



New England Commission of Higher Education

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Procedure for the Review of Educational Effectiveness Reports and Student Success Outcomes Response Reports

When the Commission has concerns related to student learning and success identified during its review of an institution that may adversely affect that institution's continued compliance with the *Standards for Accreditation*, particularly the standard on *Educational Effectiveness*, an Educational Effectiveness Report may be requested.

As an additional monitoring measure of academic quality, the Commission conducts an annual review of every candidate and member institution's graduation, retention, transfer, and total success rate data. For two-year institutions, the results are compared to the national mean for two-year institutions; for four-year institutions, the results are compared to the national mean for four-year institutions. Should one of the following apply, the institution will be asked to prepare a Student Success Outcomes Response Report:

1. the institution's 150% total success rate is one standard deviation or more below the national mean; or
2. two of the institution's other three student success measures (i.e., 150% graduation rate, retention rate, transfer rate) fall one standard deviation or more below the national mean.

The following guidance is designed to assist reviewers of Student Success Reports and Student Success Outcomes Response Reports in determining appropriate recommendations to the Commission:

Components of an Educational Effectiveness Report

Reporting institutions are asked to submit:

1. A narrative discussion of the student populations the institution serves.
2. The institution's analysis of its multi-year student success metrics and its goals, including but not limited to its defined measures of graduation, retention, transfer, and student success.
3. Summary of the efforts and initiatives implemented or planned to improve student learning and success at the institution.

Components of a Student Success Outcomes Response Report

Reporting institutions are asked to submit:

1. A narrative discussion of the institution's student populations.

2. The institution's metrics and goals for and an analysis of its multi-year student success metrics, particularly its graduate, retention, transfer, and student success.
3. Additional student success data sources for the identified cohort, as well as multi-year trend data for these other sources, as applicable, along with an analysis of this data.
4. An explanation of any special circumstances about why the rate(s) for this cohort is not higher.
5. Efforts now being undertaken by the institution to improve the success of students in achieving their goals, particularly degree attainment. If available, this will include data about the efficacy of these measures (e.g., data to indicate that graduation rates and other measures of success are higher for subsequent cohorts).
6. Additional efforts underway or planned that aim to increase student success.

Role of the Student Success Committee

Review of Educational Effectiveness and Student Success Outcomes Response Reports is undertaken by a committee of experienced academic leaders and institutional researchers, chaired by a Commissioner. To facilitate careful analysis, institutional reports are assigned to two committee members, designated as first and second reviewers, who review the report and make recommendations to the Commission for any follow-up action and/or reporting.

Reviewers are asked to analyze carefully the content of the reports and supporting materials, and to confer with one another prior to the meeting regarding their findings and recommendation. The first reviewer is asked to complete a form with a brief summary of those findings as well as the reviewers' recommendation. The Reviewers' Recommendation Form is provided electronically to reviewers and, when complete, is emailed to Commission offices for distribution prior to the meeting.

When the committee meets, those designated as first reviewers are asked to report on their institutions providing a brief summary of findings together with the reviewers' recommendation. Other committee members, who will also have had the opportunity to read the materials from that institution, may then wish to ask questions leading to a general discussion of the institution and action on the reviewers' recommendation.

In analyzing Educational Effectiveness and Student Success Outcomes Response Reports, reviewers should keep in mind that the purpose of these reports is to provide the Commission an opportunity to monitor the educational effectiveness of institutions identified either through accreditation processes or through the analysis of graduation, retention, transfer, and success rates. Institutions struggling in these areas may face a situation now or in the near future that will prevent them from meeting the Commission's standard on *Educational Effectiveness*, which states:

The institution demonstrates its effectiveness by ensuring satisfactory levels of student achievement on mission-appropriate student outcomes. Based on verifiable information, the institution understands what its students have gained as a result of their education and has useful evidence about the success of its recent graduates. This information is used for planning and improvement, resource allocation, and to inform the public about the institution. Student achievement is at a level appropriate for the degree awarded (*Educational Effectiveness*, Statement of the Standard).

The institution provides clear public statements about what students are expected to gain from their education, academically and, as appropriate to the institution's mission, along other dimensions (e.g., civic engagement, religious formation, global awareness). Goals for students' education reflect the institution's mission, the level and range of degrees and certificates offered, and the general expectations of the larger academic community (8.2).

Assessment of learning is based on verifiable statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The process of understanding what and how students are learning focuses on the course, competency, program, and institutional level. Assessment has the support of the institution's academic and institutional leadership and the systematic involvement of faculty and appropriate staff (8.3).

The institution with stated goals for students' co-curricular learning systematically assesses their achievement (8.4). (See also 5.8, 5.20)

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods and direct and indirect measures to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students, employing external perspectives including, as appropriate, benchmarks and peer comparisons (8.5).

