



MERRIMACK COLLEGE

## Undergraduate Academic Program Review and Evaluation Process Updated – September 2019

### Office of the Provost

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*Based on Recent Feedback and Critique from Faculty and Deans, this Template has been Partially Reorganized and Revised to Address the Issues Raised. These Changes and Revisions Do Not Impact the Overall Goals, Process, Timeline or the General Content of the Template.*

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#### Goals of Academic Program Review

Consistent with our mission to enlighten minds, engage hearts, and empower lives, the primary goal of the academic program review and evaluation process at Merrimack College is to promote excellence in teaching and learning in all programs.<sup>1</sup> Program review provides faculty and academic administration the opportunity to periodically examine: (1) the extent to which programs are meeting this goal; (2) the dimensions of programs quality; (3) program innovation and/or new program development; (4) alignment with the undergraduate student market; and (5) the adequacy and effectiveness of how College resources are being used to support these programs. The review process allows academic programs to reflect on their achievements, plan for the future, and insure that their activities are aligned with the College's mission and strategic plan.

The program review and the crafting of the self-study report are intended for four audiences: your own Program/Department; the School Dean; the outside evaluators; and the Provost's Office. Both the standards of the discipline and the NECHE Standards for Accreditation for Academic Programs (Appendix A) provide benchmarks for program evaluation that help establish program quality. Your review should:

- Describe and document the 5-year history of the program (as appropriate), current status, strengths, weaknesses, and goals for the next 5 years;
- Delineate how the program is striving toward effective and impactful practices as exemplified in the NECHE Standards for Accreditation, including with regard to assessment practices and curricular programming;
- Compare the program curriculum to peer and aspirant institutions in terms of quality, cost-effectiveness of delivery, and consistency with disciplinary standards;
- Review and evaluate how well the program(s) is aligned with the undergraduate student market and making recommendations on how to improve alignment; and
- Identify short-term and long-term resource needs for strengthening the program using assessment data on student learning, achievement and other evidence.

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<sup>1</sup> An academic program is a credit bearing unit typically designated in a degree as a major or minor. An academic Department may be responsible for several academic programs and it may make sense from an administrative perspective to combine all of a Department's programs in a single program evaluation process.

The review process should rely on evidence based review and assessment of effectiveness, and the use of mission driven strategic goals as the primary criteria for program evaluation. Therefore, in working on program review, the faculty of should keep in mind NECHE's description of a culture of assessment as cultivating within an institution:

*...a habit of inquisitiveness, both formal and informal, about its effectiveness, with a corollary commitment to making meaningful use of the results of that curiosity. In this way, deficiencies are recognized and corrected and processes to strengthen practice are identified and implemented. The effectiveness of the institution is thus improved.*

Given that the College's strategic goals give direction to its activities and provides a basis for the assessment and enhancement of the institution's effectiveness, the extent to which programs support and advance the College's mission driven strategic goals should be an important focus of the program review process. In addition, faculty conducting program reviews are encouraged to consider additional questions about their programs that they believe to be important.

### **The Review Process**

In consultation with the Deans of the Schools, the Provost will establish a sequence of Programs/Departments to be reviewed, and will confirm the Programs/Departments to be reviewed each year. For Departments who conduct programs reviews as part of a professional accreditation process, these two processes will be completely aligned so as to avoid duplication of efforts; an official accreditation review report is considered equivalent to completing a program review as outlined in this document.

When a program is designated to begin the process, in consultation with the Dean of the School, the Department chair will constitute a *Program Review Committee* of at least two full-time (preferably tenured) faculty members from the Department, including the Department chair. Departments may choose to have more faculty members on the Committee, including all members of the Department if so desired. If a Department has fewer than two full-time faculty members, the Dean of the School, after consultation with the Department/Program chair and the Provost, will appoint to its program review committee additional faculty member(s) from other Departments. It is especially important to have closely related or curricular-integrated Departments included in the Program Review Committee.

The Program Review Committee will identify potential external peer reviewers and assist the Dean in securing an external peer or peers, who will provide an external review. Funds to cover the costs associated with external review (\$1,500) and other significant costs will be provided by the Dean of the School (for a single external reviewer) and the Office of the Provost (for a second external reviewer).

The Program Review Committee will prepare a **Self-Study Report**. When the Program Review Committee does not consist of the entire Department, it will submit a draft of the self-study report to the faculty of the Program/Department for review, and will make any necessary and/or appropriate revisions on the basis of that review.

