PLUS Accreditation Standards

PLUS recognizes the importance of providing students in higher education with an opportunity to develop the types of global skills that will make them competitive in their career pursuits. Meeting the highest level of standards in learning another language and building practical experience with another cultural milieu is a necessary ingredient in becoming a global professional. PLUS recognizes that students who graduate from PLUS accredited programs meet standards that afford them enhanced opportunities in employment, skills certification, graduate education and global mobility.

What does Accreditation mean for Programs?

A PLUS accredited program means that a program

* Has received national recognition of its quality
* Promotes best practices in language and international culture education
* Directly involves faculty and staff in self-assessment and continuous quality improvement processes
* Is based on learning outcomes rather than teaching inputs
* Is committed to rigorous and practical overseas study including internships preferably related to their field of study
* Rigorously assesses language proficiency outcomes according to national standards

In order to implement a comprehensive accreditation system for language programs, standards must be comprehensive enough to ensure that students are educated in a broad range of knowledge, skills and behaviors that address all the qualifications needed for communication in today’s global environments. Modeled on the nationally recognized ABET (Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology) program certification process, the following are the criteria against which programs will be accredited in PLUS.

**Criteria for Accrediting Language Programs**

**Definitions**

While PLUS recognizes and supports the prerogative of institutions to adopt and use the terminology of their choice, it is necessary for PLUS volunteer peer reviewers and their staff to have a consistent understanding of terminology. With that purpose in mind, PLUS will use the following basic definitions:

Program Educational Objectives – Program educational objectives are broad statements that describe what graduates are expected to attain within a few years of graduation. Program educational objectives are based on the needs of the program’s constituencies.

Student Outcomes – Student outcomes describe what students are expected to know and be able to do by the tome of graduation. These relate to the skills, knowledge, and behaviors that students acquire as they progress through the program.

Assessment – Assessment is one or more processes that identify, collect, and prepare data to evaluate the attainment of student outcomes. Effective assessment uses relevant direct, indirect quantitative and qualitative measures as appropriate to the outcome being measured. Appropriate sampling methods may be used as part of an assessment process.

Evaluation – Evaluation is one or more processes for interpreting the data and evidence accumulated through assessment processes. Evaluation determines the extent to which student outcomes are being attained. Evaluation results in decisions and actions regarding program improvement.

**I. GENERAL CRITERIA FOR BACCALAUREATE LEVEL PROGRAMS**

**Criterion 1. Students**

Student performance must be evaluated. Student progress must be monitored to foster success in attaining student outcomes, thereby enabling graduates to attain program educational objectives. Students must be advised regarding curriculum and career matters.

The program must have and enforce policies for accepting both new and transfer students, awarding appropriate academic credit for courses taken at other institutions, and awarding appropriate academic credit for work in lieu of courses taken at the institution. The program must have and enforce procedures to ensure and document that students who graduate meet all graduation requirements.

Student Admissions. Requirements for enrolling students into the program focusing on both majors and non-majors.

Evaluating Student Performance. Summary of the process by which student performance is evaluated and student progress is monitored. Information on how the program ensures and documents that students are meeting prerequisites.

Transfer Students and Transfer Courses. Summary of requirements and process for accepting transfer students and transfer credit.

Advising and Career Guidance. Summary of the process for advising and providing career guidance to students, particularly those who will not major in the language. How often students are advised, who provides the advising (program faculty, departmental, college or university advisor).

Work in Lieu of Courses. Summary of the requirements and process for awarding credit in lieu of courses. Includes life experience, advanced placement, dual enrollment, test out, military experience.

Graduation Requirements. Summary of the requirements for the program and process for ensuring and documenting that each graduate completes all the graduation requirements for the program.

**Criterion 2. Program Educational Objectives**

The program must have published program educational objectives that are consistent with the mission of the institution, the needs of the program’s various constituencies, and these criteria. There must be a documented, systematically utilized, and effective process, involving program constituencies, for the periodic review of these program educational objectives that ensures they remain consistent with the institutional mission, the program’s constituents’ needs, and these criteria.

Program Constituencies. Identification of program constituencies. Description of how the program educational objectives meet the needs of these constituencies. How the program is structured to attract and retain students from other disciplines.

Process for Revision of Program Educational Objectives. Process that periodically reviews and revises, as necessary, the program education objectives including how the program’s various constituencies are involved in this process.

**Criterion 3. Student Outcomes**

The program must have documented student outcomes that prepare graduates to attain the program educational objectives.

Student outcomes are outcomes (a) through (o) plus any additional outcomes that may be articulated by the program.

