



*European Association for
Public Administration
Accreditation*

Accreditation Criteria

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EAPAA Accreditation Criteria

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Preamble

The quality of government has a major impact on the lives of individual citizens and the orderly functioning of society. Systematic training programmes are essential to ensure the quality of (future) government officials. Through accreditation the European Association for Public Administration Accreditation (EAPAA) wants to make a contribution to the quality improvement and assurance of academic level Public Administration programmes in Europe.

The European Accreditation of Programmes on Public Administration by EAPAA refers to:

- the evaluation and continuous improvement of
- Public Administration programmes
- that are offered by European universities and other academic level institutes
- with regard to their ability to satisfy stated or implied standards of quality
- followed by a formal decision to recognise or not to recognise the programme.

Public Administration programmes in Europe differ greatly. This is partly a result of differences in the structure of educational programmes among the European countries, but it is also due to explicit choices made by the developers of the programme. Any system of accreditation should respect the multiplicity of the programmes; this is possible by way of mission-based accreditation.

A mission is necessarily related to the structure within which programmes are set up and executed. For this reason, the institutional setting and the historical development of the programme are matters of importance.

It is recognised that programmes will have different missions and approaches to achieving excellence in Public Administration education. In arriving at an overall judgement on accreditation, consideration of substantial conformance with the standards and assessment of overall programme quality and the unique mission of that programme should be balanced.

Evaluation by interests groups

EAPAA makes a distinction between the accreditation process and the evaluation of individual Public Administration programmes by interest groups (e.g. students, alumni, or employers). EAPAA claims autonomy in its accreditation of Public Administration programmes, but in that process takes seriously into account the evaluations by interest groups of any given Public Administration programme.

This point is further investigated under criterion 5.6 (Quality improvement and innovation).

Language

The language of the Self-evaluation Report is English, French or German¹. However, the additional documents presented for the accreditation review may be produced in the language of the programme. When this language is not English, French or German, the institution applying for accreditation should provide a translation of the main documents in English, French or German.

1. Background

1.1 National educational systems

The educational systems at university level in the European countries differ. In the accreditation system these differences will be taken into account as far as they pose constraints to the programme to fulfil the EAPAA criteria.

¹ The site visit language normally is English, but can be French or German. However, EAPAA will do its utmost to ensure that one of the members of the site visit team will at least understand the language of the programme.

1.2 National evaluation systems

The national quality evaluation systems can put constraints on PA programmes as well. Where relevant, they will be taken into account also. Where possible, EAPAA will try to make use of the national quality evaluation system in order to minimise extra work for the EAPAA accreditation. When useful and efficient the EAPAA Accreditation Committee may decide to accept accreditation documents produced for other (national or international) quality review purposes. However, at least an explanatory note has to be produced by the programme, in which for all EAPAA criteria it is explained where the relevant information can be found.

1.3 Formal exams for entrance to civil service

In Europe the systems of entrance to the Civil Service differ. In some countries formal exams must be passed. In judging PA-programmes that prepare students for such exams, the constraints these formal exams put on the programme will be taken into account.

2. Applicability/Eligibility

The accreditation of Public Administration programmes in Europe assumes a commitment of the participating universities and institutes to the use of peer review procedures to assess educational quality. Formal peer review and accreditation of Public Administration programmes by EAPAA are open to programmes that meet the following criteria:

2.1 Academic public administration degree programme

Only academic public administration degree programmes are eligible for EAPAA accreditation. The primary objective of the programme to be accredited is to provide professional academic level education leading to a formal degree. The purpose of the programme is to prepare persons for academic level roles in the public sector or academic public administration teaching or research positions.

A broad variety of programme titles are considered to be subsumed under the broad term 'Public Administration' used in these EAPAA documents: 'Public Administration', 'Public Administration and Public Policy', 'Public Affairs', 'Public Management', 'Government Studies' etc. Also Political Science programmes with a clear 'public administration orientation' are included. The discriminating features are orientation to the public sector and training for practice in the public sector (or public administration education or research). Specialised programmes (e.g. Health Care Management) fall outside this group.

