



# Applied Sociology, Clinical Sociology, Engaged Public Sociology, Translational Sociology, Forensic Sociology, and Rural Sociology Programs in Sociological Practice

Master's Level

**STANDARDS**

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*The Commission on the Accreditation of Programs in Applied and Clinical Sociology*

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**Standards for  
Applied Sociology, Clinical Sociology, Engaged Public Sociology, Translational Sociology,  
Forensic Sociology, and Rural Sociology Programs in Sociological Practice  
Master's Level**

In this document, the Commission on the Accreditation of Programs in Applied and Clinical Sociology (hereafter referred to as the Commission or CAPACS) presents standards for programs in applied sociology, clinical sociology, engaged public sociology, translational sociology, forensic sociology, and rural sociology at the master's level. Throughout this document, *sociological practice* will be used as the umbrella term that encompasses these and other approaches of sociological practice and identity that may emerge consistent with the program curricula, education, training, and professional work recognized by the Commission.

The Commission recognizes that training and education in sociological practice occurs in many different types of institutions and may be called by many different names. Therefore, in this document, a program is any coherent sequence of courses (classroom, online, distance, or hybrid/blended learning) and/or learning experiences that has as its core the application of sociological knowledge, methods, and skills in a practice setting. This may include programs in applied sociology, clinical sociology, engaged public sociology, translational sociology, forensic sociology, rural sociology (e.g., development and global), criminology, gerontology, policy analysis, and other programs that may be based in sociology departments, as well as parts of other Interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary degree programs, usually within an institution of higher learning.

This document is to be used by the applicant program, in conjunction with the [Master's Level Self Study Guidelines](#) to prepare the Self Study Report and facilitate the self-study process. The Commission's [Accreditation Policies and Procedures](#) and [Accreditation Review Process Guidelines](#) are to be used by the applicant Program, in conjunction with these *Standards*, to prepare for the Site Visit. In regard to international accreditations, CAPACS will honor their differing terminology and accept the ways their systems meet the standards for monitoring and quality control (please refer to Section 4.0).

In the sections that follow, introductory comments summarize the content of the section and are followed by the standards. *Italicized text following a standard* summarizes Commission thinking about a particular issue. Selected terms are defined in the *Glossary* (see Addendum 1).

## **1.0 PRECONDITIONS FOR REVIEW**

Programs at the master's degree level in, or emphasizing, sociological practice that are applying for accreditation review at a master's degree level are required to meet a number of preconditions. Programs must demonstrate and explain in their self-study documentation how they meet these preconditions. If a Program does not meet these preconditions in a strictly literal sense, but it meets the *spirit* of these provisions, the Program may petition the Commission for special consideration.

### **1.1 The Institution**

The institution in which the Program is housed shall meet the following criteria:

- 1.1.1 A U.S. institution shall be accredited by a regional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or by its successor organization. An international institution shall be recognized by a national or international accreditation organization.
- 1.1.2 The Program shall be housed within an institution that grants a master's degree.
- 1.1.3 It shall have no policies or procedures that violate or contradict the ethical standards of the profession.
- 1.1.4 It shall have policies and procedures for accommodation of faculty grievances, and the Program shall use procedures available in the larger institution. This information shall be distributed to the faculty of the Program.
- 1.1.5 It shall have policies and procedures for accommodation of student grievances, and the Program shall use procedures available in the larger institution. This information shall be distributed to the faculty and students of the Program.
- 1.1.6 It shall have policies, procedures and activities regarding hiring, promotion and admissions that are nondiscriminatory.

*They shall conform to the principles of nondiscrimination with regard to race, color, ethnicity, religion, creed, gender, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, age, national origin, disabilities, genetic status, and marital status (also see Section 1.2, in the [Accreditation Policies and Procedures](#)). In instances where the institution and/or State (domestic or foreign) does not recognize all classifications, the Commission will consider compliance on a case-by-case basis.*

- 1.1.7 It shall have appropriate policies and procedures for maintaining the confidentiality of student records. These policies shall be consistent with applicable laws.

### **1.2 The Program**

While the Program may be housed in a variety of administrative structures or units (e. g., sociology department, interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary department or school), it is important that it emphasize sociological practice (e.g., applied sociology, clinical sociology, engaged public sociology, translational sociology, forensic sociology, or rural sociology). As a precondition for

review, the Program shall have authority, responsibility, and resources to determine and meet its goals and objectives to maintain the program over time. When the Program is embedded in a larger organization, such as a School, the Program shall have the responsibility to recommend to the Head the resources necessary to meet departmental goals and objectives and to maintain the Program.

- 1.2.1 The formal title of the Program shall contain any combination of the terms *applied sociology, clinical sociology, engaged public sociology, translational sociology, forensic sociology, rural sociology (e.g., development and global) or sociological practice*.

*In such situations where the Program name does not include these terms, this standard may be waived. In such instances, the Program shall demonstrate its identification with sociological practice through documentation acceptable to the Commission.*

- 1.2.2 The Program shall have an established governance and administrative structure ensuring its authority and responsibility for decision-making with respect to goal setting, program planning, assessing and documenting program outcomes, and achieving specified goals.

- 1.2.3 The Program shall have resources sufficient to ensure its continued operation.

*Resources shall be sufficient to ensure the retention of a well-qualified faculty and professional staff, the maintenance of library resources, ongoing expenses of the practice component, including field experiences, and the effective operation of facilities. These factors shall be examined within the context of the resources of the institution.*

- 1.2.4 The Program shall have been in operation for at least two (2) years and the department or unit in which the Program is housed shall have at least three (3) full-time faculty members, one of whom shall be the director/coordinator of the Program. The majority of the full-time faculty shall have graduate degrees in sociology or closely related fields.

