public.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* An organizational chart and documentation of existence of a university-approved curriculum having been in place for at least three years (e.g., degree description from the University catalog).
- 1.02 The institution shall be currently accredited by the appropriate regional accrediting association approved by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or by the current national accrediting body.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Documentation of institution's status and review dates. It may be possible to provide a link to the appropriate page of the website of the regional accrediting body in which accreditation of the institution is documented.
- 1.03 A minimum of two full-time faculty members and a minimum of one additional full-time equivalent faculty position (FTE), which may be comprised of multiple individuals, shall be assigned to and instruct in the program.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* A record of faculty assignments to the unit.
- 1.04 A minimum of two full-time faculty members shall hold a degree of masters or higher, and a degree of bachelors or above in parks, recreation, tourism, and related professions.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* A brief summary of the academic degrees held by faculty, supported by an appendix that includes complete curriculum vitae of faculty.
- 1.05 All individuals instructing in the programs shall have competence and credentials in the subject matter for which they are responsible.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* A brief summary of the professional and subject matter competence and credentials of faculty, supported by an appendix that includes complete curriculum vitae of faculty.
- 1.06 Each program seeking accreditation shall employ at least one individual as a faculty member who has completed formal COAPRT training no less than five years prior to submission of the self-study.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* A record of attendance at COAPRT training attendance by faculty that serve the program.

## 2.0 Mission, Vision, Values, and Planning

- 2.01 The academic unit shall have the following current written documents that are clearly demonstrated to be consistent with the institution and with the parks, recreation, tourism, and related professions:
- 2.01:01 Mission, vision, and values statements of the program shall be visible, operational, and present in the unit culture.
  - 2.01:02 The academic unit shall maintain an up-to-date strategic plan for the program. This plan must include a) current mission, vision and values; b) goals; c) measureable objectives; d) target dates for accomplishment of objectives; e) designation of primary person or organizational unit responsible for attainment of objectives; and f) a strategic plan status report.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Copies of the pertinent documents or specific URL locations.
- 2.02 There shall be ongoing curricular development and improvement, including faculty ownership of the curriculum and meaningful input from stakeholders and constituent groups.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Documentation of course additions, deletions, and modifications; updated degree plans; and other evidence of curriculum improvement and faculty ownership. This documentation shall include summary information about the sources of input (e.g., faculty, students, professionals).
- 2.03 The academic unit shall have institutionally approved degree requirements for all programs being considered for accreditation.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Copies of degree requirements, and appropriate evidence of institutional approval of those requirements.
- 2.04 The academic unit shall maintain an up-to-date assessment plan for the learning outcomes in Section 7.0, and if applicable, the 8.0 series standards.
- 2.04.01 The program shall demonstrate that its assessment plan is compatible with expectations of the regional accrediting association and the institution.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* A summary of requirements of the regional accrediting body and a justification for the position that the program's assessment plan is in compliance with those requirements.

- 2.04.02 The program shall demonstrate that data generated through measurement tools that were designed to measure program learning outcomes are used solely for that purpose. Such data must not be used as secondary data for instructor evaluations or other non-related functions.
- Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Documentation of a policy indicating program practices, and a statement of assurance that the program complies with that policy.
- 2.04.03 Evidence shall be provided that the metrics used for assessment are suitable and appropriate for their intended use.
- Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* A written description and critique of the measurement tools used. This critique might include a description of a) the procedure used to develop each measurement tool, b) the connection between the learning that is measured and the curriculum taught (i.e., content-related evidence of validity), and c) psychometric analyses of validity and reliability, if available and appropriate.
- 2.04.04 Evidence shall be provided to demonstrate that the program uses learning outcomes data to inform decisions.
- Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Minutes from faculty meetings in which assessment results were discussed, including documentation of actions taken based on that discussion.