2.2 Geography

The university or institute, or branch thereof, providing the Public Administration programme is located in one of the countries of the Council of Europe or in one of the so called CIS Countries (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan).

2.3 Programme longevity

2.3.1 Normal accreditation

The programme must have been in operation at least x years (where x = the length of the programme to be accredited + 2), so there are at least two cohorts of graduates to provide adequate data for evaluating programme policies, procedures, and placement of graduates.

2.3.2 Certification for new programmes

New programmes that not yet fulfil the longevity demand of 2.3.1, can be certified as ‘peer-approved’ when the programme is designed in detail, and the organisation and means to implement the programme are available. In this case, the criteria below will be applicable as far as reasonable. When, at the moment of the site visit, the programme is one year in operation the certification will be ‘pre-accredited’.

When the programme reaches the longevity for normal accreditation, the elements that have not been reviewed in the certification procedure, together with an update of the programme structure, need to be reviewed before an accreditation decision can be taken.

2.4 Programme variants and locations

When a programme is offered in different variants (like fulltime and part-time, or distance learning), the programme has to demonstrate that all criteria are fulfilled for all variants. In the Self-evaluation Report attention must be paid to the differences between the variants.

When a programme is offered at different locations, the programme has to demonstrate that all criteria are fulfilled for all locations.

3. Duration of Accreditation

Accreditation will be granted for a seven-year period. After that, a review is required for continued accreditation.

When during this period major changes in the programme (such as major changes in the duration of the programme, or the mission and/or curriculum) are being implemented, a review is needed. The necessity thereof is judged by the Accreditation Committee chair. When a review is needed, the programme may restrict the Self-evaluation Report to those criteria that are affected by the major change.

Institutions need to inform the EAPAA-secretariat each two years about the changes in the curriculum and other relevant aspects of the programme. If the institution does not inform the EAPAA-secretariat timely, the EAPAA Accreditation Committee can withdraw the accreditation.

It absolutely is not the purpose of this restriction to preclude programme innovation. On the contrary, innovation is necessary and welcomed, but after a major change the programme should be reviewed. Therefore the accredited programmes will be obliged to inform the EAPAA-secretariat of important changes in the programme. The Accreditation Committee can decide that a review is necessary.

In case of a ‘new programme’ when the criterion on longevity is not fulfilled the certification will be granted until the programme meets this criterion. To become fully accredited at that moment a limited review is required. This review will see to those criteria that could not (fully) be reviewed in the original review.

4. Categories of accreditation

In order to account for large differences in the type and/or length of PA programmes, there are different categories of accreditation for which different standards will be used (if necessary) to reflect these differences in type. However, in general the same requirements will apply. Referring to the Bologna Treaty of 1999, EAPAA uses the Bachelor/Master terminology to indicate these different categories:

- first cycle bachelor level public administration programmes (3 or 4 years)
- second cycle graduate/master level public administration programmes (1 or 2 years)

- combined/comprehensive public administration programmes (4 or 5 years, combining bachelor and master programme)
- executive/mid career public administration master programmes (1 or 2 years)

EAPAA can decide to create other types of accreditation.

5. 'Standards'

*The accreditation standards outlined here are standards that are intended to maintain and improve the quality of Public Administration programmes. **The standards are not intended to dictate curriculum or administrative specifics for each programme** but are intended to provide a framework within which each programme will be evaluated. The standards are shown below in normal typeface, whereas the commentary and/or explanation are shown in this smaller italic typeface. With each criterion one or more checkpoints are mentioned. These checkpoints provide a basis for the arguments and conclusions with respect to the criterion. The checkpoints are important ones, but are not exclusive; other arguments can be used as well.*

5.1 Domain of Public Administration

The programme to be accredited has Public Administration in the broadest sense of the word as its major subject. The public administration programme is multidisciplinary in character. This embraces governance and all the aspects of management and policy that come with it, as well as the social and economic environments that affect it and are affected by it. Also it embraces the understanding of democratic values. The responsibility of the accredited programmes is not just to teach technical proficiency, but also to teach Public Administration according to academic standards based on positive and normative theory and empirical research.

