

Emergency Management Higher Education Program Accreditation Focus Group

September 16-17, 2015

Participants

Stacy Willett, University of Akron

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Daryl Spiewak, V.P. Council for Accreditation of Emergency Management Education

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Emily Bentley, Columbia College

Sepideh Yalda, Millersville University

Randy Egsegian, Durham Technical Community College

Discussion in the years leading up to and during the 15th Annual FEMA Higher Education Symposium resulted in a widespread call for a focus group to explore whether accreditation for emergency management higher education programs was warranted and, if so, to what standard(s). Representatives of a mixture of Emergency Management higher education programs along with representatives of bodies actively engaged in the accreditation of emergency management programs were convened for an initial two-day meeting at the Emergency Management Institute by the FEMA Higher Education Program in September 2012.

Three years and four focus group meetings later, in September 2015 a recommended set of Emergency Management accreditation standards was produced. Significant effort was committed during the three-year period to represent on the focus group the voice of the community served; the focus group also gathered input from degree programs throughout the nation via surveys and breakout sessions at the Higher Education Conference. The membership of the focus group includes representation from various program levels and modalities. Participants in the working group include:

Stacy Muffet-Willett
University of Akron
Representative for blended programs and bachelor's degrees
Degree program holds IFSAC accreditation (first accredited program in the country)

Emily Bentley
Columbia College
Representative for online programs and bachelor's degrees
Board member of the Council for the Accreditation of Emergency Management Higher Education* (CAEME)

Anthony Brown
Oklahoma State University
Representative for face-to-face and online degree programs and master's and doctoral level degrees
Representative of the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC)

Randy Egsegian
Durham Technical Community College
Representative for online programs and associates degrees

Jessica Jensen
North Dakota State University
Representative for face-to-face programs and bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees

Dave McEntire
Utah Valley University
Representative for face-to-face programs and bachelor's degrees
Serves on Council for the Accreditation of Emergency Management Higher Education* site accreditation team

Sandy Smith
Arkansas Tech University
Representative for face-to-face and online programs and bachelor's and master's degrees

Degree program holds FFHEA accreditation

Daryl Spiewak

Board member of the Representative for the Council for the Accreditation of Emergency Management Higher Education* (CAEME)

Sepi Yalda

Millersville University

Representative for online Master's degrees

The group represents institutions with associates, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs as well as programs offered in blended, wholly online, and wholly face-to-face formats. Survey results gathered from more than 114 degree programs between formal meetings guided the focus group's work. Personal calls were also made by the focus group to program points of contact listed on the FEMA Higher Education webpage to increase participation in feedback surveys on draft standard language. Sessions also were held to discuss the draft standards and seek consensus in person at the FEMA Higher Education Symposium in June 2015. The recommended standards below incorporate both survey results and feedback from a breakout session at the 2015 Higher Education Symposium. Past reports and survey results are publically available on the FEMA Higher Education webpage:

<http://training.fema.gov/hiedu/emfoundation.aspx>

The following standards language was written to guide Emergency Management degree program improvement and accreditation efforts. These standards represent current understanding of content that represents Emergency Management as a discipline and will assist in both unifying Emergency Management higher education and communicating its identity. The focus group discussed that additional review of the standards by emergency management practitioners will be valuable to validate and maintain relevance of the standards for preparing emergency management professionals for practice and research. The focus group also noted that accreditation standards are likely to evolve the future. The last formal focus group meeting was held at EMI on September 16-17, 2015. This meeting concludes the purpose for the group's formation. The recommended standards and suggested accreditation process steps that follow were composed and are offered for use by degree programs and by accrediting organizations.

The FEMA Higher Education accreditation group extends sincere gratitude to the Emergency Management higher education community in providing vital and constructive feedback through survey participation and meeting processes. This process was challenging for the community; however, it holds value working through a collective process for greater purpose and program strength. Serving the higher education community was the intent of the committee. The FEMA higher education community is a family of passionate academics that should continue to guide the future of Emergency Management education and the recommended standards.

