

Specialized Accreditation of Academic Programs Procedures

University of Toledo
Office of the Provost

Principles

Program accreditation is vitally important to the University of Toledo. Having programs be accredited and licensed by the appropriate state or national governing bodies is necessary in order to recruit good students, to maintain our overall regional accreditation with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and most importantly because program accreditation is a vehicle through which we maintain and demonstrate program quality and excellence and keep pace with national trends in the field. Accreditation is not merely about compliance and checking boxes; it is a concrete manifestation of our commitment to provide our students with the highest quality education and training.

Responsibility for program accreditation is shared between the program faculty, the college in which the program resides, and the university as a whole. Each level has a part to play, and only by working together can we insure that our programs maintain their accreditation and achieve success for our students.

- The role of the program (embodied in the faculty and the Program Director/Department Chair) is to provide the necessary expertise and ongoing implementation of practices needed for accreditation. The Program Director/Department Chair is the front-line manager of the accreditation process, supported by the faculty and staff in the program who are doing the work, gathering the data, and participating in the day-to-day operations and decisions of the program.
- The role of the college (embodied in the Office of the Dean) is to provide oversight and support to the program, to insure a sufficient allocation of resources to meet the program's needs, and to advocate on behalf of the program to the university. The Dean is aware of the program's status and progress on an ongoing basis and works with the Program Director/Department Chair to advance goals and maintain alignment with accreditation and licensure standards.
- The role of the university (embodied in the Office of the Provost) is to provide coordination, oversight and support to all academic programs, and support to the Deans in particular. The Provost's Office speaks with the voice of the university to outside entities, including the HLC, and is responsible for maintaining the integrity and coherence of the university as a whole. The Provost works with the Deans to allocate resources as needed to support, maintain, and advance academic programs, and advocates for programs, colleges, and faculty as part of the university's Senior Leadership Team. Finally, the Provost's Office manages the process of program accreditation to make sure that actions are taken in a timely fashion at all levels. As articulated in HLC policy, *Pursuant to Commission Policy COMM.C.10.020, Relationships with External Agencies, it is HLC's expectation that institutions will remain in good standing with all accreditation and regulating bodies to which they belong.*

This document lays out a process to provide guidance to each of these levels, so that everyone can know their responsibility and coordinate their efforts toward the success of the whole. This guidance provides for a smoothly-running process when fully executed, and allows the university to identify problems and deficiencies early so that corrective action can be taken where needed, before accreditation is threatened.

Program Responsibilities

Program faculty, led by the Program Director/Department Chair, have the primary day-to-day responsibility of managing and delivering the program to their students. As such, it is their work that is the primary subject of the accreditation process. The first responsibility of every accredited program, therefore, is to conduct their work in accordance with the standards laid out by their accrediting body.

Beyond this, programs have several other key responsibilities:

- The Program Director/Department Chair must keep a current, working knowledge of accreditation standards, requirements, procedures, and timelines. She or he should also be an active participant in ongoing reviews of accreditation standards at the national level.
- The timeline and calendar of accreditation must be kept up to date through at least the next accreditation cycle into the future, and this information must be communicated to the Dean and the Provost.
- The Program Director/Department Chair is responsible for insuring that the necessary data is gathered on an ongoing basis, that the data is analyzed appropriately, and that the results of that analysis are used on a regular basis to inform decisions within the program. This includes making timely and well-articulated requests to Institutional Research.
- The Program Director/Department Chair supports the faculty in the necessary tasks of data gathering and analysis, and leads the faculty in the process of continuous monitoring and improvement of the program.
- The Program Director/Department Chair leads the effort to produce self study documents and other reports as needed by the accreditation process, and speaks on behalf of the program to the college and the university.
- The Program Director, as the primary voice of the program, communicates regularly and in a timely fashion with the Dean regarding the accreditation process. This includes sharing drafts of self study reports and other documents far enough ahead of external deadlines to allow for discussion and feedback. This also includes alerting the Dean to important and impending changes so that appropriate action can be taken before problems arise.

