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PRINCIPLES OF ACCREDITATION

adopted Sept. 16, 2000 | amended September 2003

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Mission of journalism and mass communications | [top](#)

The mission of journalism and mass communications professions in a democratic society is to inform, to enlighten and to champion freedom of speech and press. These professions seek to enable people to fulfill their responsibilities as citizens who mean to govern themselves. They seek to help people protect, pursue and promote their rights and interests in their personal lives and in their work in public and philanthropic service, in commerce and industry, and in the professions.

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Professional programs should prepare students with a body of knowledge and a system of inquiry, scholarship and training for careers in which they are accountable to:

- the public interest for their knowledge, ethics, competence and service;
- citizens, clients or consumers for their competencies and the quality of their work; and
- employers for their performance.

Commitment to diversity and inclusiveness | [top](#)

To inform and enlighten, the professions of journalism and mass communications should understand and reflect the diversity and complexity of people, perspectives and beliefs in a global society and in the multicultural communities they serve.

Programs seeking accreditation should develop curricula and instruction that educate faculty and prepare students with the multicultural knowledge, values and skills essential for professional practice.

Programs should document their efforts to ensure the representation of women and people of diverse racial and ethnic identity in the student body and faculty and to expand these students' opportunities for entry into the communications professions.

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The Accrediting Council does not define specific curricula, courses or methods of instruction. It recognizes that each institution has its unique situation, mission, and resources, and this uniqueness is an asset to be safeguarded. The Council judges programs against the objectives that units and institutions set for themselves and against the standards that the Council sets forth for preparing students for professional careers in journalism and mass communications.

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The content and quality of a student's entire degree program are of vital educational importance and are the responsibility of journalism and mass communications units. To ensure that units monitor carefully each student's entire degree program for appropriate balance between liberal education and professional preparation, the Council requires that students take a minimum of 80 semester hours (or 116 quarter hours) in courses outside the major area of journalism and mass communications, with no fewer than 65 semester hours (or 94 quarter hours) in the liberal arts and sciences.

The Council urges journalism and mass communications programs to advise students to acquire appropriately supervised experience in campus media and professional internships.

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The Council embraces the value of a liberal arts and sciences curriculum as the essential foundation for professional education in journalism and mass communications. Professional education applies the knowledge and perspectives of arts and sciences disciplines to the understanding of the modern world and to the evolution and workings of diverse communities within society.

Professional values and competencies | [top](#)

Individual professions in journalism and mass communication may require certain specialized values and competencies. Irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be able to:

- understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of groups in a global society in relationship to

- communications;
- understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- think critically, creatively and independently;
- conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

Assessment of student learning | [top](#)

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation. The Council evaluates curricula and instruction in the light of evidence and expects programs seeking accreditation to assess students' attainment of professional values and competencies.

Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- Awareness: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- Understanding: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- Application: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

Student learning is evaluated to:

- develop curriculum, improve teaching, and enhance student learning;
- document what students have learned; and
- provide accountability.

Evaluation of student learning also enables the Council and its representatives to make fairer and more consistent judgments across units and programs.

Schedule for assessment plans | [top](#)

The Council in September 2001 adopted a schedule for the development and implementation of assessment plans. Schools seeking accreditation or re-accreditation were required to have plans for the assessment of educational outcomes by September 2003 and to collect information for assessing student learning during the 2003 – 2004 academic year. Schools were required to begin applying findings from the assessments to improve curricula, instruction and learning by September 2004.

The Council has published a [guide to assessment methods](#) already in use by accredited schools. Copies were sent in October 2001 to administrators of all accredited schools. Additional copies are available (contact [Cheryl Klug](#) for more information).

Transfer credit | [top](#)

The Council recommends that accredited schools accept for transfer from junior colleges no more than 12 semester hours (or equivalent) in journalism courses.

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The Council recognizes that, although the academic community must firmly control academic policies and programs, the accrediting process provides a means by which practitioners have a voice in evaluating the teaching of professional practice. They also can participate in the wider effort of the academic community to formulate educational standards.

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The Council tries to keep the burden of accreditation as light as possible. It recognizes the time and expense involved in preparing the self-study report and in hosting the visiting team. It endeavors to respect the institution under review and to minimize in every way the distractions and expense of the process.

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