The members also extend sincere thanks to Barbara Johnson, who supported the formation and work of this committee over the past three years. Barbara is the backbone of the FEMA higher education program and an integral part in keeping our community together and working toward greater goals. Lastly, members would like to extend gratitude and a welcome to Wendy Walsh, the new FEMA higher education program director for her early and vocal support of the community and specifically the accreditation focus group.

Recommended Emergency Management Education Accreditation Standards

Introduction

[to be inserted by accrediting body]

Accreditation statement (importance of accreditation)

- Improve quality of education
- Increase professionalism
- Add to discipline and profession of emergency management in minds of leaders in higher education

Scope

These standards are voluntary for degree program accreditation. These standards are intended for degree programs that are face-to-face, blended/hybrid, and wholly online. While the standard language was drafted primarily for application to bachelor's degree programs, the standards language is written broadly in terms of curriculum content to allow for application in associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degree programs assuming appropriately advanced learning objectives and expected levels of expertise at each higher level of degree.

1.0 Institution and Administrative

1.1 Institution

In the United States, the institution must be accredited by a regional or national accrediting body approved by the US Department of Education. In the case of foreign universities, the institution is accredited by a generally accepted international higher education institution accrediting body.

1.2 Facilities and Other Resources

The institution provides program specific services to support the programs mission where needed (e.g., if the program has an EOC, then support for maintaining and equipping the EOC is provided by the institution).

1.3 Office space

Office space shall be provided for program faculty and the program coordinator. An area for private and group meetings is provided. Instructional space, technology, and materials are provided, maintained, and updated consistent with program goals, course content, and delivery platforms. Other critical materials to support instruction are provided as needed. The program regularly assesses the adequacy of program instructional space and equipment including the extent to which the space and equipment available is compatible with the instructional needs of the program.

1.4 Equipment and Supplies

Equipment and supplies to support office operations is provided as appropriate to support faculty responsibilities and effectively accomplish program objectives and goals given program delivery model.

1.5 Technical Support

Technical support for instructional technologies is provided as appropriate to help faculty meet their responsibilities and effectively accomplish program objectives and goals given program delivery models.

1.6 Library

The program will work with the library to make available emergency management scholarly journals and books to students and faculty. The library shall make these journals and books easily accessible to students and faculty given the delivery format of the program. Instruction and assistance in the use of the library will be readily available and accessible to students. There should be mechanism for faculty review and input regarding titles for acquisition.

1.7 Program

The program provides clear, consistent, and reliable information to the public regarding:

- a. A statement of purpose that conveys the focus of the degree being offered as emergency management for standards to apply.
- b. Orientation of program (e.g., theoretical vs. applied, disciplinary approach or span).
- c. Specialty/concentration/area of focus of the program.
- d. A stated description of the degree or degrees offered including learning outcomes for each degree.
- e. Description of admission process and policies.
- f. Listing of program faculty and their qualifications.
- g. Description of curriculum structure and degree requirements.
- h. Examples of student experiences while in the program, employment opportunities (e.g., Bureau of Labor Statistics) and achievements post-graduation.

1.8 Organization

The institution clearly identifies the program and its organizational structure including its location and relationship within the broader institution. The program faculty shall determine the program's design and development, implementation, evaluation, and revision of program curriculum in accordance with the institution's policy and procedures.

The program must have a coordinator designated in writing who has authority and responsibility for managing the program. The coordinator position must have a detailed job description that establishes the percentage of time dedicated to

program coordination. The program coordinator must receive adequate compensation in the form of additional salary or course release. The coordinator must be a full-time faculty member qualified for program management by virtue of his/ her education and experience.

The coordinator, working with other emergency management faculty, shall have input in the recruitment and hiring of faculty who will teach within the degree program.

1.9 Budget

The program coordinator must have influence in the formal budget process relative to the degree program in accordance with the institution's policy and procedures. The program's budget should provide adequate funding to accomplish the program's goals and objectives and these standards.

1.10 Human Resources

1.10.1 Program Faculty

The program shall have a sufficient number of faculty to implement program objectives. The program must have at least one full time faculty member teaching in the program. The program coordinator and the teaching faculty member may be the same individual. If the institution offers more than one degree program, it shall meet the above requirement for each program.

In an associate's degree program, at least 25 percent of the emergency management course hours in an academic year are taught by faculty with at least a master's degree in emergency management or a closely related field and experience related to emergency management.