*The Program shall have enrolled students for at least two (2) years by the time of application, or shall have been recognized during that period in the institution's literature.*

## **2.0 PROGRAMMATIC STRUCTURE**

The Program at the master's degree level in, or emphasizing, applied sociology, clinical sociology, engaged public sociology, translational sociology, forensic sociology, rural sociology and/or sociological practice may be a free standing program, or may be a specialization, concentration, or track within the graduate program. Further specialization within a practice program is also expected in substantive areas (See 2.6). Programs in fields closely related to sociology also may be considered for accreditation. For example, a program in criminology that incorporates the components of an applied, clinical, engaged public, translational, forensic, or rural sociology program would be eligible to apply.

The Program shall have a mission statement that clearly articulates its purpose as a program in or emphasizing sociological practice with the programmatic structures to support and reflect that mission. The Program's mission shall be reflected in: (a) its goals and objectives; (b) its

administrative and organizational structures; (c) the services it provides to its students; (d) its faculty characteristics and professional development; and (e) the nature of its public and professional services.

## **2.1 Mission and Goals**

The Program shall clearly articulate its philosophy and vision as a program in or emphasizing applied sociology, clinical sociology, engaged public sociology, translational sociology, forensic sociology, rural sociology and/or sociological practice. It shall have a mission statement that is translated into a set of program goals and objectives and an associated curriculum of study.

- 2.1.1 The Program shall have a mission statement that clearly articulates its purpose as a program in or emphasizing sociological practice.
- 2.1.2 The Program shall have a set of program goals that clearly reflect the Program's mission.
- 2.1.3 The Program shall have a set of learning goals and associated learning outcomes that specify that students will be able to do upon completion of the Program.
  - a. The student learning outcomes attached to the Program's learning goals shall be quantitatively and/or qualitatively measured.
  - b. The student learning outcomes attached to the Program's learning goals shall encompass those listed in sections 2.6.1a and 3.1 to 3.5 of these Standards.

## **2.2 Administrative and Organizational Structure**

The Program shall accurately reflect its characteristics and the nature of its offerings in public documents, including maintaining ongoing relationships with sociological practitioners. It shall have access to facilities and resources to support teaching, research, and practice. It shall maintain records that are accessible to students and faculty that document teaching practices.

*Public documents shall consist of printed and/or digital resources that include, but are not limited to, catalogs, bulletins, brochures, and other informational materials published by the Program, Department or Unit, College or Division, and/or the University or Institution within which the Program is housed. Digital resources include, but are not limited to, electronic posts on internal and external websites, social media, and public broadcasts and podcasts.*

- 2.2.1 The Program shall establish and maintain close, reciprocal, and ongoing relationships with sociological practitioners and practitioner associations.

*As part of the ongoing relationships with sociological practitioners and practitioner associations, the Commission encourages individual, program or departmental memberships in the Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology, the ASA Section on Sociological Practice and Public Sociology, the Research Committees of Sociological Technics - Sociological Practice or Clinical Sociology of the international Sociological Association, and the Rural Sociological Society. In such situations where the association name does not include these terms, the Program shall demonstrate the association's identification with sociological practice through documentation acceptable to the Commission.*

2.2.2 The current institutional catalogue or bulletin shall accurately describe the academic unit and the program(s) offered, including admission criteria, minimum Program requirements, matriculation requirements, opportunities for supervised practice experiences, and financial aid information.

2.2.3 The Program shall have access to resources to support teaching, research, and practice experiences for students (e.g., field placements, internships, practica).  
*This is interpreted to mean that the Program has direct access to or control over resources including, but not limited to:*

- a. *data analysis, word processing, and other productivity software capabilities;*
- b. *statistical consultation and computer assistance for ongoing research and data analysis activities;*
- c. *administrative technologies (e.g., Blackboard and Workday, etc.) and support (when necessary) to assist the Program in securing resources for sociological practice activities, including supervised practice experience for students; and,*
- d. *professional, technical, and financial support for faculty and curriculum development and assessment.*

2.2.4 The Program shall have access to printed and/or digital resources in library facilities and the internet (e.g., interlibrary loan) that are appropriate for scholarly inquiry, research, and practice by Program faculty and students. The Program shall provide access to historical and current scholarly materials relevant to sociological practice such as the [\*Journal of Applied Social Science\*](#) (supersedes the [\*Journal of Applied Sociology\*](#) and [\*Sociological Practice\*](#)) and the [\*Clinical Sociology Review\*](#) from 1982 to 1998 (Volumes 1-16), [relaunched](#) in 2022, as an open-access journal (continuing with volume 17). The Program shall have developed a list of basic readings in classic and contemporary sociological practice and these readings should be easily available to students enrolled in the Program. *Assistance in developing this list is available from the Commission.*

2.2.5 The Program shall maintain on file, for five (5) years, printed and/or digital syllabi for all courses taught that include, at a minimum, course objectives/student learning outcomes, course content, course assignments, and mechanisms used to evaluate the progress of students in the course.

2.2.6 Accurate and comprehensive information about the Program shall be provided to prospective and enrolled students.

*This Program information shall consist of printed and/or digital content, which should include, but is not limited to:*

- a. *career information, including information about the job placements of alumni of the Program;*
- b. *Program requirements, prerequisites, and offerings, including appropriate courses offered through other departments;*
- c. *student learning outcomes and assessment processes as described in Sections 2.6.1a, 3.0 and 4.0;*
- d. *admission processes and procedures;*
- e. *additional cost of the Program to the student, if applicable;*

- f. *course registration, including information about frequency of course offerings;*
- g. *any additional time in school required to complete the Program;*
- h. *student financial aid;*
- i. *withdrawal and dismissal policies and procedures; and*
- j. *when applicable, accreditation status of the Program.*

## 2.3 The Students

The Program shall maintain accurate and timely information, consisting of printed and/or digital content, about students' admission and progress in the Program. Support services available to the student (e.g., through the institution) shall include Program and career advisement and employment assistance.

2.3.1 The Program shall clearly articulate and implement criteria and processes for student admission.

2.3.2 An advisor shall be assigned to each student during enrollment in the Program. The advisor shall assist the student to develop a plan of study.

