



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



IASIA

International Association of Schools
and Institutes of Administration



Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training



2025

What are the Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training?

The Standards of Excellence are a set of criteria or benchmarks that define the highest level of quality and performance in education and training programs related to public administration. These standards serve as a guide for academic and training institutions, as well as faculty, trainers, and practitioners, who aim to promote quality education and achieve exceptional outcomes.

Why are the Standards of Excellence Critical for the World We Want and the Advancement of a Better Society?

The quality of education and training in public administration significantly affects the quality of governance. Well-prepared and highly professional public servants are essential for effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions, leading to the design and implementation of policies, programs, and public services that improve people's quality of life. This, in turn, promotes trust in government and contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

How were the 2008 Standards of Excellence updated?

The 2008 Standards were reviewed between 2023 and 2024 to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals and reflect new developments in public administration. The review was conducted through a global and regional consultative process including an online survey in five languages and a total of 17 global and regional meetings. Over 1,000 contributions were received by schools and institutes of public administration, networks, academia, and representatives of international, regional, and national organizations.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) and its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), and the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) established in 2023 a global Task Force to review and/or update the Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training.

Who can Apply the Standards of Excellence and How?

Any program worldwide can use the Standards for self-assessment and learning to enhance the quality of its education and training. Through its rigorous evaluation process, IASIA's International Commission on Accreditation of Public Administration education and training programs (ICAPA) accredits programs that meet high standards of quality, relevance, and effectiveness.

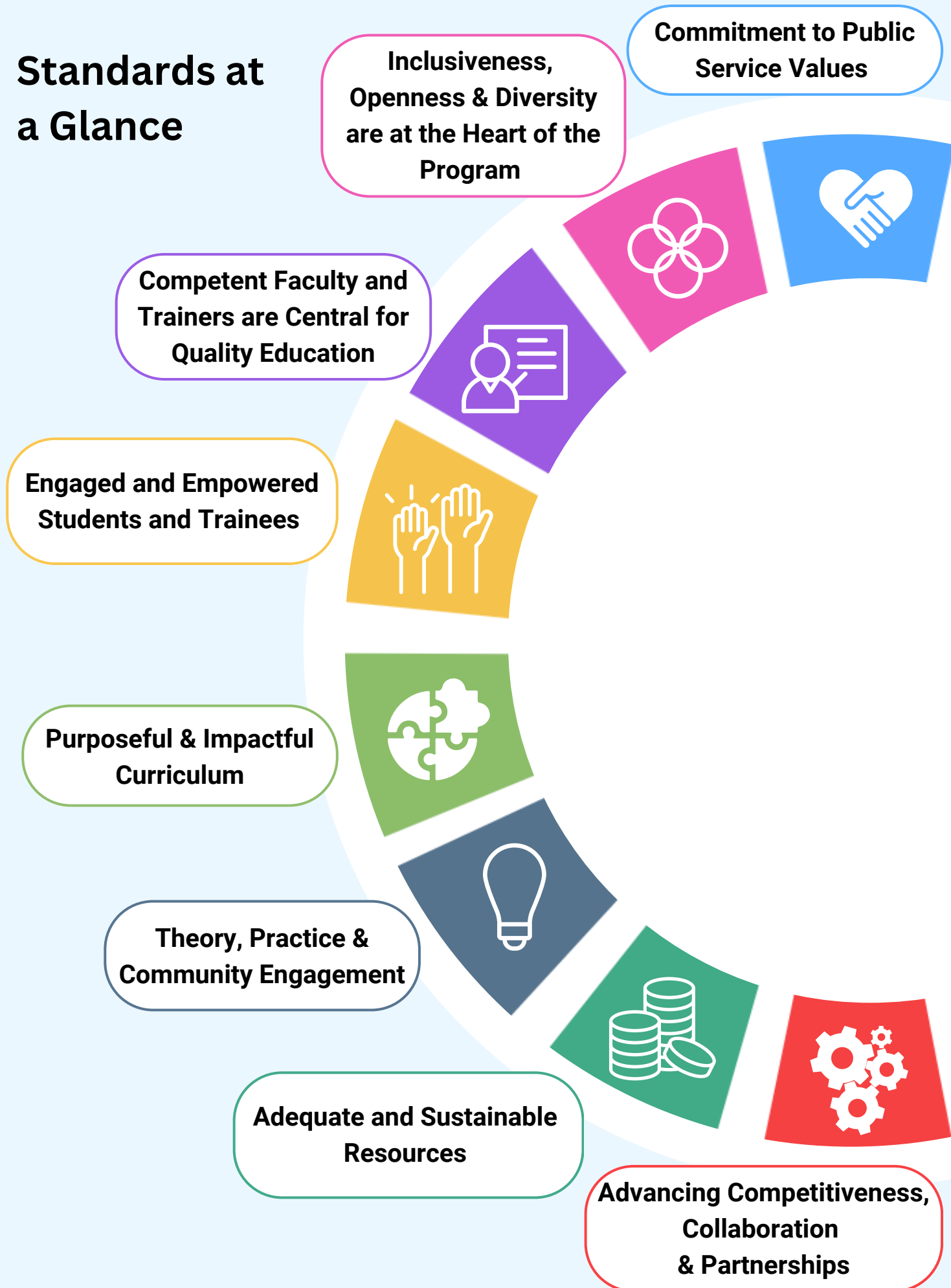
What are the Expected Results of Applying the Standards of Excellence?