### **3.0 Administration**

- 3.01 Institutional policies and the organizational structure within which the program is housed shall afford sufficient opportunity for the program to succeed in its mission, vision, and values with respect to:
- 3.01:01 Responsibility and authority of the program administrator to make decisions related to resources allocated to that program.
- Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Formal written policy concerning the scope of responsibility and authority of the chair, director, coordinator, or administrator and a written evaluation from that administrator of the extent to which that policy and institutional practice afford her or him the opportunity to succeed in the mission of the unit.
- 3.01:02 Adequacy of financial resources.
- Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Appropriate financial documents and an evaluation of adequacy of financial resources assigned to the program.
- 3.01:03 Implementation of personnel policies and procedures.
- Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Policy and procedure manual of the institution with appropriate pages highlighted, unit policy and procedure documents, or specific URL locations, along with a compelling statement of compliance.

- 3.01:04 Development and implementation of academic policies and procedures for the unit.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Policy and procedure manual of the institution with appropriate pages highlighted, unit policy and procedure documents, or specific URL locations, along with a compelling statement of compliance.
- 3.02 The program administrator of the academic unit shall hold a full-time appointment in his or her academic unit with the rank of associate or full professor with tenure, with appropriate academic credentials in the unit being considered for accreditation.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* A brief summary of the credentials of the administrator, supported by an appendix that includes the curriculum vitae of the administrator.
- 3.03 The program administrator of the academic unit shall have a workload assignment and compensation consistent with the prevailing practice within the institution.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* A description of the process through which workloads are established, along with actual assignments of the administrator or coordinator. Some programs may have formal, written policies regarding workload. In those cases, the policy statements should be provided.
- 3.04 There shall be formal participation of faculty in setting policies within the academic unit.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Documentation of faculty participation in administrative policy development within the unit (e.g., minutes of faculty meetings, records of correspondence).
- 3.05 Consistent consultation with practitioners shall affirm or influence the curriculum.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Minutes of interactions and meetings, and/or correspondence, with practitioners and documentation of how that input was used in curriculum development and improvement.

#### **4.0 Faculty**

- 4.01 Professional development opportunities for academic unit faculty shall be sufficient to enable the program to accomplish its mission and operate in a manner consistent with its values.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* A description of professional development resources and an evaluation of the adequacy of those resources, in terms of the mission and values of the unit.

- 4.02 Faculty development activities shall impact program quality, consistent with the missions of the institution and the academic unit.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Documentation of how faculty development activities have influenced curriculum design, content, and/or delivery, and/or program operations or initiatives.
- 4.03 The program shall utilize strategic hiring practices intended to result in a faculty that varies in education, training, institutions attended, gender, ethnicity, race, age, and other elements of diversity.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: A description of hiring practices and processes or associated policies at the institution.
- 4.04 The policy used to determine academic unit faculty workloads shall be consistent with that applied to other academic units.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: A copy of workload policy and evidence of policy conformity.
- 4.05 Salaries, promotion and tenure privileges, university services, sabbatical leaves, leaves of absence, workload assignments, and financial support for faculty shall be sufficient to enable the program to accomplish its mission and operate in a manner consistent with its values.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: A copy of pertinent policies or specific URL locations, evidence of policy adherence, and an evaluation of the adequacy of those resources in terms of the mission and values of the academic unit.
- 4.06 Full-time faculty members with appointments to the parks, recreation, tourism, and related professions program shall instruct at least 60 percent of the required courses within the curriculum.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Last three years of teaching assignments of all faculty responsible for teaching in the program.
- 4.07 Scholarship activities of discovery, integration, and/or application by academic unit faculty serving the curriculum shall impact program quality, consistent with the missions of the institution and the academic unit.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Documentation of ways that the curriculum has been significantly informed by scholarly productivity of faculty and staff.

## **5.0 Students**

- 5.01 There shall be formal and ongoing processes designed to generate, maintain, and consider student input relative to those aspects of the academic unit affecting their professional preparation.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Documentation of student input on issues of professional preparation.