The Self-Study Report will be submitted to the external reviewer(s), who will examine the self-study, visit campus to collect additional information, and provide a written review to the Department/Program faculty. The members of the Department will prepare a response to the external review.

The Self-Study Report, the external review, and the departmental response will be submitted to the Dean of the School, who will discuss the program review with the Program/Department faculty. The Dean will then write a brief summary report and forward all the materials to the Provost with recommendations concerning the Program/Department and the implementation of any recommendations arising from the review process.

### **Annual Reports versus Program Review Self-Study**

The Departmental Annual Report and the Program Review Self-Study Report are designed to be aligned with each other. Annual Reports emphasize year-to-year changes and description/evaluation of a particular year. The Program Review emphasizes longer-term trends and changes. Graphical representations of change over time are helpful in that regard, and are highly recommended. In short, Annual Reports should look back over the last year; Program Review should use those “looks” and direct attention forward to improvement, growth, and development.

### **Elements of the Report**

The Complete Program Review package will have the following elements:

- The Self-Study Report, including documentation, data, and analysis (see below for structure, format and details)
- Departmental Annual Reports for up to the last 5 years or since the last Program Review, including appendices for those reports
- A peer/comparable institution comparison
- An aspirant institution comparison
- External peer review report
- Departmental response to the external review report
- Dean Response and recommendations to the Provost

**Program Review Schedule** (10-month Review Process) – Dates Listed are Targets

September 3	Provost and Deans notify Programs and/or Departments due to begin the self-study
September 15	Department/Program notifies Dean and Provost of the membership of the Self-Study Review Committee; Self-Study Review Committee receives data from Institutional Research
October 1	Self-Study Review Committee gathers relevant information and begins drafting the report
November 1	Department/Program submits to Dean a list of possible external reviewers/consultants and a list of relevant Department stakeholders
December 1	The external reviewer(s) is selected by the Dean and the visit is arranged
January 15	The draft report is reviewed by the Department faculty
February 15	The Self-Study is submitted to the Dean, and a copy is submitted to the external reviewer(s)/consultant(s)
March 15	A visit by the external reviewer(s) is completed by this date; the External Review Report is due 30 days after the visit
April 15	The External Review Report is reviewed by Department/Program and faculty write a response
April 30	The Program Review documents are submitted to the Dean
by May 15	Dean meets with the Department/Program faculty to discuss the Program Review and writes a summary report that includes recommendations to the Provost
by June 15	Provost meets with faculty and the Dean to discuss the Program Review results

**Brief Outline for Program Review Self-Study**

SECTION I. Program Overview, Enrollments, and Faculty Activity

- A. Basic Information
- B. Program Overview
- C. Enrollment and Retention Trends
- D. Teaching Activity
- E. Faculty and Faculty Scholarship and Related Activity
- F. Faculty Community Service

SECTION II. The Academic Program(s)

- A. Curriculum
- B. Peer and Aspirant Institution Analysis
- C. Professional Organization Recommendation (if applicable)
- D. Program Resources
- E. Faculty Development
- F. Program(s) Summary

SECTION III. Academic Program and Student Learning Assessment

- A. Assessing Student Learning Outcomes
- B. Program(s) Changes, Innovation, and Collaborations
- C. Summary: Progress on Assessment

SECTION IV. Five-Year Action Plan

Appendices

## Program Review Evaluation Template

### SECTION I. Program Overview, Enrollments, and Faculty Activity

#### A. Basic Information

Department Name:

Undergraduate Program(s) Name:

Self-Study Committee Members:

#### B. Program Overview

- Brief Program History
- Program Mission
- List of Undergraduate (and Graduate) Programs Offered
- How is the Program Aligned with and how does it Support the College's Mission?

#### C. Enrollment and Retention Trends

- Provide commentary on the enrollment trends data (provided), including majors, minors and service courses (including service to other majors and/or the Liberal Studies Core) over the past 3-5 years.
- Provide an evaluation of enrollment trends over the past 3-5 years in relationship to disciplinary/professional contexts, the undergraduate student market, and societal needs.
- What is the impact of current enrollment trends on the program and the School?
- Evaluate and comment on recruitment, application, and admission trends over the past 3-5 years (data provided).
- Evaluate and comment on retention and graduation data trends over the past 3-5 years (data provided).