Applying these Standards of Excellence in public administration education and training programs will result in more dynamic, tech-savvy, agile, and globally aware public servants and professionals who can navigate an ever-changing landscape and contribute to the advancement of sustainable development.

The Eight Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training



Standards at a Glance





1 Commitment to Public Service Values

The program prepares present and future leaders dedicated to serving the public interest by instilling public service values, contributing to high-quality public services, engaging meaningfully with their communities, and ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of sustainable development.

The faculty and administration of the education and training program are fundamentally committed to public service values, including professionalism, integrity, transparency, accountability, service orientation, innovation, collaboration, participation, and inclusiveness. They are dedicated to advancing the public interest and promoting democratic, effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels, consistently embodying these values in all their activities.

This commitment is demonstrated through their advocacy for and nurturing of mindsets that foster a culture rooted in democratic values, the rule of law, and ethical leadership and behavior. They exemplify these values in their interactions with public organizations and institutions, as well as in their work with students and trainees. The program's internal governance also reflects these ideals, upholding high standards of competence, inclusiveness, diversity, integrity, transparency, accountability, and independence.

Through teaching, training, engagement in research and practice, technical assistance, and community service activities, the faculty and trainers nurture students and trainees to uphold public service values.



2 Inclusiveness, Openness & Diversity are at the Heart of the Program

Inclusiveness, openness, and diversity are essential for preparing present and future leaders to serve diverse groups in society, especially those living in vulnerable situations, and to empower them to participate in policy decision-making that impacts their lives.

A critical element in achieving excellence in public administration education and training is the unwavering commitment of faculty, trainers, practitioners, administration, and students to inclusiveness, openness, and diversity. The education and training program should be open and accessible to all interested individuals, free from any prejudices. Faculty, trainers, practitioners, administration, students, and trainees should represent a wide range of racial, ethnic, and demographic communities within society.

The program should promote multidimensional diversity, inclusive leadership and mindsets, fostering a culture of inclusion, openness and participation in research, teaching, and training both within the institution and with community stakeholders. The ideas, concepts, theories, and practices addressed in the program should reflect a broad array of intellectual interests, voices, and approaches. Inclusiveness—regarding ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, gender, gender orientation, persons with disabilities, older persons, the youth, and Indigenous Peoples—also serves to encourage diversity of ideas. As much as possible, the program should promote digital inclusion enabling students and trainees to fully participate in the digital world and benefit from its opportunities as highlighted, for example, by the UN Global Digital Compact. In turn, they should be equipped with the capacities to use technology to engage citizens in government deliberations and processes.

Inclusiveness as a value and practice is an evolving framework that encompasses a range of policies, practices, and attitudes aimed at creating environments where all individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to participate fully. As such, the program should continuously adapt to reflect changing societal norms, diverse perspectives, and the needs of various communities.



