



ALBERTA
Association

CANADIAN
INSTITUTE OF
PLANNERS

Serving Alberta,
the Northwest Territories
and Nunavut

POSITION PAPER ON ACCREDITATION OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS IN PLANNING

AACIP Position Paper: Accreditation of Academic Programs in Planning

BACKGROUND: WORKING SESSION ON PLANNING PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

ALBERTA ASSOCIATION OF THE CANADIAN INSTITUTE OF PLANNERS

January 18, 2008

INTRODUCTION

In preparation for the development of the position paper to guide universities that may propose degree programs in planning for which they will seek accreditation, it is worth reviewing several issues. In addition to the stated criteria for accreditation (recognition) of planning programs as set forth in the Canadian Institute of Planners Membership Manual (Appendix 3), there are several other factors that may have a direct bearing on the design and financing of a curriculum in planning and the creation of an administrative structure to deliver it.

From the perspective of the university, these include the identifiable societal demand for such an offering, government post-secondary education policy on and support for new academic offerings, the potential organizational structure and capacity of the unit to offer the program, the existing capacity of the university to mount the program, the potential commitment of new resources in support of the planning curriculum and teaching unit, and the curriculum design policies or guidelines of the universities involved.

From the perspective of the profession, these include the expected competencies of program graduates, the ethical preparation of graduates for professional practice, the capacities of graduates for ongoing intellectual and professional development, the capacities of graduates to contribute as learned, professional members of society, and the ability of the program to prepare graduates to meet the requirements of the "regional" labour market (skill sets, knowledge base, legislation).

The profession is also concerned about the adequacy of institutional support for the program over a short to moderate term time horizon, the independence of the program with respect to the reporting relationship of the program within the university's administrative structure, the independence of the program with respect to faculty hiring and curriculum development, the credentials and experience of the administrative head responsible for the program, the credentials and experience of faculty delivering the program, and the appropriate form of a necessary and ongoing relationship between the university program and the profession.

THE UNIVERSITIES

The form of curriculum any new planning degree offering will ultimately take will in large measure be predetermined by decisions made by a university with respect to the factors outlined previously. If the Provincial government is not prepared to approve and financially support a new academic program and/or the University is not prepared to finance such a program offering then any planning program that might evolve would necessarily have to be

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embedded within an existing academic unit and curriculum structure which would be driven by the “home” academic department. Any curriculum offered would be built on existing courses within the academic home unit and the university at large plus the addition of a small number of planning course offerings.

If a university is simply trying to mount a new program offering to attract students to more efficiently use existing resources already committed by the university, or to make better use of the resources already committed to a specific academic unit which is experiencing declining demand and enrolment, or to “test” the potential of a new academic offering prior to committing to significant new resource allocations and hirings, then the new planning offering will take a very different form from that of a program which is specifically designed to make a long-term commitment to professional education in the province.

In example, undergraduate planning programs have been added to the offerings of an existing academic unit as a “specialization” or “option”. This has occurred several times in Canada with planning programs being housed in arts or social science academic disciplines ranging from geography to sociology to social work to anthropology to urban studies. The majorities of these programs have remained small and have not received the institutional support to fully evolve and mature into a significant, independent unit in their own right. They do not have direct control over program curriculum, or hiring. As a result a considerable proportion of program teaching is done by faculty who lack a formal education in planning and decisions on curriculum are made with an eye to the needs of the larger academic unit and not necessarily of the planning program specifically. In order to satisfy the promotion and tenure requirements of the university, new faculty hires (even if their educational credentials are in planning) would be under significant pressure to acquire funding for research and to complete a publication program appropriate to the discipline of the home academic unit and not necessarily for a planning program.

Some small planning programs have also been “morphed” into other teaching units because they have not experienced the expected level of enrolment growth or because the university wishes to redirect those resources to an established, but declining, related academic unit. In some cases, planning program resources have been committed by universities to new academic offerings designed to attract new applicants. The current rush by some universities to offer new “interdisciplinary” or “quasi-professional” programs is an example of this trend. For example, several universities are now mounting new “Sustainable Development” programs housed in Arts or Social Science faculties to offset declining enrolment demand for Geography and Urban Studies degree offerings and stagnant or declining enrolments in planning programs.

The history of these small programs reflects the difficulties of building a successful professional planning degree offering when there was insufficient critical mass (budget and faculty) and independence of hiring and curriculum at the beginning. Those small undergraduate planning programs mounted on an Arts degree platform in particular have experienced significant difficulties over the past several decades with the loss of accreditation or closure of the program resulting. In some CIP Affiliates in order to avoid losing an accredited program, decisions have been made to “release” the programs from one or more of the required elements for accreditation.

However, even graduate planning programs have been dramatically impacted as a result of being morphed into another departmental unit (such as Geography, Engineering or Agriculture) or faculty level unit such as Environmental Design or Environmental Studies where there is far less program structure to the planning offering. Some universities are now asking the planning

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profession to grant exemptions for their graduate planning programs from selected accreditation requirements or are asking for accreditation of new programs that do not meet the current requirements for accreditation.

In all of these cases, the planning program involved has experienced a significant loss of:

1. administrative autonomy,
2. independence with respect to budget, faculty hiring and curriculum development, and
3. profile within the university and with respect to the recruitment of new students.

