



First meeting of the
UN DESA/IASIA 2023 Task Force for

The Review of the Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training

18 April 2023

Booklet

Concept Note



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Description of Event

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) and its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) are co-organizing the First Meeting of the IASIA/UN DESA Task Force for the Review and/or Update of the Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training, which will be held on April 18, 2023 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. NY Time.

About the Organizers

DPIDG is a division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). It provides secretariat support to the United Nations Programme in Public Administration. DPIDG's mission is to assist the Member States of the United Nations in advancing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, including through fostering effective, efficient, transparent, accountable, inclusive, and innovative public governance, administration, and services for sustainable development. UNPOG is part of the Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). Its principal mission is to strengthen the public governance capacities of developing Member States in Asia, the Pacific, and beyond to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

IASIA is an entity of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS) but has its own governance: Board of Management and General Assembly and its own network (members). It shares with IIAS the Secretariat. The IASIA/IIAS will influence the global governance agenda through high impact events targeting and involving both public service and academia; production and dissemination of relevant knowledge on public governance; enabling collaborative and strategic projects with members and partners; and accrediting both academic and professional training programs in line with standards of best practices in public management.

Background

The development of the Standards of Excellence was the result of a joint initiative between the Division of Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) (currently Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the United Nations (UN) and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA). A joint UN DESA/IASIA Task Force was set up in 2005 and the Standards were issued in 2008.

The UN DESA/IASIA Task Force elaborated eight (8) Standards of Excellence, which include:

- (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 (see Annex I for the full description of the 8 Standards of excellence).

The joint IASIA/UN DESA Task Force was composed of 14 members (see Annex III List of 2008 Task Force Members), which included experts and practitioners from schools and associations of public administration, and representatives of international and regional organizations from across the world. The members were selected by the former Director of DPIDG and the IASIA President. Due consideration was given to geographical and gender balance.

The IASIA/UN DESA initiative was premised on the belief that public administration education and training programs must be conceived and implemented to make current and future public sector leaders capable of effectively addressing the key issues facing the world today. “The Task Force was established as the UN had received inquiries from public administration education and training programs in many parts of the world about whether it might initiate a process for accrediting such programs as a means of enhancing excellence. Second, it had received several inquiries from governments around the world regarding the issue of enhancing senior governmental leadership and it felt that, for upper-level officials, the broader perspective of a worldwide academic organization could be of special value”.

The purpose of the joint initiative was to provide a set of standards that could be used by schools of public administration and institutes of public management to assess the quality of public administration and training. A set of criteria and guidelines were also developed on how to evaluate the implementation of the Standards.

To this end, IASIA established the International Commission on Accreditation of Public Administration Education and Training (ICAPA). ICAPA provides full international accreditation based on the conformance of the Institute and/or the program with the United Nations/IASIA Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training Programs.

The Standards of excellence were finalized in 2008 almost 15 years ago. 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 education and training.

Most notably, the Standards were issued before the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by 193 Member States. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the importance of ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Goal 4) and the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels. Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda specifically calls for effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. Indeed, public institutions play a critical role in the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets.

To make institutions effective, accountable, and inclusive, as elaborated in SDG 16, public administration systems must define new standards of excellence for public administration education and training that can advance the principles of the 2030 Agenda across public service and ensure that they are put into practice. They must also reflect the Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development, which were developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council on 2 July 2018. The principles highlight the need for pragmatic and ongoing improvements in national and subnational governance capabilities to reach the SDGs.

To this end, the principles are linked to a variety of commonly used strategies for operationalizing responsive and effective governance, many of which have been recognized and endorsed over the years in various United Nations forums, resolutions and treaties. Technical guidelines and relevant practices to operationalize the principles are provided through Strategy Guidance Notes, which are now available on the UNPAN.

One of the Principles of Effective Governance is competence. A competent and effective public service with well-motivated and professional public servants is at the center of success in implementing government policies and programs related to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, including in delivering services to those left furthest behind. Without a dedicated effort to help governments mobilize and develop the knowledge and capacities of public servants at all levels, progress on the SDGs may be undermined.

The use of digital technologies in education and training, which was accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, also needs to be reflected, and considered, by the Standards of excellence.

The development of human resources, as recalled by Resolution A/RES/72/235 adopted (without a vote) by the General Assembly of the United Nations, on December 20, 2017, is not only the keystone of economic, social, and environmental development, and health and education are at the heart of this process, but such a development of human resources is also an essential element of the action taken to achieve the agreed development goals at the international level, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and to provide more opportunities, especially for the most vulnerable groups.

Working closely with schools of public administration, institutes of public management and universities, who are responsible for training public servants, is critical to mainstreaming the SDGs into their curricula. To this end, UN DESA/DPIDG launched in 2018 a Global Initiative on Building Capacities of Public Servants for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Implementation, which aims at developing the capacities of governments and public servants (in terms of knowledge, skills, attitude, leadership competencies, and mindsets) to support the implementation of the SDGs. DPIDG also published the first publication ever issued on how to change mindsets in public institutions to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In 2021, UN DESA/DPIDG further developed, together with over 50 partners, including schools of public administration and experts, a Curriculum on Governance for Sustainable Development. The Curriculum Training of Trainers Toolkits, which address the 11 Principles of Effective Governance, offer a holistic and integrated framework for capacity development in the area of governance and public institutions. The Curriculum aims to promote the critical understanding of sustainable development issues, enhance governance capacity, and strengthen public servants' awareness of their active role in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. The Curriculum on Governance is a comprehensive set of Training of Trainers Capacity Development Toolkits, which contain ready-to-use and customizable training material on key governance dimensions needed to advance the implementation of the SDGs. It provides methodologies and approaches to advance knowledge and assist governments in developing capacities at the individual, organizational, and institutional/societal levels, to drive the transformational change needed to implement the 2030 Agenda. The review of the Standards of excellence, working closely with IASIA, can be an opportunity to raise awareness of the above issues.

Objectives

The aim of the First Meeting of the IASIA/UN DESA Task Force for the Review and/or Update the Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training is to:

- Sharing the rationale and considerations behind the creation of the Taskforce;
- Introducing the Members of the Taskforce;
- Providing an overview of the scope of the IASIA/UN DESA Task Force's mandate and work;
- Highlighting and discussing the role of the Task Force members;
- Agreeing on a Roadmap and timeline for the Task Force's activities.

Format

The First Meeting will be composed of different sessions covering the above issues. The meeting will be held virtually.

Target Audience

Members of the IASIA/UN DESA 2023 Task Force.

Expected Results

At the end of the meeting, participants will have a better understanding of why the standards of excellence need to be revamped and will discuss and agree on how to proceed to build a common shared Roadmap.