- 5.02 Written policies and procedures shall exist for admission, retention, and dismissal of students from the academic unit.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Materials or specific URL locations documenting policies and procedures for admission, retention, and dismissal of students from the academic unit, and evidence of adherence to the policies and procedures.
- 5.03 The resources available to the academic unit shall be sufficient to meet its educational objectives and serve the number of students admitted to the unit and enrolled in its courses.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Number of students and faculty, program budget, additional program responsibilities such as graduate programs and administrative appointments, and an evaluation of the adequacy and equity of resources, given the number of students and breadth of faculty assignments.
- 5.04 Student advising systems shall be effective, accessible to students, continually improved through evaluation, and include:
- 5.04:01 Academic advising.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Degree planning documents, policies, and a description of procedures.
- 5.04:02 Professional and career advising.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Professional/career portfolios, resumes, employment documents, participation in seminars, and plans for acquisition of professional credentials.
- 5.05 Student records shall be maintained in compliance with accepted confidentiality practices.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* A copy of the relevant policy or specific URL locations and evidence of compliance with the policy.
- 5.06 There shall be ongoing student involvement in professional organizations, activities of those organizations, and in professional service.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* Records of attendance at conferences, as well as participation in such activities as delivery of presentations, service as room hosts, involvement in majors' clubs, and service in professional program planning and logistics.

## **6.0 Instructional Resources**

- 6.01 Administrative support services shall be sufficient to enable the program to accomplish its mission and operate in a manner consistent with its values.  
*Suggested Evidence of Compliance:* A description of administrative support services and an evaluation of the adequacy of those services, in terms of the mission and values of the unit.

- 6.02 There shall be properly located and equipped faculty offices of sufficient quality to adequately address privacy and confidentiality issues, and that are of a number and size comparable to other programs housed in the academic unit and consistent with institutional policy.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Documentation of appropriate location and size to adequately address privacy and confidentiality issues.
- 6.03 There shall be adequate conference rooms for faculty use, study areas for students, and meeting space for student organizations.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Description of such resources and documentation of adequacy of these areas.
- 6.04 There shall be classrooms, laboratory and teaching areas, and appropriate content-specific instructional areas for the academic unit.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Schedules documenting appropriate assignments of classes to laboratories and classrooms of adequate size and resources.
- 6.05 Sufficient resources shall be present to properly implement the curriculum of the parks, recreation, tourism, and related professions academic unit, including access to special services for individuals with disabilities.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: A description of the adequacy of resources to the unit and services for individuals with disabilities and an evaluation of the adequacy of those resources and services, in terms of the mission and values of the unit.
- 6.06 All instructional areas, faculty offices, and other educational facilities shall comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the amendments to the Act.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Proof of compliance with current ADA requirements.
- 6.07 Library resources and access shall be sufficient to enable the program to accomplish its mission and operate in a manner consistent with its values.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Documentation of the adequacy of library resources (financial, materials, reference, staffing, etc.) and services and an evaluation of the adequacy of library resources, in terms of the mission and values of the unit.
- 6.08 Computing technology and computing support services available to faculty, staff, and students of the parks, recreation, tourism, and related professions academic unit shall be sufficient to enable the program to accomplish its mission and operate in a manner consistent with its values.  
Suggested Evidence of Compliance: Documentation of computing and computing support services and an evaluation of the adequacy of those resources, in terms of the mission and values of the unit.