Program Structure

In addition to the “positioning” of the planning program within a University’s academic-administrative structure, which impacts upon the potential autonomy of the teaching unit offering the degree program, University curriculum development policies will in large measure determine the academic program offered. Depending on where the program is administratively placed within the University the resulting curriculum could be markedly different. These policies will of course be quite different for undergraduate as opposed to graduate program offerings.

At the undergraduate level in North America there exists a wide range of program structures in use. All universities have established curriculum policies and guidelines for undergraduate degree offerings with many being directly shaped by Provincial government policies. New program offerings are assessed based on how well they support the educational ‘pedagogy’ of the institution. Program structure may be assessed from several perspectives including the format of the curriculum, curriculum focus/intent, mix of professional and non-professional courses, “liberal arts or science” requirements, curriculum flexibility, and expected program outcomes.

Curriculum Format

Undergraduate programs in Canada have been traditionally three and four academic years in length. Historically, there have been a few five-year undergraduate programs in professional realms of study but virtually all of these have been replaced by five-year undergraduate plus Masters “stream”. Many universities have terminated their three-year offerings.

In Canada, the planning profession has traditionally accredited four-year undergraduate and two year graduate program offerings. However, there have recently been two new formats accredited: a two-year, post bachelor’s degree undergraduate offering; and a one year Master’s degree offering. While both formats have a completed bachelor’s degree as prerequisite, they are quite different in terms of program focus, design and the number of planning and/or planning related courses taken.

In terms of a four-year undergraduate offering, most Canadian universities require the completion of 20 year long course credits (40 semester credits, 120 curriculum hours) in their Arts/Humanities/Social Sciences program platforms. In Science and Professional program platforms the number of course credits and curriculum hours may range higher with the introduction of lab/studio/experiential learning courses.

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In undergraduate planning programs across Canada, the credit and total curriculum hours for those housed in Arts faculties are virtually all forty semester course credits and 120 total curriculum hours. For those programs housed in Faculties of Environmental Science/Studies or in professional Faculties the course credits and hours range from 40 – 46 semester credits and 126 – 148 hours respectively, with planning studio courses being the main reason for the additional curriculum hours.

The structure and balance of undergraduate programs also cover a range of delivery formats. Program structures tend to be of three types:

1. four year integrated;
2. one plus three year format; and
3. two plus two format.

In the one plus three format, a very nominal number of planning courses (if any) are taken in the first year of the program. Students choose courses from a broad range of course offerings to assure a breadth of exposure to different disciplines and to capture the prerequisites for more senior courses to satisfy the university's "breadth and depth" requirements of a liberal arts education. Students choose from a limited number of planning courses in year two and only get the opportunity to focus on planning in years three and four of the program.

In the two plus two format, the large majority of planning courses (if not all) are available only within the final two years of the program and normally as an "option" within an academic unit such as Geography, Urban Studies or Social Science, or as a double major option for students.

In the four-year integrated program format students take planning courses in every year (semester of study) with planning courses within any given academic term being designed to integrate and support each other. Traditionally, a studio course is used as the main integrating opportunity for students. However other forms of project courses may also be used. The program moves from foundational course offerings in the lower years to more sophisticated and specialized offerings in the senior years, supported by a formal course prerequisite structure. Such programs are designed either to be "generalist" programs addressing the broad spectrum of planning practice and associated knowledge and skill bases (or addressing the process of planning generally), or "specialized" programs that focus on a specific realm of practice such as design or environmental planning.

Curriculum Balance

The "balance" of undergraduate degree offerings in terms of the mix of planning and non-planning courses, and required and elective courses also vary. A number of universities set a maximum number of course credits within a degree program that are from the major field of study (for example, no more than 20 of 40 or 50% of total course credits) given the liberal (versus professional) educational mandate of their arts and sciences degree offerings. Programs housed in faculties such as Environmental Science/Studies, Engineering, or Professional Studies may have a higher maximum value for total planning courses offered or total curriculum hours of planning courses delivered. These may range up to 75% of the total program course credits being in planning.

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Given the program and curriculum structure, and balance of professional and other course requirements of a planning program, the resulting curriculum in planning could range from a low of 18 to 20 planning course semester credits (54-60 hours) in an Arts/Social Science curriculum model to a high of 26 to 28 (78-108 hours) in a professional studies or Environmental Studies/Design or Engineering curriculum models. The range and depth of coverage of content in planning courses will as a result also vary dramatically.

The capacity of the program to satisfactorily meet the competency, ethical and understanding of practice requirements of the accreditation process will also vary. Perhaps more importantly, the curriculum model used to deliver the program will also determine in large measure who the faculty are that deliver the planning curriculum. In an Arts/Social Science Faculty context the likelihood of the program curriculum being delivered by faculty whose formal education is in planning will be far lower than that of a program delivered in a professional faculty where the "academic culture" is more professional and understanding of the advantages of academics trained formally in the field delivering the program. Such academic units are both more knowledgeable and supportive of the accreditation of academic programs by an external body or profession and responsive to the creation, maintenance and appropriate evolution of a program of study leading to a professional designation in planning.

