

# ACJS Academic Certification

## Frequently Asked Questions

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**This document provides information that supplements the materials in the Standards and process documents. The FAQ serves to document the interpretation of standards that has been developed through the use of Certification Standards. Therefore, the FAQ serves as the “case law.” Programs undergoing Certification Reviews should refer to the FAQ for guidance. Certification Reviewers will use it as guidance in interpretation of the standards. The FAQ will be updated as necessary.**

### General and Process Questions:

#### Why "certification" rather than "accreditation"?

- It is primarily semantics as a matter of application of standards.
- Certification is an intermediary step.
- Eventually, ACJS may move to “accreditation.”
- The reasons for making this progressive step are many and differ substantially depending on who is answering the question.
- The process and standards for ACJS “certification” are such that “accreditation” could easily have been used, but we do not have a separate Commission that acts to certify programs. The ACJS Executive Board is the body that makes the final certification decision.
- **Certification** means that a program has been reviewed according to specific standards by an authoritative external body (ACJS), and has been certified that it meets those standards. This is where we are now.

**Accreditation** at the program level, on the other hand, signifies that a program has been evaluated and determined to meet standards according to the requirements of a sanctioned specialized accrediting body (e.g., American Association of Colleges and Schools of Business). Specialized accrediting bodies are sanctioned by CHEA - Council on Higher Education Accreditation through an accreditation process of their own. Under the CHEA guidelines, the specialized accreditation body and should be an entity distinct from the parent professional organization, i.e., a "commission". ACJS may ultimately decide to move in this direction. However, there are no specific plans to do so at this time.

#### What are the advantages of ACJS certification for academic programs?

- The primary advantage is that the program will undergo a significant self-study using of a set of criterion-referenced standards designed for quality and effectiveness.
  - The program must meet every part of every standard in order to be certified.
  - To be certified, the program must provide **substantive, credible evidence** that it meets each standard.

- **The emphasis is on evidence, not intention.**
- The anticipated results provide the most visible advantages.

**What are the anticipated results of ACJS certification?**

The program will have:

- a clear sense of its mission and how it fits within the academic institution
- a sound curriculum that is designed to meet technological and societal change
- clear evidence of program quality and effectiveness based on program outcome assessment
- the institutional and programmatic resources to maintain program quality and effectiveness
- a commitment to and will have met the integrity standards of the ACJS Code of Ethics

**Our institution is due to undergo regional accreditation and our program must put together a self-study for that process. Is it reasonable to attempt the ACJS process at the same time?**

Yes. Approaching ACJS Certification and your regional or state accreditation/certification process at the same time should hold down your in-house costs in dollars and time.

**(Rev. 2-29-2008) Is there a list of ACJS certified programs available for me to view?**

- Yes.
- As programs are certified, the list is revised and is posted in the Certification Section of the ACJS website at [www.acjs.org](http://www.acjs.org)

**If our program becomes certified, do students who have graduated since our application for the certification process get the privilege of saying that they are from an ACJS-certified program?**

Yes.

**(Rev. 1-30-2007) Is it appropriate for a new program, or one that has started recently, to seek Certification?**

The assessment section (Section H) of the certification standards require that assessment data be provided. Therefore, programs should have assessment data for a minimum of ten graduates before applying.

Academic Peer Review remains available for the assistance of new programs or programs that need guidance to eventually meet certification standards.

**Does the institution complete a self-study for each separate degree program?**

Yes, if the institution wants a program to be evaluated for certification it will need to complete an independent self-study for each program to be reviewed. The institution selects which of its programs to submit for certification review.

**What if ACJS determines that a program is not in compliance? What happens to it?**

The program can continue. ACJS Certification is a voluntary process.

Programs that are denied certification may reapply for certification review whenever they wish.

**Are Review Team Members allowed to tell the institution what they plan to recommend to ARC?**

No. They are not to share their recommendation with the program. The review team may not have made their final program assessment by close of the visit with the institution. In any case, they are not allowed to reveal what the team's recommendation will be regarding certification.

**There is currently no Certification for Ph.D. programs. What do we do if we want a review of our Ph.D. program?**

Academic Peer Review remains available for Ph.D. programs.

***(New 2-29-2008)* If a student makes a complaint against a faculty member, the program, or the institution during the Certification site visit, can the review team treat the student's statement as confidential?**

No. The Review Team Members must share the complaint with the appropriate parties at the institution and, if a violation of the ACJS Code of Ethics the complaint will be reported to the ACJS Ethics Committee using the procedure designated in the Code of Ethics. However, for all other purposes the confidentiality of the review and the review process itself remains in tact.