*Generally, the planned program of study identifies how the student learning outcomes will be met and assessed. It should include the following:*

- a. *student learning outcomes for the Program;*
- b. *curricular experiences required to meet student learning outcomes (this shall include core requirements along with specialized and elective curricular requirements, as appropriate);*
- c. *supervised practice experience requirements; and,*
- d. *methods of assessing achievement of student learning outcomes.*

2.3.3 An up-to-date file on each student shall be kept and secured.

*This file shall consist of printed and/or digital content that is protected under FERPA<sup>1</sup> and other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws or requirements of the State and/or institution, including similar laws enacted outside the United States, and should include, but is not limited to, documentation of student progress, including such items as:*

- a. *a plan of study;*
- b. *academic record/transcript;*
- c. *documents related to the practice experience; and*
- d. *if applicable, documents related to thesis progress (e.g., proposal, administrative forms).*

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<sup>1</sup> For additional information on FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), including a link to its definition and conditions on the United States Department of Education website, see the entry for “FERPA” in “Addendum 1 – Glossary” at the end of this document (*Master’s Level Standards*). One of the conditions allows schools to disclose student education records to specified parties and officials without the consent of parents or students of legal age, including “Accrediting Organizations” such as the Commission on the Accreditation of Programs in Applied and Clinical Sociology (CAPACS). With appropriate documentation, CAPACS will honor other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws or requirements of the State and/or the institution, including similar laws enacted outside the United States, as indicated.

- 2.3.4 Students shall receive advice and assistance in making career decisions and in seeking employment.

## **2.4 The Faculty and Staff**

The Program's learning goals and objectives shall be supported and advanced by: a) the quality, composition, and size of the faculty and staff, and b) the nature of the Program's curricular, scholarly, outreach, and community service endeavors.

- 2.4.1 The department or unit in which the Program is housed shall have at least three (3) full-time faculty members, one of whom shall be the director/coordinator of the Program.
- 2.4.2 The director/coordinator of the Program shall be a full-time member of the faculty. This director/coordinator is responsible for the coordination of the Program, and is the one to whom inquiries regarding the overall Program are addressed. The desired qualifications for director/coordinator are:
- a. a doctoral degree in sociology.  
*Alternatively, a doctoral degree in a closely related field along with a master's degree in sociology shall suffice. In such cases, the Program shall document how the work of the director/coordinator is essentially sociological.*
  - b. documented experience in sociological practice (e.g., applied sociology, clinical sociology, engaged public sociology, translational sociology, forensic sociology, rural sociology) or related field.
  - c. membership(s) in the Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology, the American Sociological Association (Section on Sociological Practice and Public Sociology), the International Sociological Association (Research Committees on Sociological Technics - Sociological Practice or Clinical Sociology), the Rural Sociological Society or other relevant professional association (*identification with sociological practice shall be demonstrated through documentation acceptable to the Commission*).  
*In cases where the department or unit in which the Program is housed has a director/coordinator for all masters programs, the Program must document the availability of faculty with documented experience in sociological practice and membership in the Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology, the American Sociological Association (Section on Sociological Practice and Public Sociology), the International Sociological Association (Research Committees on Sociological Technics - Sociological Practice or Clinical Sociology), the Rural Sociological Society or other relevant professional association (identification with sociological practice shall be demonstrated through documentation acceptable to the Commission).*
  - d. sufficient release time or formal appointment effort to adequately fulfill the administrative duties associated with the Program.

*Because programs will vary in size, institutional context, and designation of a masters coordinator, the time needed for administrative duties will vary. A Program shall document the administrative tasks, the time required for their completion, and the adequacy of the resources, personnel and time to complete these tasks.*



- 2.4.3 Program faculty shall have:
- a. an advanced degree in sociology or other closely related field.
  - b. documented experience in sociological practice (e.g., applied sociology, clinical sociology, professional sociology, engaged public sociology, translational sociology, forensic sociology) or related field.
  - c. membership(s) in the Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology, American Sociological Association (Section on Sociological Practice and Public Sociology), the International Sociological Association (Research Committees on Sociological Technics - Sociological Practice or Clinical Sociology), the Rural Sociological Society or other relevant professional association (*identification with sociological practice shall be demonstrated through documentation acceptable to the Commission*).
- 2.4.4 Program faculty shall be assigned to provide instruction (classroom, online, distance, or hybrid/blended learning) only in areas for which they have experience and/or training.
- 2.4.5 There shall be an effort to recruit and retain Program faculty:
- a. from practice as well as academic settings; and,
  - b. who represent a diversity among people in society (e.g., women, racial and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, sexual orientation, and gender identity).

*This is interpreted to mean that the Program follows the institutional guidelines related to equal employment opportunities.<sup>2</sup>*

- 2.4.6 Individuals from practice settings shall be involved as adjunct faculty, guest speakers, members of an advisory group, and/or in other roles as deemed appropriate by the Program.
- 2.4.7 Faculty members shall provide evidence of continued involvement in some aspect of scholarly, practice, and/or professional development and renewal, in addition to teaching, to keep up-to-date and well-informed.

*A wide variety of scholarly activities are appropriate to a practice program. They include contributions to basic scholarship, application, and instructional development. While scholarship may be in any area, programs are encouraged to emphasize practice oriented contributions as part of the scholarly activities of the Program.*

*Dissemination of scholarly activities shall be through appropriate media for the activity, including online. The manner of dissemination may include publications in academic or practice refereed journals, public or trade magazines, in-house journals or papers, and through workshops and trade presentations, as well as through other formats that are appropriate to the*

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<sup>2</sup> Faculty recruitment should also adhere to the tenets of “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (DEI) or approved successor program and the policies and practices of the institution receiving Federal financial assistance under [Title VI](#), and the prohibitions and amendments against employment discrimination under [Title VII](#), of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other corresponding laws of the United States (includes similar titles, or their equivalent, and laws enacted outside the United States), for all protected classes of persons. For additional information, see the section on “Diversity & Inclusion” under “Research & Insights” in the menu on the website of the [American Council on Education \(ACE\)](#).