There is a tension here between universities and the professions. Universities independently develop their own academic policies and program curricula and the professions must acknowledge and accept this fact. Professions create and "own" accreditation standards and procedures independent of universities and the universities must come to understand and accept this reality. Where a mutually beneficial outcome can be identified, professional programs may be developed, launched, become established, and evolve. The relation will become more tenuous where one or both the parties presume to modify some aspect of it. Senior university administrators have a low tolerance to being dictated to by a profession, even in the face of threat of loss of accreditation. Professions have (and should have) a low tolerance for requests from universities to modify accreditation standards in order to launch a new professional offering or to modify an existing program, or for unacknowledged modifications to programs, their staffing, their budgets, or their organizational autonomy.

It is therefore very important that universities contemplating the development of a program in planning understand that a process premised on the assumption that "if we build it they will accredit it" is seriously flawed. They also need to understand that the profession has some very clear requirements for the accreditation of university based planning programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels that are evolving to "raise the bar" in light of its' experience with the existing cohort of accredited programs. Curriculum models and organizational structures found in existing accredited programs are therefore not necessarily appropriate as templates for the design and delivery of a new degree offering in planning.

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ACCREDITATION OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS IN PLANNING

The Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) in partnership with its Provincial and Regional Affiliates is responsible for the accreditation of academic programs in planning in Canada. CIP utilizes a modified version of accreditation – recognition - to formally assess and acknowledge the quality of qualifying academic degrees awarded during specific periods of time.

The Canadian Institute of Planners, as a nationally chartered organization, is committed to maintaining an interest in the university system in which the majority of the professional planners in Canada are educated. Through the National/Affiliate Membership Committee, CIP establishes national standards for accreditation and oversees the initial and periodic reviews of academic programs seeking to acquire accreditation for the first time or to maintain an existing accreditation status. The accreditation review process itself is delivered by the Provincial or Regional Affiliate organization. In addition to an intensive initial and periodic review process, accredited planning curricula must also file an annual report to maintain their accreditation standing.

With the assistance of Provincial and Regional Affiliate planning organizations and the Association of Canadian University Planning Programs (ACUPP), CIP endeavours to support the development of formal planning education in Canada through fostering the involvement of students in university level planning studies, through the support of academic Members in the planning programs, and by contributing to the continuing evolution of planning practice and the articulation of appropriate principles, philosophy and ethical standards.

The process of accreditation is based on four underlying principles including:

- that the degree is in planning, as defined by CIP;
- that the department or planning school has the administrative capacity and academic independence to control and deliver its program;
- that Members of the professional Institute are significantly involved in the delivery of teaching in the planning curriculum; and
- that course content includes "what planners need to know".

The first three criteria are addressed by seven "administrative" standards applied for both the annual and periodic reviews. The degree to which university planning programs adhere to these principles has been an ongoing source of "tension" between the planning Institutes and those academic institutions delivering planning curricula. While CIP acknowledges the independence of universities to set curriculum and academic policies and to structure its own administration and academic units, universities must acknowledge that the accreditation process and standards are the sole responsibility of the profession.

As to the fourth criteria – minimum program content - CIP recognizes that a university can never teach everything a planner needs to know. To begin with, work experience is a fundamental and complementary part of a planner's training as is a program of ongoing continuous professional learning.

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In regards to academic preparation, the Institute respects the university's role in deciding what it believes students need to learn in order to be well-rounded citizens, and what it believes planning students need to learn. Furthermore, each university responds to regional needs, market conditions, and demand for post-secondary education. As a result each university may specialize in different fields of planning over time in response to regional need and to the advancement of the profession.

However, the Institute, as the voice of the profession, has a duty to identify the knowledge, skills and competencies that professional planners require, and to require that degree programs include these as a condition of accreditation. Therefore, in making a decision on whether to recognize a degree the Institute will judge whether the course content effectively addresses the four overlapping categories of essential substantive knowledge: process, content, context, and role. The Institute will also judge whether the courses teach a sufficient number and quality of skills. These are currently described in the Accreditation sections of the CIP Membership Manual.

A Major Review of Standards is Now Underway

It must be noted that CIP in concert with its Affiliate organizations is currently engaged in a major review of membership standards and procedures which when completed will significantly alter the current standards for member competencies, ethical practice, and certification requirements. The process and standards to be used to assess academic programs for initial and ongoing accreditation, will also undergo significant change as a result.

Based on experience gained over a fifty plus year period, the Institute now sees the need to clarify both the administrative and program content requirements for programs currently recognized and for those contemplating seeking accreditation. The review of all membership standards and procedures will serve to establish new norms and requirements for university accreditation. In the meantime, the Institute now provides interpretations of existing standards and criteria to assist universities currently considering the creation of a curriculum in planning and a future application for accreditation of such programs. Post-secondary educational institutions contemplating the development of new program offerings in planning should anticipate that these interpretations will be formally embedded within the certification and accreditation standards and procedures to be phased in over the next two to three years.

What follows is a review of the *current* administrative standards applied for an initial assessment for accreditation, and for annual and intensive periodic reviews.

Administrative Standards

The degree shall be established by a post-secondary educational institution recognized by a Government of a Province of Canada.

Interpretation:

As the national planning organization, CIP undertakes the process of accreditation for Canadian academic programs only. As a result CIP is unlike other national planning bodies, including the Planning Accreditation Board of the United States, which will administer their accreditation to schools in other national jurisdictions. While this CIP standard does not preclude the development of joint programs from more than one academic institution, even when located in different jurisdictions, the degree award must be from a Canadian post-secondary educational institution.