## 7.0 Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes presented in this series of standards are designed to elicit evidence of student learning in the program's *foundational curriculum*. Foundational curricula in parks, recreation, tourism, and related professions include study in three areas:

- Foundations includes the background, nature, and scope of the profession, including its history, philosophy, and social and behavioral science underpinnings.
- Provision of services and experience opportunities for guests, visitors, participants, clients, or other constituent groups. The provision of service and experience opportunities includes, but is not limited to recreation programming and leadership, heritage and environmental interpretation, site design and management, experience design, and related processes.
- Management/Administration. This dimension refers to both operations management/administration and strategic management/administration. Operations management/administration includes planning, organizing, staffing, directing, leading, controlling, reporting, finance, resource acquisition, marketing, and critical thinking. Strategic management/administration refers to processes that managers in parks, recreation, tourism and related professions use to optimize the success of the organization within the external systems in which their organization operates. Strategic management/administration involves creating, maintaining, and deploying plans-of-action that address changing circumstances in social, economic, environmental, or financial environments; new technology; and new competitors.

It is incumbent upon the program to determine the specific body of knowledge applicable to the three areas of foundational curriculum. That decision must reflect current literature and current practice in each of the three areas.

7.01 Students graduating from the program shall demonstrate the following entry-level knowledge: a) the nature and scope of the relevant park, recreation, tourism or related professions and their associated industries; b) techniques and processes used by professionals and workers in these industries; and c) the foundation of the profession in history, science and philosophy.

7.01.01 The program shall demonstrate that students are provided with sufficient opportunity to achieve this learning outcome.

Evidence might include a) syllabi for courses relevant to this learning outcome, b) descriptions of special assignments and extra-instructional learning opportunities that are central to meeting this standard, c) a matrix of courses and extra-instructional experiences by specific learning objectives associated with 7.01.

- 7.01.02 The program shall demonstrate that quality assessment measures were used to assess learning outcomes associated with this standard. At least one of the measures used to assess this learning outcome shall be a direct measure (see Table 1 for examples of direct measures).

Evidence might include the following: a) a description of the process of constructing and evaluating the measures used, b) evidence of inter-rater agreement, reliability, validity or criteria appropriate to the measure, c) a description of when measures are administered and to whom they are administered, d) an assurance that assessment tools are not being used for purposes other than that for which they were developed

- 7.01.03 The program shall demonstrate that results of its assessment program indicate that graduates of the program are achieving this Learning Outcome.

Evidence must include a written interpretation about student attainment of learning outcomes based on data from the measures used. At least two measures of learning outcomes must be used. One of these must be a direct measure of the learning outcome (e.g., test scores, scores on embedded assignments, standardized test pass rates, ratings of observed performance by appropriate raters). The second measure can be either a direct or an indirect measure of the learning outcome. Examples of direct and indirect measures are included in Table 1.

- 7.01.04 The program shall demonstrate that it uses data from assessment of Learning Outcome 7.01 for continuous program improvement.

Evidence must include a written explanation of how the data associated with Learning Outcome 7.01 are used to inform decision making.

- 7.02 Students graduating from the program shall be able to demonstrate the ability to design, implement, and evaluate services that facilitate targeted human experiences and that embrace personal and cultural dimensions of diversity.
- 7.02.01 The program shall demonstrate that students are provided with sufficient opportunity to achieve this learning outcome.
- Evidence might include a) syllabi for courses relevant to this learning outcome, b) descriptions of special assignments and extra-instructional learning opportunities that are central to meeting this standard, c) a matrix of courses and extra-instructional experiences by specific learning objectives associated with 7.02.
- 7.02.02 The program shall demonstrate that quality assessment measures were used to assess learning outcomes associated with this standard. At least one of the measures used to assess this learning outcome shall be a direct measure (see Table 1 for examples of direct measures).
- Evidence might include the following: a) a description of the process of constructing and evaluating the measures used, b) evidence of inter-rater agreement, reliability, validity or criteria appropriate to the measure, c) a description of when measures are administered and to whom they are administered, d) an assurance that assessment tools are not being used for purposes other than that for which they were developed
- 7.02.03 The program shall demonstrate that results of its assessment program indicate that graduates of the program are achieving this Learning Outcome.
- Evidence must include a written interpretation about student attainment of learning outcomes based on data from the measures used. At least two measures of learning outcomes must be used. One of these must be a direct measure of the learning outcome (e.g., test scores, scores on embedded assignments, standardized test pass rates, ratings of observed performance by appropriate raters). The second measure can be either a direct or an indirect measure of the learning outcome. Examples of direct and indirect measures are included in Table 1.
- 7.02.04 The program shall demonstrate that it uses data from assessment of Learning Outcome 7.02 for continuous program improvement.
- Evidence must include a written explanation of how the data associated with Learning Outcome 7.02 are used for decision-making.
- 7.03 Students graduating from the program shall be able to demonstrate entry-level knowledge about management/administration in parks, recreation, tourism and/or related professions.
- 7.03.01 The program shall demonstrate that students are provided with sufficient opportunity to achieve this learning outcome.
- Evidence might include a) syllabi for courses relevant to this learning outcome,