(a) documented language proficiency in accordance with announced program goals for majors and non-majors; as defined by ILR, ACTFL, CEFR, or another nationally or internationally recognized proficiency scale (ISO 29991:2013)

(b) ability to design and conduct language maintenance and enhancement as necessary throughout the professional career

(c) understanding of general as well as culture-specific concepts, behaviors, and beliefs

(d) ability to assess and use translation and interpretation services effectively and efficiently

(e) ability to identify, formulate, and solve communications problems

(f) understanding of professional and ethical responsibility

(g) ability to communicate effectively in one’s native language

(h) broad education necessary to understand the impact of effective communications in a global, political, social, economic, environmental, and societal context

(i) recognition of the need for, and an ability to engage in life-long learning

(j) knowledge of contemporary issues

 (j) ability to use the techniques, skills, and modern technologies & tools necessary for cross-cultural communications

1. Knowledge of a area or region of the world and an overview of global issues
2. Critical thinking skills
3. Technical skills in a discipline
4. ability to function on multidisciplinary teams

**Criterion 4. Continuous Improvement**

The program must regularly use appropriate, documented processes for assessing and evaluating the extent to which the student outcomes are being attained. The results of these evaluations must be systematically used as input for the continuous improvement of the program. Other available information may be used to assist in the continuous improvement of the program.

**Criterion 5. Curriculum**

The curriculum requirements specify subject areas appropriate to global communications but do not prescribe specific courses. The faculty must ensure that the program curriculum devotes adequate attention and time to each component, consistent with the outcomes and objectives of the program and institution. The professional component must include:

1. language acquisition program aimed at announced proficiency outcomes
2. specified program of courses for majors and non-majors designed to convey the culture of a specific area of the world, to include the performance and achievement cultures (**citation**) of a specific area, country, or region where the language is spoken
3. specified program of area studies courses for majors and non-majors focused on a particular area of the world
4. conscious understanding and appreciation of cultural differences between native and other cultures
5. a general education component that complements the language and culture content of the curriculum and is consistent with the program and institution objectives.

Students must be prepared for global professional practice through a curriculum culminating in a major design experience based on the knowledge and skills acquired in earlier course work and incorporating appropriate language and culture standards and multiple realistic constraints.

**Criterion 6. Faculty**

The faculty must be of sufficient number and must have the competencies to cover all of the curricular areas of the program. There must be sufficient faculty to accommodate adequate levels of student-faculty interaction, student advising and counseling, university service activities, professional development, and interactions with industrial and professional practitioners, as well as employers of students.

The program faculty must have appropriate qualifications and must have and demonstrate sufficient authority to ensure the proper guidance of the program and to develop and implement processes for the evaluation, assessment, and continuing improvement of the program, its educational objectives and outcomes. The overall competence of the faculty may be judged by such factors as education, diversity of backgrounds, language and communication experience, teaching effectiveness and experience, ability to communicate, societies, and—where relevant—certification in one or more languages. The faculty must be appropriately balanced between tenure-track faculty with appropriate participation in self-governance and adjunct faculty. (trying to get at core capacity here)

**Criterion 7. Facilities**

Classrooms, offices, laboratories, and internet access must be adequate to support attainment of the student outcomes and to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning. Modern tools, internet, computing resources, and laboratories appropriate to the program must be available, accessible, and systematically maintained and upgraded to enable students to attain the student outcomes and to support program needs. Students must be provided appropriate guidance regarding the use of the tools, internet, computing resources, and laboratories available to the program.

The library services and the computing and information infrastructure must be adequate to support the scholarly and professional activities of the students and faculty.

**Criterion 8. Institutional Support**

Institutional support and leadership must be adequate to ensure the quality and continuity of the program.

Resources including institutional services, financial support, and staff (both administrative and technical) provided to the program must be adequate to meet program needs. The resources available to the program must be sufficient to attract, retain, and provide for the continued professional development of a qualified faculty. The resources available to the program must be sufficient to acquire, maintain, and operate infrastructures, facilities, and equipment appropriate for the program, and to provide an environment in which student outcomes can be attained.

Internships?

II. GENERAL CRITERIA FOR MASTERS LEVEL PROGRAMS

Masters level programs must develop, publish, and periodically review, educational objectives and student outcomes. The criteria for masters level programs are fulfillment of the baccalaureate level general criteria, fulfillment of program criteria appropriate to the masters level specialization area, and one academic year of study beyond the baccalaureate level. The program must demonstrate that graduates have an ability to apply masters level knowledge in a specialized area of global communications related to the program area.

III. PROGRAM CRITERIA

Each program must satisfy applicable Program Criteria (if any). Program Criteria provide the specificity needed for interpretation of the baccalaureate level criteria as applicable to a given discipline. Requirements stipulated in the Program Criteria are limited to the areas of curricular topics and faculty qualifications. If a program, by virtue of its title, becomes subject to two or more sets of Program Criteria, then that program must satisfy each set of Program Criteria; however, overlapping requirements need to be satisfied only one PROGRAM.

[It remains to be determined whether “Program Criteria” are needed by the language profession in addition to the General Criteria.] [this would obtain if degrees are offered thusly – Russian Linguistics versus Russian Literature versus Russian Translation]