

MODULE TWO: Core Standards

Module Two, Core Standards, reviews the administrative, faculty, and clinical standards and explains how to evaluate each standard. This module includes:

1. Introduction to the core standards, which are required for all programs
2. Documentation used to verify that each core standard is met.
3. How to score standards
4. Interviews, including who to interview, what information to gather, and sample interview formats
5. Determining if sufficient standards have been met.

1. Introduction to the core standards.

Core standards apply to all programs seeking approval. The core standards cover

- I. Administration: 13 standards including adequate access to library and other educational materials, education at a baccalaureate level or above, etc.
- II. Faculty: 8 standards including class size and minimum education and experience for faculty.
- III. Clinical requirements: 11 standards including number of hours, types of experiences, and amount of supervision.

All core standards can be found on the AER Website

2. Documenting core standards.

Programs are required to submit certain information that will assist in scoring the standards, such as 2 page vitae for all faculty and staff. For core standards, programs are provided with a suggested list of documents to submit to verify that each standard is met, but they may choose to submit alternative or additional materials if they believe this will better support their claim that the standard is met. In the program self-study of administrative standards, column 2 contains suggested items to document that standards are met. In column 3, programs list what materials they are submitting to document each standard. Reviewers should use this information to assist them in locating the information necessary to score each standard. Reviewers may use a separate Survey Monkey form to register their evaluation. Whenever a standard is either partially met or not met, comments are required.

Programs should submit specific enough information to allow the reviewers to quickly determine that each claim is or is not met. For example, in addressing core standard I.h. "University resources should include resources to students with disabilities," programs can submit a link to a university website that verifies resources to students with disabilities. If a website is provided, it should be an official university webpage and should take the reviewer to the exact page documenting disability services. Reviewers should not have to search through a university

website to find the documentation needed, rather the program should provide specific links/web addresses to support their claims.

3. How to score core standards.

Each standard can receive three possible scores: met, partially met, or not met. Rubrics are provided for each standard to assist in consistently determining the score.

You MAY NOT allow your personal opinions to dictate how you score a standard. For instance, the standards state that clinical supervisors must meet three requirements: a minimum of two years field-based experience, a master's degree, and state or ACVREP certification in the area they are supervising. You may believe that supervisors should have a minimum of five years experience, but this is not the standard. You must score the standard based on the rubric not on your personal opinion.

Some standards are very narrow and straightforward, while others consist of multiple sections to be considered when determining the score. A few standards can only be scored as fully met or not met. Let's look at some examples

A standard that must be scored as fully met or not met.

The first administrative standard states that "The university must be accredited by a regional higher education accrediting body. Non-US universities can request that their local accreditation system be accepted." If a US program provides acceptable documentation indicating accreditation by a regional higher education accrediting body, the program receives a score of fully met. Acceptable documentation includes an official University publication, a letter from the accrediting agency granting accreditation status, etc. An example of non-acceptable documentation would be a statement from a program faculty member asserting accreditation status. An example of an accrediting agency is the Higher Learning Commission of North Central. If a US program fails to provide adequate documentation, they would receive a score of not met. For programs based in the US, a score of partially met cannot be given on this standard.

We recognize that universities in non-US countries do not necessarily have access to similar accrediting agencies. Non-US universities must submit proof of their accreditation. The program may choose to submit additional information supporting the validity of their accreditation agency or the reviewers may request this information as part of the review process. For example, some countries use a national, rather than regional, accrediting body that adheres to high professional standards making this an acceptable alternative. In this case the program should receive a score of fully met. If a program in a non-US country submits proof of accreditation but the team finds that the requirements for accreditation are insufficient and that a higher quality alternative accreditation is available to the program, the team could choose to give a score of partially met.

A relatively narrow standard

An example of a relatively narrow standard can be found in the clinical standards. The clinical experience must provide a reasonable amount of diversity in settings, skills, and types of consumers. To receive a score of fully met, a program must provide evidence that their

candidates experience diversity in settings, skills, and types of clients/students. No clinical experience can provide a candidate with every possible experience, but there should be enough diversity in the clinical experience to adequately prepare the candidate to be an effective first year TVI, O&M Specialist, or Vision Rehabilitation Therapist. Many O&M programs are funded to specifically work with one population, either adults or children. These programs must still provide experience with the entire age range, but the majority of the experience can be with one age group, either adults or children.

If the evidence indicates that candidates have limited diversity of experience (e.g., all candidates work in only one setting but with a variety of consumers, candidates work in a variety of settings but only with consumers receiving beginning instruction), OR if evidence indicates that some candidates have diverse clinical experiences and others have limited experiences, then the program should receive a score of partially met.

If the evidence indicates that all or almost all of the candidates have very limited diversity in their clinical experience, the program should receive a score of not met.

Standards with multiple components

Below are two examples of standards with multiple components. First, let's look at an administrative standard related to library resources.

