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Accreditation of
Master's Programs in
Library & Information Studies

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Introduct

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I: Mission, Goals, an

I.3 Within the context of these Standards each program is judged on the degree to which it attains its objectives. In accord with the mission of the school, clearly defined, publicly stated, and regularly reviewed program goals and objectives form the essential frame of reference for meaningful external and internal evaluation. The evaluation of program goals and objectives involves those served: students, faculty, employers, alumni, and other constituencies.

II.4   The curriculum provides the opportunity for students to construct coherent programs of study that allow individual needs, goals, and aspirations to be met within the context of program requirements established by the school and that will foster development of the competencies necessary for productive careers. The curriculum includes as appropriate cooperative degree programs, interdisciplinary coursework and research, experiential opportunities, and other similar activities. Course content and sequence relationships within the curriculum are evident.

II.5   When a program includes study of services and activities in specialized fields, these specialized learning experiences are built upon a general foundation of library and information studies. The design of specialized learning experiences takes into account the statements of knowledge and competencies developed by relevant professional organizations.

II.6   The curriculum, regardless of forms or locations of delivery selected by the school, conforms to the requirements of these Standards.

II.7   The curriculum is continually reviewed and receptive to innovation; its evaluation is used for ongoing appraisal, to make improvements, and to plan for the future. Evaluation of the curriculum includes assessment of students' achievements and their subsequent accomplishments. Evaluation involves those served by the program: students, faculty, employers, alumni, and other constituents.
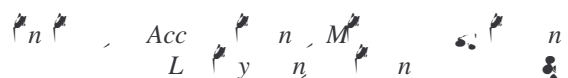

III: Faculty

III.1 The school has a faculty capable of accomplishing program objectives. Full-time faculty members are qualified for appointment to the graduate faculty within the parent institution and are sufficient in number and in diversity of specialties to carry out the major share of the teaching, research, and service activities required for a program, wherever and however delivered. Part-time faculty, when appointed, balance and complement the teaching competencies of the full-time faculty. Particularly in the teaching of specialties that are not represented in the expertise of the full-time faculty, part-time faculty enrich the quality and diversity of a program.

III.2 The school demonstrates the high priority it attaches to teaching, research, and service by its appointments and promotions; by encouragement of innovation in teaching, research, and service; and through provision of a stimulating learning and research environment.

III.3 The school has policies to recruit and retain faculty from diverse backgrounds. Explicit and equitable faculty personnel policies and procedures are published, accessible, and implemented.

III.4 The qualifications of each faculty member include competence in designated teaching areas, technological awareness, effectiveness in teaching, and active participation in appropriate organizations.

III.5 For each full-time faculty member the qualifications include a sustained record of accomplishment in research or other appropriate scholarship.

III.6 The faculty hold advanced degrees from a variety of academic institutions. The faculty evidence diversity of backgrounds, ability to conduct research in the field, and specialized knowledge covering program content. In addition, they demonstrate skill in academic planning and assessment, have a substantial and pertinent body of relevant experience, interact with faculty of other disciplines, and maintain close and continuing liaison with the field. The faculty nurture an intellectual environment that enhances the accomplishment of program objectives. These characteristics apply to faculty regardless of forms or locations of delivery of programs.

III.7 Faculty assignments relate to the needs of a program and to the competencies and interests of individual faculty members. These assignments assure that the quality of instruction is maintained throughout the year and take into account the time needed by the faculty for teaching, student counseling, research, professional development, and institutional and professional service.

III.8 Procedures are established for systematic evaluation of faculty; evaluation considers accomplishment and innovation in the areas of teaching, research, and service. Within applicable institutional policies, faculty, students, and others are involved in the evaluation process.

IV: Students

IV.1 The school formulates recruitment, admission, financial aid, placement, and other academic and administrative policies for students that are consistent with the school's mission and program goals and objectives; the policies reflect the needs and values of the constituencies served by a program. The school has policies to recruit and retain students who reflect the diversity of North America's communities. The composition of the student body is such that it fosters a learning environment consistent with the school's mission and program goals and objectives.

IV.2 Current, accurate, and easily accessible information on the school and its program is available to students and the general public. This information includes announcements of program goals and objectives, descriptions of curricula, information on faculty, admission requirements, availability of financial aid, criteria

for evaluating student performance, assistance with placement, and other policies and procedures. The school demonstrates that it has procedures to support these policies.

IV.3   Standards for admission are applied consistently. Students admitted to a program have earned a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution; the policies and procedures for waiving any admission standard or academic prerequisite are stated clearly and applied consistently. Assessment of an application is based on a combined evaluation of academic, intellectual, and other qualifications as they relate to the constituencies served by a program, a program's goals and objectives, and the career objectives of the individual. Within the framework of institutional policy and programs, the admission policy for a program ensures that applicants possess sufficient interest, aptitude, and qualifications to enable successful completion of a program and subsequent contribution to the field.

IV.4   Students construct coherent programs of study that allow individual needs, goals, and aspirations to be met within the context of program requirements established by the school. Students receive systematic, multifaceted evaluation of their achievements. Students have access to continuing opportunities for guidance, counseling, and placement assistance.

IV.5   The school provides an environment that fosters student participation in the definition and determination of the total learning experience. Students are provided with opportunities to form student organizations and to participate in the formulation, modification, and implementation of policies affecting academic and student affairs.

IV.6   The school applies the results of evaluation of student achievement to program development. Procedures are established for systematic evaluation of the degree to which a program's academic and administrative policies and activities regarding students are accomplishing its objectives. Within applicable institutional policies, faculty, students, staff, and others are involved in the evaluation process.

V: Administration and Financial Support

V.1   The school is an integral yet distinctive academic unit within the institution. Its autonomy is sufficient to assure that the intellectual content of its program, the selection and promotion of its faculty, and the selection of its students are determined by the school within the general guidelines of the institution. The parent institution provides the resources and administrative support needed for the attainment of program objectives.

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Afterword

This update to the 1992 Standards resulted from a five-year review process that included two periods of constituent comment collection. Impetus for providing an updated version arose from three major inputs: 1) expressions of concern from the field, 2) a 2002 report from an ad hoc Standards Review Subcommittee, which included assessment of the views of external review panel members regarding targets for revision, and 3) the collective experience of COA members regarding recurring points of confusion or failure of programs to address the standards in a satisfactory manner.

The first section of the Standards describes the field of professional practice and its associated areas of study and research. It defines the phrases "library and information studies" and "school of library and information studies." These definitions are intended to allow a school to bring forward for the purposes of accreditation any master's degree program (one or more than one) that addresses the field's areas of interest regardless of a degree's name, including for example, degrees entitled Master of Information Science, Master of Librarianship, Master of Arts in Library Science, Master of Information Resource Management, or other similar titles.

The unit called a "school" may be organized as an autonomous college within its university, as a department in a college, or otherwise, as appropriate within its institution.

While the Standards apply solely to programs of education at the master's degree level, the mission, and goals and objectives of any other programs offered by the school are relevant to the review of a master's degree program.

The Standards make it explicit that the location of the offering of a program or its components, or the means by which a program or its components are delivered, e.g., satellite, closed circuit television, are relevant to the accreditation process simply as one aspect of a total program. The Standards neither extol nor caution against distance education. For accreditation purposes, programs are evaluated in the same way regardless of locations or forms of delivery of a program.

The Standards are stated in the declarative and while ways to achieve quality are not detailed, a high quality program must be present for accreditation to be awarded. For example, the term "excellence" is used to indicate that the Standards are intended to encourage the attainment of excellence in educational programs.

The Standards stress innovation, and encourage an active role and concern for future developments and growth in the field.

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