*area of application. Dissemination also may occur through presentations at appropriate professional meetings. Institutions and Programs are encouraged to take these varied means of dissemination into account in their appointment, promotion, and tenure practices. Programs are encouraged to support peer review of scholarly activities by practitioners as well as academicians.*

- 2.4.8 Resources shall be provided for faculty participation in scholarly and professional organizations that are relevant to the Program's mission.
- 2.4.9 Faculty shall be involved in public and professional outreach and service (local, state, national, and/or international levels) that is consistent with the Program's goals, institutional setting, and external context.

*Faculty should be encouraged to support the advancement of the profession in a variety of ways. Appropriate activities include, but are not limited to, development of professional organizations; support of registration, certification and licensure when appropriate; and provision of information to the general public. Institutions and programs are encouraged to take these activities into account in their appointment, promotion, and tenure decisions.*

## **2.5 Structure of Practice Experience**

The practice experience shall consist of an academically relevant integrated project with coordinated supervision. The experience shall be supervised by an academic advisor and by a practice site supervisor either in the field or virtually (see guidance below) and approved by the program director/internship coordinator; in some cases, the academic advisor may serve both roles. It shall be designed to permit the student to complete a single project in a given area of practice. The practice experience should involve the professional activities of the sponsoring organization, be a professional experience, and address the learning goals and outcomes specified in section 3.3 of these Standards.

*During an international crisis or pandemic such as COVID-19, the program may substitute a virtual practice experience in lieu of a conventional (e.g., organization- or field-based) experience for compliance with the Standards. The virtual practice experience should adhere to the guidelines of the academic institution and sponsoring organization<sup>3</sup> and, at minimum, include: (1) weekly virtual meetings with video chat and screen sharing for live interactions (e.g., Zoom or Microsoft Teams, etc.), (2) cloud-based document-sharing tools (e.g., Dropbox, Google Docs, etc.), (3) project management software (e.g., Microsoft Project or Asana, etc.) that supports real-time updates and interactive communications between the student and the practice experience supervisor (as needed), (4) weekly or bi-weekly face-to-face meetings in a public setting for mentoring, feedback, and additional planning (when possible), and (5) compliance with U.S., other national, or international public health and safety guidelines during the crisis or pandemic.*

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<sup>3</sup> If the academic institution and sponsoring organization have not implemented policies and procedures for the virtual practice experience, the Commission recommends the perusal of the University of Maryland website (specifically the [University of Maryland \(UMD\) Internship Guidance](#) and [UMD Internship Guide for Employers](#) web pages) for suggested best practices.

- 2.5.1 The practice experience shall consist of a minimum of 200 practice hours, plus at least an additional 40 hours for academic activities supportive of the practice experience. These additional activities may include training, project development/planning, meetings with academic advisor, written reports, et cetera. The practice experience shall be supervised by an academic advisor or an internship coordinator either on-campus or virtually and by a practice site supervisor either in the field or virtually (see guidance under Section 2.5, above). In some cases, the academic advisor or internship coordinator may serve in both roles (e.g., in a practicum). The practice experience arrangement must be approved by the Program Director.

*In the event that the practice experience involves more than a single site, the Program must demonstrate that the practice experience is integrated through a single problem or issue or area of practice.*

- 2.5.2 The Program shall document its expectations for the practice experience. These expectations shall be available to academic and site supervisors as well as to the students.

*Generally, the documentation shall consist of printed and/or digital content that should be secured and made accessible to academic and site supervisors, as well as to students that is protected under FERPA<sup>4</sup> and other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws or requirements of the State and/or institution, including similar laws enacted outside the United States, and should include:*

- a. site supervisor and academic supervisor rights and responsibilities;*
- b. student rights and responsibilities, including reasonable work hours;*
- c. appropriate participation in the professional activities of the sponsoring organization(s);*
- d. grievance policies and procedures for supervisors and students;*
- e. code of ethics for sociological practitioners (applied, clinical, engaged public, translational, forensic, and rural sociologists); and,*
- f. safety responsibility agreement.*

- 2.5.3 The Program's student file documentation shall consist of printed and/or digital content that should be secured and made accessible to academic and site supervisors, as well as to students. *Generally, this content shall be protected under FERPA<sup>5</sup> and other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws or requirements of the State and/or institution, including similar laws enacted outside the United States.*

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<sup>4</sup> For additional information on FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), including a link to its definition and conditions on the United States Department of Education website, see the entry for "FERPA" in "Addendum 1 – Glossary" at the end of this document (*Master's Level Standards*). One of the conditions allows schools to disclose student education records to specified parties and officials without the consent of parents or students of legal age, including "Accrediting Organizations" such as the Commission on the Accreditation of Programs in Applied and Clinical Sociology (CAPACS). With appropriate documentation, CAPACS will honor other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws or requirements of the State and/or the institution, including similar laws enacted outside the United States, as indicated.

<sup>5</sup> Refer See footnote 4, above.

This documentation shall include, at minimum, the following:

- a. a practice experience agreement (tripartite) or set of agreements amongst the Program, the site organizations and the student;
- b. a stated period covered by the agreement(s);
- c. an evaluation of the student's progress; and,
- d. a mechanism, such as a portfolio, to document student learning outcomes in the practice experience.

2.5.4 The Program shall demonstrate having adequate time and resources to support faculty and students in the practice experience.

- a. The site supervisor shall have at least a baccalaureate degree and a minimum of five (5) years of relevant professional experience; a master's degree is preferred.
- b. The academic supervisor shall have a minimum of a doctoral degree in sociology, or related field, and a minimum of two (2) years of applied, clinical, engaged public, translational, forensic, or rural sociological practice.
- c. The academic supervisor shall receive teaching credit or equivalent compensation (such as additional pay, release time, or banked time) for coordinating and supervising the practice experience. *For example, this may mean teaching credit equivalent to one (1) three hour course per semester for every 20 students.*

2.5.5 The Program shall develop and maintain connections in the community for sustaining appropriate field placements. This may include working with a centralized internship, field placement, or career counseling center.

