

Program review checklist for higher education

Program review is one of the core processes institutions use to evaluate quality, effectiveness, and viability of academic programs, ensuring they are relevant and aligned with institutional mission.

Use this checklist to guide your next review cycle.



1. Planning & preparation

- Define the purpose, scope, and goals of the review.
- Identify stakeholders and assign responsibilities.
- Align criteria with accreditation standards (if applicable).
- Establish timelines and milestones.
- Determine required data and documentation.



2. Data collection & analysis

- Gather curriculum documentation and assessment results.
- Compile or request enrollment, retention, and completion data.
- Incorporate labor market insights to inform program review decisions and improve student outcomes.
- Review faculty performance data and evaluations to inform pedagogical improvement.
- Confirm data accuracy and access.



3. Evaluation & findings

- Identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- Compare outcomes to benchmarks or expectations.
- Document findings with supporting evidence.
- Connect results to program and institutional goals.



4. Action planning

- Define next steps based on findings.
- Set timelines and measurable outcomes.
- Assign ownership for each action.
- Align plans with broader institutional priorities.



5. Reporting & accreditation

- Document the review process clearly and consistently and maintain records for future review cycles and audits.
- Prepare materials and ensure alignment with standards for institutional and/or programmatic accreditation, or internal/state reporting.

How to improve program review processes

Improving program review often comes down to consistency, visibility, and scalability:

- **Centralize data and workflows:** Managing data, documentation, and workflows in one place reduces duplication and improves accuracy.
- **Standardize reporting cycles:** Consistent templates, timelines, and expectations help ensure each review follows a repeatable process.
- **Use technology to scale:** As programs and reporting requirements grow, technology can streamline data collection, simplify reporting, and maintain consistency, especially when paired with solutions like Watermark Faculty Success that support evaluating faculty performance, activity reporting, and credentialing.



How Watermark supports program review

Watermark helps institutions bring structure and visibility to the program review process.

With a more connected approach, institutions can:

- ✓ Manage planning, data collection, and reporting in one place.
- ✓ Connect outcomes, assessment, and decision-making.
- ✓ Maintain consistency across programs and review cycles.

The goal isn't just to complete reviews, but to make them more meaningful for decision-making.

A clear, consistent approach to program review improves both program review readiness and long-term program quality. When processes are structured, and data is accessible, teams can spend less time assembling reports and more time acting on insights.

Request a live demo today to see how easy it is to complete each step of the program review process with our centralized solution.

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