UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

Office of Assessment

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW GUIDEBOOK: For Programs with Programmatic Accreditation

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ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW TIMELINE:
For Internal Reviews Following a Reaccreditation Review

TIMELINE recommended*	**ACTIVITY**
January	• Provost's office notifies deans of their programs that are scheduled to undertake a review in the upcoming academic year. The email includes the guidebook and an offer of a workshop from the assessment office for completing the summary response and strategic plan. • Deans forward the message to their chairs/school directors (SD)/academic directors (AD)/program directors (PD).
By Aug 31	• Assessment office reminds deans of schedule and guidelines, which the deans then forward to their chairs/SDs/ADs/PDs. • Office of Institutional Research and Data Analytics (OIRDA) provides programs with five-year trends of relevant institutional data. • Assessment office provides a market analysis, as needed, on current and potential future new program offerings.
Months 1-4 from reaccreditation review	• Program collaborates with all pertinent stakeholders to complete the summary response and strategic plan, based on the findings of the self-study, accreditor review, and feedback from other pertinent stakeholders. • Assessment office and OIRDA assist as needed.
Month 5 from reaccreditation review	• Program submits draft summary and strategic plan to the dean, who reviews and approves it.
Month 6 from reaccreditation review	• Program submits the final summary response and strategic plan to the dean and associate director of assessment.** • Assessment office schedules meeting with chair/SD/AD/PD, provost, associate provost, dean, associate dean, associate director of assessment, and other pertinent stakeholders.
By Month 7	• Chair/SD/AD/PD, provost, associate provost, dean, associate dean, associate director of assessment, and other pertinent stakeholders meet to discuss and finalize the summary response and strategic plan.
After Month 7	• Chair/SD/AD/PD and dean (if applicable) implement strategic plan together with the program faculty and pertinent stakeholders.
Follow-up Progress Report	
Annually, Aug/Sept, after the program review	• Assessment office checks in with dean's offices to see if the deans need updates on their programs' strategic plans. • Dean meets with chairs/SDs/ADs/PDs, as needed, to discuss progress on their strategic plan.

* Deadlines of the steps in the program review process may vary, depending on the dates of the program's accreditation visit and/or receipt of the accreditor's feedback and report. A timeline will be established following a discussion.

** For colleges with one academic program, the dean or designee will provide leadership in the development and submission of the strategic plan.

PART I: PROGRAM REVIEW PURPOSE

Program review serves as one of the instruments the University of New England (UNE) uses to regularly evaluate its educational effectiveness and make plans for improvement. UNE's program review process involves a comprehensive analysis to evaluate and enhance the quality and currency of each program. Various levels of the institution—program, department/school, college/division, and university—use the program review's results to inform planning and improvement, budgeting and resource allocation, and overall quality assurance.

Programs with programmatic accreditation undergo regularly scheduled comprehensive accreditation reviews. However, the self-studies conducted for these reviews typically do not include the development of a strategic plan or a market analysis. Therefore, programs with programmatic accreditation will develop a strategic plan in the year following their external accreditor review.

According to Wolff (2006), "If done appropriately, program review provides a singularly effective way of addressing both the need for internal improvement and external accountability" (xii).

A. Program Improvement

Program review provides an internal structure and process to foster continuous program improvements that may include:

- Aligning program strategic plan with the college mission and university strategic plan
- Aligning program strategic plan to program learning outcomes



- Refining program learning outcomes for assessing student learning
- Making curricular and instructional changes to improve student learning and retention
- Refining, reorganizing, or refocusing curricula to reflect changes in the discipline or profession
- Refining curriculum map and measures for assessing student learning
- Reorganizing or improving student support systems, including advising, library services, and career readiness, to improve students' academic success in the program
- Designing needed professional development programs, including those that help faculty learn how to assess learning outcomes, increase pedagogical effectiveness, and improve curricular cohesion
- Reorganizing or refocusing resources to advance student learning and the curriculum
- Reassigning faculty/professional staff or requesting new lines
- Illuminating potential intra-institutional collaborations
- Informing decision-making, planning, and budgeting, including resource allocation
- Linking and aggregating program review results to the institution's broader quality assurance and improvement efforts

B. NECHE Accreditation Standards

While not the primary reason for conducting a program review, the increased scrutiny on the quality, cost, and value of higher education has led to heightened regulatory oversight to ensure that there is regular and ongoing institutional oversight of its programs. In this context, the New England Commission of Higher

Education (NECHE), UNE's institutional accreditor recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, specifies:

> The institution reviews its academic programs on a regular cycle, incorporates external perspectives when applicable, and uses the results for program improvement (2026, Standard 2.10).
>
> The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods, and direct and indirect measures, to assess its mission-appropriate goals for student learning and success and to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of its academic programs, student services, and co-curricular programs in achieving its mission and facilitating student success (2026, Standard 4.2).
>
> The institution regularly and systematically collects and analyzes data aligned with its mission and uses the findings to identify and address areas for improvement (2026, Standard 4.3).