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The degree must be in the field of planning, planning being defined as “the scientific, aesthetic and orderly disposition of land, resources, facilities and services with a view to securing the physical, economic, and social efficiency, health and well being of urban and rural communities”.

Interpretation:

In their proposal for initial recognition, university planning programs seeking recognition from CIP must clearly state how the program meets the stated definition of the academic field and realm of practice. They must also articulate through their statement of goals and objectives for the program how it complies with the CIP program content requirements as defined by the accrediting body within the broader framework of their own university or institutional goals and/or mission statements. While the definition of planning is broad - and deliberately so - it should not be construed as being all inclusive or simply a listing from which certain program attributes or foci may be selected.

Planning is a future-oriented and comprehensive process. It seeks to link knowledge and action in ways which improve the quality of public and private development and of decisions affecting people and their environment. Because of its future orientation, planning embraces visionary and idealistic thinking, yet also recognizes that the implementation of plans requires the reconciliation of present realities to futures states.

A Bachelor's degree in planning should require at least four years or equivalent in a normal case (except in Quebec where it is normally 3 years following CEGEP).
A Master's degree in planning should require at least two years or equivalent of study in a normal case.

Interpretation:

As a point of entry to the profession, CIP defines the four year Bachelor's Degree as the minimum academic credential required. Where the planning curriculum is housed in a faculty where the traditional degree nomenclature for a four year degree is an “Honours Degree”, then this designation shall be viewed as the minimum credential required. At the graduate level, two year programs with a thesis or major research paper requirement are the expected norm.

However, other formats have also been accredited. These include a Bachelor's Degree in Planning of two years duration after a completed baccalaureate degree, and a one year (three academic semesters) Masters Degree for candidates with an accredited undergraduate planning degree.

All new program proposals built on curriculum models other than the four year undergraduate and two year graduate offerings must undergo a rigorous review by the National/Affiliate Membership Committee of CIP.

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The word “planning” or the French equivalent shall appear in the title of the degree or parenthetically to identify the discipline of planning within the designated branch of knowledge (Science, Arts, Environmental Studies, etc.) and shall not be subordinate to another discipline within that branch of knowledge (Geography, Architecture, Biology, etc).

Interpretation:

Degree designations such as Urban and Rural/Regional Studies, Urban Studies, Urban Development, Community Studies or the like, are not appropriate degree designations for an accredited planning program. Degree designations which subordinate the planning curriculum to another discipline or professional degree (Bachelor of Arts (Geography) with a specialization or minor in Planning) are also not appropriate. The degree designation should clearly identify the field of study to be planning. Programs proposing a degree designation that does not satisfy this standard will not normally be considered for accreditation.

The program offering the degree in planning shall be a recognizable administrative unit within the educational institution, in the direct charge of an individual whose substantive qualifications are in planning and who is officially designated by the educational institution as the responsible executive academic officer of the unit having authority on academic matters at least equivalent to that of a department chair.

Interpretation

In the opinion of the Institute, the long term viability of an accredited planning program is based on the administrative independence and capacity of the program unit responsible for the curriculum, the qualifications of the executive administrative officer of the unit, the academic and professional qualifications of the teaching faculty, and the existence of a critical mass of teaching, staff, space/equipment and budget resources.

An accredited planning program shall be headed by an individual whose academic credentials include at least one degree in planning and who is at the time of appointment a full member of the Canadian Institute of Planners. This executive administrative officer shall have authority on academic matters at least equivalent to that of a Departmental Chair or School Director in regards to curriculum development, faculty hiring and considerations for promotion and tenure, budget, the assignment of teaching within the unit, recruitment, and representation of the planning degree program both within the educational institution and with the external community.

It is the clear preference of the accrediting body that new planning offerings are established as independent departments or schools with their administrative executive officer reporting directly to a Dean or Vice-President Academic/Provost.

It has been the experience of the Institute that small, minimally resourced programs which are embedded within other departmental units do not attain the critical mass or independence necessary to fully evolve into mature, successful programs. Programs which are not based on an integrated planning curriculum delivered in the majority by a faculty with academic and professional qualifications in planning have consistently struggled to attain long term viability.

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As a result of this experience, the Institute is now reviewing its policies and standards with respect to the accreditation of academic programs. Proposed offerings which address only the minimum requirements for accreditation will be carefully scrutinized.

The faculty shall include at least three academic members whose major appointments are in the planning program.

Interpretation

This standard sets the floor for academic appointments to the planning offering. A minimum of three faculty members, one being the executive academic officer, shall have their academic appointment to the university to the planning degree program. Faculty cross-appointments to other academic or research units within the university, or secondments from other units to the planning program, will not be counted toward this minimum. Adjunct faculty appointments will also not be counted towards this minimum.

As these faculty appointments are to the planning degree program, it is the expectation of the accrediting body that individuals holding these appointments have appropriate academic credentials in the planning field. This is interpreted to mean holding at least one degree in planning. Programs populated by faculty without appropriate academic credentials in planning will not be accredited. Programs falling below this floor of appropriately qualified faculty shall be deemed to be in non compliance with the accreditation requirements.

