



*European Association for
Public Administration
Accreditation*

Certification Criteria

EAPAA Certification Criteria

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1. Background

1.1 National educational systems

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

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 certification. When useful and efficient the EAPAA Accreditation Committee may decide to accept certification 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 certification 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 certification of Public Administration programmes by EAPAA are open to programmes that meet the following criteria:

2.1 Academic public administration degree programme

Only public administration degree programmes are eligible for EAPAA certification. 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

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.

2.4 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 Certification

Certification 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 certification.

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 certified 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.

4. Categories of certification

In order to account for large differences in the type and/or length of PA programmes, there are different categories for which different standards will be used (if necessary) to reflect these differences in type. However, in general the same requirements will apply.

In line with the Bologna Treaty of 1999, EAPAA uses the Bachelor/Master terminology to indicate these different categories:

- first cycle bachelor level public administration programmes;
- second cycle graduate/master level public administration programmes;
- combined/comprehensive public administration programmes;
- executive/mid career public administration master programmes;

5. 'Standards'

The certification 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 certified has as its major subject Public Administration in the broadest sense of the word. 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 certified 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 aim 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 certification

The programme states clearly its educational philosophy and mission. Preferably the programme objectives are translated into competencies and/or learning outcomes which the programme intends to achieve.

Interpretations of the standards of this certification 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 a bachelor or master degree.

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. 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. 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.

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.

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 (optional)

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 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 (optional)

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

5.12 Student services (optional)

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 (optional)

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 levels¹

	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.

¹ 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 Requirements to receive certification

Requirements to receive certification	Criteria
These criteria must be included in the self-evaluation and all receive a score of at least 'adequate'.	5.1 (Domain of public administration), 5.2 (Mission of the programme), 5.3 (Level), 5.5.1.1 (Core components), 5.5.1.3 (Structure and didactics of the programme), 5.7 (Student Assessment), 5.9 (Faculty).
These criteria must be included in the self-evaluation report, but not all these criteria need to be met to receive certification.	5.4 (Practise and internships), 5.5.1.2 (Other Components), 5.5.1.4 (Intake), 5.5.2 (Length), 5.5.2 (Results), 5.6.1 (Programme accomplishment), 5.6.2 (Curriculum Development), 5.6.3 (External Reviews), 5.8 (Programme Jurisdiction), 5.10 (Admission of Students), 6 (Additional Criteria).
These criteria can be optionally included in the self-evaluation report.	5.9.3 (Diversity: gender and minorities), 5.11 (Supportive Services and Facilities), 5.12 (Student Services), 5.13 (Public Relations).