In bachelor's degree programs, at least 33 percent of the emergency management course hours in the program are taught by faculty with a doctoral degree in emergency management or a closely related field and research or experience related to emergency management.

In master's degree programs, at least 50 percent of the emergency management course hours in the program are taught by faculty with a doctoral degree in emergency management or a closely related field and research or experience related to emergency management.

In doctoral degree programs, 100 percent of the emergency management course hours in the program are taught by faculty with a doctoral degree in emergency management or a closely related field and research or experience related to emergency management.

1.10.2 Full-time Faculty Qualifications

Full-time faculty shall have academic and/or professional experience appropriate to their areas of responsibility. Full-time faculty shall participate in relevant professional and/or scholarly associations. Full-time faculty shall engage in scholarly research, practice, and/or creative activity leading to professional growth and the advancement of the profession. Full-time faculty shall demonstrate continuing professional development related to their areas of teaching and research interests.

1.10.3 Adjunct Faculty Qualifications

Adjunct faculty teaching degree courses have emergency management related education, training, and experience. In addition:

For associate degree programs, adjunct or part-time instructors should have at least a bachelor's degree in emergency management or closely related field, or a bachelor's degree and experience related to emergency management.

For bachelor's degree programs, adjunct or part-time instructors should have at least a master's degree in emergency management or closely related field, or a master's degree and experience related to emergency management.

For master's degree programs, adjunct or part-time instructors should have at least a doctoral degree in emergency management or a closely related field, or a doctoral degree and experience or research related to emergency management.

For doctoral degree programs, adjunct or part-time instructors should have at least a doctoral degree in emergency management or a closely related field, or a doctoral degree and experience or research related to emergency management.

Graduate Teaching Assistants/Teaching Fellows teaching in associate or bachelor's degree emergency management programs must have completed a minimum of six graduate semester hours (or equivalent) in emergency management or a closely related field. They must work under the supervision of a full-time faculty member teaching emergency management courses, and will have their instructional performance evaluated and documented, in accordance with department or university policy.

1.10.4 Administrative Assistance

Administrative support (including the preparation and processing of materials, correspondence, and records) is provided as appropriate to help faculty meet their responsibilities and effectively accomplish program objectives and goals given the program delivery model.

1.11 Program Assessment

The program maintains an ongoing process, documented in written procedures, for assessing achievement of program learning outcomes. The program uses input from various groups (for example, enrolled students, faculty members, employers, alumni, advisory board, local emergency managers) and assessment results to develop and implement strategies to improve curriculum, course content, and instructional delivery.

2.0 Program Objectives and Curriculum Structure

Each of the following numbered items is a standard for program structure. For each, an example or sample type of documentation or proof is listed.

- 2.1 The program has defined program learning outcomes for the degree.
Example: Demonstrate identification of learning outcomes (e.g., Emergency Management higher education outcomes or curriculum map).

- 2.2 The curriculum is reflected in a written degree plan.
Example: Provide a copy of the most current degree plan or the degree audit checklist used in the past five years.
- 2.3 Course learning objectives, consistent across sections and offerings, have been established for each course reflected in the degree plan and support the program learning outcomes regardless of delivery mode.
Example: Course learning objectives are identified in course syllabi.
- 2.4 Each course in the degree plan has a syllabus.
Example: Provide current syllabi for both required and elective courses in the program.
- 2.5 The curriculum follows a logical sequence that begins with foundational content and progresses to more complex and in-depth content.
Example: Demonstrate the sequence of courses from introductory and prerequisite courses to more advanced courses (e.g., shown on curriculum map or program degree plan).
- 2.6 The program maintains an ongoing process, documented in written procedures, to assess achievement of course and program learning outcomes and to improve curriculum, course content, and instructional delivery.
Example: Demonstrate existence of a curriculum committee and/ or advisory committee and most recent minutes. Provide program assessment plan along with supporting documentation of outcomes (e.g., annual data collection efforts and resulting curriculum changes).
- 2.7 The program uses input from internal and external constituencies to develop and implement strategies to improve curriculum, course content, and instructional delivery.
Example: Demonstrate the use of exit surveys, focus groups, advisory boards, or student surveys or evaluations.
- 2.8 Program assessment data is available to the public upon request.
Example: Demonstrate data results from institutional research (e.g., program assessment data findings, graduation rates, completion rates, job placements, or job market data).
- 2.9 Courses in the curriculum are grounded on the basis of significant, substantive research in both classical and current topic area(s).
Example: Ensure syllabi include a list of recommended and required readings.
- 2.10 The curriculum addresses topics that benefit students pursuing a wide variety of career paths in emergency management.
Example: Ensure public, private, non-governmental, and other sectors are covered within the curriculum (e.g., internships, readings, research projects, service learning, the courses themselves).