***(New 2-29-2008)* The fee structure of ACJS Certification indicates that institutions must pay an additional \$1000 for each satellite campus or location where a substantial portion of a degree or a certificate program is offered away from the main institution. What constitutes a "substantial portion" of a program?**

The program offers a substantial portion of the program whenever one-half or more of the courses in the major (criminal justice required and elective courses) are offered over a two-year time frame through any instructional technology (face-to-face, internet, other electronic means, etc.) to students at a particular location or satellite campus.

**Questions Regarding Standards:**

**If the program is offered during the day and during the evening, is it still considered one program?**

If there is one degree program with one name, then the entire program (day and evening, on and off campus) must meet the standards.

Evening or branch campus students are entitled to a program that meets the same Quality Standards as students who attend the program during the day or on the main campus.

*(New 2-29-2008)* **How is the term “major” defined when used in the standards?**

The term “major” is used specifically in two standards within the certification documents at all program levels to indicate the degree requirements for the program in criminal justice. It is also used elsewhere in this FAQ. Unless indicated otherwise, the major includes all required “core” courses and the elective courses that are offered by the criminal justice program.

For instance, one part of baccalaureate standard B.10 says: “A baccalaureate major in criminal justice should require one-third of its semester hours in criminal justice and related cognates.” In this case, the major refers to the entire degree program including “general education” coursework. Further clarification on this standard is provided later in the FAQ.

Another instance is found in the part of baccalaureate standard D.5: “No more than 10 percent of the criminal justice major credits are completed through knowledge-based examinations (e.g., CLEP).” In this case, “criminal justice major courses” refers to those courses that count toward the requirements for the criminal justice part of the degree and does not include anything that is counted separately in general education or for a minor or area in another field of study.

### **Standard B.3**

**In reference to Indicator I-B.k. Comprehensive evaluation or capstone experience [B.3], how does ACJS define a “capstone experience” and must the course be among the core requirements in the major in order to be meet ACJS certification requirements?**

The comprehensive evaluation or capstone experience can be incorporated within an existing course. The course in which such comprehensive evaluation or capstone experience occurs would need to be required in order to ensure that all students are exposed to it before graduation. Of course, the program can choose to do this in whatever manner works for the institution. The key is to meet Standard B.3. The indicators are provided to give ideas of how you might meet the Standards.

### **Standard B.5**

#### **Baccalaureate**

Under this Standard for the baccalaureate degree programs, there is a chart that lists six required content areas and related topics: administration of justice, corrections, criminological theory, law adjudication, law enforcement, and research and analytic methods. Must the baccalaureate degree program have a separate course for each of these content areas?

No. Though it is generally assumed that baccalaureate programs will have separate courses to cover each of these areas, it is not a requirement. Standards B.6 – B.11 also include other required content coverage. Nevertheless, ALL the topics must to be covered in required courses in such a way as to guarantee that all graduates will have covered the required topics. The required topics must be demonstrated through the course syllabi. It is the program’s responsibility to demonstrate that their curriculum requires all the necessary subject matter to be taught. The assessment would then measure the extent to which the students understand the material.

## **Associate**

For associate degree programs, multiple content areas are expected to be covered in a single course. For example, Standard B.5 states that Research Methods must be a part of the associate degree program. It is assumed that the program would NOT have a research methods course but would include this content through stated outcomes in other required courses.

### *(New 1-30-2007)* **Clarification of B.10 for the Associate and Baccalaureate Standards:**

Standard B.10 says that a “major in criminal justice should require one-third of its semester hours in criminal justice and related cognates.”

Standard B.11 requires a balance of courses to insure a broadly based degree program.

Because of the connection between these two standards, B.10 will be interpreted to mean that one-third and no more than 1/3 of a degree should be in the criminal justice major. Some flexibility is provided within the standard. Examples for typical baccalaureate and associate programs follow.

**For a 120 hour baccalaureate program, 40 hours of criminal justice and related cognates and no more than 40 hours should be required.** The "should" is interpreted to give minimal flexibility in either direction. For example, a program with all 3 hour classes would likely require either 39 or 42 hours. Programs with 1, 4, or 5 hour courses will be allowed similar discretion. The goal is for the program to stay within the spirit of the standard but also maintain the program’s culture and mission.

**For a 60 hour associate degree program, 20 hours of criminal justice and related cognates and no more than 20 hours should be required.** The "should" is interpreted to give minimal flexibility in either direction. For example, a program with all 3 hour classes would likely require either 18 or 21 hours. Programs with 1, 4, or 5 hour courses will be allowed similar discretion. The goal is for the program to stay within the spirit of the standard but also maintain the program’s culture and mission.

## **Standard C.4 – Earned Doctorate**

Standard C.4 refers to an earned doctorate (PhD) in criminal justice or a closely related discipline. What is an “earned doctorate”? Does it also apply to the closely related discipline?