#### D. Teaching Activity

- Review the reports on teaching activity from Institutional Research (up to the last 5 years). Comment on the reports regarding such issues as teaching loads, patterns of enrollment in particular courses of note, any areas of concern or triumph that you observe. The emphasis of your commentary should be on patterns and trends over the last 5 years.
- Comment on the level of use of adjuncts, the amount of release time and overloads by full-time faculty, etc. Where does the department use full-time versus part-time faculty? How are tenured versus untenured faculty deployed across the curriculum? Again, consider the pattern over the last 3-5 years, and evaluate its desirability.
- Discuss the faculty role in, and the evaluation of, student advising across the Department.

#### E. Faculty and Faculty Scholarship and Related Activity (See Section 8.7.2 in the Faculty Handbook)

- Provide comment on the profile of the collective faculty in terms of meeting the needs of the students and the program. This may include the academic qualifications, reputation, and experiences of the faculty as a whole, use and qualifications of adjuncts, congruence of faculty qualifications with program needs.
- Comment on the scholarly productivity of the collective faculty over the past 3-5 years as it contributes to the reputation of the program, meets program needs, contributes to student learning, and meets tenure needs and promotion guidelines.

#### F. Faculty Community Service (See section 8.7.3 in the Faculty Handbook)

- Provide highlights of Community Service activities by faculty members over the past 3-5 years.

## **SECTION II. The Academic Program(s)**

### **A. Curriculum**

- Briefly describe how the current curriculum was developed for your program(s). Who was involved in the process and what guided its development?
- Comment on the integration of experiential education activities into the curriculum (e.g., directed study, internships, study abroad).
- Please review *Appendix A* regarding NECHE’s accreditation Standard Four on academic programs

### **B. Peer and Aspirant Institution Analysis**

- In consultation with the Dean, identify 5-7 peer institutions offering relevant programs. Given that curriculum often differs between 4-credit and 3-credit based institutions, the institutions included should all be on 4-credit systems. How do your program’s curriculum, structure, learning outcomes, goals, etc., compare to those of the peer group?
- In consultation with the Dean, identify 5-7 aspirant institutions offering relevant programs. How do your program’s structure, curriculum, learning outcomes, goals, etc., compare to those of the aspirant group?
- Identify any potential growth areas.

### **C. Professional Organization Recommendations (if applicable)**

If your discipline has a professional organization(s) that makes recommendations for curriculum, please compare your curriculum with those recommendations. If your program has specialized accreditation standards that identifies a required or expected curriculum, curricular characteristics, and/or learning outcomes, provide evidence and commentary about the alignment of your program with those requirements or expectations.

### **D. Program Resources**

- Comment on the adequacy of dedicated budget resources for your program(s).
- Summarize information about your department staff and the staff structure.
- Comment on the adequacy of other program resources, including classroom and office space, laboratory space, library and technology resources, and personnel.

### **E. Faculty Development**

- What efforts have been made to support faculty seeking to improve the quality of instruction/student learning?
- How does the program support faculty research/scholarship? What additional support would be helpful?
- What type of mentorship activities do you engage for your faculty?

### **F. Program(s) Summary**

For each program and based on the results obtained under Section II:

- What were the key findings from your peer and aspirant analysis?
- Describe the top 3 to 5 strengths of your program.
- Describe the top 3 to 5 areas of enhancement and/or expansion over the next five years.
- Describe if and how programmatic offerings are aligned with student demand.
- Based on your programmatic analysis, please list 2 to 5 specific questions on areas on which you would like the external program reviewers to comment on and make recommendations.

## **SECTION III. Academic Program and Student Learning Assessment**

### **A. Assessing Student Learning Outcomes**

- List your program student learning outcomes and note when they were developed.
- Provide a curriculum map with each course in the major mapped onto program student learning outcomes.
- What evidence exists that students are meeting program outcomes?
- Review and comment on the DWF grade reports for introductory courses.
- Briefly describe what course level assessment techniques your Department engages in.
- What student satisfaction data collected and used to enhance the quality of the program (course evaluations, student rating of professors, focus groups, etc.)?
- Provide commentary on the Student Outcomes data (provided), including salary information.
- Provide information pertaining to the program's efforts to collect information from alumni, including a description of any survey methods and your interpretation of results.

