

Accreditation and Competencies: The Canadian Experience

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Canada

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- Next Steps
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The Canadian Context

The Schools & Public Administration Academic Community

- Doctoral
 - Schools: Carleton, ENAP, Johnson-Shoyama, Victoria
 - Depts: UBC, Dalhousie, McMaster, Ottawa, Ryerson, SFU, UWO
- MPA/MPP
 - Schools: Calgary, Carleton, Dalhousie, ENAP, Queen's, Johnson-Shoyama, Victoria, Toronto
 - Depts: UBC, Brock, Carleton, Concordia, Guelph, Guelph-McMaster, Laval, Manitoba-Winnipeg, Moncton, Ottawa, UQAM, Ryerson, SFU, UWO, Waterloo, Winnipeg, York (Atkinson, Glendon, Schulich), Waterloo,
- Undergrad and Diploma
 - Athabasca, Alberta, Bishop's, Brandon, BC Open, Brock, Calgary, Cape Breton, Carleton, Dalhousie, Laurentian, Lethbridge, Mount Saint Vincent, UNBC, Ottawa, PEI, Ryerson, St. Mary's, St. Thomas, Saskatchewan, UTScarborough, Victoria, UWO, York,

CAPPA

- National association representing Canadian schools, programs, and departments teaching and researching public administration
- Mission: To improve the quality of teaching and research in public administration

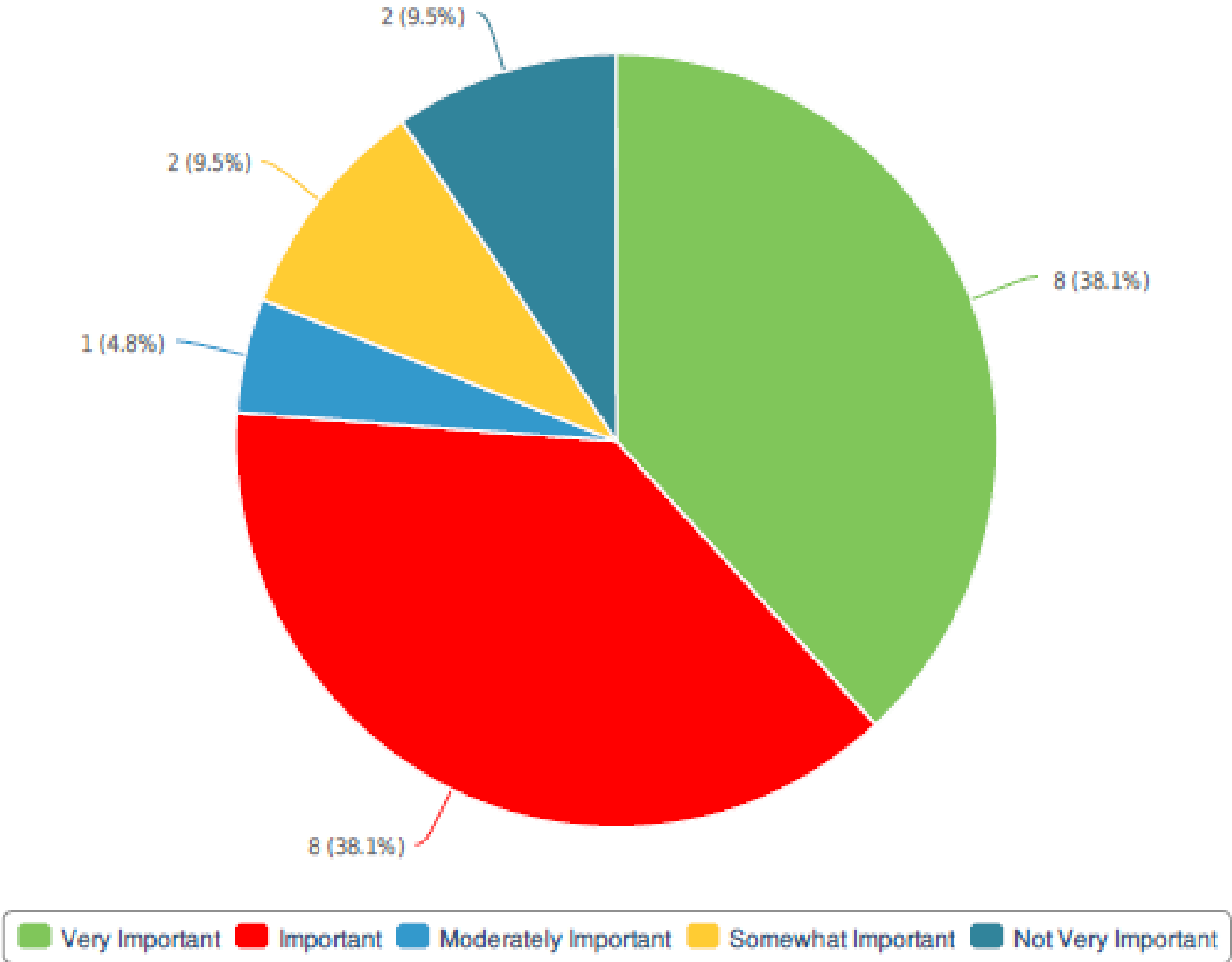
Getting to Accreditation the Canadian Way