It is also the position of the accrediting body that members of the professional institute be engaged in the delivery of the academic program. Individuals appointed to the teaching faculty should hold professional qualifications as well. This is addressed in the following standard.

At least three “full time equivalent” faculty members of the degree granting institution must be Members; at least two of whom must have their “major appointment” in the planning program. Faculty members on sabbatical or parental leave are to be included for the purpose of meeting this requirement. Two or more members with part-time teaching appointments in the planning program shall be considered to be one of these full time equivalents.

Interpretation

This standard sets the floor for the involvement of members of the professional institute in the delivery of the planning degree program. No fewer than three Full Members of CIP must be appointed to the university, at least two of whom must have their major appointment to the university with the planning degree program. While faculty on sabbatical or parental leave may be counted for the purpose of meeting this requirement, faculty seconded or promoted to other duties in the university or on long-term unpaid or disability leave may not be counted. Professors Emeriti will also not be counted.

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In instances where this minimum level of Member involvement in the planning degree offering is not achieved in any given year, two part-time teaching appointments to the program held by Members of the Institute, shall be considered to be one of these full time equivalent. However, only one full time equivalent may be satisfied in this manner.

In instances where the level of Member involvement in the planning program, including the use of two part-time appointments as an FTE equivalent, falls below this minimum, the program shall be deemed to be in non-compliance with the accreditation requirements.

Minimum Program Content Requirements

Decisions on planning program accreditation also require a thorough assessment of how a program's curriculum provides students with the knowledge, skills and ethical values necessary for becoming professional planning practitioners.

To become effective and ethical practitioners, students must develop a comprehensive understanding of communities and regions, and of the theory and practice of planning. Students must also understand how planning affects individual and community values, and must be aware of their own roles in this process.

KNOWLEDGE COMPONENTS

Structure & Function of Human Settlements

Guideline:

This subject area should include:

- knowledge of human settlement itself, its evolution and history, geography, economy, changing forms and political and social structure;
- an understanding of local government, finance, and land use;
- an understanding of the broad principles that guide the design and operation of infrastructure and services;
- an understanding of the roles of economic development and social service provisions, including housing.

History and Principles of Community Planning Processes and Practices

Guideline:

- This subject area should include:
- knowledge of the theories, ideals and principles which have guided community planning;
- approaches to and methods of policy analysis;
- history of community planning;
- and community planning practice.

Planning should be examined as a decision making process in a political environment. This typically includes:

- an understanding of the strengths, limitations, and uncertainties associated with the political, social, environmental, cultural and economic nature of public interest and the roles of professional judgment, expertise and advice within these frameworks;
- an understanding of the historical evolution of community planning as a function of government, as a professional activity, and as a reform movement.

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Legislative, Legal, Political and Administrative Aspects of Planning and Policy Implementation

Guideline:

This subject area should include:

- the contexts in which planning takes place, focusing on enabling legislation, agencies conducting planning or employing planners, and the processes by which plans are made and implemented.

Methods of Policy Implementation and Planning

Guideline:

This subject area should include:

- methods for implementing public policy and community planning within the framework of Canadian law and the process of local government - it includes planning law, community development plans, zoning and other implementation techniques, governmental systems, political and organizational behavior, public finance principles, evaluation methods and impact assessment;
- knowledge of, and familiarity with, the role and methods of public consultation and involvement in decision making and understanding of the concepts of community based development.

Environmental and Ecological Aspects of Planning

Guideline:

This subject area should include:

- an understanding of biophysical environments and systems;
- an understanding of the relationship between ecological, social and economic factors in planning including the concepts of sustainable development.

Roles and Responsibilities of Planners

Guideline:

This area should:

- enable students to understand the roles, relationships and responsibilities of planners within the broader society.

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SKILLS COMPONENTS

Problem Identification, Research Skills, And Data Gathering Guideline:

This subject area should address the ability to identify problems from complex actual situations. Sub-areas include the ability to:

- design research frameworks and conduct research;
- gain competence in a variety of research techniques including case study methods, survey design and data gathering methods such as observation, open ended interviewing and the

Analytical Skills

Guideline:

- This subject area should address:
- the ability to apply statistical and other analytical methods and techniques, to define planning problems, forecast future needs, generate alternatives, and evaluate their consequences;
- the ability to apply principles and rules of classification (sorting, grouping, categorizing), logic (inductive and deductive reasoning) and empiricism in undertaking analysis and in reporting results;
- the ability to apply methods of policy and program analysis and evaluation to identify outcomes such as benefits and costs (including differential distribution of benefits and costs).

Written, Oral, and Graphic Communications Skills

Guideline:

This subject area should address:

- the ability to communicate effectively in written, spoken, and visual terms;
- the drafting of technical, advisory and regulatory reports and other documents used as a basis for decision making.

Collaborative Problem Solving Skills

Guideline:

This subject area should address:

- the ability to work effectively as leaders and members of multi-disciplinary teams, and to understand interpersonal and group dynamics to assure effective group action - the subject area should also include an understanding of group processes, as well as mediation and negotiation skills;
- knowledge of and familiarity with the role and methods of public consultation and involvement in decision making and an understanding of the concepts of community based development.