As is stated in the Introduction above, all kind of programme titles are intended to be subsumed under the broad term Public Administration.

The Public Administration programmes should be aiming at the acquisition and application of scientific knowledge of governance. These standards apply to individual degree programmes whose purpose is to provide academic education for professional proficiency in academic level roles in the public domain.

In public administration master programmes knowledge and skills on certain aspects of public administration can be proved by the achievement of relevant entrance requirements (for example a bachelor degree in public administration).

5.2 Mission-based accreditation

The programme states clearly its educational philosophy and mission and has an orderly process for developing appropriate strategies and objectives consistent with its mission, resources, and constituencies. From the mission a set of credible educational objectives are formulated. Preferably the programme objectives are translated into competencies and/or learning outcomes which the programme intends to achieve.

Interpretations of the standards of this accreditation must be justified in light of the programme's mission and objectives and success in fulfilling its mission.

5.3 Level

The intended learning outcomes of the programme correspond to general, internationally accepted descriptions of the qualifications of an academic bachelor or master degree.

The general characteristics of academic training can be found on the one hand in the public administration-specific requirements that are common in the international field, and at the other hand in more general academic qualifications. Examples of the latter can be found in appendix 1.

5.4 Relation to practice and internships

The Public Administration programme provides adequate training of practical skills in correspondence with the mission and the programme objectives. Therefore it has adequate links to the public administration profession.

Preferably a carefully planned internship should be made available by the programme, or should be a prerequisite to participate in the programme. This internship may come in the form of a thesis project. Students who lack a significant professional work background should at least be strongly encouraged to do an internship. Training of practical skills should, in one way or the other, be part of the programme.

5.5 Curriculum

5.5.1 Curriculum content

The curriculum expresses the general idea of public administration as a multidisciplinary field of study, with the purpose of preparing students for professional academic level roles in the public sector in democratic and legal states and/or academic public administration teaching or research positions. All components of the curriculum are justified with respect to their quality and consistency with the mission of the programme. The programme follows the developments in the public administration field of science. This should be demonstrated by explicitly linking the mission and programme objectives with the curriculum components. Components also can be covered through explicit entry requirements for the programme.

The disciplines indicated provide knowledge that is useful for describing, understanding and designing governance. This does not necessarily imply that these disciplines should be taught in separate courses. Neither is it implied that other disciplines are irrelevant. Components also can be covered through explicit entry requirements for the programme.

5.5.1.1 Core components

The core curriculum provides a thorough teaching of the basic concepts, theories, methods and history (classics) of Public Administration on the level of the programme (bachelor or master). The curriculum components are designed to produce professionals capable of intelligent, creative analysis and communication, and action in the public sector. Courses taken to fulfil the core curriculum components provide research methods, concepts and theories from the disciplines of economics, law, political science, sociology, public finances, informatisation, and public management, as well as the relationship between these fields.

Students are obliged to give adequate proof of their ability to work independently (under the supervision of a supervisor) on 'real' problems or research questions in the public sector, for example through essays and final papers (e.g. a thesis), adapted to the level (bachelor or master) of the programme.

The core curriculum components enhance the student's values, knowledge, and skills to act ethically and effectively.

Depending on the institution's view on the disciplinary position of Public Administration, the teaching of the above components can be done either in courses in Public Administration, or in the context of courses in the basic disciplines (economics, law, political science, and sociology).