## **2.6 Areas of Specialization/Concentration**

Programs are required to provide opportunities for students to specialize or concentrate in a substantive area. This specialization or concentration may characterize the Program as a whole (e.g., applied sociology, clinical sociology, engaged public sociology, translational sociology, forensic sociology, or rural sociology), or exist as a sub-area of the program, or opportunities may be developed for individual students in consultation with their faculty committee. Some examples include gerontology, criminology, marketing research, program evaluation, organizational development, human service practice, or individual/group/forensic counseling, among others.

2.6.1 For each area of Program or individual specialization or concentration, a Program shall:

- a. identify student learning goals and outcomes for each area of specialization or concentration; these learning goals and outcomes shall pertain to the distinct aspects of the specialization or concentration and shall be in addition to those listed in sections 3.1 (knowledge), 3.2 (skills), 3.3 (practice experience), and 3.4 (professional orientation and ethics).
- b. provide evidence that there are faculty members who are qualified in the area of specialization or concentration.

- c. provide a practice experience that is directly related to (1) sociological practice (e.g., applied sociology, clinical sociology, engaged public sociology, translational sociology, ~~or~~ forensic sociology, or rural sociology) and (2) the area of specialization or concentration.
- d. provide appropriate advising for students in their area of specialization or concentration.

### **3.0 STUDENT LEARNING GOALS AND OUTCOMES**

A master's program in or emphasizing sociological practice shall enable students to integrate sociological *knowledge and skills*. These students will develop a professional identity, demonstrate a capacity for leadership, and adhere to a set of ethical standards in their practice endeavors. The Program shall instill a comprehensive knowledge of the field and a specialized content area, as well as educate students in critical analysis and application. The Program shall prepare students to communicate effectively in oral and written form. To that end, the Program shall incorporate a broad foundation within the entire master's curriculum and learning experiences. Programs in or emphasizing sociological practice shall be developed and organized as a coherent and integrated whole. Standards encompassing student learning goals and outcomes are listed in Sections 2.6.1 and 3.1 to 3.5.

*These educational standards are framed as learning goals and outcomes in keeping with current trends toward outcome-based assessment and the creation of learning environments. Focusing on student learning goals and outcomes of education recognizes the need for and value of various routes to achieve these outcomes. Students may take a variety of routes to acquire a degree in sociological practice. Some student learning outcomes have been identified, but programs are encouraged to identify outcomes that reflect the distinctive character of their mission and program. All program graduates prepared at the Master's level must demonstrate the identified knowledge, skills, and professional orientation as specified in this document.*

### **3.1 Knowledge**

Comprehensive knowledge of the field includes an understanding of sociological theory and methods. Sociological theory provides the knowledge of how and why social phenomena operate the way they do. Sociological research methods provide the tools for examining the nature of social phenomena in a systematic manner.

#### **3.1.1 Sociological Theory**

Students who complete the Program will demonstrate an in-depth mastery of the role of theory in sociological practice, and the interaction between theory and practice. Specifically, they will:

- a. compare and contrast the basic theoretical perspectives of sociology with particular emphasis on those that relate to social action, change, and intervention.
- b. demonstrate knowledge of the micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis.
- c. assess the role of practice in the modification of sociological theory.
- d. demonstrate the link between theory and practice in their area of specialization or concentration.
- e. provide thorough knowledge about the history of sociological practice.

- f. demonstrate additional learning outcomes in their area of specialization or concentration relevant to sociological theory, as determined by the Program.

### 3.1.2 Sociological Research Methods

Students who complete the Program will demonstrate an in-depth mastery of the role of evidence as it relates to qualitative and quantitative methods in sociology. Specifically, they will:

- a. compare and contrast the types of methodological approaches that are particularly relevant to sociological practice.
- b. assess the role of data as the basis for examining issues and making recommendations for change.
- c. demonstrate the link between research methods and practice in their area of specialization or concentration.
- d. demonstrate additional learning outcomes in their area of specialization or concentration relevant to research methods, as determined by the Program.

*Students should learn about a range of qualitative and quantitative methods. Such methods might include: surveys, case studies, in-depth interviews, focus groups, conversational analysis, ethnography, life stories, content analysis, observation, secondary data analysis, needs assessments, program evaluations, experiments/quasi-experiments, and single subject designs. Types of sampling and data analysis techniques also should be included, as appropriate for a particular type of design.*

## 3.2 Skills

Students who complete the Program will have skills needed in sociological practice.

### 3.2.1 Specifically, they will:

- a. make written, oral, and graphic presentations to appropriate audiences.
- b. address social problems and/or issues through intervention at the appropriate level.
- c. relate specific practice tasks to the broader organizational and socio-political context.
- d. effectively lead, supervise and collaborate with diverse colleagues and clients.<sup>6</sup>
- e. identify, locate, and retrieve information relevant to the practice of sociology.
- f. respond to requests for proposals for research, services or interventions.
- g. demonstrate the link between these skills and practice in their area of specialization or concentration.
- h. demonstrate additional learning outcomes in their area of specialization or concentration relevant to these skills, as determined by the Program.

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<sup>6</sup> Student learning outcomes (SLOs) for effective leadership, supervision, and collaboration should adhere to the tenets of “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (DEI) or approved successor program and the policies and practices of the institution receiving Federal financial assistance under [Title VI](#), and the prohibitions and amendments against employment discrimination under [Title VII](#), of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other corresponding laws of the United States (includes similar titles, or their equivalent, and laws enacted outside the United States), for all protected classes of persons. For additional information, see the section on “Diversity & Inclusion” under “Research & Insights” in the menu on the website of the [American Council on Education \(ACE\)](#).

### 3.3 Practice Experience

Students will be able to integrate academic studies with occupational realities through a practice experience. The purpose of the practice experience is to provide students with supervised work experiences at a site where they can learn how to apply sociological theories, methods, skills, professional orientation, and ethics.<sup>7</sup>

The practice experience shall involve a project with clearly defined goals and outcomes and shall focus on an actual problem or issue at the practice site. Some examples of possible projects include a portfolio, the creation of a new program at a human service agency; the evaluation of an existing program; or the development of a major document such as a grant proposal or a personnel manual.