### **B. Program(s) Changes, Innovation, and Collaborations**

- Describe the 5 most significant changes in the program, including innovations made to improve student learning, curriculum, and/or recruitment.
- What areas of potential collaboration exist for the program within your academic unit and across other academic units?
- How is the program advancing the state of the discipline or profession?

### **C. Summary: Progress on Assessment**

Given the evidence you considered in this section, summarize your Department's achievements in assessment and reflect on the efficacy of your assessment program.

- How are you working to build a culture of assessment?
- Outline what work you need to do to address any gaps and your plans to move forward on assessment.

## **SECTION IV. Five-Year Action Plan**

This section should describe in considerable detail how you plan to move this program to the next level, as well as explain how this action plan has been shaped by the key findings discovered in the self-study process.

- Based on the self-study, what goals and objectives have you set to advance excellence in teaching and learning over the next five years?
- How do these goals and objectives align with the college's strategic priorities and potential program growth?
- What is your vision for the Department /Program in the areas discussed in this report?
- What specific steps will you take to achieve these goals and who will be responsible for carrying out the components of this action plan?
- What kinds of support do you anticipate will be required to achieve your goals and objectives, and what other stakeholders will be critical in carrying out your plan?

## **External Program Review and Reviewer Commentaries Guidelines**

*To be completed by External Reviewers. Departments/Programs may also add additional questions for the external reviewers.*

### **SECTION I. Program Overview, Enrollments, and Faculty Activity**

*From the Self-Study Report, please (a) review each sub-section and associated commentary, and (b) provide your comments and recommendations based on sub-sections (A-F).*

*Provide a brief summary of your comments and recommendations regarding Section I.*

### **SECTION II. The Academic Program(s)**

*From the Self-Study Report, please (a) review each sub-section and associated commentary, and (b) provide your comments and recommendations based on sub-sections (A-F).*

*Provide a brief summary of your comments and recommendations regarding Section II.*

### **SECTION III. Academic Program and Student Learning Assessment**

*From the Self-Study Report, please (a) review each sub-section and associated commentary, and (b) provide your comments and recommendations based on sub-sections (A-C).*

*Provide a brief summary of your comments and recommendations regarding Section III.*

### **SECTION IV. Five-Year Action Plan**

*From the Self-Study Report, please (a) review the action plan, and (b) provide your comments and recommendations based on the proposed plan.*

## **EXTERNAL REVIEWER SUMMARY, FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND RATIONALE**

*Based on the entirety of the Self-Study Report and based on your site visit, please provide your comments regarding the following areas:*

- *Program strengths and weaknesses*
- *Potential areas of enhancement and growth*

*Please also provide your recommendations for the program and the rationale for your recommendations.*

## Appendix A. NECHE Standard Four



[https://www.neche.org/resources/standards-for-accreditation/#standard\\_four](https://www.neche.org/resources/standards-for-accreditation/#standard_four)

### STANDARD FOUR: THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM

**The institution's academic programs are consistent with and serve to fulfill its mission and purposes. The institution works systematically and effectively to plan, provide, oversee, evaluate, improve, and assure the academic quality and integrity of its academic programs and the credits and degrees awarded. The institution sets a standard of student achievement appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded and develops the systematic means to understand how and what students are learning and to use the evidence obtained to improve the academic program.**

*The following information is for undergraduate programs.*

4.1 The institution offers collegiate-level programs consisting of a curriculum of studies that leads to a degree in a recognized field of study and requires at least one year to complete. The institution for which the associate's degree is the highest awarded offers at least one program in liberal studies or another area of study widely available at the baccalaureate level of regionally accredited colleges and universities.

4.2 The institution publishes the learning goals and requirements for each program. Such goals include the knowledge, intellectual and academic skills, competencies, 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.

4.3 Programs leading to degrees or other awards have a coherent design and are characterized by appropriate breadth, depth, continuity, sequential progression, and synthesis of learning. Coherence is demonstrated through learning goals, structure, and content; policies and procedures for admission, retention, and completion; instructional methods and procedures; and the nature, quality, and extent of student learning and achievement.

4.4 The institution offering multiple academic programs ensures that all programs meet or exceed the basic quality standards of the institution and that there is a reasonable consistency in quality among them. The institution provides sufficient resources to sustain and improve its academic programs.

#### **Assuring Academic Quality**

4.5 Through its system of academic administration and faculty participation, the institution demonstrates an effective system of academic oversight, assuring the quality of the academic program wherever and however it is offered.

4.6 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.