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Synthesis and Application of Knowledge to Practice Guideline:

The program should provide:

- the ability to synthesize planning knowledge and apply it to actual planning problems - typically this is demonstrated through a thesis, comprehensive project, or comprehensive exam;
- the ability to generate creative solutions to practical planning problems -this may be through studio projects or workshops.

ETHICAL VALUES COMPONENT

- the planning program shall provide students with the basis for becoming ethical practitioners who are aware of and responsible for the way that their activities affect and promote ethical values.
- the program shall provide students with an understanding of the importance and effects of the Code of Ethics and Code of Professional Conduct of the Canadian Institute of Planners, and of the Codes and Standards of Practice of the relevant Affiliate Planning jurisdiction.

As described previously, the Canadian Institute of Planners in co-operation with its Provincial and Regional Affiliates is currently engaged in a significant review of membership standards and practices. Work on Competency Standards, Ethical Standards, and Certification Standards and Procedures (including academic program accreditation) is currently well underway.

Draft Competency Standards have been prepared for review and recommendation. To assist those post-secondary institutions considering the development of a program offering in planning for which they will seek external professional accreditation, the proposed competencies are provided herein. It should be evident that the proposed competencies represent a significant “raising of the bar” with respect to the standards for certification within the planning profession in Canada. The transition to these new standards will also require new certification and accreditation processes and criteria.

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PROPOSED COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR THE PLANNING PROFESSION IN CANADA (Adopted by the National/Affiliate Membership Committee, November 2008)

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Purpose and Intent of the Competency Standards

This report endeavours to identify professional competencies that are and will be essential for professional planners. The competencies identify the knowledge, skills and attitudes that professional planners “need to know” in order to practice in a competent manner.

The competencies are intended to be used to provide an overview of the requisite capabilities of planners to be developed through formal education, professional practice and ongoing professional learning. While it is acknowledged that the development and ongoing mastery of all competencies represents a challenge given changing career position responsibilities and the degree of specialization of work, they do address the skills appropriate to the broad realm of planning practice. The competencies will also:

1. Provide a basis for certifying the competency of entry-level planners and the granting of a professional designation.
2. Assist educational institutions offering programs leading to planning degrees and to provide a basis for the accreditation of such programs.
3. Support continuing professional learning activities and to assist members to conduct self-assessments and to identify areas requiring improvement.
4. Provide a reference for employers in recruitment, selection, performance, management, evaluation, and programs for employee career development.
5. Support assessment of international equivalencies and mobility.
6. Provide planning employers, governments, regulatory bodies, and any other interested parties with information on the capabilities of professional planners.

Conceptual Framework

This document sets out a standards based approach to competencies according to a conceptual framework which identifies “functional” and “enabling” competencies. For each Functional and Enabling competency, a listing of competency areas and specific knowledge or skill defining activities is identified.

The competencies reflect professional planners’ roles and responsibilities in an interactive professional environment and the need to maintain broad-based skills and knowledge. These competencies are general and therefore pertinent to all types of organizations. They have been developed to reflect both current and anticipated future workplace realities for practicing planners. They aim to ensure that entry-level planners are prepared to practice competently, effectively, and ethically.

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Summary of Functional Competencies

<i>Human Settlement</i>	<i>History & Principles of Community Planning</i>	<i>Government, Law and Policy</i>	<i>Plan and Policy Considerations</i>	<i>Plan and Policy Making</i>	<i>Plan and Policy Implementation</i>	<i>Developments in Planning and Policy</i>
Human Settlement And Community, Regional and Provincial Settings	History of Planning in Canada and Other Countries	Government and Legislation	Environmental and Sustainable Development Issues	Planning Approaches and Focus	Decision Making and Risk Management	Emerging Trends and Issues
Influences on Communities	Planning Theories, Principles and Practices	Policies and Application	Diversity and Inclusiveness	Developing Visions and Outcomes	Implementation Plan	
			Functional Integration of Knowledge	Strategic Information Gathering and Analysis	Project Management	
			Finance and Economics	Obtaining Input and Approvals	Finance and Administration	
					Evaluation	

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Details of Functional Competencies

HUMAN SETTLEMENT

Human Settlement and Community, Regional and Provincial Settings

- Understand knowledge of human settlement, its evolution and history, influence of natural setting and site context, geography, economy, environment and sustainability issues, changing forms and political and social structure.
- Able to identify lessons learned from past experiences.
- Able to link lessons learned in human settlement to current and future planning challenges and opportunities.

Influences on Communities

- Understand local government and relation to provincial government, finance and land use, and the broad principles that guide the physical design of communities and the design and operation of infrastructure and services.
- Understand the role that transportation infrastructure plays in determining community structure.
- Understand the roles of economic development and social service provisions, including housing.
- Understand the elements of sustainable community building and ability to assess progress of initiatives.
- Able to relate the influences to planning activities.

HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY PLANNING

History of Planning in Canada and Other Countries

- Understand the history of small and large scale community planning.
- Understand the historical evolution of community planning as a function of government, as a professional activity, and as a reform movement.
- Understand how to use lessons learned to support future decision making.

Planning Theories, Principles and Practices

- Understand theories, ideals and principles which have guided small and large scale community planning and its physical expression
- Understand approaches to and methods of policy analysis and the role and methods of public consultation and involvement in decision making
- Understanding of the concepts of community based development.
- Understand the strengths, limitations, and uncertainties associated with the political, social, environmental, cultural and economic nature of public interest and the roles of professional judgment, expertise and advice within these frameworks.