3.0 Program Content

These standards are not intended to dictate specifics of program design. Program design is left to the discretion of the academic unit. Topics below must be covered as part of the curriculum, but individual or specific courses for each topic are not required. A chart has been developed to assist with topic identification across courses.

- 3.1 The following foundational topics are addressed in the program curriculum:
 - 3.1.1 Hazards, hazard processes and characteristics, and hazard analysis
 - 3.1.2 Vulnerability theories, types, and analysis
 - 3.1.3 Risk, risk perception, and risk assessment
 - 3.1.4 Crises, emergencies, disasters, catastrophes, complex humanitarian events, and distinctions among the types
 - 3.1.5 Historical and contextual awareness of disasters and emergency management
 - 3.1.6 Professionalism of the field including *The Principles of Emergency Management*, ethics, certifications, and associations/ affiliations related to different career options
 - 3.1.7 International and comparative dimensions of emergency management
- 3.2 Key topics across the mission areas of mitigation, prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery are covered in the curriculum, including:
 - 3.2.1 Social, cultural, and economic dimensions relevant to emergency management
 - 3.2.2 Political, legal, and fiscal contexts of emergency management
 - 3.2.3 Current emergency management policy and standards that guide emergency management practice
 - 3.2.4 Tasks and activities of individuals and households, organizations, communities, and levels of government, including functional areas, across the public, private, and non- governmental sectors
 - 3.2.5 Use and implications of communication methods and technological tools relevant to emergency management
- 3.3 The program provides opportunities for students to gain practical emergency management experience and apply knowledge gained from the program in a professional setting through an internship or practicum based on guidelines of the institution.
- 3.4 While building knowledge related to the above-listed areas, the program provides students opportunities to develop the following skills:
 - 3.4.1 Written, visual, verbal, interpersonal, and group communication
 - 3.4.2 Network-building, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement
 - 3.4.3 Analytical thinking, problem solving, and decision making
 - 3.4.4 Application of research in practice
 - 3.4.5 Leadership and management

Recommended Accreditation Process and Procedure

AP1. Timeline and Activities

Step 1: The institution notifies _____ of their intent to seek accreditation.

Upon receipt of an institution's intent to seek accreditation, _____ staff shall provide an Application for Accreditation, Standards for Accreditation of Emergency Management Degree Programs, and Self-Study Guide for Accreditation to the institution.

Step 2: The institution receives, from _____, an Application for Accreditation, Criteria for Accreditation of Emergency Management Programs, and Self-Study Guide for Accreditation.

Step 3: The institution returns the completed Application for Accreditation to the _____ with the appropriate application fee. When an institution is requesting accreditation for more than one degree program, it must submit an application for each degree to be considered. Upon receipt of the completed application and application fee (may be invoiced) for accreditation from the institution, _____ shall verify the degree(s) to be accredited and establish dates for the site visit.

Step 4: _____ determines the configuration of the site visit team for each program seeking accreditation. The site team will include minimum of three trained evaluators and an alternate.

For doctoral degree programs the site team would be composed of three members with a doctoral degree. At least one member must have experience teaching in a doctoral level program.

For master's degree programs the site team would be composed of three members with a doctoral degree. At least one member must have experience teaching in a master's level program.

For bachelor's degree programs the site team would be composed of at least one member with a doctoral degree. The remaining members must at least possess a master's degree.

For associate degree programs, the site team would be composed of at least one member with a doctoral degree. The remaining site team members must at least possess a bachelor's degree.

If the program seeking accreditation is an online or hybrid program, at least one site team member must also have experience teaching in an online or hybrid format.

