

**Accreditation, General Education, and Assessment:
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New England Association of Schools and Colleges

- Regional accrediting association for the six New England States
- Established in 1885
- Comprises 6 Commissions that accredit independent and public, elementary, secondary, vocational-technical and post-secondary institutions in New England and abroad

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

- Accredits 245 colleges and universities in New England and five countries abroad
- 23 Commissioners; 8 staff members
- Compact geography; wide institutional diversity; preponderance of independent institutions
- Eleven *Standards for Accreditation*; revised in 2006

The Academic Program Standard includes expectations for general education

The general education requirement is coherent and substantive. It embodies the institution's definition of an educated person and prepares students for the world in which they will live. The requirement informs the design of all general education courses, and provides criteria for its evaluation, including the assessment of what students learn. (4.15)

The general education requirement in each undergraduate program ensures adequate breadth for all degree-seeking students by showing a balanced regard for what are traditionally referred to as the arts and humanities, the sciences, including mathematics, and the social sciences. General education requirements include offerings that focus on the subject matter and methodologies of these three primary domains of knowledge as well as on their relationships to one another. (4.16)

The institution ensures that all undergraduate students complete at least the equivalent of forty semester hours in a bachelor's degree program, or the equivalent of twenty semester hours in an associate's degree program in general education. (4.17)

Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English; the ability for scientific and quantitative reasoning, for critical analysis, and logical thinking; and the capacity for continuing learning, including the skills of information literacy. They also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific, historical, and social phenomena, and a knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind. (4.18)

... and for student learning

The institution publishes the learning goals and requirements for each program. Such goals include the knowledge, intellectual and academic skills, and methods of inquiry to be acquired. In addition, if relevant to the program, goals include creative abilities and values to be developed and specific career-preparation practices to be mastered. (4.4)

The institution ensures that students use information resources and information technology as an integral part of their education. The institution provides appropriate orientation and training for use of these resources, as well as instruction and support in information literacy and information technology appropriate to the degree level and field of study. (4.6)

Students completing an undergraduate or graduate degree program demonstrate collegiate-level skills in the English language. (4.7)

Undergraduate degree programs are designed to give students a substantial and coherent introduction to the broad areas of human knowledge, their theories and methods of inquiry, plus in-depth study in at least one disciplinary or interdisciplinary area. (4.13)

Expectations for student learning reflect both the mission and character of the institution and general expectations of the larger academic community for the level of degree awarded and the field of study. These expectations include statements that are consistent with the institution's mission in preparing students for further study and employment, as appropriate. (4.46)

The institution ensures that students have systematic, substantial, and sequential opportunities to learn important skills and understandings and actively engage in important problems of their discipline or profession and that they are provided with regular and constructive feedback designed to help them improve their achievement. (4.49)

... and for assessment

The institution implements and supports a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on education improvement through understanding what and how students are learning through their academic program and, as appropriate, through experiences outside the classroom. This approach is based on a clear statement or statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. (4.44)

The institution's approach to understanding student learning focused on the course, program, and institutional level. Data and other evidence generated through this approach are considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students. (4.45)

The institution uses a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to understand the experiences and learning outcomes of its students. Inquiry may focus on a variety of perspectives, including understanding the process of learning, being able to describe student experiences and learning outcomes in normative terms, and gaining feedback from alumni, employers, and others situated to help in the description and assessment of student learning. The institution devotes appropriate attention to ensuring that its methods of understanding student learning are trustworthy and provide information useful in the continuing improvement of programs and services for students. (4.50)

Standards on *Students* and *Public Disclosure* include expectations about reporting

The institution measures student success, including rates of retention and graduation and other measures of success appropriate to institutional mission. The institution's goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform recruitment and the review of programs and services. Rates of retention and graduation are separately determined for any group that the institution specifically recruits, and those rates are used in evaluating the success of specialized recruitment and the services and opportunities provided for the recruited students. (6.6)

The institution publishes statements of its goals for students' education and the success of students in achieving those goals. Information on student success includes rates of retention and graduation and other measures of student success appropriate to institutional mission. As appropriate, recent information on passage rates for licensure examinations is also published. (10.10)

The institution has readily available valid documentation for any statements and promises regarding such matters as program excellence, learning outcomes, success in placement, and achievements of graduates and faculty. (10.12)

New data forms: *Making Assessment More Explicit and Student Success*

Introduced in Spring 2008. Required of institutions submitting fifth-year interim reports starting in 2008; required of institutions undergoing comprehensive evaluations starting in 2009.

Assumptions:

- Greater regularity in reporting will benefit institutions, teams, the Commission, and the general public
- Goal is to stimulate greater coherence in institutional approaches and greater sharing among institutions
- Not every measure is appropriate for every institution; the system is best served when institutions can choose the measures and methods that best fit their approach
- Institutions are encouraged to compare their data with peers
- Trends in any measure are important

Making Assessment More Explicit (the E series) asks institutions to select and declare a basic approach to assessment and summarize the findings. Institutions are asked to report on student learning at the institutional level, for each degree program, and for general education (if an undergraduate institution). There are four possible alternatives:

- E1. Inventory of program assessment and specialized accreditation
- E2. Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA) plus program review
- E3. Statement of claims for student achievement and providing supporting evidence
- E4. Comparison to peers on measures of student achievement and success

Data Forms on Student Success (the S series) are used to present data on retention and graduation rates and other measures of success appropriate to the institution's mission. There are four forms:

- S1. Retention and graduation rates
- S2. Other measures of student achievement and success
- S3. Licensure passage and job placement rates
- S4. Completion and placement rates for short-term vocational programs

Questions included in the E series:

- Have formal learning outcomes been developed?
- Where are these learning outcomes published?
- Other than GPA, what evidence is used to determine that graduates have achieved stated outcomes?
- Who interprets the evidence? What is the process?
- How are the findings used? What changes have been made as a result of using the data?
- When was the most recent program (or general education) review conducted?
- How is an “external perspective” incorporated into program review?
- When is the next scheduled review?
- *For specialized accreditation:*
 - What accreditations are currently held?
 - When was the most recent review?
 - What issues were identified during that review?
 - What performance indicators are required by the accreditor?
 - When is the next review?
- *For peer comparisons:*
 - For each measure, what is the institution’s score?
 - For each measure, what is the peers’ score?
 - What changes are anticipated as a result of the comparison?

Items included in the S series:

- IPEDS retention and graduation rates
- Other retention and graduation rates appropriate to the institution’s mission
- Course completion, retention, and graduation rates for distance education students
- Course completion, retention, and graduation rates for branch campuses and locations
- Success of students pursuing higher degrees (if appropriate to mission)
- Rates at which graduates pursue mission-related paths (e.g., Peace Corps, public service law)
- Rates at which students are successful in fields for which they were not explicitly prepared
- Documented success of graduates achieving other mission-explicit achievements (e.g., leadership, spiritual formation)
- State licensure passage rates by program
- National licensure passage rates by program
- Job placement rates by program
- Completion and placement rates for short-term vocational training programs for which students are eligible for federal financial aid

The NEASC website (www.neasc.org) is currently undergoing revision. When the revisions are completed, these data forms will be available on the site. In the meantime, if you would like an electronic copy, please email me at pobrien@neasc.org