The institution defines measures of student success and levels of achievement appropriate to its mission, modalities and locations of instruction, and student body, including any specifically recruited populations. These measures include rates of progression, retention, transfer, and graduation; default and loan repayment rates; licensure passage rates; and employment. The institution ensures that information about student success is easily accessible on its website (8.6). (See also 2.2, 5.6, 9.22)

The institution uses additional quantitative measures of success, such as further education, civic participation, religious formation, and others, as appropriate to its mission, to understand the success of its recent graduates. Information from students and former students is regularly considered (8.7). (See also 2.2, 9.22)

The results of assessment and quantitative measures of student success are a demonstrable factor in the institution's efforts to improve the curriculum and learning opportunities and results for students (8.8).

The institution integrates the findings of its assessment process and measures of student success into its institutional and 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 (8.10).

The reviewers' analysis should focus primarily on whether the institution's student success metrics have stabilized and/or improved over time and whether there are systematic, sustainable assessment processes in place at the course, program, and institutional level, and whether or not the institution appears to have the means and ability to analyze its student learning and success data, identify areas for improvement, and develop and implement plans to achieve its goals for student learning and success.

In its action requesting reports, the Commission may indicate specific items to be addressed in the narrative section of the reports. Reviewers should give specific attention to these components in their summary of findings and conclusions.

Student Success Reviewers' Recommendations

Reviewers may make one of several recommendations for the disposition of reports:

1. *Accept the report and request no further reports.*

This recommendation should be made when the reviewers find that the educational effectiveness of the institution has improved to the degree that further annual monitoring will not be necessary. That is, the reviewers' recommendation should be based on some reasonable assurance that there is no significant challenge to the institution's ability to meet the standard on *Educational Effectiveness* prior to the time of the next scheduled Commission review.

2. *Accept the report and ask that the institution continue to report annually.*

This recommendation is appropriate when the reviewers conclude that continued monitoring is necessary. It should be based upon the findings that, while conditions at the institution have not deteriorated to the degree that a Notice of Concern, Notation, probation or withdrawal of accreditation ought to be recommended, the institution continues to have challenges regarding educational effectiveness. Also, the reviewers may conclude that annual reporting will encourage the institution to continue to strive for improvements in its processes and/or its student success metrics. As a part of this recommendation, reviewers may wish to specify areas which should be given particular emphasis in subsequent reports.

3. *Accept the report and recommend that the Commission issue a formal Notice of Concern.*

This recommendation is appropriate when the reviewers conclude that the institution is in danger of being found not to meet the Commission's standard on *Educational Effectiveness* if current circumstances or trends continue, and, as a formal Notice of Concern is not made public by the Commission, conditions do not yet warrant notice to the public. An institution issued a formal Notice of Concern will undergo an evaluation within two years to assess its

success in addressing the identified concerns. Ordinarily, institutions issued a formal Notice of Concern will also be asked to continue to submit Student Success Reports.

4. Accept the report and recommend that the Commission issue a Notation. This recommendation is appropriate when the reviewers conclude that the institution is in danger of being found not to meet the Commission's standard on *Educational Effectiveness* if current circumstances or trends continue and, as a Notation is public, conditions are such to warrant notice to the public. An institution issued a Notation will undergo an evaluation within two years to assess its success in addressing the identified concerns. Ordinarily, institutions issued a Notation will also be asked to continue to submit Student Success Reports.
5. Reject the report and ask that another be prepared. Reviewers should make this recommendation if they find that the Student Success or Student Success Outcomes Response report was so inadequately prepared that it does not contain accurate or sufficient information to permit conclusions to be drawn about the institutional condition.
6. Defer action and ask that additional information be provided. This recommendation should be made when reviewers conclude that additional specific information is required before conclusions can be drawn regarding the institution's condition. This is not a situation where the report was poorly prepared, but rather that pertinent information may not be available prior to the Student Success Committee's meeting.
7. Accept the report and ask that the institution show cause why the institution should not be put on probation or why its accreditation should not be withdrawn for failure to meet the Commission's standard on Educational Effectiveness. This recommendation should be made when the reviewers conclude that the institution's student success and educational effectiveness efforts have deteriorated to the extent that there is either a direct and immediate threat to the institution's ability to meet the criteria for accreditation, or that there is reason to believe it does not now meet them and thus probation or withdrawal of accreditation should be considered by the Commission. In such cases, due process requires that the institution be afforded the opportunity to meet with the Commission before action is taken.

Commission Decision: Following the Student Success Committee meeting, a written summary of the recommendations for action is prepared and distributed to the Commission for its consideration and action at its next regularly scheduled meeting.