An earned doctorate is a Ph.D. and it does also apply to the closely related discipline part of this Standard.

## **Standard C.4 – Use of PhD**

Does the use of PhD in Standard C.4 exclude other doctorate degrees such as EdD or DPA?

Yes, Standard C.4 excludes all doctorates other than the PhD.

### **Standard C.4 – Graduate Degree**

Standard C.4 specifies: “When a faculty member holds a graduate degree in a closely related discipline, there should be evidence of experience, scholarship, and professional involvement, demonstrating a clear commitment to and identification with the field of criminal justice.” Does this apply only to the PhD graduate degree?

No, the graduate degree is any type of graduate degree. When any graduate degree is not in criminal justice, the requirement for commitment to and identification with the field of criminal justice applies in this Standard and all other Standards in which the phrase “closely related discipline” is used.

### **Standard C.4**

**The Associate Degree Standard C.4 requires all faculty in associate degree programs to have a master’s degree. The Baccalaureate Degree Standard C.4 requires 2/3 of all Full-Time faculty to hold an earned Ph.D. Does this mean that the other one-third of the Baccalaureate faculty can hold a bachelor’s degree?**

No. The standards are cumulative and to be taken as a whole. The requirement for all Associate faculty to have a masters means that all Baccalaureate faculty must have at least a master’s degree and 2/3 of them must have a Ph.D. The bachelor degree is never acceptable for teaching in a Baccalaureate Degree program.

### **Standard C.5 – Terminal Degree**

What is a “terminal” degree in Standard C.5?

A terminal degree is the highest degree that is available for a given field of study. For criminal justice it is a PhD. The J.D. is not a terminal degree.

### **Standard C.11**

Standard C.11 states that: “Programs rely on full-time faculty to teach core-courses...” Does this mean that full-time faculty must teach all core-courses?

Yes, It means that programs use full-time faculty to teach all core-courses.

**What is the definition of the term "core-courses?"**

“Core-courses” are the required criminal justice courses in the criminal justice program. They do not include supporting courses such as Ethics, Psychology, American Government, etc.

### **Standard D.3**

The second half of Standard D.3 states: “No academic credit is awarded by the criminal justice program for life experience or for military, police academy, or other professional training.” Does this mean that a program can accept transfer credit that has awarded such credit? Does this standard apply only to credit that would be used in the criminal justice major?

No, the standard does not allow academic credit to be awarded nor accepted for transfer credit. Yes, the standard applies only to credits that are to be used for the criminal justice major. The standard does not control credits that are used for general education or institutional electives.

**In Section H of the certification standards, there are several different examples of assessment. Do we need to demonstrate that we are using all of them?**

Each of the standards must be fully addressed. The “selected indicators” that are listed are *suggested* items that should be used to demonstrate compliance by providing evidence that the program meets the associated standard. Institutions may choose to provide evidence of compliance through appropriate indicators not specifically listed. The program will be evaluated on the basis of evidence provided to meet the standards.

(New. 1-30-2007) **How do we figure FTE?**

The definitions and method for calculation are provided in the Certification Application Part II. They are also included below:

- “Year” refers to a Full Academic Year.
- “Full- and part-time” **undergraduate** student definitions:
  - A “full-time **undergraduate** student” is one who is enrolled for 12 or more semester credit hours during a semester.
  - A “part-time **undergraduate** student” is one who is enrolled for fewer than 12 semester credit hours during a semester.
- “Full- and part-time **graduate** student definitions:
  - A “full-time **graduate** student” is one who is enrolled for 9 or more semester credit hours during a semester.
  - A “part-time **graduate** student” is one who is enrolled for fewer than 9 semester credit hours during a semester.
- “FTE” for **undergraduates** is calculated in the following manner:
  - Total number of **hours** of all part-time undergraduate students **DIVIDED BY 12** and rounded to the nearest whole number. Then **ADD** to the total **number** of full-time undergraduate students.
- “FTE” for **graduates** is calculated in the following manner:
  - Total number of **hours** of all part-time graduate students **DIVIDED BY 9** and rounded to the nearest whole number. Then **ADD** to the total **number** of full-time graduate students.
- “FTE” for **undergraduate faculty** is calculated in the following manner:
  - Total number of **undergraduate hours** taught by all full-time and part-time faculty **DIVIDED BY 12**. Round to the nearest whole number.
- “FTE” for **graduate faculty** is calculated in the following manner:
  - Total number of **graduate hours** taught by all full-time and part-time faculty **DIVIDED BY 9**. Round to the nearest whole number.
- Ratio of full-time to part-time faculty is based on hours taught calculated in the same manner as FTE.