

African Regional Workshop on the Review of the Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training

13 September 2023 (9.00 am-12.00 pm)

Concept Note

Description of Event and Objective

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) are organizing an African Regional Workshop for the Review of the Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training. The workshop will take place from 9 am to 12 noon New York time and 4pm to 7pm Nairobi time on 13 September 2023. The purpose of the event is to gather inputs from Africa on the review and/or update of the Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training which were originally established in 2008 before the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by 193 Member States.

Six regional workshops will be held as follows:

- 13 September 2023: Africa
- 5 October 2023: Europe
- Early October 2023: Latin America and Spanish-speaking Caribbean
- 3 November 2023: Asia and the Pacific
- 8 November 2023: North America and English-speaking Caribbean
- Early December 2023: Middle East

Background

The Standards of Excellence were finalized in 2008 almost 15 years ago, and while the Standards are still relevant today, they do not refer to recent inter-governmental agreements and to the insights from the work undertaken by UN DESA/DPIDG and IASIA in the area of public administration education and training. Accordingly, UN DESA, through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) and its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), and IASIA have established in 2023 a Task Force to review and/or update the Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training.

The Task Force met for the first time in April of 2023. Since then, UN DESA and IASIA have been working closely together to ensure that the process of revising and/or updating the Standards is as inclusive of all stakeholders as possible. To that end, a dedicated web page has been created to not only provide information about the process, but also to gather inputs through a survey which is available in five

languages. For more information on the review process, please see UN DESA/DPIDG's [webpage](#) and the dedicated [Booklet](#).

Regional workshops are being organized where, with the collaboration and support of each region's Task Force members, ideas, suggestions, and recommendations from each region will be gathered to update and/or review the Standards. Contributions from the regional workshops and the online survey will be compiled and discussed at an Expert Group Meeting to be held in 2024. The new Standards are expected to be published in the Fall of 2024 and will be available on the UNPAN website.

Format

The regional workshops will be held online via zoom to ensure the broadest participation possible.

Target Audience

All schools of public administration, networks, academia and representatives of international and regional organizations, including all actors and stakeholders.

Standards of Excellence in Public Administration Education and Training Methodological Approach

The Task Force believed that standards of excellence for public administration education and training should facilitate organizations in the public sector to be high performing through providing them with the highest quality of public servants. The UN DESA/IASIA Task Force elaborated the following 8 Standards:

- (1) Public service commitment;
- (2) Advocacy of public interest values;
- (3) Combining scholarship, practice and community service; (4) The faculty are central;
- (5) Inclusiveness is at the heart of the program;
- (6) A Curriculum that is purposeful and responsive;
- (7) Adequate Resources are critical;
- (8) Balancing collaboration and competition.

For each Standard, the Task Force provided a description as follows:

1. Public Service Commitment:

The faculty and administration of the program are defined by their fundamental commitment to public service. They are in all of their activities (teaching, training, research, technical assistance and other service activities) at all times absolutely committed to the advancement of the public interest and the building of democratic institutions. This is true within all facets of the program including internal organizational arrangements as well as programmatic activities at local, regional, national and international levels.

2. Advocacy of Public Interest Values:

The program's faculty and administration reflect their commitment to the advancement of public service by both their advocacy for, and their efforts to create, a culture of participation, commitment, responsiveness and accountability in all of those organizations and institutions with which they come into contact. In so doing, both by pedagogy and example, they prepare students and trainees to provide the highest quality of public service.



3. Combining Scholarship, Practice and Community Service:

Because public administration is an applied science, the faculty and administration of the program are committed to the integration of theory and practice and as such the program draws upon knowledge and understanding generated both by the highest quality of research and the most outstanding practical experience. Consequently, the faculty, administration and students of the program are actively engaged through its teaching, training, research and service activities with all of their stake holder communities from the smallest village or city neighborhood to the global community at large.