These requirements do not prescribe specific courses. Neither do they imply that equal time should be spent on each discipline or that the Public Administration faculty must offer all courses. Nor should they be interpreted in a manner that might impede the development of special strengths in each programme.

5.5.1.2 Other components and specialisations

The programme clearly defines its objectives for additional work and the rationale for the objectives, and explains how the curriculum is designed to achieve these objectives. The statement of objectives includes any programme specialisation or concentration and the main categories of students to be served (e.g., pre-service, in-service, full-time, part-time).

Units other than the one responsible for the Public Administration programme may offer specialisation or concentration courses. The specialisation and concentration courses should not be substitutes for the core curriculum components.

5.5.1.3 Structure and didactics of the programme

The programme is coherent in its contents. The didactic concept is in line with the aims and objectives of the programme. The teaching methods correspond to the didactic philosophy of the programme. The programme is 'doable' in the formal time foreseen for the programme in the respective years.

5.5.1.4 Intake

The structure, contents and the didactic of the programme are in line with the qualifications of the students that enter into the programme. The entrance requirements are carefully checked before students start the programme. When candidates are allowed to 'repair' lacunas in the entrance prerequisites, a clear procedure is available.

5.5.2 Length

The curriculum length is in line with the objectives of the programme and in accordance with the accreditation category that is applied for.

5.5.3 Results

The final qualifications that have been achieved by the graduates of the programme meet the intended learning outcomes of the programme. Graduates are able to operate adequately in the public sector or public administration academic environment.

5.6 Quality improvement and innovation

5.6.1 Programme accomplishment

The programme assesses the accomplishment of its objectives; it uses information about its performance in directing and revising programme objectives, strategies, and operations regularly.

The primary concern of these standards is to achieve high quality professional education for persons entering public service. Flexibility and innovation in curriculum design and means of delivery are necessary in order to meet the diverse educational needs of (full-time and sometimes part-time) students, pre-entry and (if applicable) in-career students, students who are changing careers and students with interests in different career specialities in public

affairs/policy/administration. Assessment procedures and measures may take any form appropriate to the programme and its circumstances, but each programme should develop and use procedures to determine how well it carries out its mission.

5.6.2 Curriculum development

The Public Administration programme provides evidence of an adequate process of curriculum development in which all relevant stakeholders are involved.

The content of a curriculum and the means of communication and of teaching change over time. Flexibility and the ability to innovate on the basis of adequate information on governance and teaching skills are important features of any educational programme, in order to meet the need of the students and the teaching staff.

5.6.3 External reviews

The Public Administration programme provides evidence that the recommendations received during previous reviews (by EAPAA or any other (inter)national review body) have led to changes in the content or the organisation of the programme.

5.7 Student assessment

The programme assesses individual performance of its students. The programme evaluates the students' performance in a substantive way with respect to the objectives of the curriculum. The programme provides adequate feedback to the students.

Student assessment procedures and measures may take any form appropriate to the programme and its circumstances.

5.8 Programme jurisdiction

Within the framework of institutional organisation, responsibility for the programme in Public Administration rests with an identifiable person or group of persons, chosen according to the rules of the organisation.

Within the framework of organisation and process peculiar to the institution, the faculty and/or administrator exercises initiative, and substantial determining influence with respect to important aspects of the programme.

Effective Public Administration programmes may exist in several forms - sometimes as an autonomous faculty, department, school or institute, sometimes as an accountable portion of some larger unit. Recognising wide variations in structures, the intent is to achieve an appropriate focus of attention, direction, and accountability for the programme without prescribing any particular form of organisation.

5.9 Faculty

5.9.1 Faculty nucleus

There is an identifiable faculty nucleus that accepts primary responsibility for the programme; this responsibility is recognised at the next higher level of the organisation. This regular faculty consists of a sufficient number of faculty significantly involved with the programme to support the teaching responsibilities.

The institution specifies how each regular faculty member is involved in the teaching and the related research and service aspects of the programme.