4.7 The institution undertakes academic planning and evaluation as part of its overall planning and evaluation to enhance the achievement of institutional mission and program objectives. These activities are realistic and take into account stated goals and available resources. Additions and deletions of programs are consistent with institutional mission and capacity, faculty expertise, student needs, and the availability of sufficient resources required for the development and improvement of academic programs. The institution allocates resources on the basis of its academic planning, needs, and objectives.

4.8 The institution undertaking substantive changes (e.g., the initiation of degrees at a higher or lower level, off-campus programs, programs that substantially broaden the scope of the academic offerings, distance learning programs, correspondence education programs, competency- and mastery-based programs, contractual relationships involving courses and programs, academic programs overseas) demonstrates its capacity to undertake and sustain such initiatives and to assure that the new academic programming meets the standards of quality of the institution and the Commission's Standards and policies. In keeping with Commission policy, the institution initiating substantive changes seeks Commission approval prior to implementation. The institution recognizes and takes account of the increased demands on resources made by programs offered at a higher degree level.

4.9 When programs are eliminated or program requirements are changed, the institution makes appropriate arrangements for enrolled students so that they may complete their education with a minimum of disruption.

4.10 If the institution depends on resources outside its direct control (for example, classrooms, information resources, information technology, testing sites), a written agreement ensures the reasonable continued availability of those resources. Clear descriptions of the circumstances and procedures for the use of such resources are readily available to students who require them.

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

4.12 Expectations for student achievement, independent learning, information literacy, skills in inquiry, and critical judgment are appropriate to the subject matter and degree level and in keeping with generally accepted practice.

### **Undergraduate Degree Programs**

4.13 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 mastery of at least one disciplinary or interdisciplinary area. Programs have an appropriate rationale; their clarity and order are visible in stated requirements in official publications and in student records.

4.14 Each undergraduate program includes a general education requirement and a major or concentration requirement. At the baccalaureate level, curricula include substantial requirements at the advanced undergraduate level, with appropriate prerequisites. The institution also affords undergraduate students the opportunity to pursue knowledge and understanding through unrestricted electives.

4.15 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 capability 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.

### **The Major or Concentration**

4.19 The major or area of concentration affords the student the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in a specific disciplinary or clearly articulated interdisciplinary area above the introductory level through properly sequenced course work or competencies. Requirements for the major or area of concentration are based upon clear and articulated learning objectives, including a mastery of the knowledge, information resources, methods, and theories pertinent to a particular area of inquiry. Through the major or concentration, the student develops an understanding of the complex structure of knowledge germane to an area of inquiry and its interrelatedness to other areas of inquiry. For programs designed to provide professional training, an effective relationship exists between curricular content or competencies and effective practice in the field of specialization. Graduates demonstrate an in-depth understanding of an area of knowledge or practice, its principal information resources, and its interrelatedness with other areas.

### **Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit**

4.29 The institution's degrees and other forms of academic recognition are appropriately named, following practices common to American institutions of higher education in terms of length, content, and level of the programs. The institution ensures that minimum degree requirements are 60 semester credits at the associate's level; 120 semester credits at the baccalaureate level; and 30 semester credits at the master's level. The institution demonstrates restraint in requiring credits above the minimum for undergraduate degrees.

4.30 The institution offering competency-based programs, including through direct assessment, produces a transcript for each student showing the credit equivalencies of the competencies attained, in order to demonstrate the comparability of the program and provide students and graduates with transcripts facilitating evaluation of their achievements by other academic institutions and outside entities. Commission Standards and policies regarding the award of credit guide institutions offering competency-based programs to ensure that such programs are at least equivalent in breadth, depth, and rigor. The institution certifies the attainment of competencies for students who have achieved the stated objectives only at levels at or approaching excellence.

4.31 The institution offers required and elective courses as described in publicly available print and digital formats with sufficient availability to provide students with the opportunity to graduate within the published program length.

4.32 The institution demonstrates its clear and ongoing authority and administrative oversight for the academic elements of all courses for which it awards institutional credit or credentials. These responsibilities include course content, the specification of required competencies, and the delivery of the instructional program; selection, approval, professional development, and evaluation of faculty; admission, registration, and retention of students; evaluation of prior learning; and evaluation of student progress, including the awarding and recording of credit. The institution retains, even with contractual, dual enrollment, or other arrangements, responsibility for the design, content, and delivery of courses for which academic credit or degrees are awarded. The institution awarding a joint, dual, or concurrent degree demonstrates that the program is consistent with Commission policy and that the student learning outcomes meet the institution's own standards and those of the Commission.