4. The Faculty are Central:

The commitment and quality of the faculty (and/or trainers) is central to the achievement of program goals in all areas of activities. Consequently, there must be, especially in degree granting programs, a full time core faculty committed to the highest standards of teaching, training and research and possessing the authority and responsibility appropriate to accepted standards of faculty program governance. This faculty must be paid at a level that allows them to devote the totality of their professional activities to the achievements of the goals and purposes of the program and must be available in adequate numbers consistent with the mission of the program. In that regard, a ratio of 1 faculty member per 20 graduate level students and at least 4 full time faculty would represent typical minimum requirements. Faculty teaching responsibilities should not be greater than two academic courses (or their equivalent in a training institution) at any time in the calendar year in order to allow for necessary involvement in research, training, service and technical assistance activities.

5. Inclusiveness is at the Heart of the Program:

A critical element in the achievement of excellence in public administration education and training is an unwavering commitment on the part of faculty and administration to diversity of ideas and of participation. The people who participate in programs, including students, trainees, trainers, administrators and faculty, should come from all the different racial, ethnic, and demographic communities of the society. The ideas, concepts, theories and practices addressed in the program should represent a broad variety of intellectual interests and approaches. Inclusiveness in terms of individual involvement (including sensitivity to issues of ethnicity, nationality, race, gender orientation and accessibility to all) within a program serves also to encourage inclusiveness in terms of ideas. Both forms of inclusiveness, intellectual and participatory, are the hallmarks of excellent programs.

6. A Curriculum that is Purposeful and Responsive:

A principal goal of public administration education and training is the development of public administrators who will make strong, positive contributions to the public service generally and, in particular, to the organizations they join, or to which they return. This requires public administration education and training programs to have coherent missions which drive program organization and curriculum development. In addition, it is critical that those who educate and train public administrators communicate and work with and, as appropriate, be responsive to the organizations for which they are preparing students and trainees. It also requires that the student and/or trainee be inculcated with a commitment to making a difference and that their education and training prepare them to effectively communicate (both verbally and in writing) with those with whom they work.

7. Adequate Resources are Critical:

An important prerequisite to creating a program of excellence in public administration education and training is the availability of adequate resources. Many different kinds of resources are required including facilities, technology, library resources and student services (in terms of assistance with meeting such basic needs as housing, health care, etc.). The availability of these resources is obviously a function of the



availability of adequate financial resources. Those financial resources must be such as to sustain full time faculty and/or trainers, provide needed assistance to students and faculty (such as funding to participate in international conferences, etc.) and ensure the availability of adequate classroom, research, training and meeting space as well as individual offices for each faculty member and as needed for students.

8. Balancing Collaboration and Competition:

Finally, and most importantly, there must be among the program faculty, trainers, administrators and students or trainees a sense of common purpose and mission deriving from the program's commitment to the advancing of the public interest. There must also be a sense of determination, indeed even competitiveness, that drives the program to be the best and creates a desire to meet and exceed world class standards of excellence.

In order to assess the achievement of these standards of excellence it was necessary to have appropriate criteria against which to measure program progress. The criteria for assessing standards were discussed within the Task Force and with other colleagues at the several open meetings organized by the Task Force during international conferences.

Methodological Approach for the Review of the Standards of Excellence

The approved methodology for the review of the Standards of Excellence is as follows:

- Confirm and approve a standard with no changes
- Review a standard/s and update its description and indicators
- Change a standard/s, its description and indicators
- Abolish a standard/s
- Create a new standard/s with its description and indicators

In reviewing and updating the SoE (or when creating new ones), members of the Taskforce and other stakeholders should take into consideration the evaluation criteria to be applied/used by accrediting institutions or make proposals in that regard.

Expected Results

It is expected that the regional workshop will help to gather as many ideas and inputs as possible for the review and update of the Standards of Excellence. The inputs will be compiled in an online matrix, which will be shared with all the Task Force members for further review.