Step 5: The institution conducts the self-study. (See self-study guidance document). The institution must complete and provide to the accrediting body an electronic copy of the self-study at least 60 days prior to the agreed upon site visit start date.

AP2. Review of Self Study

1. The site visit team will review the self-study and notify the accrediting body of the results. If the self-study is complete the site visitation date will be coordinated. If there are major deficiencies found by the site visit team during the review of the self-study, a member of the accrediting body will notify the program of those deficiencies. The program will have ___ days to correct those deficiencies. After the timeline has passed without resolution, the visit may be cancelled or the program may withdraw its application. (Note: The accrediting body will state refund policy for application fees).

2. If there are deficiencies found during the review of the self-study that need further explanation and/ or correction prior to the onsite evaluation, the accrediting body will contact the program point of contact to request additional information in writing prior to the site visit. If the deficiencies were corrected prior to the site visit they will not be included in the final report.

AP3. Site Visit

Onsite visits for accreditation will typically span three days depending upon the size and complexity of the program. An agenda for the onsite evaluation should be arranged between the evaluation team leader and the program director (or other program official) representing the entity seeking accreditation.

The agenda outlines important events which should take place during the onsite evaluation. The agenda will typically cover interviews with key leaders, faculty members, program stakeholders, and students and be shared with all those involved. The agenda may be modified by the evaluation team leader in coordination with the host entity due to local circumstances; this should be done well before the visit is to take place. Officials representing the entity seeking accreditation should take part in the preparation of the agenda so that it accommodates the characteristics of campus facilities and allows for scheduled interviews with appropriate faculty, students, and administrators. The evaluation team leader should furnish a copy of the agenda to each member of the onsite evaluation team prior to arrival.

AP4. Arrival

Immediately upon arrival, the evaluation team leader will contact the entity representative for any final modifications to the schedule. Site team members also should have a private meeting to review the accreditation site visit process and discuss any strategies or assignments for the onsite evaluation.

AP5. Site Team Work Area

The onsite evaluation team should be provided a private work area (e.g., conference room) where they can discuss issues without interruption. If possible, the room should have a telephone and a computer connected to the internet. Access to a printer and copy machine, and the institution's intranet may be advisable.

AP6. Preliminary Meeting with Leadership

The team will conduct an opening meeting with institution and program leadership to state the purpose of the evaluation and onsite evaluation team expectations and needs.

AP7. Program Interviews

During an onsite evaluation, onsite evaluation team members should interview the dean, chairperson, program coordinator, program faculty and staff, students, and any other pertinent stakeholders. Onsite team members may conduct separate interviews and visits with individuals and groups within the program and the institution.

Program Leadership

The dean, chairperson, and the program coordinator (or equivalent) should be interviewed separately. The program coordinator also should be interviewed separately from faculty and staff.

Faculty

The onsite evaluation team members should interview enough instructors to ensure overall entity understanding and commitment to written policies and procedures as well as consistency with each other and the program coordinator. Faculty interviews may be conducted individually, collectively, in-person and/or via electronic means (for distance learning programs).

Staff

The onsite evaluation team members should interview administrative assistants, advisors and/ or other program staff separately from faculty.

Students

Interviews with students should be conducted without the presence of representatives of the program seeking accreditation. A minimum of five students will be interviewed from each undergraduate degree program seeking accreditation. A minimum of two students will be interviewed from each graduate program seeking accreditation. Student interviews should be scheduled in groups based on the program in which they are enrolled. If applicable, student interviews may be conducted via phone or other electronic means. If possible, class visits are encouraged.

Program Stakeholders

The onsite evaluation team members may meet with advisory board members or other stakeholders to ensure that stakeholders have input into program planning.

AP8. Visit and Review of Support Services

The team will review academic support services (eg. Library, learning management system, office of accommodation, internships, career center). This includes accessibility of services available to online students.

AP9. Exit Conference

The onsite evaluation team will hold a private meeting before the exit conference to review preliminary findings and seek consensus among team members, to begin preparation of the draft report, and to designate onsite evaluation team member roles for the final conference.