- Two Reports
 - Gow and Sutherland Report (2004) Comparison
 - Diversity
 - Balance between public policy and public admin/management, vs focussed, skills vs environment
 - Variety in prerequisites, admission standards, degree requirements
 - General weakness in Quantitative methods
 - Uram (CAPPA) report 2005
 - Reasons, Choices – stand alone or affiliated
- CSPA and CAPPA
 - Concerns about fragmentation
- CAPPA Goes Ahead
 - 3 person working group
 - “mission-based accreditation regime”
 - Standard: mission and objectives being achieved and the objectives and missions are appropriate
- Clark and Pal Report (2011)
 - Variation (Provincial, CAPPA “weak”, commitment to diversity)
 - Gow and Sutherland’s conclusions still
 - Skills, Rules, Knowledge, Values (Rasmussen + Clark& Pal)
 - Conclusions: Clarity re MPA/MPP; renewed commitment to accreditation, CAPPA as repository
- Currently
 - 5 accredited, costs, limited buy-in

Accreditation 2014

| REASONS FOR | REASONS AGAINST |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishment of general professional standards;• Quality assurance in programs and their delivery;• Minimal standards through ongoing assessment;• Promotion of peer review ;• Opportunity for professional reflection, self-improvement, and innovation in the schools;• Promotion of self-assessment and good governance;• Maintenance of relevant and current standards;• Common professional standards in jurisdictions;• Comparison of professional standards across jurisdictions;• Connections between employers and new grads;• Promotion of the profession through standards of practice; and• Better professional service to society through all of the above.• Credibility and resourcing within universities and with governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inflexibility in assessing professional programs;• Stress on maintaining a uniform and rigid curriculum;• Loss of rich diversity and student/employer choice;• Inability of professional schools to adequately respond to changing times thus hindering innovation;• Excess red tape in the accreditation process;• Over-reliance on rules and regulations of accreditation rather than on education outcomes;• Emphasis on common quantitative measures rather than good qualitative measures;• Cost vs size of public administration community in Canada; and,• Opportunity cost. |