Example 1: One of the "critical" administrative standards states, "Library facilities must have adequate holdings to facilitate learning and research including access to significant texts and periodicals in blindness, low vision, education, rehabilitation, and gerontology, as appropriate to the program under review. The University provides extensive, accessible on-line research capabilities with adequate research and technical support for traditional and distance students."

Programs should submit adequate information to show that this standard is met. Suggested materials to document this standard include a list of the journals and texts available to students and faculty members, a link to the specific university library webpage that indicates the types of library services available to students and faculty. If the review team desires more information, they can ask students during the interview about their experiences in accessing the library and finding information they need.

To receive a score of fully met, a program must provide evidence that their students and faculty have access to adequate journals and texts to support their educational program, and that they have adequate research and technical support. For programs with distance students, the library must provide reasonable access to materials either in electronic copy or by mailing materials to students. Since no library will hold every possible publication related to TVI, VRT, and O&M, it is acceptable for some materials to be available through interlibrary loan.

To receive a score of partially met, a program must provide evidence that their students and faculty have access to a significant number of applicable journals and texts, but several significant texts and/or journals are not available to students in a timely manner. Alternatively, journals and texts may be available but the library may offer little or no support to students and faculty who are conducting research or who experience difficulties accessing the library resources.

To receive a score of not met, a program does not provide evidence that an adequate number of journals and texts are available. A few journals and texts may be available or holdings may only be available on campus and not for distance students.

Example 2: Now, let's look at the standard for faculty requirements, which is a single standard with detail about the educational and experience requirements for additional appointed/adjunct faculty, and clinical supervisors/cooperating teachers. Below is the exact wording of the standard.

1. **Adjunct faculty** and **additional appointed faculty** will meet the following criteria for teaching any course (on campus, distance, or online).
 - a. Faculty teaching skill-based/profession specific courses (e.g., foundation of O&M/VRT, methods of teaching children with VI) must have at least masters level preparation in their professional area, ACVREP or state certification, and at least 3 years full time field-based teaching experience or the equivalent.
 - b. Faculty teaching related-content courses (e.g., research, eye physiology) must have at least masters level preparation and 3 years field-based teaching experience or equivalent.
 - c. Supervision, mentoring, and regular communication will be provided for adjuncts.
 - d. Adjunct faculty teaching courses that include simulation activities must receive training by the program relative to the aspects of performing simulation training/teaching, including training sequence and methods of providing student feedback.

Programs will submit two page vitae on all faculty members to provide the information necessary to support this standard. To score this standard, you will evaluate each component of the standard using the rubric on the next page. Please note that our professions consist of qualified personnel with a variety of educational and experiential backgrounds.

In most cases it will be simple to determine if a faculty member meets the requirements, but in some cases it may be more complex. For example, the requirement that appointed and adjunct faculty members have at least "3 years field-based teaching experience or the equivalent" could be met by someone who has taught in a center, residential, or itinerant setting as a TVI, O&M, or VRT for three years, by someone who has worked in a low vision clinic for 3 years, or someone who served as an outreach service provider for an agency, etc. The work experience should match the courses the faculty member is teaching. For example, it would be appropriate for a CLVT with a master's degree and five years experience in a low vision clinic to teach a course on the physiology of the eye and the implications of visual impairments. This person might or might not be qualified to teach a course on research and further information from the CV would be needed to make this determination. If our hypothetical CLVT had also conducted several research projects, she would be qualified to teach a research class, but if she had no or limited research experience, she would not be qualified to teach a research class.

Rubric:

Elements of Standard	Fully Met	Partially Met	Not Met
Skills based courses	<p>Evidence indicates that</p> <p>ALL faculty teaching skill-based/profession specific courses (e.g., foundation of O&M/VRT, methods of teaching children with VI) HAVE at least masters level preparation in their professional area</p> <p>AND</p> <p>ACVREP or state certification</p> <p>AND</p> <p>at least 3 years full time field-based teaching experience or the equivalent.</p>	<p>Evidence indicates that</p> <p>SOME of the faculty teaching skill-based/profession specific courses DO NOT HAVE at least masters level preparation in their professional area</p> <p>OR</p> <p>do not have ACVREP or state certification</p> <p>OR</p> <p>do not have at least 3 years full time field-based teaching experience or the equivalent.</p>	<p>Evidence indicates that</p> <p>MOST of faculty teaching skill-based/profession specific courses DO NOT HAVE at least a master's level preparation in their professional area</p> <p>OR</p> <p>do not have ACVREP or state certification</p> <p>OR</p> <p>do not have at least 3 years full time field-based teaching experience or the equivalent.</p>
Related content courses	<p>Evidence indicates that</p> <p>ALL faculty teaching related-content courses (e.g., research, eye physiology) must have at least masters level preparation</p> <p>AND</p> <p>3 years field-based teaching experience or equivalent.</p>	<p>Evidence indicates that</p> <p>SOME of the faculty teaching related-content courses (e.g., research, eye physiology) do not have at least masters level preparation</p> <p>OR</p> <p>do not have at least 3 years field-based teaching experience or equivalent.</p>	<p>Evidence indicates that</p> <p>MOST of the faculty teaching related-content courses (e.g., research, eye physiology) do not have at least masters level preparation</p> <p>OR</p> <p>do not have at least 3 years field-based teaching experience or equivalent.</p>