3 Competent Faculty and Trainers are Central for Quality Education

Competent, committed, and engaging faculty, trainers, and practitioners are central to achieving the program's goals and delivering quality education and training.

The program should have a world-class faculty, trainers, and practitioners who are committed to the highest standards of teaching, training, and research. They must possess the appropriate mindsets, knowledge, and skills to ensure quality and innovative public administration education and training. Faculty members, trainers, and practitioners come from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, valuing different academic perspectives to provide a well-rounded education for all.

Faculty, trainers, and practitioners are committed to producing relevant and impactful knowledge that anticipates and addresses emerging issues in a rapidly changing world. They are dedicated to serving students by delivering high-quality and engaging education and mentorship. They promote collaborative learning experiences where faculty and students learn from each other.

To maintain excellence, the program encourages lifelong learning and continuing professional development for faculty and trainers through the exchange of innovative practices, e-learning, collaboration with government agencies, and multidisciplinary knowledge sharing among countries and regions, as well as through partnerships and networks, in accordance with sustainable development goal 17.



4 Engaged and Empowered Students and Trainees

Engaged and empowered students and trainees are the hallmark of an excellent program.

The program aims to create an inclusive and friendly environment that actively engages all students and trainees, valuing diverse perspectives and integrating various backgrounds and learning styles. Students and trainees should be encouraged to take an engaged role in their learning journey. This includes opportunities for empowering them to be active participants in the learning process, giving them the competencies, tools, and skills required to be changemakers. Students and trainees who are actively engaged in community service, research, and practice are better able to connect their academic knowledge to real-world challenges, fostering a sense of social and civic responsibility and preparing them for the job market.

Students and trainees should be able to participate in program governance through constructive dialogue and feedback mechanisms. Regular feedback from students and trainees is essential for program improvement, utilizing surveys, focus groups, games, and other innovative feedback mechanisms, to ensure their voices are heard. A systematic evaluation of the overall student experience helps assess engagement and satisfaction, aligning with the program's mission to foster excellence in public administration education and training. Recognizing and celebrating student achievements through awards and showcases fosters a meritocratic culture that motivates students to strive for excellence. Creating spaces and encouraging Alumni initiatives is also relevant.

By encouraging a lifelong learning mindset, the program promotes ongoing education and personal development, reinforcing the importance of continuous growth and the pursuit of high performance and excellence. Prioritizing merit and excellence, the program aims to prepare future talent and leaders who can seize opportunities and tackle challenges in their careers and fields.



5 Purposeful & Impactful Curriculum

A purposeful and impactful curriculum challenges and prepares students and trainees to become committed and engaged public leaders—changemakers capable of anticipating and responding to evolving political, economic, environmental, and social trends, thereby serving the needs of present and future generations.

The public administration education and training program should develop a curriculum that aligns with the values, vision, mission, and strategy of the program. The curriculum should aim to mainstream the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and principles of effective governance for sustainable development, promoting global, cross-cultural, inclusive, and multidisciplinary perspectives. It should also involve research and teaching related to innovation and digital governance, contributing to the development of policies and innovative practices in this evolving field.

The curriculum should equip students and trainees with the mindsets to succeed in an ever-changing world, including ethical, innovative, agile, foresight-driven, collaborative, inclusive, solution and result-oriented, and digital mindsets. It should promote knowledge, competencies, and skills such as ethical reasoning, critical thinking, creativity, responsive and future-oriented leadership, data analytics, and digital competencies. Additionally, the curriculum should be engaging, relevant, and connected to the needs of all actors and stakeholders.

The delivery of the curriculum should incorporate problem-solving and participatory approaches, real-world case studies, and practical experiences to maximize its teachings' engagement and impact. Teaching methodologies should focus on lifelong learning, adopting in-person, online, and blended formats while ensuring the ethical use of technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI).



6 Theory, Practice & Community Engagement

Combining theory, practice, and community engagement equips students and trainees with the knowledge, competencies, and skills to make a difference in their communities and improve the quality of people's lives.