1. How important do you think it is that your program be accredited by CAPPA?



2. What do you consider to be the major benefits of accreditation?

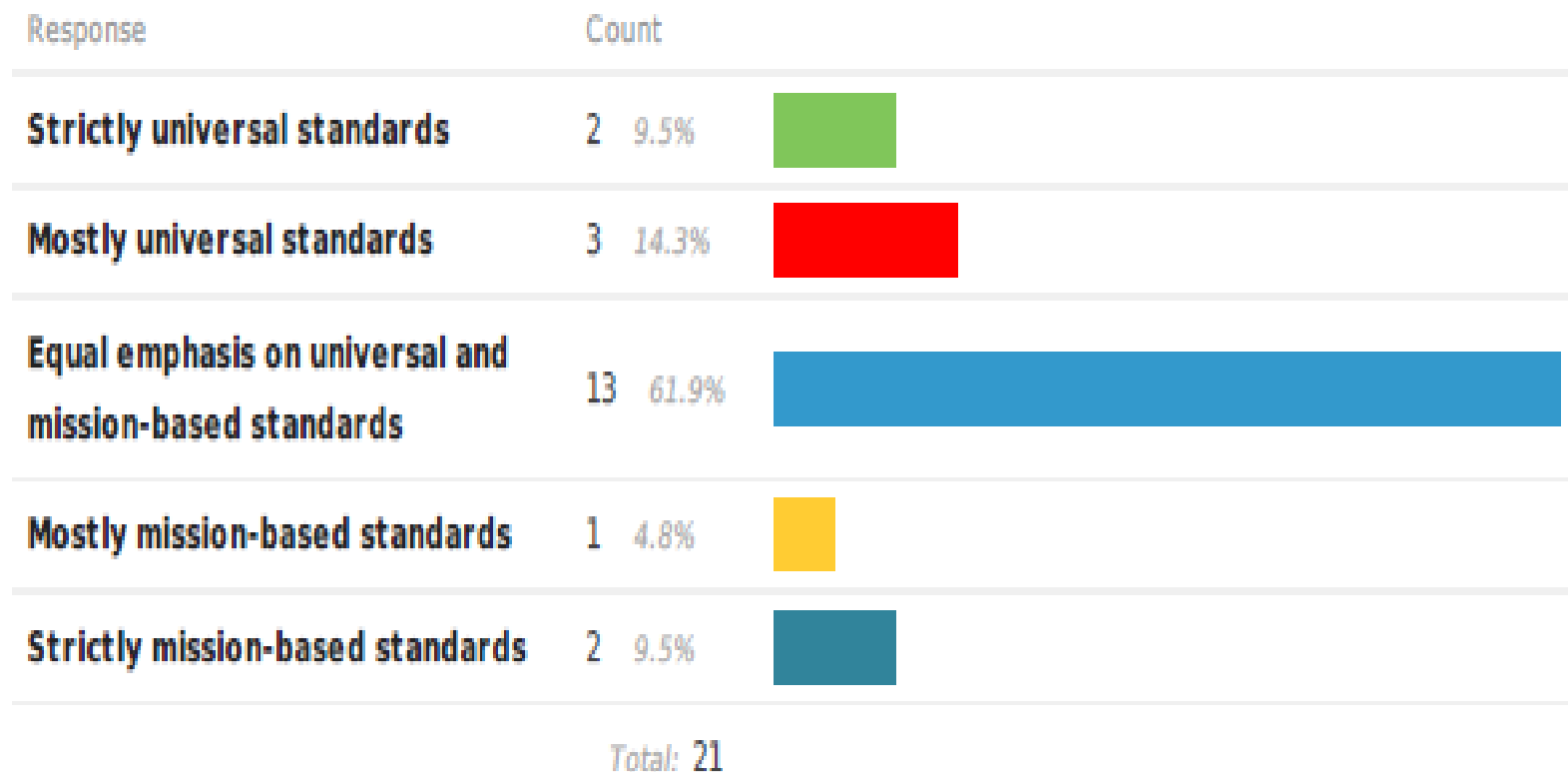
| Variable | Very Important | Important | Moderately Important | Somewhat Important | Not Very Important | Total: |
|---|----------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------|
| Improved ability to recruit students | 6 28.6% | 9 42.9% | 2 9.5% | 3 14.3% | 1 4.8% | 21 |
| Improved ability to recruit faculty | 2 9.5% | 4 19.0% | 6 28.6% | 4 19.0% | 5 23.8% | 21 |
| Improved ability to obtain resources from central administration | 3 14.3% | 5 23.8% | 6 28.6% | 2 9.5% | 5 23.8% | 21 |
| Stronger connections to other accredited programs | 4 19.0% | 10 47.6% | 5 23.8% | 1 4.8% | 1 4.8% | 21 |
| Improved ability to raise funds from donors | 0 0.0% | 5 23.8% | 6 28.6% | 4 19.0% | 6 28.6% | 21 |
| Improved ability to partner with government | 1 4.8% | 9 42.9% | 1 4.8% | 4 19.0% | 6 28.6% | 21 |
| Enhanced overall reputation | 8 38.1% | 8 38.1% | 1 4.8% | 2 9.5% | 2 9.5% | 21 |

3. What do you consider to be the major impediments to achieving or renewing accreditation?

| Variable | Very Important | Important | Moderately Important | Somewhat Important | Not Very Important | |
|---|----------------|------------|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| Meeting the current standards | 0 0.0% | 3 15.0% | 6 30.0% | 3 15.0% | 8 40.0% | Total: 20 |
| Convincing colleagues of the importance | 4 20.0% | 6 30.0% | 2 10.0% | 2 10.0% | 6 30.0% | Total: 20 |
| Time and effort to assemble the required documentation | 8 40.0% | 5 25.0% | 3 15.0% | 2 10.0% | 2 10.0% | Total: 20 |
| Obtaining the approval of senior administration | 1 5.0% | 2 10.0% | 5 25.0% | 6 30.0% | 6 30.0% | Total: 20 |
| Accreditation application fee | 2 10.0% | 3 15.0% | 2 10.0% | 3 15.0% | 10 50.0% | Total: 20 |
| Other | 1 25.0% | 0 0.0% | 1 25.0% | 0 0.0% | 2 50.0% | Total: 4 |