Supervision of faculty	Evidence indicates that supervision, mentoring, and regular communication are provided for adjuncts at an ADEQUATE level	Evidence indicates that supervision, mentoring, and regular communication are provided for adjuncts at only a MINIMAL level	Evidence indicates that supervision, mentoring, and regular communication are NOT PROVIDED for adjuncts
Simulation activities	Evidence indicates that adjunct faculty teaching courses that include simulation activities receive ADEQUATE training by the program relative to the aspects of performing simulation training/teaching, including training sequence and methods of providing student feedback	Evidence indicates that adjunct faculty teaching courses that include simulation activities receive LIMITED training by the program relative to the aspects of performing simulation training/teaching, including training sequence and methods of providing student feedback	Evidence indicates that adjunct faculty teaching courses that include simulation activities receive NO training by the program relative to the aspects of performing simulation training/teaching, including training sequence and methods of providing student feedback

To receive a score of fully met, all four components of the rubric must be scored as fully met. If any of the four components receive a score of not met, the standard is scored as not met. In all other instances, the standard is scored as partially met.

Refer to the rubrics in the other modules for guidelines on scoring other standards.

4.interviews

Interviews are conducted AFTER all of the submitted materials have been reviewed and initial scoring has been completed on core and curricular standards.

Reviewers are to complete two to three telephone interviews. One interview is to be with an administrator at the university (e.g., department chair or dean of school of education), one with a faculty member, and one with students/graduates. At times it may be possible to combine the interview with the administrator and the faculty. Reviewers may choose to schedule more than one interview with faculty and students or may choose to conduct a teleconference to interview several faculty members at one time or several students at one time. Please do not interview faculty and students at the same time. Two reviewers should

participate in each phone call, but the same two reviewers do not have to complete all the interviews.

The purpose of the interviews is to verify the accuracy of information submitted to support that standards have been met and to gather MINIMAL additional information as needed. The review team is not expected to use the interviews to gather extensive information that should have been submitted in the application packet.

INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

1. Through the program contact, schedule each interview at a time mutually convenient for the reviewers and the interviewees.
 - a. Administrator interview: Plan 15 minutes
 - b. Faculty interview: Plan 30 minutes
 - c. Student interview: Plan 30 minutes
2. Contact the AER office at programreview@aerbvi.org with the interview times and to request call in numbers. Communicate the call-in numbers to the interviewees.
3. Begin the interview by identifying yourself by name and as a reviewer for AER's personnel preparation program approval process.
4. Explain the purpose of the interview is to gather additional information about the application.
5. Ask if there are any questions before you begin.
6. Ask the required questions
7. Follow up as needed to gather sufficient information on required questions. Generally, open-ended questions will provide the best information, but you may ask specific questions if you are not getting the information that you need.
8. Ask the minimum number of the optional questions for each interview. Select the questions that will provide you with the most useful information based on your review of the application. You may ask more than the minimum number of optional questions if you need additional information.
9. When possible, decide which additional questions you will ask prior to beginning the interview. See instructions on the interview form about reviewer generated questions.
10. If your review of the application raised specific questions related to standards, you may ask those questions. You MAY NOT ask questions simply out of curiosity about the program or to learn about issues not related to the standards.
11. After completing all interviews, revise any scores (up or down) as needed based on the information gathered in the interview.

Required and optional interview questions are available to panel member through the AER office and address both core and curricular standards.

5. Determining if sufficient standards have been met.

After each reviewer finishes scoring his/her assigned sections on their individual self-study reports, the review team meets and compiles scores onto a summary self-study report. If there

is disagreement about scores, the review team should look at the information provided again and determine if consensus can be reached. If there is disagreement about the score, the majority opinion rules. If there is a tie vote, a member from the University Executive Panel is brought in to review the standard and cast the deciding vote.

To be recommended for full approval, programs must receive the following minimum scores on the three sections of the core standards:

Administration:

All nine absolute standards (a-i) must be fully met.

All four critical standards (j-m) must be fully or partially met.

Faculty:

All eight absolute standards (a-h) must be fully met.

Clinical Requirements:

All eleven of the absolute standards (a-k) must be fully met.

Conditional Approval

It must be remembered that if the university program did not meet minimum standards in one of the absolute core criteria, it is possible to obtain conditional approval if they have an acceptable score in the critical standards and agree to rectify this shortcoming within the short term.