In the exit conference the site team members will present preliminary findings to the program point of contact/ leadership. The exit conference concludes the site visit and is followed by the immediate departure of the team from the institution. (Note: this closure should also be listed in the agenda section).

AP10. Findings and Draft Report

Before leaving the program's site, the onsite evaluation team composes a rough draft of findings for the accreditation report. After the site visit the evaluation team prepares the initial draft accreditation report. The draft report includes a review of the site team visit including:

- a brief overview of the program and institution
- composition of site evaluation team
- confirmation that documentation was reviewed
- site visit agenda and list of interviews conducted
- a discussion about strengths and weaknesses based on accreditation standards
- the team's preliminary findings of compliance with accreditation standards
- and suggestions for future improvement

The draft report is sent by the team leader to the accrediting body no later than 30 days after the site visit concludes. The accrediting body presents the draft report to the program for review. The program will have 30 days after receipt of the report to respond and provide additional supporting documentation, if applicable, to the accrediting body.

AP11. Final Report Preparation

The evaluation team will prepare the final draft which follows the same format as the draft report. The accrediting body sends the final report to the program notifying them of the outcome of the review within 90 days of the conclusion of the site visit. The final report will include one of three accreditation decisions:

AP12. Accreditation

If the program meets all standards, it will be awarded accreditation for a period of six years.

AP13. Conditional Accreditation

If the program meets the general intent of accreditation, although deficiencies are identified, the program may be given conditional accreditation or have an option to withdraw its application. If a program receives conditional accreditation it will be required to submit a plan to correct deficiencies to the accrediting organization within 45 days. The corrective action plan should include the identified deficiencies, corrective action to be taken, and a timeline. Additionally, the program will submit a progress report that reviews the status of the corrective action plan within 12 months to maintain conditional accreditation. If all deficiencies are satisfactorily corrected within 24 months the program will be eligible for accreditation. The program will submit a final report upon completion of the corrective action plan with supporting documentation to the accrediting body for reconsideration. A follow up on-site review may be required to evaluate progress.

AP14. Non-accreditation

If the program does not achieve accreditation during the initial review or at the conclusion of the conditional accreditation period, non-accreditation will be issued.

The following chart was created as a tool to assist with identifying where section 3.0 Program Content standards are addressed in curriculum/courses: *Replace “course x” with course or program component titles/names in top row of table and then enter Yes or , for example, in appropriate fields for each row below to note where standards elements/requirements are found.*

Where addressed in curriculum (refer to standard language for full text and context)																
	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3	Course 4	Course 5	Course 6	Course 7	Course 8	Course 9	Course 10	Course 11	Course 12	Course 13	Course 14	Course 15	Notes
3.1 The following foundational topics are addressed in the program curriculum:																
Hazards, hazard processes and characteristics, hazard analysis																
Vulnerability theories, types, and analysis																
Risk, risk perception, and risk assessment																
Crises, emergencies, disasters, catastrophes, complex humanitarian events, and distinctions among the types																
Historical and contextual awareness of disasters and emergency management																
Professionalism of the field including: The Principles of Emergency Management																
Ethics																
Certifications and associations/ affiliations related to different career options																
International and comparative dimensions of emergency management																
3.2 Key topics across the mission areas of mitigation, prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery are covered in the curriculum, including:																
Social dimensions relevant to emergency management																

Cultural dimensions relevant to emergency management																	
Ethical dimensions relevant to emergency management																	
Political contexts of emergency management																	
Legal contexts of emergency management																	
Fiscal contexts of emergency management																	
Current emergency management policy and standards that guide emergency management practice																	
Tasks and activities of individuals and households, organizations, communities, and levels of government, including functional areas, across the public, private, and non-governmental sectors																	
Use and implications of communication methods and technological tools relevant to emergency management																	
3.3 The program provides opportunities for students to gain practical emergency management experience and apply knowledge gained from the program in a professional setting through an internship or practicum																	

based on guidelines of the institution.																
3.4 While building knowledge related to the above-listed areas, the program provides students opportunities to develop the following skills:																
Written, verbal, visual, interpersonal, and group communication																
Network-building, advocacy, and stakeholder engagement																
Analytical thinking, problem solving, and decision making																
Application of research in practice																
Leadership and management																