#### 3.3.1 Students who complete the practice experience shall:

- a. demonstrate the ability to utilize theory, methods and skills in their practice experience.
- b. analyze problems and their solutions, showing how these relate to individual, group, and/or organizational processes.
- c. analyze ethical issues related to work assignments.
- d. realize the influence of their personal values and perceptions as related to other individuals and groups in practice settings.
- e. identify policy implications of their work in terms of organizational, community, and national policy, when appropriate.
- f. demonstrate the link between their practice experience and their area of specialization or concentration.
- g. demonstrate additional learning outcomes in their area of specialization or concentration relevant to their practice experience, as determined by the Program.

### 3.4 Professional Orientation and Ethics

Professional orientation and ethics provide standards and values that guide sociological practitioners in their work. They also provide important peer accountability guidelines protecting the clients, the practitioner, and the profession.

#### 3.4.1 Students who complete the Program shall:

- a. acquire and maintain a professional identity as a sociological practitioner (the identity or approach shall be one that is recognized by the Commission).
- b. comply with the codes of ethics of the Association for Applied and Clinical Sociology, the American Sociological Association, the International Sociological Association, the Rural Sociological Society and/or other relevant professional association (*identification with*

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<sup>7</sup> Please refer to the proviso in Standard 2.5 (Structure of the Practice Experience) for substituting a virtual practice experience in lieu of a conventional (e.g., organization- or field-based) experience for compliance with the Standards during an international crisis or pandemic such as COVID-19. As indicated in footnote 3, if the academic institution and sponsoring organization have not implemented policies and procedures for the virtual practice experience, the Commission recommends the perusal of the University of Maryland website (specifically the [University of Maryland \(UMD\) Internship Guidance](#) and [UMD Internship Guide for Employers](#) web pages) for suggested best practices.

- sociological practice shall be demonstrated through documentation acceptable to the Commission).*
- c. analyze the social, political, and ethical constraints on sociological practice.
  - d. understand the procedures for the protection of research subjects and the privacy of client records.
  - e. demonstrate the link between professional orientation and ethics in their area of specialization or concentration.
  - f. demonstrate additional learning outcomes in their area of specialization or concentration relevant to professional orientation and ethics, as determined by the Program.

### **3.5 Integrative Product**

Students shall demonstrate their ability to integrate sociological theories, methods, skills, and practice experience in a final product. Specifically, they will demonstrate mastery of the relevant outcomes listed in Sections 3.1 to 3.4, as well as relevant outcomes for their area of specialization/concentration listed in Standard 2.6.1a.

- 3.5.1 Students who complete the Program shall prepare an integrative product. The integrative product may be:

- a. a thesis;
- b. a report prepared for a client organization;
- c. a presentation;
- d. a paper suitable for submission for publication or presentation;
- e. an application suitable for submission of a grant;
- f. a comprehensive examination; or,
- g. other appropriate mechanism determined by the Program.

*Documentation of the integrative product must be acceptable to the Commission and included with the materials assembled and secured at a central location and made available for review during the site visit with the necessary permissions. Documentation may consist of printed and/or digital samples accessed through a secure URL or portal. (For additional information, see Section IV, D, 3 in the [CAPACS Accreditation Review Process Guidelines](#)).*

## **4.0 MONITORING and QUALITY CONTROL**

The Program shall demonstrate its commitment to continuous quality improvement. Quality improvement shall be achieved by having appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the Program's administrative procedures and practices as well as for assessing student learning. The Program shall document program improvements made in response to the results of program evaluation and assessment in an annual report to the Commission.

### **4.1 Evaluation of Program Implementation**

- 4.1.1 The Program shall annually collect and maintain records to document its administrative and academic activities.



*Generally, this documentation shall consist of printed and/or digital content that is secured and protected under FERPA<sup>8</sup> and other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws or requirements of the State and/or institution, including similar laws enacted outside the United States, and includes items such as:*

- a. curriculum materials (e.g., course of study, syllabi for courses, special projects or assignments, practice experience requirements, etc.);*
- b. faculty credentials and professional development activities;*
- c. student evaluation of Program advisement, course content, quality of instruction, and practice experiences;*
- d. program data (e.g., number of students at each level, number graduating, number in various tracks, graduates' names and addresses and placement information, etc.).*

4.1.2 The Program shall identify its goals, annually collect data on how well these goals are being met, and, based upon these data implement changes to better meet the Program goals.

4.1.3 The Program shall maintain appropriate records to document its administrative and academic activities for two (2) years or from the date of last accreditation.

4.1.4 The Program shall document Program changes made in response to recommendations from self – studies, accreditation reviews, annual reports to the Commission following accreditation, and/or external reviews (institutional and/or departmental).

## **4.2 Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes and Continuous Quality Improvement**

4.2.1 The Program shall have an assessment plan, consisting of printed and/or digital content, that includes the following components:

- a. a mission statement;
- b. student learning goals and outcomes that encompass those in Sections 2.6.1a and 3.0 of this document;
- c. an assessment matrix showing where the student learning outcomes are met in the Program's courses or other activities; and,
- d. a timeline showing which student learning outcomes will be assessed during each year of the assessment cycle.

4.2.2 Each of the Program's student learning outcomes shall be assessed during a cycle not to exceed five (5) years.

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<sup>8</sup> For additional information on FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act), including a link to its definition and conditions on the United States Department of Education website, see the entry for "FERPA" in "Terms and Definitions Used for Preparing the Self-study Report" at the beginning of this document or "Addendum 9 – Glossary" at the end of this document (*Master's Level Standards*). One of the conditions allows schools to disclose student education records to specified parties and officials without the consent of parents or students of legal age, including "Accrediting Organizations" such as the Commission on the Accreditation of Programs in Applied and Clinical Sociology (CAPACS). With appropriate documentation, CAPACS will honor other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws or requirements of the State and/or the institution, including similar laws enacted outside the United States, as indicated.