C. Preparing for the Program Review

As programs begin working on their summary response and strategic plan, it is important to continue to refer to the academic program review timeline (p. 1), which lays out the key steps in the process. Typically, the program review's steps extend over one semester.

- **The semester following reaccreditation**: Program collaborates with its faculty and other pertinent stakeholders to complete a summary response to its accreditor's report and a strategic plan, gets the materials approved by its dean's office, and sends them to the associate director of assessment. Finally, the key stakeholders (e.g., chair/SD/AD/PD, provost, associate provost, dean, associate dean, and associate director of assessment) meet to discuss and wrap up the review.

PART II: SUMMARY RESPONSE

A. Internal Review following a Reaccreditation Review

The semester following their reaccreditation review, programs with an external accreditor should complete the following two steps for their internal review: (1) write a concise summary response (1-2 pages suggested) to the major findings from their self-study and external accreditor review, particularly the strengths and areas for opportunity, and (2) submit a strategic plan with revisions as applicable.

In the summary response, programs should address relevant curriculum, programmatic, or staffing concerns, whether or not they are identified by the accrediting body, that are related to the ongoing success of the program. This summary response should provide the context and serve as the foundation for the program's strategic plan.

See Part III (below) for a discussion on the strategic plan, the second step in the internal review.

B. Internal Review at the Midpoint of a Reaccreditation Review

Programs with programmatic external accreditors that undergo a reaccreditation review every seven or more years must undergo an internal review at the midpoint or halfway mark of their scheduled reaccreditation review. The program's dean's office, in collaboration with the provost's office and the Office of Assessment, will decide the specific details of each midpoint review. Generally, in the spirit of UNE's internal program review process, the program needs to submit to the Assessment office and the provost's office: (1) a 1-2-page summary report with 2-3 strengths of the program, 2-3 opportunities, and any other

significant information, a recent annual report to its accreditor, and/or recent data sent to its accreditor; and (2) an update on its strategic plan or action items from its last report.

See Part III (below) for a discussion on the strategic plan, the second step in the internal review.

PART III: STRATEGIC PLAN

The program review process will conclude with an evidence-based strategic plan for the program. The strategic plan should be based on and reflect on the findings derived from the external review, programmatic and institutional data, relevant market analysis, and discussions with and feedback from other pertinent stakeholders. The strategic plan should also align with the college mission and university strategic plan.

At minimum, the program's strategic plan should follow the structure and level of detail of the university strategic plan, including: (a) Mission, (b) Vision, (c) Core Values, (d) Strategic Priorities, (e) Prioritized Goals, (f) Initiatives/Strategies, and (g) Action Items.

Departments or schools with more than one program may decide to create a strategic plan for each of their programs or that encompasses the entire department or school, or, for example, establish a common mission, vision, and core values, and separate strategic priorities, prioritized goals, initiatives/strategies, and action items.

The strategic plan should ultimately facilitate departments/schools to agree on the future direction of their programs and the values and goals they want to fulfill. While it should include appropriate planning to position the program for the next reaccreditation review, the strategic plan should go beyond the components of accreditation and envision future collaborations, innovations, and actions to further benefit the students, the program, the college, and the university.

(a) Mission: The mission statement should describe, in honest, authentic, and concise prose, the program's present-based purpose, i.e. the reasons it exists, within the context of the UNE mission.

(b) Vision: The vision statement should describe, in a concrete and concise manner, the program's future-based, long-term ambitions and aspirations by articulating the direction and path it plans to take, the goals it seeks to carry out, the identity it wants to assume, and the impact it wishes to make on the students, the university, and the community. Situate the program vision statement within the context of the UNE vision; compose it in future tense; and organize it, if desired, into areas within the department, such as student majors and minors, and faculty research, scholarship, and service.

(c) Core Values: The core values should highlight, either in paragraph form or numbered/bullet points, the program's set of qualitative attributes that characterize and guide its ethos, principles, and standards. The core values convey the behaviors and qualities that the program values, expects, and exemplifies, within the context of the UNE core values, serve as the basis for decision-making, and underpin the program mission, vision, strategic priorities, prioritized goals, initiatives/strategies, and action items. A program can value, for instance, student-centeredness, collegiality, academic excellence, health and wellness, and lifelong learning.

(d) Strategic Priorities: The program's strategic priorities are a collection of overarching areas of focus that should include a brief description and vision statement, like the UNE strategic priorities, and align with and be mapped to the UNE strategic priorities where possible. Reference the number of each of UNE's strategic priorities that aligns with the program's strategic priorities (see Appendix A for template). The program can also include other priorities that do not directly map to UNE's strategic priorities, if needed.