College Responsibilities

The college's primary responsibility, exercised through the Office of the Dean, is to support the program. This includes monitoring the program's progress and providing managerial oversight as well as allocating resources so that the program can do its work efficiently and effectively in service of its students. The Dean's role in the accreditation process falls within these managerial and allocation tasks. Thus, the Dean's responsibilities in program accreditation include:

- The Dean will be aware of which programs in the college are externally accredited and what the timelines, calendars, and general accreditation requirements of those programs are.
- The Dean will provide timely feedback and response to accreditation self study reports and other documents provided by the Program Director.

- The Dean will forward copies of all correspondence with external accreditation agencies to the Office of the Provost to ensure that institutional records regarding program accreditation are complete and up to date.
- The Dean will include considerations of accreditation in ongoing discussions with the program about resource allocation and strategic direction. The Dean should also alert the Provost (below) when there are upcoming decisions about resources that affect accreditation.
- The Dean will make timely decisions about resource allocations in order to maintain the program's accreditation.

University Responsibilities

To entities outside the university, UT is a single institution that should speak with one voice. In academic affairs, that voice is exercised by the Office of the Provost. It is also the responsibility of the Provost to support the Deans, much as the Deans support their programs, in management and resource allocation. As such, the Provost's responsibilities in program accreditation include these:

- The Office of the Provost will maintain a university-wide project management software system for program accreditation processes. This system will include a list of all programs that are externally accredited and the timelines, calendars, and general accreditation requirements of those programs. The system will generate regular and timely communications to both the Program and College levels with reminders of needed actions, and will keep track of the progress of each accreditation process as it moves through the necessary steps.

This system will maintain copies of program and college correspondence with all external accrediting organizations including self study, interim, monitoring and/or mid-cycle reports as well as communications regarding decisions about accreditation status or changes in status.

- The Office of the Provost will provide timely feedback and response to accreditation self study reports and other documents provided by the Dean. This feedback will primarily focus on the process and broad principles of accreditation, as expertise on the specifics of the field resides within the program and its faculty.
- The Provost will include considerations of accreditation in ongoing discussions with the college about resource allocation and strategic direction.
- The Provost will make timely decisions about resource allocations to the college in order to maintain the program's accreditation.

Timelines and Calendars

Program accreditation process involve various steps and calendars, no two exactly alike. Most processes, however, share certain elements in common. For those common elements, a timely process should keep to the following general timeline. Please note that the Office of the Provost requests that Deans submit documents for review at least two weeks in advance of submission to the accreditation agencies.

University Program Review and the Preparation & Submission of Self Study and other Documents

The University reviews all of its academic programs on a regular basis. The process of program review includes gathering data and information, review of that data and information by both internal and external evaluators, and action plans developed and implemented in response to that review. This process is coordinated by the Office of the Provost in conjunction with the University Academic Programs Review Committee.

For accredited programs, it is important that this process be coordinated with accreditation cycles. Program review will turn up important issues ahead of time that can be addressed prior to accreditation self-study reports and visits. The program review process also gives programs an opportunity to make sure they are adjusting to changes in accreditation standards. To insure this coordination, programs that are subject to specialized accreditation or licensure requirements will undergo the Program Review process two academic years prior to their accreditation self-study & visit.

The table below outlines the timeline that programs show follow in integrating the program review and accreditation processes. Adjustments to this timeline may be necessary in some cases – where such adjustments are needed, they must be communicated and agreed to by the program, the Dean, and the Provost.

<u>Action</u>	<u>Timeline</u>
Program Review Process (includes consideration of how the last accreditation report was addressed)	2 years prior to accreditation self-study
Follow-Up Meeting: Review Progress, Begin Process of Preparing for Accreditation	12 months prior to accreditation self-study
First Draft of Self-Study Produced, Shared with Dean (Dean shares with Provost)	40 Working Days prior to Deadline
Feedback & Suggestions provided by Dean	20 Working Days prior to Deadline
Second/revised Draft Incorporating Dean Feedback & Suggestions (Dean shares with Provost)	10 Working Days prior to Deadline
Final Submission Approved by Dean	5 Working Days Prior to Deadline
Final Submission Approved by Provost	3 Working Days Prior to Deadline
Submission to Accrediting Body	Deadline (set by Accrerator)
Follow-Up Meeting after Findings of Accreditation Process	Within 20 Working Days after Accreditation Report
Follow-Up Meetings on Action Items	1 Year and 3 Years after Accreditation Report