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GOVERNMENTS, LAW AND POLICY

Governments and Legislation

- Understand the political, legal and institutional contexts of the realm of planning practice.
- Understand how legislation and laws influence and requires planning.
- Understand the agency and employment relationship of planning to legislation.

Policies and Application

- Understand and able to evaluate critically policy formulation, evaluation, and tools and strategies for implementation
- Understands policy application in specific planning contexts (resource management, health, environment, development etc) and how the legal/legislative context affects planning
- Understand how planners support legislation, develop recommendations and advise on policies.
- Understand methods for implementing public policy and planning within the framework of Canadian law and the process of government (Includes planning law, community development processes and plans, zoning and other implementation techniques, urban design, governments systems, political and organizational behavior, public finance principles, evaluation methods, impact assessment, and litigation).

PLAN AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Environmental and Sustainable Development Issues

- Understand environmental management, biophysical environments and systems, ecological limits and processes, and science and sustainability.
- Understand the relationship between ecological, social and economic factors in planning, including the concept of sustainable development.
- Able to assess issues and the effects on development actions and able to debate and link the relationships by using planning as a positive influence.

Diversity and Inclusiveness

- Understand demographics of society and diversity and inclusiveness considerations including, but not limited to Aboriginal people.
- Understand practices to effectively comply with legal aspects and benefit from approaches to building on diversity and difference.
- Able to develop plans that build on diversity and inclusiveness considerations.

Functional Integration of Knowledge

- Understand basic elements and interactions between the following functional areas and other areas that have a relationship to planning: transportation; facilities; economics; social; urban design; legal; resources; environment; recreation; housing; infrastructure; land use; development control; etc.
- Understand how to use networks and other domains of knowledge to support decision making

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- Able to integrate knowledge and demonstrate technical capacities to apply it to planning situations.
- Able to understand how technology can support planning analysis and activities, policy development and decision making.

Finance and Economics

- Understand the economics of development (private and public perspectives).
- Understand local government finance and its relationship to development.
- Able to assess financial and economic considerations, and use this information to support the development of planning proposals and reports.

PLAN AND POLICY MAKING

Planning Approaches and Focus

- Understand the various approaches and instruments used in small and large scale plan making and policy development.
- Able to determine the challenge or opportunity to be addressed.
- Able to select an approach to and clarify the focus of the plan.

Developing Visions and Outcomes

- Understand approaches to the development of visions and outcomes.
- Able to use analysis and processes to assess possible options.
- Able to develop visions and outcomes.
- Able to articulate, present, and defend visions, plans and policies.

Strategic Information Gathering and Analysis

- Understand what information should be gathered.
- Able to gather information to enable a critical analysis of the situation.
- Able to analyze information gathered to support development of a proposal or plan.
- Understand how technology can gather input and analyze information.
- Able to apply technology to support analysis

Obtaining Input and Approvals

- Understand practices to effectively engage and gather input from key stakeholders.
- Able to prepare reports and presentations to support input gathering.
- Able to present analysis and reports, support discussions and make recommendations leading to approval.

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PLAN AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Decision Making and Risk Management

- Understand various modes of decision making and how the technical, financial, social, environmental and political factors are integrated into sound decision making.
- Understand risk management and its integration into sound decision making.
- Understand land use regulations, legal, environmental, infrastructure, finance and economics, development control, and other considerations that are part of implementation.
- Able to integrate information to minimize risk.

Implementation Plan

- Understand practices to develop an effective implementation plan.
- Able to engage other key stakeholders in the development and review of the plan.
- Able to develop and support implementation of a plan.

Project Management

- Understand basic practices of project management.
- Able to apply project management techniques and tools to support projects.
- Able to complete projects based on desired outcomes and targets.

Finance and Administration

- Understand finance and administration practices to effectively manage project or plan implementation.
- Able to monitor and assess financial and administrative activities.
- Able to report on financial and administrative activities.

Evaluation

- Understand practices to evaluate and monitor plan implementation.
- Able to frame recommendations for implementation which can be monitored and evaluated.
- Able to assess and determine when correction is required.
- Able to direct or use evaluation processes and develop reports.

DEVELOPMENTS IN PLANNING

Emerging Trends and Issues

- Understand practices to monitor emerging trends and issues that relate to planning.
- Able to source and critically assess external and internal environment information to support analysis of the topics.
- Able to critically assess applicability to plans, physical designs, projects and activities, and report on potential innovations and improvements.
- Support information exchange within the profession on trends and best practices.

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Summary of the Enabling Competencies

<i>Critical Thinking</i>	<i>Interpersonal</i>	<i>Communication</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Professionalism and Ethical Behavior</i>
Issue Identification	Integrity and Trust	Listening	Vision	Professionalism
Problem Solving and Decision Making	Diversity and Inclusiveness	Written, Oral and Visual Presentation	Responsiveness and Influence	Ethical Standards
Research and Analytical	Facilitation	Information and Knowledge	Team Building	Continuous Learning
Innovation and Creativity	Negotiation	Use of Information Technology	Climate of Excellence	
Political Awareness	Collaboration and Consensus Building	Internal and External Relations	Managing Resources and Results	
Change Management	Conflict Management			

Details of the Enabling Functional Competencies

CRITICAL THINKING

Issues Identification

- ? Understand effective issues identification practices to determine and manage issues.
- ? Able to identify and track emerging issues in light of project goals, resources and stakeholder interests.
- ? Able to facilitate processes to identify issues and seek input, categorize, analyze and report on issues.

