

# **CERTIFICATION URBAN PLANNERS**

## **LESSONS FROM INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS U.S.A., Canada and Australia**

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## URBAN PLANNERS

### 1a. CERTIFYING INSTITUTION

- The national association of urban planners generally is the certifying institution. This is the case in USA, Canada and Australia.
- It may be expected that those developing nations that already have an association, may have a much greater chance of success in implementing a certification system, than does who lack this type of institution.

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### 1b. Two Different Certifications

- The results of the international comparisons suggest that generally there are two systems of certification: One certifies planning schools and the other certifies practicing planners.
- Also, it usually is the same certifying institution, through its specialized units, that certifies the school and the planners. This is the case in USA, Canada and Australia.

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### 2a. Certification of Academic Programs

Generally two main requirements need to be met, which are:

- One, a Core Curriculum in Planning must be operating in the planning program, and
- Secondly, the program must meet the Visiting Board Requirements, as described in the a institution's review document.

This is the case in Australia, USA, and Canada.

## 2b. Certification of Academic Programs (Continuation)

- Certification generally involves several staff in different administrative and operational units within both the national and regional certifying institutions. This is the case in USA, Canada, and Australia
- It also includes representatives of the university, the planning program, the professors; and the students.
- In practice, several interested parties from both sides actually oversee the process.

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### 2c. Certification of Individuals

#### Main Requirements

- Candidates must hold a recognized degree in planning.
- Must have a minimum of two years of responsible professional planning experience.
- Must have successfully completed the examination to the satisfaction of the certifying institution.

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### 3. Areas of Specialization

- The findings do not suggest any common set of specializations. Typically, a standard classification is made between graduates with college, M.A.'s, and Ph.D. degrees.
- Exceptionally, some differentiation is made among urban planner who focus more on: (i) Urban and Regional Planning, (ii) Social Planning, (iii) Economic Planning, (iv) Urban Design, (v) Environmental Planning, and (vi) Transport Planning, such as in Victoria Province in Australia.

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### 4. Certification Process

- The certification process has historically started with the accreditation of planning programs in colleges and universities, rather than with the certification of individuals. This has been the case in USA, Canada, and Australia.
- Hence, it may be expected that developing nations that already accredit planning schools may have a much greater chance of success in the certification of individuals.

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### 5. Required Inst. Capacity

The certification system for individuals, as well as for institutions (the academic programs) relies on the institutional capacity of the association of professional planners, such as APA, CIP, and PIA in USA, Canada, and Australia, which are non-profit organizations.

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### 6a. Continuous Professional Learning

- CPL is a fairly new requirement among certified planners. It began in 2005 in Canada, in 2006 in Australia, and will start in January 2008 in USA.
- USA requires 32 credits within consecutive two-year periods, 18 yearly Learning Units in Canada, and 60 Points of Professional Development in two-year periods in Australia.
- Compliance with CPL is required to maintain the status as a Certified Planner.

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### 6b. Renewal of Certification

- It is generally based on compliance with continuing professional education (CPE), which makes renewal automatic, rather than being subject to a fixed expiration period and re-examination.
- Failure to comply with CPE/CPL generally means lost of the status, which requires re-certification (i.e., re-examination).

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# 7. Professional Recognition

- Certification is in the best interest of academic institutions, certified members, employers, and professional associations, since it allows setting and maintaining high standards for the profession. All stakeholders benefit from a system of recognition that operates under an independent, third party type of authority, as it does in USA, Canada, and Australia.
- Salary surveys in the USA have shown that certified planners earn higher income than non-certified planners.
- Certification and membership fees are generally tax deductible.

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# 8. Cost of Certification

- Generally, becoming certified includes the cost of becoming a member of the professional association. A typical fee structure may include a broad number of memberships, such as: Student, corporate member, fellow, retired member, resident and non-resident member, institutions and individuals; as well as one-time registration fees and the annual dues.
- In the USA, fees are equivalent to about half a percent (0.5%) of the annual salary of a CPP. For new professionals the annual fee is \$145 (APA \$70 and AICP \$75); and the cost of an AICP's Exam Prep & CD is \$150.
- In Canada, OPPI's membership ranges from \$203 to \$260.
- In Australia the one-time admission fee to become a member is \$65.00 and the annual membership is \$465.00.

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### 9. Quality Control

The quality of certification is generally warranted by:

- A transparent and objective review criteria for planning programs, and
- standard examinations for individuals, which are applied and overseen by the highest third party authority in the planning profession.

## URBAN PLANNERS

# 10. Inter-Jurisdictional Recognition

- In the USA there is national and, in some cases, state certification.
- In Canada there is an agreement of reciprocity with the USA regarding the recognition of planning programs in both nations.
- Certification for individuals is recognized all across Canada.
- In Australia recognition of both planning programs and individual is also nationwide.

Thank you

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