Insofar as public administration is an applied science, the faculty, practitioners, trainers, and administration of the program are committed to integrating theory and practice in the design and methodology of the program. This approach connects knowledge, engaged research, and scholarship with real-world experience, including experiential and case-based learning, to advance and achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to promote principles of effective governance for sustainable development. The program is grounded in a deep understanding of current public administration challenges, fostering critical thinking, collaboration, and co-creation to prepare students and trainees to solve complex problems.

The faculty, administration, and students of the program are also actively engaged with their community through teaching, learning, training, research, and community service activities, connecting with stakeholders from the smallest village or city neighborhood to the global community at large, promoting “whole of government” and “whole of society” approaches.

The program reflects the relevant needs of their communities and fosters public innovation through co-creation with citizens and technology stakeholders. Additionally, it promotes multidisciplinary exchanges among professional communities and strengthens the science-policy interface by providing accessible, evidence-based advice for better decision-making in public and private institutions.



7 Adequate and Sustainable Resources

Adequate and sustainable resources ensure that the program's curriculum and teaching methodologies remain relevant and state-of-the-art.

An important prerequisite for creating a program of excellence in public administration education and training is the availability of appropriate and adequate resources to fulfill the program's objectives and desired impact. Resources encompass human, financial, physical, technical, logistical, and digital infrastructure.

The program must ensure effective, transparent, and accountable needs-assessment, planning, mobilization, management, reporting, and evaluation of resources while striving for financial autonomy and long-term sustainability. Adequate and sustainable resources should be allocated to attract and retain a diverse faculty and student body, ensuring the program's inclusiveness. It should provide sufficient resources to support all faculty, trainers, and practitioners, as well as the administration, including through equitable remuneration, opportunities for attendance at international conferences, community engagement and research, as well as lifelong learning. Additionally, the program should allocate resources to support the professional development of students and trainees through academic advising, mentorship, career support, scholarships, fellowships and internships, and opportunities to attend international or regional conferences.

The program should allocate adequate resources to faculty, trainers, practitioners, administration, and students for various services, including healthcare, childcare, housing, and sports (when possible). It should also provide essential infrastructure, including accessible facilities such as office space, libraries, classrooms, and meeting spaces, along with necessary digital infrastructure and services. Additionally, the program should provide resources for digital literacy and competencies to equip faculty, trainers, students, and trainees with the skills needed to effectively leverage digital technologies.



8 Advancing Competitiveness, Collaboration and Partnerships

Competitiveness, collaboration, and partnerships drive the continuous improvement of the program's curriculum, teaching, and learning methodologies.

There must be among the program faculty, trainers, administrators, students, and trainees a sense of common purpose, commitment to public service values, and a determination to advance competitiveness that drives the program to be the best and creates a desire to meet and exceed world-class standards of excellence. A program's excellence is evidenced by students' and trainees' satisfaction, participation, and engagement.

The program fosters collaboration in cocreating and coproducing multidisciplinary knowledge, research, training, and teaching within the academic and/or training institution to provide students and trainees with the best quality education. It encourages the learning and use of diverse languages.

Collaboration and partnerships with a wide range of actors and stakeholders, including academic institutions, associations, professional organizations, government leaders at all levels, the private sector, technology companies, civil society, international organizations, and Alumni Associations, are the hallmark of an outstanding program. These collaborations encompass peer-to-peer learning, peer-review mechanisms, networking, faculty and student exchange programs, internships, study abroad opportunities, and the exchange of innovative practices from around the world. By providing diverse, global perspectives, the program equips students and trainees with the knowledge and skills to effectively address local, regional, national, and transnational challenges in an ever-changing landscape.