b) descriptions of special assignments and extra-instructional learning opportunities that are central to meeting this standard, c) a matrix of courses and extra-instructional experiences by specific learning objectives associated with 7.03.

7.03:02 The program shall demonstrate that quality assessment measures were used to assess learning outcomes associated with this standard. At least one of the measures used to assess this learning outcome shall be a direct measure (see Table 1 for examples of direct measures). Evidence might include the following: a) a description of the process of constructing and evaluating the measures used, b) evidence of inter-rater agreement, reliability, validity or criteria appropriate to the measure, c) a description of when measures are administered and to whom they are administered, d) an assurance that assessment tools are not being used for purposes other than that for which they were developed.

7.03.03 The program shall demonstrate that results of its assessment program indicate that graduates of the program are achieving this Learning Outcome.

Evidence must include a written interpretation about student attainment of learning outcomes based on data from the measures used. At least two measures of learning outcomes must be used. One of these must be a direct measure of the learning outcome (e.g., test scores, scores on embedded assignments, standardized test pass rates, ratings of observed performance by appropriate raters). The second measure can be either a direct or an indirect measure of the learning outcome. Examples of direct and indirect measures are included in Table 1.

7.03.04 The program shall demonstrate that it uses data from assessment of Learning Outcome 7.03 for continuous program improvement.

Evidence must include a written explanation of how the data associated with assessment of Learning Outcome 7.03 are used for decision-making.

7.04 Students graduating from the program shall demonstrate, through a comprehensive internship of not less than 400 clock hours, the ability to use diverse, structured ways of thinking to solve problems related to different facets of professional practice, engage in advocacy, and stimulate innovation.

Table 1

Examples of Direct and Indirect Measures of Learning Outcomes

Direct Measures of Learning Outcomes	Indirect Measures of Learning Outcomes
Capstone assignment quality	Advisory Board Evaluation
Comprehensive Examination	Alumni Survey
Internship evaluation	Benchmarking
Performance of relevant skills	Curriculum Review Results
Portfolio Evaluations	Employer Survey Results
Pre/Post Test Results	Exit Interview Results
Presentation Quality	Focus Group Results
Project Quality	Graduate School Acceptance Rates
Standardized Test Results	Honors/Awards Received by the Program
Thesis/Project Quality	Placement Data
Video/Audiotape Production	Satisfaction
Written Assignment Evaluations	School Performance
Writing Exam Results	Student Evaluations of their Learning
	Transfer Acceptance Rates

## **8.0 Specialty Profession Learning Outcomes**

8.0 Standards within the 8.0 series are provided by associations that represent specializations and reflect the specialized knowledge, understanding, and abilities required to achieve minimum competencies in particular professional areas. At present, no associations have provided such standards.

- The American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) has entered into an agreement with COAPRT to develop standards for administration and management by 2013.
- The National Association of Recreation Resource Planners (NARRP) has entered into an agreement with COAPRT to develop standards for recreation resource planning by 2013.
- The National Therapeutic Recreation Society (NTRS) has entered into an agreement with COAPRT to develop standards for therapeutic recreation by 2013.