- a. Each outcome should be assessed at least once during each assessment cycle.
  - b. Each outcome should be assessed in more than one course or activity.
  - c. Multiple measures should be used to assess each outcome, including both direct and indirect measures of student learning.<sup>9</sup>
- 4.2.3 Assessment findings should be disseminated to, discussed by, and acted upon by Program faculty annually.
- a. At least one Program or department meeting per year should be dedicated to discussion of assessment findings.
  - b. Program faculty should identify at least one student learning outcome for improvement each year, based upon discussion of assessment findings. An improvement may consist of changes in the curriculum, pedagogy, practice experience, assessment measures, or anything else suggested by the assessment findings.
  - c. After changes are implemented, the Program should collect follow-up data to determine whether the changes had the intended effect.
- 4.2.4 The Program shall document its evaluation and assessment findings in an annual report to the Commission.

*Following accreditation, the Program shall submit an annual report to the Vice-Chair of the Commission for review. The annual report becomes part of the Program's permanent accreditation file. See "Section 11.0: Maintenance of Accreditation Status" (particularly Sections 11.2 and 11.4) in the [Accreditation Policies and Procedures](#), and "Section VII: Post-Accreditation Review Process: Annual Reports to the Commission" in the [Review Process Guidelines](#) for the requirements and deadlines for preparing and submitting the annual report.*

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<sup>9</sup> Please consult the respective entries for "Direct measure of student learning" and "Indirect measure of student learning" in the "Glossary" in Addendum 1 at the end of this document (*Master's Level Standards*) for examples.

## Addendum 1 – Glossary

**Academic supervisor:** faculty charged with overseeing a student's placement and progress in supervised field work and internships.

**Accreditation:** the status earned by a Program after the process of self-study and review by the Accreditation Review Committee. The different levels of accreditation shall include:

- ✓ **Full accreditation:** when the available evidence indicates that an applicant Program is in substantial compliance with all of the Standards of the Commission. Full accreditation is awarded for five (5) years.
- ✓ **Provisional accreditation:** when an applicant Program is in substantial compliance with most of the Standards of the Commission, and any deficiencies are such that they can be corrected within a short period of time. Provisional accreditation shall not exceed two (2) years. During that time, if the Program can correct the deficiencies the Program will be awarded Full accreditation for the remainder of the five (5) year accreditation period. If the deficiencies have not been corrected within the two (2) year period, the Program will no longer be accredited.
- ✓ **Probationary accreditation:** when an already accredited Program experiences changes, which cause the Program to fall below the acceptable level of compliance with the Standards of the Commission. Programs on Probationary status will be given a maximum of two (2) years to correct the problems that have caused them to fall below Commission Standards. If the Program successfully remedies the deficiencies, the Program will be restored to Full accreditation status. If the Program is unable to correct the deficiencies within the two (2) year period, the Program will no longer be accredited.

**Application:** involves the interpretation and transfer of knowledge in support of the practice of sociology in local, state, national, or international contexts.

**Applied Sociology:** the utilization of sociological theory, methods, and skills to collect and analyze data and to communicate the findings to understand and resolve pragmatic problems of clients.

**Assessment cycle:** length of time over which the full set of student learning outcomes for a program will be assessed. This is generally a five (5) year cycle.

**Assessment matrix:** a grid that shows where student learning outcomes are met in the Program's courses or other activities (e.g., alumni surveys, standardized tests, and so forth) for the purposes of assessment and continuous quality improvement of the Program. (See Standard 4.2.1c.)

**Assessment of student learning:** the process of gathering evidence to determine the extent to which student learning outcomes are being met and using this evidence to improve student learning.

**Assessment plan:** document that identifies the student learning goals and outcomes for a program and that states how and when the outcomes will be assessed. At a minimum, an assessment plan should include a mission statement, student learning outcomes, an assessment matrix, and a timeline. See **Assessment matrix** entry, above, and **Timeline** entry, below.

**Basic scholarship:** includes discovery of new knowledge and integration of knowledge across disciplinary boundaries.

**Clinical Sociology:** the application of a sociological perspective to the analysis and design of intervention for positive social change at any level of social organization.

**Coordinator:** Under the general supervision of the Program director, the coordinator is responsible for planning, implementing and monitoring the practice experience and related aspects of the Program.

**Direct measure of student learning** (applies to Standard 4.2, “Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes and Continuous Quality Improvement”): measure based upon review of student work and performance. Examples include essay exams, student papers, evaluations of student work by internship supervisors, and portfolios of student work.

**Director:** the person who is responsible to provide the ongoing direction and daily leadership for the operation and development of the Program.

**Distance learning:** a mode of delivering education and instruction to students who are not physically present in a traditional setting such as a classroom.

**Engaged Public Sociology:** brings sociology, including applied and/or clinical sociology, into dialogue with audiences inside as well as outside of the academy.

**Ethics:** see **Professional ethics** entry below.

**Evaluation of program goals:** the process by which a program gathers evidence to determine how well its goals (other than learning goals) are being met and uses this evidence for improvement. *Evaluation* is a counterpart to *assessment*, which is the process of gathering and using evidence pertaining to the program’s goals for student learning.

**FERPA:** [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. Under certain conditions (34 CFR § 99.31), FERPA allows schools to disclose student education records to specified parties and officials without the consent of parents or students of legal age. One of these conditions includes “Accrediting Organizations” such as the Commission on the Accreditation of Programs in Applied and Clinical Sociology (CAPACS). CAPACS recognizes FERPA and will honor other applicable privacy and confidentiality laws or requirements of the State and/or the institution, including similar laws enacted outside the United States.

**Forensic Sociology:** the application of social scientific theories, methods, research, and data in the study of human behavior and its functions in various social contexts and situations to crime scenes, the mental illness claims of criminals, the study of the origins of substance abuse and violence, the social impact of crime, and the establishment, interpretation, adjudication, and mediation of statutory and case law, legal facts, and social policies.