For this purpose, anyone who is involved in delivering and organising the programme (involvement in the sense of being co-responsible for the quality of the programmes as a whole), can be counted (for the proportion of their time devoted to the programme), irrespective the place of their formal position.

5.9.2 Faculty qualifications

A substantive percentage of the professional faculty nucleus actively involved in the programme holds an earned doctorate or other equivalent terminal academic degree in their field. Any faculty lacking the terminal degree must have a record of sufficient professional or academic experience directly relevant to their assigned responsibilities.

The field of expertise and experience of the faculty reflects the needed expertise to deliver the programme as intended. All faculty with teaching assignments have at least proven basic educational skills. The educational skills are adapted to the didactics of the programme and its components. Where practitioners teach courses, there is satisfactory evidence of the quality of their academic qualifications, professional experience, and teaching ability.

A sufficient number of the staff is actively involved in public administration research activities.

The programme on Public Administration requires a certain faculty size, specialised personnel, qualifications of the teaching staff, and faculty quality in instruction, research and service.

5.9.3 Diversity: gender and minorities

The programme strives for a balanced percentage of men and women among their (professional) staff, which is in accordance with the principles of gender equality as specified by the higher education institution hosting the programme.

When this is an issue in the wider society or when the institution or programme wishes so, the programme strives for a percentage of persons among their staff, which is in accordance with the societal targets.

The last sentence above is aimed at specific groups like minorities, disabled persons and the like.

5.10 Admission of students

Admission goals, admission policy and admission standards, including academic prerequisites, are in line with the mission and programme objectives. They are clearly and publicly stated, specifying any differences for pre-service, in-service or other categories of students.

The programme strives for a balanced percentage of men and women among its students, which is in accordance with the principles of gender equality as specified by the higher education institution hosting the programme.

5.11 Supportive services and facilities

The accommodation and material facilities are adequate to realize the programme in an effective and efficient way.

5.12 Student services

Student services are adequate in relation to the mission of the programme. Programme advisement, progress appraisal and career guidance are available to students.

The programme has a clear policy and adequate means to keep student attrition to a minimum.

5.13 Public relations

The programme provides future students and others with adequate information on the programme.

6. Additional criteria

At the request of the programme other criteria can be applied in the evaluation, if the EAPAA Accreditation Committee agrees to do so.

Appendix 1 Dublin descriptors for bachelor and master levels²

| | Qualifications of Bachelors | Qualifications of Masters |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Knowledge and understanding | Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon and supersedes their general secondary education, and are typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study. | Have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with Bachelor's level, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context. |
| Applying knowledge and understanding | Can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study. | Can apply their knowledge and understanding and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study; have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity. |
| Making judgements | Have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, academic or ethical issues. | Can formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, that rather include reflection on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements. |
| Communication | Can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences. | Can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously. |
| Learning skills | Have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy. | Have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous. |

² Taken from: QANU-protocol; Guide to external quality assessment of bachelor's and master's degree programmes in research-oriented universities, version 3.1e; Utrecht, Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities, August 2005, pg. 55.

Appendix 2 Examples of general academic qualifications³

- an analytical approach to problem-solving;
- ability to submit an argument in the exact sciences or humanities to critical appraisal;
- analytical and critical way of thought and ability to apply logical reasoning; ability to independently follow current scientific developments;
- openness to inter-, multi- and transdisciplinary cooperation;
- ability to transpose academic knowledge and expertise into social, professional and economic contexts;
- academically appropriate communicative skills;
- reflection on one's own style of thought and working methods and readiness to take the necessary corrective action;
- acquaintance with the standards of academic criticism;
- awareness of the ethical, normative and social consequences of developments in science and technology.

³ Taken from: QANU-protocol; Guide to external quality assessment of bachelor's and master's degree programmes in research-oriented universities, version 3.1e; Utrecht, Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities, August 2005, pg. 12.