ACSA

ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE
SCHOOLS OF ARCHITECTURE

To:	National Architecture Accreditation Board
From:	Marleen Kay Davis, FAIA, 2008-09 ACSA President
Date:	January 23, 2009
Re:	Review of the proposed Procedures for Accreditation
cc:	JW Blanchard, Assoc. AIA; Marvin Malecha, FAIA, DPACSA; Gordon E. Mills, FAIA

REVIEW OF NAAB 2009 PROCEDURES DRAFT
The ACSA Board of Directors has reviewed the 2009 NAAB Procedures Draft document, and would like to share our major concerns below.

General Concern: Redundancy of Format for the Procedures

The overall re-organization by "visit-type—i.e. Section 3 (Continuing Accreditation), Section 4 (Candidacy) and Section 5 (Initial Accreditation)—provides redundant information for APR, Site Visit, and VTR, creating an unnecessarily long and potentially confusing, document. The total Procedures document has grown from 30 pages to 72. Program chairs may read only the section related to their situation and may miss other important information.

We would like to suggest a single comprehensive outline for the APR, Site Visit, and VTR, noting the specific components that would differ regarding Candidacy and Initial Accreditation.

A second general concern is the absence of information regarding plans for the evaluation of NAAB, which has been recommended during the Accreditation Review process.

Section 1. Overview: Issues Regarding Mission and Activities

While it is good to add a section on "Core Mission," the mission itself should be clearly stated. There is no mission in the By-Laws that refers to the purpose of the organization in the Articles of Incorporation. Perhaps both the "purpose" and "mission statement" should be printed.

We recommend titling the "Other Activities" section "International Issues in Accreditation," with a clear subset related to "substantial equivalency" that includes a succinct definition. Further, there should be clear references to the NAAB documents on the website that outline the procedures for substantial equivalency.

Section 2: Accreditation

We recommend clearly explaining the possible "terms" for accreditation in this section. The section should clarify, that the 6-year term with a Focused Evaluation is given only for conditions 1 through 12, a policy that is stated only on page 48. Moreover, no statement exists that the term of initial accreditation is 3 years, which has been a good practice in the past.

Section 3: Procedures for Continuing Accreditation

Degree paths:

It is unclear how schools with significantly different professional degree paths are handled in the accreditation process. whether schools with B.Arch and M.Arch programs or schools with multiple M.Arch degree paths.

While we recognize schools vary in how they handle multiple degree path, particularly at the M.Arch level, we recommend that Section 3 provide clear guidelines for both schools and visiting teams with respect to review of different degree paths. These guidelines should include expectations such as:
- whether visiting teams have an additional member (as has been done in the past)
- whether Student Performance Criteria are reviewed separately for each path
- whether matrices for each degree path are expected
- whether or to what extent policies for transfer credit and advanced standing are to be reviewed.

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In recognition that NAAB accredits degree programs, not simply the one-year or two-year component of a longer program path that grants the M.Arch, we ask particularly that NAAB address how Student Performance Criteria are addressed in the pre-professional component.

In recognition that NAAB accredits degree programs, not simply the one-year or two-year component of a longer program path that grants the M.Arch, we think it is important that NAAB clearly address the procedures for those schools that have significantly different degree paths, even when the final degree title is the same.

Other issues in Section 3:
The APR page limit of 135 pages is well-intentioned, but should only apply to responses to Conditions 1–13, not the supplemental information such a faculty CV's, course descriptions, annual reports, and the response to previous visits. Most programs have a 1-2 page resume for each faculty member, but this could easily add up to 40 –80 pages in the report. Previous team VTRs can be as long as 10-30 pages.

Scheduling continues to be a concern: it is most useful to schools if team visit schedules are determined well in advance. In order to deter last minute changes, we recommend that stiff penalties be in place for team members who cancel.

In the past, the "response" of the school to the VTR was considered a permanent part of the VTR. We recommend that this policy should be explicit and should not change

Section 4: Procedures for Candidacy for Accreditation

While the intent to make procedures for candidacy more rigorous is laudable, there are many areas of confusion regarding the timeline for different degree programs, when students can enter the program, and when students actually receive an accredited degree. The terminology should be consistent: site visit, eligibility visit, initial visit, initial candidacy visit, candidacy visit, continuing candidacy, etc.   A clearly presented timeline would be helpful.

o   Section 4.3.a.ii.2. "not less than 6 years" is probably not accurate for all schools; e.g. a new 3-year M.Arch. seeking accreditation.

o   Section 4.3 (page 21). Would the candidacy visit necessarily follow after only one year of eligibility. Could there be cases where a school might sit in eligibility mode for 1-3 years before the first candidacy visit?

We recommend that the "Plan for Achieving Initial Accreditation" should be incorporated into the APR.

Section 5: Procedures for Initial Accreditation

Consistent terminology and a clear timeline would be helpful. See comments at Section 4 regarding the status of students in the program.

o   Section 5.1 "Not less that 4 years in continuous candidacy" might not always be the case; e.g. a 3-year M.Arch. program may only be in candidacy for 2 or 3 years.

Is the term of Initial Accreditation still three years, and where is this stated?

Section 6: Procedures for Focused Evaluation

These procedures seem clear, with both consistency and flexibility.

We recommend ensuring Section 2 clearly states that programs cannot receive a Focused Evaluation for deficiencies in Student Performance Criteria.

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Section 7: Procedures for Nomenclature Change

These procedures seem clear if they are intended to prevent existing B. Arch. programs from going through "candidacy" procedures for a nomenclature change.

APPENDIX

Has the category "Well Met" been eliminated? This category has been useful for schools and teams, both in the Student Performance Criteria and in Conditions 1 through 12.

Pages 128-136 appear to reference a specific school in the header which is probably not intended, nor advisable.