



INNOVATION FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

*Office of the Provost*

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**ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW  
GUIDEBOOK**

**GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES  
For Academic Programs  
With Specialized Accreditation**

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Last Revised: January 2019*

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW TIMELINE

TIMELINE (recommended*)	ACTIVITY
Within one month of report from accrediting body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Provost notifies Deans and/or Chairs/Program Directors (PDs) to create a summary and strategic plan, based on the findings of the self-study, external accreditor review, and feedback from other relevant stakeholders.</li> <li>• Associate Director of Assessment forwards the schedule, guidelines, and procedures, and offers a workshop on completing a summary response and strategic plan.</li> <li>• The Office of Institutional Research (IR) provides the program with five-year trends of relevant institutional data as needed.</li> <li>• IR assists as needed with market analysis relevant to current and potential future new program offerings.</li> </ul>
Months 1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program collaborates with all relevant stakeholders to complete the summary and strategic plan.</li> <li>• Associate Director of Assessment and IR provide assistance as needed.</li> </ul>
Month 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program submits the draft summary response and strategic plan to the relevant supervisor (Dean and/or Provost) and Associate Director of Assessment.<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Provost's office schedules meeting with Chair/PD, Provost, Dean, and Associate Director of Assessment.</li> </ul>
By Month 6	Chair/PD/Dean meets with the Provost, Dean (if applicable), and Associate Director of Assessment to discuss and finalize the strategic plan.
After Month 6	Chair/PD/Dean implements strategic plan together with the program faculty and relevant stakeholders.
<b>Follow-up Progress Report</b>	
Annually, following the approval of the strategic plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair/PD/Dean meets with the Dean and Provost, if applicable, to discuss progress on the strategic plan.</li> <li>• Associate Director of Assessment records the updates.</li> </ul>

\* 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.

<sup>1</sup> For colleges with one academic program, the Dean (or designee) will provide leadership in the development and submission of the strategic plan.

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## 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, 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 specialized 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 specialized accreditation will develop a strategic plan in the year following the 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" (p. 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/or 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/or measures for assessing student learning
- Reorganizing or improving student support systems, including advising, library services, and student development initiatives, 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/or 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. Compliance

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 federal, regional, and state 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 regional accrediting body, specifies,

*“The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its academic programs under institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies with established channels of communication and control. Review of academic programs includes evidence of student success and program effectiveness and incorporates an external perspective. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters” (2016, Standard 4.6).*

*“The institution integrates the findings of its assessment process and measures of student success into its program evaluation activities and uses the findings to inform its planning and resource allocation and to establish claims the institution makes to students and prospective students” (2016, Standard 8.10).*

## **PART II: SUMMARY RESPONSE TO THE ACCREDITATION REVIEW**

Programs with an external accreditor should begin their internal review with a concise summary response (1-2-pages suggested) to the major findings from their self-study and external accreditor review. 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. In other words, attend to aspects of the program that may or may not have been addressed in the accreditor’s review that have surfaced or may surface in the near future. Ultimately, this summary response should provide the context and serve as the foundation for the program’s strategic plan.

Consider addressing the program’s viability and sustainability at the university as well.

Evaluation of program viability typically addresses: the level of student demand for the program; the reasons students choose the program; the uniqueness of the program; the available faculty to support the program; and the overall relevance of the program.

Evaluation of program sustainability typically addresses: the program’s vision; the program’s internal management; the degree to which resources are allocated appropriately and are sufficient to maintain program quality and to support the program in achieving its mission, vision, core values, and learning outcomes; and the extent to which the program has and will continue to have the support it needs.

## **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 relevant 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 with more than one program may decide to create a strategic plan for each of their programs or that encompasses the entire department, 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 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, research, and writing

**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 operations

**Financial resources**

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

The Chair/Program Director then submits the summary response, strategic plan, and any other pertinent documents to the Provost, Dean, and Associate Director of Assessment.

Finally, the Provost's office schedules a meeting with the Chair/Program Director, Provost, Dean, and Associate Director of Assessment to discuss and finalize the strategic plan. (Programs can append their strategic plan to their annual budget proposals.)

## REFERENCES

- New England Commission of Higher Education (formerly New England Association of Schools and Colleges). (2016). *Standards for accreditation*. Retrieved from <https://cihe.neasc.org/standards-policies/standards-accreditation>
- Suskie, L. (2009). *Assessing student learning: A common sense guide* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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- Walvoord, B. E. (2010). *Assessment clear and simple: A practical guide for institutions, departments and general education* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges. (2016). *Resource guide for 'good practices' in academic program review: 2013 handbook of accreditation update*. Retrieved from <https://www.wscuc.org/content/program-review-resource-guide>
- Wolff, R. A. (2006). Foreword. In M. J. Bresciani, *Outcomes-based academic and co-curricular program review: A compilation of institutional good practices* (pp. ix - xiv). Sterling, VA: Stylus.

## APPENDIX A: STRATEGIC PLAN TEMPLATE

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### [Program/Department] Strategic Plan, YYYY-YYYY Completed MMMM YYYY

*\*Format the program strategic plan the same way as the [UNE strategic plan](#). The departmental strategic plan does not need to mimic the language of the UNE strategic plan. It should be department-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

### **2. Prioritized Goal**

- 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 specialized accreditation. See the *Academic Program Review Guidebook: Guidelines and Procedures for Academic Programs with Specialized Accreditation*, Parts II and III, 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
<b>Part II: Summary Response to the Accreditation Review</b>			
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			
<b>Part III: Strategic Plan</b>			
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			