**Full-time faculty:** individuals compensated for full time professional effort to the employing institution of higher education. Faculty may have duties in instruction, research, or outreach, or in a combination of these

areas. Full time faculty may be appointed under the rules of tenure or have fixed term multi-year appointments.

**Hybrid/blended learning:** a mode of delivering education and instruction to students through a combination of classroom, and digital and online learning experiences.

**Indirect measure of student learning** (applies to Standard 4.2, 'Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes and Continuous Quality Improvement'): a measure that does not focus directly on student work and performance. Examples include surveys of students or alumni, exit interviews, and focus groups. Insofar as the goal of assessment is to gather evidence about how well students meet the program's learning outcomes, indirect measures are inferior to direct measures. However, indirect measures (such as those that measure perceptions of learning) may be quite useful for interpreting and acting upon findings from direct measures.

**Instructional development:** includes research in support of the instructional efforts of the institution or discipline.

**Interdisciplinary:** work that crosses traditional boundaries between academic disciplines. Interdisciplinary research relies on shared knowledge and is created when disciplines such as sociology and psychology interact. An interdisciplinary team approach, when addressing a situation, involves a single consultation.

**Macro level:** the unit of practice which is designated as the social institutional or large social system level.

**Meso level:** the unit of practice which is designated as the organizational level.

**Micro level:** the unit of practice which is designated as the individual or small group level.

**Mission statement:** description of the fundamental purpose of the program.

**Multidisciplinary:** work that crosses traditional boundaries between academic disciplines. A multidisciplinary approach utilizes the skill and experience of different disciplines, with each discipline approaching the situation from its own perspective. A multidisciplinary team approach, when addressing a situation, provides consultation from independent disciplines. An example is the "translational" work of sociologists who work with other professionals and community stakeholders in multidisciplinary teams to address and resolve real-world social problems. See the entry for **Translational Sociology**, below, for additional information.

**On-site supervisor:** a professional based in a formal agency, organization and similar workplace environment who is commissioned to work directly with interns at their work-site.

**Portfolio (also e-portfolio):** a means of measuring student learning outcomes in which the student presents a collection of his/her work along with a commentary on it; this work is to reflect what the student knows and is able to do, as well as the progression of knowledge and ability over the course of an educational experience.

**Practice experience:** a supervised learning experience that provides the student with the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in an academic setting and to develop his/her professional skills. The term used by a program to label its practice experience may vary (e.g., internship, practicum, field experience).

**Professional development:** a process of learning and keeping up-to-date in one's area of expertise.

**Professional ethics:** the principles and standards that underlie one's responsibilities and conduct in a particular field of expertise (e.g., a profession).

**Professional master's degree:** career-oriented master's degree characterized by (1) knowledge and skill requirements that cross disciplinary boundaries; (2) an orientation toward practice and experience; (3) linkages to the labor market; (4) building professional networks; and (5) methods to assess the mastery of skills and knowledge needed for professional practice.

**Professional ethics:** the principles and standards that underlie one's responsibilities and conduct in a particular field of expertise (e.g., a profession).

**Professional orientation:** the attitudinal and behavioral characteristics of individuals that guide them as they fulfill their work related roles.

**Program:** any coherent sequence of courses and/or learning experiences within a department, or other administrative unit recognized by its institution, that has as its core the application of sociological knowledge, methods, and skills in a practice setting.

**Program goal:** general statement about the intended effects of program activities. Because program *learning* goals are of special importance, they are dealt with separately. The term *program goal* generally refers to all other types of goals (such as effects on the community, relationships with practitioners, or the institution, and so forth).

**Program learning goals:** statements about general aims or purpose of education that are broad, long-range intended outcomes. Goals are used primarily in policy making and general program planning.

**Program matrix:** a grid that maps program components and identified student learning outcomes and experiences in courses and/or outside-of-course activities. (Referenced in the *CAPACS MA/MS Self Study Guidelines* under Sections/Standards 2.6 and 3.0.)

**Public sociology:** see **Engaged Public Sociology** entry above.

**Quality control:** the procedures put into place to continuously assess the performance of a program; and if it is meeting the goals and objectives, as specified.

**Reaccreditation:** after the initial period of accreditation, a Program may apply for reaccreditation, which requires the same review process, but reaccreditation may be awarded for a period of up to seven (7) years.

**Research methods:** the various ways in which data can be gathered, organized, and analyzed, whether it be quantitative or qualitative data and data analysis.

**Rural Sociology:** a field of applied [sociological research](#), training, and engaged scholarship focusing on the investigations of, and the interventions with, rural people and the social, cultural, political, economic, and global organization of rural communities in developing and developed countries. In the United States, [rural sociology](#) traces its intellectual and administrative origins to the U.S. Land-Grant System of colleges. [The broad focus of rural sociology](#) is interdisciplinary and collaborative in addressing [emerging social issues and new approaches to recurring social issues](#) for effective policy-making and constructive social change in societies with rural and urban communities.

**Safety responsibility agreement:** an agreement between an agency and student placed in the agency for a practice experience. This agreement specifies the extent of liability of each party as related to the safety of the student.

**Sociological Practice:** an umbrella term that encompasses applied sociology, clinical sociology, engaged public sociology, translational sociology, and forensic sociology, including other approaches of sociological practice identity that may emerge consistent with the program curricula, education, training, and professional work recognized by the Commission.

**Student learning outcomes:** what a student knows and/or is able to do as a result of an educational experience.

**Timeline:** a chronological specification of when (which year) within the assessment cycle each student learning outcome will be assessed.

**Translational Sociology:** a sociological practice approach that utilizes established sociological theories, methods, skills, perspectives, and experiences in collaboration with other disciplines and professions, including policymakers, consumers, and community stakeholders, who work in multidisciplinary teams to develop strategies for addressing and resolving real-world social problems through evidence-based interventions. Also see the entry for **Multidisciplinary** above.