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Problem Solving and Decision Making

- Understand effective problem-solving and decision making practices and underlying values and potential ethical issues.
- Able to define problems and identify viable options and possible solutions.
- Able to relate activities in one area to others and assess potential for the integration of ideas.
- Able to pull together diverse ideas, issues and observations into a simple, clear and useful analysis and/or presentation.
- Able to support complex decision making.

Research and Analytical

- Understand methods and practices to find relevant information and conduct an analysis.
- Able to compare and integrate data from various sources and identify cause/effect relationships.
- Able to analyze results effectively.
- Able to evaluate results.

Innovation and Creativity

- Understand and encourage practices to support innovation and creativity in work environments.
- Use innovation and creative practices and tools to facilitate decision making.

Political Awareness

- Understand political motives, issues and actions.
- Actively follow political trends, issues and activities.
- Demonstrate awareness of how political trends, issues and activities influence decision making.

Change Management

- Understand stages within the change process and practices to implement change.
- Able to monitor issues and anticipate potential changes.
- Use change management processes to implement decisions.

INTERPERSONAL

Integrity and Trust

- Understand the importance of maintaining high standards of integrity and trust.
- Able to provide a balanced picture, respect others and build trust.
- Able to set a positive example.

Diversity and Inclusiveness

- Understand the elements of diversity and difference.
- Appreciate the value of diversity.
- Able to apply policy and practices to accommodate diversity and inclusiveness.

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- Able to articulate recommendations for consideration and action.

Facilitation

- Understand the value of facilitation to plan making and implementation.
- Understand practices to facilitate situations.
- Able to facilitate situations to support decision making and engender commitment.

Negotiation

- Understand practices to support negotiations.
- Able to support position and presents issues in a factual and persuasive manner.
- Able to build on common ground and seek compromise when appropriate.

Collaboration and Consensus Building

- Understand practices to support collaboration and consensus building.
- Able to assess and analyze an approach to support improvements.
- Able to facilitate collaboration and consensus building situations.

Conflict Management

- Understand practices to manage conflict.
- Able to assess the nature of a conflict and suggest an approach to address the conflict.
- Able to address conflicts in a non-judgmental fashion, clarify differences, and build on common interests.
- Able to propose recommendations for consideration and action.

COMMUNICATIONS

Listening

- Demonstrate capacity to listen effectively and understand messages.
- Able to confirm messages have been received and are understood.

Written and Oral Presentation

- Understand practices and tools to support simple and effective written, oral and visual/graphic presentations.
- Able to express ideas in a clear, organized and effective manner, both verbally and non-verbally, to achieve understanding.
- Able to communicate complex matters and be persuasive.

Information and Knowledge

- Understand types of information and knowledge required to support decision making.
- Able to translate and integrate various sources of information.
- Able to support timely, relevant and accurate communications.

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Use of Information Technology

- Understand issues, trends and how to integrate multi-media material into written, oral and visual presentations.
- Use current technology to complete work and make informed decisions.
- Evaluates the use of technology and, through benchmarking (review of best practices), identify opportunities for improvement and support of technical staff.

Internal and External Relations

- Understand the importance and practices of successful media and other external relations activities required to communicate messages effectively.
- Understand various types of internal communications and processes used to gather and disseminate information.
- Engage in activities to improve internal and external relations activities.

LEADERSHIP

Vision

- Understand the importance of values and vision, and methods and processes for vision development and promotion.
- Apply a critical, integrative thinking approach to issues.
- Able to support the development of values and vision, monitor progress and identify when to make corrections.

Responsiveness and Influence

- Anticipates future needs and developments.
- Understand how to effectively engage stakeholders in complex issues.
- Understand how to connect needs and solutions and influence decisions.
- Able to propose influential recommendations to key stakeholders.

Team Building

- Understand team building techniques and dynamics.
- Act as a leader or member of a multi-function team.
- Build and motivate teams.

Climate of Excellence

- Understand frameworks to support quality and performance measurement.
- Understand the meaning of accountability and practices to support accountability.
- Able to apply practices and tools to manage for results and achieve positive outcomes.

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Managing Resources and Results

- Understand policies and processes to effectively manage resources and results expected.
- Able to manage human and financial resources and achieve targeted results.
- Able to assess the use of resources and identify areas for improvement.

PROFESSIONALISM AND ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

Continuous Learning

- Understand practices to support life long learning, mentorship and coaching for self and others.
- Able to assess development needs.
- Engage in continuous learning and promoting the value of learning for self and others.

Ethical Standards

- Understand ethical responsibilities and dilemmas for the professional planner.
- Understand and demonstrate adherence to establish ethical standards.
- Set highest standards for self and others, and monitors practice.

Professionalism

- Understand the role of the professionals generally.
- Understand the role of the planner in the development of the profession.
- Monitor changes in the profession and demonstrate professionalism.
- Participate in activities to support development of the profession.

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