Standards

4. All accreditation systems have standards. Mission-based standards are those devised by and for a given program; universal standards apply to all programs equally. Looking to the future, CAPP's accreditation system should employ:



Comments on Standards

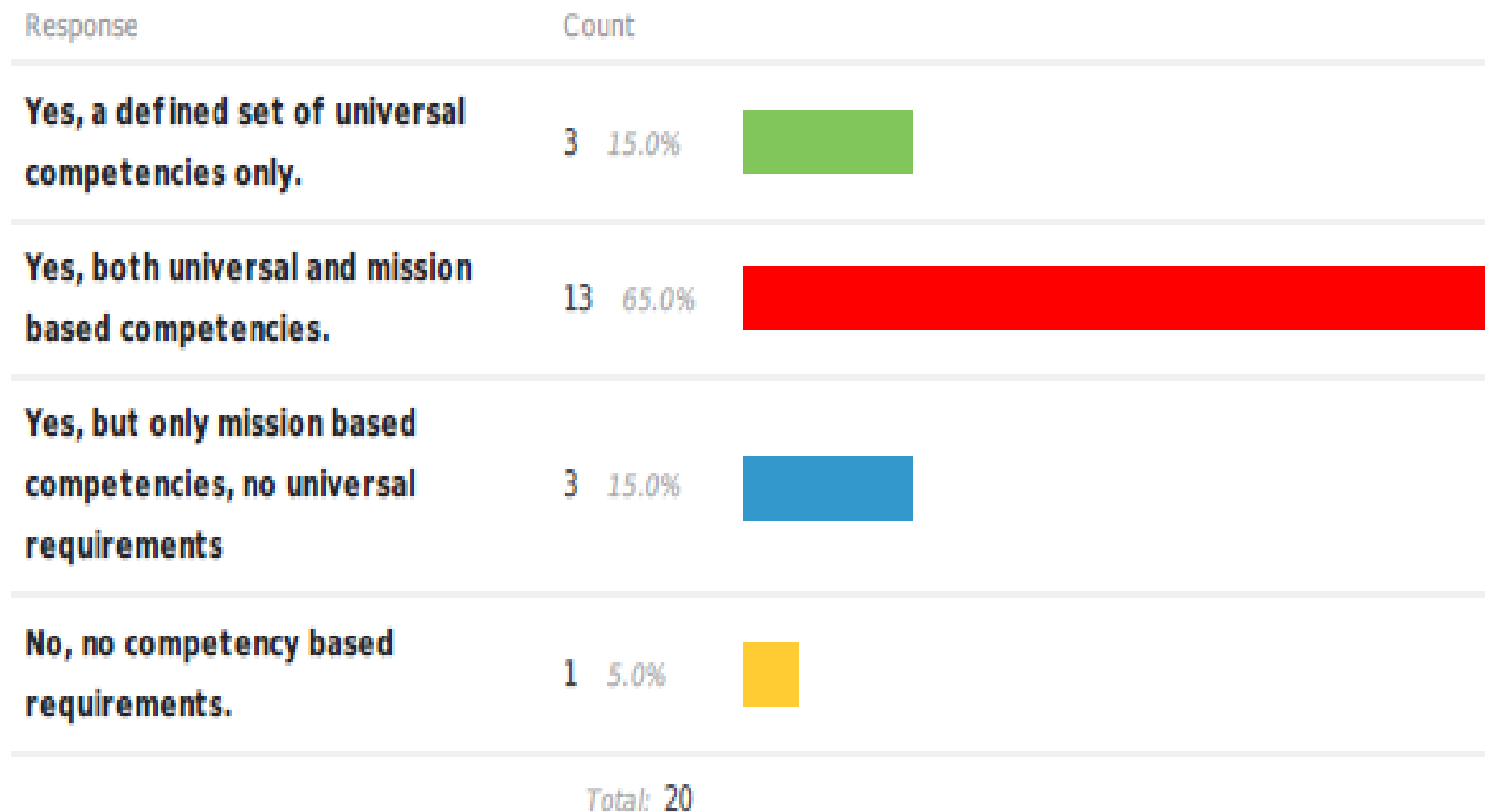
See previous notes. I am concerned that there will be a proliferation of MPP programs without any substantial commonality in standards. This will discount the value of the designation and undermine our ability to communicate and provide assurances about the program that is offered.

