

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
May 16-17, 2023
Chicago, Illinois (Hybrid)**

**Standards Committee: Guidelines for a
Graduate Program in Archival Studies
(Prepared by Kira Dietz, Co-Chair)**

BACKGROUND

The Committee on Education (CoE) previously revised the SAA Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies (GPAS) with adoption of the revisions by the SAA Council in November 2016, at the recommendation of the SAA Standards Committee. The Graduate Archival Education Subcommittee (GAES) reviewed the current GPAS and prepared recommendations for revision during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 terms. (Note: Find all supplementary materials on the [Standards shared drive](#).)

The GAES chair Edward Benoit, III, directed the regular five-year review of the GPAS during the 2020-2021 year. The GAES held monthly meetings from July 2020 to June 2021, focusing on the review and revision of the document. The subcommittee initially reviewed the existing and comparative documents from outside archival organizations. The GAES revised the GPAS systematically over the term, with each revision discussed and agreed upon by the subcommittee. At the beginning of the 2021-2022 year, chair Ashley Todd-Diaz shared the revised document with the CoE for feedback. The GAES focused their monthly meetings from September to December 2021 on addressing the CoE's recommendations and questions.

In 2022, this revision was brought to the attention of the Standards Committee when it was initially submitted to Council. Standards were not aware this revision was in process, and we began working with GAES so they could develop a submission packet, which was received later that spring. For the last year, Standards and GAES leadership have been going back and forth with questions regarding the revision process and the content of the revision itself. In April 2023, we received an updated version of the document that contained formatting changes ONLY ([available through the Standards shared drive](#)), with no content changes. The Standards Committee has had an extensive discussion around this revision, as noted in the section below.

DISCUSSION

The following summary highlights key revisions in each of the GPAS major sections. The GAES also recommends several thematic revisions for the entire document:

- Aligning language more closely with the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) guidelines.

- Changing verbs to more prescriptive forms throughout the GPAS. For example, "...the curriculum should focus on core archival knowledge areas..." to "...the curriculum shall focus..."
- Including more focus on diversity and inclusivity within archival science.
- Updating the component areas and subsequent language to reflect contemporary archival theory and practice more.
- Reducing the delineation between areas of complementary knowledge.
- Reducing repetition within the GPAS.

From the Standards Committee perspective, this revision was discussed at multiple meetings, and we had several rounds of communication with GAES leadership. It was never our intention for this revision to be delayed, and as co-chair, I apologize for the long review, but our committee members raised substantial questions throughout the process. The revised summary in the attached is the third and final version that we most recently reviewed.

Since this revision was instigated using the "Fast track" option of the [Procedures for Review and Approval of an SAA-Developed Standard](#) (Section VI), meaning it was begun at Council's directive, and it did not start through the usual process, Standards found out about the revision well into the process and did not have opportunities to engage with the revision team from the start. Standards Committee considering how communication around fast-tracked revisions may be improved to prevent this situation in the future.

We would also like to suggest some topics/issues be addressed in the future revision, given our committee discussions for proposed revisions in general (we expect to be submitted some changes to the current procedures regarding expectations later this year) and this standard specifically. For the next revision, we recommend that there be:

- Additional discussion of managing digital records and digital materials
- Some focus on the importance and role of technical skills in our profession and how that might/should be addressed at the archival education level
- More emphasis on the role and impact of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as they relate to archival education
- Additional feedback sought from some specific constituencies, including active archival/library science graduate students and newer professionals who may have recently completed archival education

This is a much-needed update to the existing guidelines, and we appreciate GAES' work on the revision throughout our ongoing conversations and their commitment to improving education-related standards. The Standards Committee recommends that SAA Council approve the revised Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies and support its inclusion in the Standards Portal.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the SAA Council adopt the revised [Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies](#).

Support Statement:

Endorsement of the revised Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies will allow the new guidelines to be posted on the Standards Portal, shared via social media, and be freely accessible to professionals who need them, while providing much needed, updated information to graduate programs and archival professionals.

Impact on Strategic Priorities:

Endorsement of the revised Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies supports Goals 2, 3, and 4 by providing guidelines that reflect contemporary archival theory and best practices and updating an outdated standard.

Fiscal Impact:

No fiscal impact.