4.33 The evaluation of student learning or achievement and the award of credit or certification of competencies are based upon clearly stated criteria that reflect learning objectives and are consistently and effectively applied. They are appropriate to the degree level at which they are applied.

4.34 Credit awards are consistent with Commission policy and the course content, appropriate to the field of study, and reflect the level and amount of student learning. The award of credit is based on policies

developed and overseen by the faculty and academic administration. There is demonstrable academic content for all experiences for which credit is awarded, including study abroad, internships, independent study, and service learning. No credit toward graduation is awarded for pre-collegiate-level or remedial work designed to prepare the student for collegiate study.

4.35 Credit for prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning is awarded only with appropriate oversight by faculty and academic administration and is limited to 25% for credentials of 30 credits or fewer. When credit is awarded on the basis of prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning alone, student learning and achievement are demonstrated to be at least comparable in breadth, depth, and quality to the results of institutionally provided learning experiences. The policies and procedures for the award of credit for prior or experiential learning are clearly stated and available to affected students.

4.36 Students complete at least one-fourth of their undergraduate credits, including substantial advanced work in the major or concentration, at the institution awarding the degree.

4.37 The institution that advances students through their academic programs through transfer or articulation agreements, prior learning assessment, credit recommendation services, or other extra-institutional arrangements evaluates the effectiveness of such arrangements to ensure student achievement in institutionally offered coursework validates the suitability of the credit awards.

4.38 In accepting undergraduate transfer credit from other institutions, the institution applies policies and procedures that ensure the credit accepted reflects appropriate levels of academic quality and is applicable to the student's program. The institution's policies for considering the transfer of credit are publicly available to students and prospective students on its website and in other communications. The information includes the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education along with a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements.

4.39 The institution protects academic quality and integrity in the acceptance of transfer credit and seeks to establish articulation agreements with institutions from which and to which there is a significant pattern of student transfer. Such agreements are made available to those students affected by them.

4.40 In accepting transfer credit, the institution exercises the responsibility to ensure that students have met its stated learning outcomes of programs at all degree levels. The acceptance of transfer credit does not substantially diminish the proportion of intermediate and advanced coursework in a student's academic program.

4.41 At the graduate level, the institution accepts credit in transfer on a strictly limited basis to preserve the integrity of the degree awarded.

4.42 The institution publishes requirements for continuation in, termination from, or re-admission to its academic programs that are compatible with its educational purposes. Decisions about the continuing academic standing of enrolled students are based on clearly stated policies and applied by faculty and academic administrators.

4.43 Graduation requirements are clearly stated in appropriate publications and are consistently applied in the degree certification process. The degrees awarded accurately reflect student attainments.

4.44 Faculty, with administrative support, ensure the academic integrity of the award of grades and certification of competencies, where applicable, and credits for individual courses. The institution works to prevent cheating and plagiarism as well as to deal forthrightly with any instances in which they occur. It works systematically to ensure an environment supportive of academic integrity.

4.45 The institution offering programs and courses for abbreviated or concentrated time periods or via distance or correspondence learning demonstrates that students completing these programs or courses acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies equivalent to those achieved in similar

programs offered in more traditional time periods and modalities. Programs and courses are designed to ensure an opportunity for reflection and for analysis of the subject matter.

4.46 Courses and programs offered for credit off campus, through dual enrollment, through distance or correspondence education, or through continuing education, evening, or weekend divisions are consistent with the educational objectives of the institution. Such activities are integral parts of the institution and maintain the same academic standards as courses and programs offered on campus. Faculty and students receive sufficient support for instructional and other needs. Students have ready access to and support in using appropriate learning resources. The institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of all programs and assures adequate resources to maintain quality.

4.47 All students, including those enrolled in off-campus courses, distance learning courses, correspondence education courses, and/or competency-based programs have sufficient opportunities to interact with faculty regarding course content and related academic matters.

4.48 The institution offering distance education or correspondence education has procedures through which it establishes that the student who registers for such a course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the program and receives the academic credit. In carrying out these procedures, the institution protects student privacy.

4.49 The institution offering certificates, badges, and other forms of academic recognition based on competencies or courses offered for credit ensures the coherence and level of academic quality are consistent with its degree programs.