(e) Prioritized Goals: Under each strategic priority, the program should list measurable short-term (1-2 years) and long-term (3-5 years) prioritized goals.

(f) Initiatives/Strategies: Under each goal, the program should list various initiatives and/or strategies it will implement to achieve each related goal.

(g) Action Items: Then, under each initiative/strategy, the program should list concrete, achievable, and measurable action items that it will carry out to fulfill (d), (e), and (f).

Sections (d), (e), (f), and (g) of the strategic plan should address all concerns identified in the summary response, the self-study that was undertaken for the external review, and by the external accreditor. Additional topics to consider are as follows:

Demand for the Program/Market Analysis: What makes the program unique? Why do students choose to major/minor in the program? How does the program distinguish itself in the market? How does it compare to similar programs at other institutions? How does it compare to professional standards?

Evidence **might** include:

- Trends in student applications, admits, and enrollments over a five-year period
- Trends within the profession, local community, region, and/or nation on the anticipated need for this program in the future
- The program's effort to recruit new students
- Internal demand for the program and/or the support it offers to other programs
- Credit-hour production for the program (which includes majors and non-majors)

Allocation of Resources: Does the program have the support it needs? Has the program set and/or met its benchmark goals for resources? Are there a sufficient number of faculty, student support services, information and technology resources, facilities, professional staff, and/or financial resources to maintain program quality?

Evidence **might** include:

Student support

- Academic and career advising programs, practices, and resources
- Tutoring, supplemental instruction, and T.A. training
- Basic skill remediation
- Support for connecting program learning outcomes to general education outcomes
- Orientation and transition programs
- Financial support (scholarships, fellowships, teaching assistantships, etc.)
- Support for engagement in the campus community
- Support for non-cognitive variables of success, including emotional and psychological
- Support for research or engagement in the community beyond campus, such as fieldwork or internships

Faculty support

- FTE faculty to credits taught
- Student-faculty ratio
- Faculty workload

- Faculty review and evaluation processes
- Mentoring processes/program
- Professional development opportunities and resources (including travel and research funds)
- Sufficient time for course development and teaching, and professional development (e.g., research, writing, and conference presentations)

Information and technology resources

- Library print and electronic holdings in the program's teaching and research areas
- Resources to support information literacy outcomes
- Technology resources to support the pedagogy and research in the program
- Technology resources to support students' needs

Facilities

- Classroom space
- Instructional and/or research laboratories
- Office space
- Student study spaces
- Access to classrooms suited for instructional technology
- Access to classrooms designed for alternative learning styles

Professional Staff

- Administrative and technical FTE professional staff supporting program, departmental and/or school operations

Financial resources

- Operational budget (revenues and expenditures) and trends over a five-year period

The chair/SD/AD/PD then submits the summary response, strategic plan, and any other pertinent documents to the provost, dean, and associate director of assessment.

PART IV: WRAP-UP MEETING

Once the program completes its self-study, external review, and strategic plan, and receives approval from its dean's office, the chair/SD/AD/PD sends the materials to the associate director of assessment who then schedules a wrap-up meeting. The wrap-up meeting brings together the provost, dean, associate provost, associate dean, chair/SD/AD/PD, associate director of assessment, and any other stakeholders.

Before the meeting, the associate director of assessment will ask the invitees (1) if other stakeholders need to attend (e.g., representatives from Admissions or the Registrar), and (2) the topics that the chair/SD/AD/PD should prepare to address. To ensure a meaningful and productive meeting, the associate director of assessment will also ask the chair/SD/AD/PD to open with a ten-minute high-level summary of the review that includes the program's key findings, successes, challenges, and opportunities that are connected to enrollment, retention, and/or learning outcome trends. The meeting will then move into a discussion on the review.

PART V: REGULAR CHECK-INS FOLLOWING THE REVIEW

Program reviews for programs with programmatic accreditation generally run on a seven or more years-long cycle. Thus, in the years between a program's review, its dean's office, in collaboration with the Assessment office, will regularly check in to get updates on its strategic plan.

Throughout their review cycle, programs should regularly evaluate their strategic plan. For various unforeseen reasons, they might need to add, revise, or remove a component of their strategic plan. For instance, after a year or more of implementing its strategic plan, a program might need to change direction, remove one of its strategic priorities, and/or add a different one. That process thus might involve revising the prioritized goals, initiatives/strategies, and action items that fall under each strategic priority. Or, a program might keep its strategic priorities but revise its action items.