I believe that it's important to have clear, rigorous universal standards. However, there is substantial variety among MPA/MPP program structure and specific emphasis (our program, for example, focuses primarily on local government matters, unlike any other Canadian program). The overall health of MPA/MPP programs in Canada is strengthened by this differentiation, since the market served by MPA/MPP programs is segmented and diverse, and so no one is served well by excessive duplication among programs. As a result, it's important to also retain evaluation of mission-based standards.

It will be important to have a robust discussion about what constitutes the universal standards that we - as a discipline - agree upon. It is possible (likely?) that there will be significant variation in what that looks like. There will certainly be a need to acknowledge - and accommodate - differences in the programs across the country. A smaller program focused on specific populations will need to be recognized for the value that provides (assuming it does), while balancing the need for some common standards/approaches.

Competencies

9. Many professional programs endorse a learning outcomes or student competencies approach to curriculum design. Should accreditation be available only to those programs that have measurable learning outcomes in areas such as leadership, methodological skills, managerial tools and so on?



Final reflections

Accreditation is only worthwhile if it is based on meaningful and substantive criteria. The most important of these are the competencies that students acquire and how effectively those are inculcated. To do this we need standards about types of course offerings and knowledge goals in specific terms. Resource constraints like space and number of faculty are less important provided minimums are met as universities pursue innovation in delivery, which is to the good. But as more delivery options are pursued core competencies and knowledge become even more important. One great fear about accreditation is that they are not rigorous because of 'politics'. This is to be avoided at all costs, nothing discredits accreditation more than this.

A robust accreditation system is important for Canada, but in order to have broadly based support, it still needs to encourage engagement by a diversity of programs.

In my experience convincing colleagues of the value of a CANADIAN accreditation system is challenging but could be facilitated by outlining the expected gains from the accreditation system. Having some entente with other international accreditation systems may substantially increase the value proposition attached to the accreditation.

CAPPA accreditation is very important to our program and has served us well. As suggested by my responses above, I think the CAPPA system could be improved by moving in the direction of emphasis on formally defined competencies and, to some extent, universal standards. However, for reasons I discussed earlier, it's very important to retain sufficient allowance for mission-based evaluation that the accreditation system supports the maintenance and development of a diversity of distinct MPA/MPP programs. Also, since there is no space for comments in question 6, I will take this opportunity to note that I do believe that it is important to have minimum standards in all of the matters listed in the question; however, the importance of universal (as opposed to program-specific and mission-based) standards varies across the different categories. It is this variation that I've tried to express in my differential responses to question 6.

NEXT STEPS

- Indigenous, CAPPAs-Mandated but Independent Process
- Cost Effective
- Minimum Red Tape
- Respectful of Diversity & Professional Standards
- Balance Between Mission-Based and Universal
- And of course, through Dialogue
 - CAPPAs 2005 February Meeting

Standards

- All accreditation systems have standards. Mission-based standards are those devised by and for a given program; universal standards apply to all programs equally. Looking to the future, CAPPAs accreditation system should employ:
 - **Strictly universal standards 9.5% (2)**
 - **Mostly universal standards 14.3% (3)**
 - **Equal emphasis on universal and mission-based standards 61.9% (13)**
 - **Mostly mission-based standards 4.8% (1)**
 - **Strictly mission-based standards 9.5% (2)**

Current Views: Survey (21 responses/34,)

- How important do you think it is that your program be accredited by CAPPA?
 - 76.2% (16) either very important or important; 4.8% (1) moderately important
 - 19% (4) either somewhat or not very important
- Benefits of Accreditation
 - Enhanced Overall Reputation :76% said very important or important (8, 8)
 - Improved ability to recruit students: 71.5% (6, 9)
 - Stronger connections with other programs: 66.6% (4, 10)
 - Improved ability to partner with government: 47.7% (1, 9)
- Split: faculty recruitment and securing resources from central admin, partnering with government, fundraising
- Major Impediments
 - Convincing colleagues of Importance – 50%
 - Time and effort to assemble documentation – 65%