Milestones of the 2023-2024 Review Process of the Standards

October 2022 - January 2023	January 2023 Identification of Task Force members. Invitations sent to join the Task Force.
January 2023	Establishment of the UN DESA / IASIA Global Task Force on Excellence in Public Administration Education and Training.
January - February 2023	Preparation of relevant concept note, proposed roadmap, communications material, and timeline.
3 March 2023	Co-Convenors meeting to discuss Roadmap and Timeline.
March - April 2023	Preparation of communication material for the launch in five languages (Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Spanish)
28 March 2023	Preparatory discussions of Task Force members attending the Annual Session of the Committee of Experts in Public Administration, UN Headquarters, New York.
18 April 2023	First meeting of the Task Force members.
19 June	Meeting of the Regional Chairpersons of the UN DESA/IASIA Task Force on Excellence in Public Administration Education and Training.
July 2023	Call for online contributions on the Review and Update of the Standards of Excellence in Public Administration Education and Training.
31 July – 4 August	Session organized in the context of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) Annual Conference held in the Philippines themed “Building Better Futures of Governance towards Achieving the SDGs in a VUCA World” (Session in English).

Milestones of the 2023-2024 Review Process of the Standards cont.

13 September 2023 (online)	Regional Workshop Africa (session in English) Organized in collaboration with Kenya School of Government (KSA), African Local Government Academy (ALGA) of the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa).
5 October 2023 (online)	Regional Workshop Europe (session in English) Organized in collaboration with the Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe (NISPAcee)
3 November 2023 (online)	Regional Workshop Asia and the Pacific (session in English) Organized in collaboration with UN DESA/UNPOG and the Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration (EROPA).
6 - 10 November 2023	Session organized in the context of the Annual Meeting of the African Public Sector Human Resource Managers Network (APSHRnet) held in Kenya (Session in English).
22 November 2023 (hybrid)	Africa (session in French) Regional Workshop on the Review of the Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training in the context of the 7th edition of the African Forum of Territorial Managers and Training Institutes Targeting the Local Government (FAMI7_2023), Under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, El Jadida, Morocco.
5 December 2023 (online)	Regional Workshop Americas (session in Spanish) Organized in collaboration with the Latin American Group of Public Administration (LAGPA/IIAS).
8 December 2023 (hybrid)	Regional Workshop Middle East (session in English) held in the context of the Middle East and North Africa Public Administration Research Network (MENAPAR) Annual Conference, 7-10 December, Egypt.

Milestones of the 2023-2024 Review Process of the Standards cont.

**5 – 8 December
2023**

Sessions organized in the context of the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) Annual Conference, Livingstone, Zambia (Session in English).

**23 January 2024
(online)**

Regional Workshop Americas (Session in English).

**20 February
2024
(online)**

Americas (Session in Portuguese).

2 July 2024

Workshop on the Importance of the Standards of Excellence in Public Administration Education and Training at the IASIA annual Conference, South Africa (1 – 5 July).

**July 2023 – July
2024**

Completion of online surveys by relevant stakeholders

**14 - 15 October
2024**

Expert Group Meeting of the UN DESA/IASIA Global Task Force at UN Headquarters, New York to review the final version of the new Standards of Excellence 2025.

About

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

The **Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (UN DESA)** is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: (i) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which States Members of the United Nations draw to review common problems and to take stock of policy options; (ii) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint course of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and (iii) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.

International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration

The **International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA)** is an entity of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS). It is an association of organizations and individuals whose activities and interests focus on public administration and management. The activities of IASIA target the education and training of public administrators and managers. IASIA is an international/global association, whose mission is to strengthen administrative capacity building around the world, to advance excellence in public administration education and training, and to conduct, discuss, and disseminate cutting-edge scholarly research and "smart practices" on governance and administration.

The **International Commission on Accreditation of Public Administration education and training programs (ICAPA)** is the quality assurance body of the IASIA. Its accreditation criteria are based on Standards of Excellence elaborated by a joint Task force including representatives of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and of IASIA. The new Standards were developed based on the inputs from over 1,000 public administration scholars and practitioners from across the world. As such, while there are other national and regional accrediting authorities, ICAPA is the only truly international accrediting body. These are designed to support capacity building for development efforts. ICAPA governance bodies include a Steering Committee (SC), an Accreditation Committee (AC), and a Secretariat.

To learn more about the Standards of Excellence and how they can be applied to enhance the quality of education and training in public administration, please contact:

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