The Assessment office will check in with the dean's offices annually, early in the fall semester (August/September), to see if they need to remind programs of the action items they are working on that year. Each dean's office will then decide if/when it needs to check in with programs. Because each program differs, for instance, the deans should decide which school/department/program needs an annual check-in and which needs a biennial check-in. The check-in provides an opportunity for deans to regularly discuss with their chairs/SDs/ADs/PDs their strategic plans. Since programs tend to undergo changes and leadership transitions over the years, the check-in ensures that they continue working toward their goals.

The Assessment office recommends that each dean's office encourages its programs to regularly record the progress and modifications they have made toward their strategic plans. Each program can either create its own file, or the Assessment office will provide a standard spreadsheet for each program to record the updates.

The Assessment office recommends that each dean's office meets regularly with its programs to discuss:

- the scope of their work on their strategic plans;
- the length of time that programs need to complete each action item;
- the resources programs need to complete each action item;
- the progress they have made on each action item; and
- the modifications programs need to make on their strategic plan.

The Assessment office also encourages chairs/SDs/ADs/PDs to engage in regularly scheduled meetings with their faculty/department/school to discuss the work needed toward achieving their goals. The Assessment office will keep track of the program review schedule and contact the deans as each program reaches its cycle and will need to undergo its next comprehensive program review.

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APPENDIX A:
STRATEGIC PLAN TEMPLATE

[Program/Department/School] Strategic Plan, YYYY-YYYY

Completed MMMM YYYY

**Format the program strategic plan the same way as the UNE strategic plan. The program/departmental/school strategic plan does not need to mimic the language of the UNE strategic plan. It should be program-/department-/school-specific but aligned to UNE's strategic plan.*

Mission:

Vision:

Core Values:

I. Strategic Priority (Aligned with UNE Strategic Priorities # & #)

Brief description, vision statement, or statement of significance

Toward these ends, we will:

1. **Prioritized Goal**
    - Initiative/Strategy
        - Action Item
        - Action Item
    - Initiative/Strategy
        - Action Item
        - Action Item
    - Initiative/Strategy
        - Action Item
        - Action Item
2. **Prioritized Goal**
    - Initiative/Strategy
        - Action Item
        - Action Item
    - Initiative/Strategy
        - Action Item
        - Action Item
    - Initiative/Strategy
        - Action Item
        - Action Item
3. **Prioritized Goal**
    - Initiative/Strategy

    - Action Item
    - Action Item
- Initiative/Strategy
    - Action Item

II. Strategic Priority (Aligned with UNE Strategic Priorities # & #)

Brief description, vision statement, or statement of significance

Toward these ends, we will:

1. Prioritized Goal

- Initiative/Strategy
    - Action Item
    - Action Item
- Initiative/Strategy
    - Action Item
    - Action Item
- Initiative/Strategy
    - Action Item
    - Action Item

2. Prioritized Goal

- Initiative/Strategy
    - Action Item
    - Action Item
- Initiative/Strategy
    - Action Item
    - Action Item
- Initiative/Strategy
    - Action Item
    - Action Item

III. Strategic Priority (Aligned with UNE Strategic Priorities # & #)

Brief description, vision statement, or statement of significance

Toward these ends, we will:

1. Prioritized Goal

- Initiative/Strategy
    - Action Item
    - Action Item
- Initiative/Strategy
    - Action Item
    - Action Item
- Initiative/Strategy
    - Action Item
    - Action Item

APPENDIX B:
PROGRAM REVIEW CHECKLIST

This program review checklist includes **recommendations** of key items to address in the summary and strategic plan for programs with programmatic accreditation. See Parts II and III (above) for a detailed description of the following items. **This checklist is neither comprehensive nor compulsory**. Rather, it aims to help programs put together an evaluative and reflective summary response and purposeful strategic plan.

Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
Part II: Summary Response, A: Internal Review following Reaccreditation Review			
Summary responds to the major findings from the self-study and accreditor review			
Summary response attends to items not addressed in the self-study and accreditor review			
Summary response provides the context and serves as the foundation for the development of the program's strategic plan			
Summary response evaluates program viability			
Summary response evaluates program sustainability			
Part III: Strategic Plan			
Strategic plan summarizes and addresses all concerns identified in the summary response, self-study, and by the accreditor			
Strategic plan states the program's mission, which aligns with the UNE mission			
Strategic plan states the program's vision, which aligns with the UNE vision			
Strategic plan articulates the program's core values, which align with the UNE core values			
Strategic plan states the program's strategic priorities, which align with the UNE strategic priorities			
Strategic plan maps the program's strategic priorities with the UNE strategic priorities, where applicable			
Strategic plan lists measurable, short- and long-term prioritized goals the program will take to fulfill each related strategic priority			
Strategic plan lists the initiatives/strategies the program will take to fulfill each related strategic priority and prioritized goal			

Strategic plan includes concrete, achievable, and measurable action items the program will carry out to fulfill each related strategic priority, prioritized goal, and initiative/strategy			