

Office of the Provost

Accreditation Protocol

For academic units applying for specialized professional accreditation and renewing specialized professional accreditation.

The New NAU Charter

VISION

NAU aims to be the nation's preeminent engine of opportunity, vehicle of economic mobility, and driver of social impact by delivering equitable postsecondary value in Arizona and beyond.

MISSION

NAU transforms lives and enriches communities through high-quality academics and impactful scholarship, creative endeavors, and public service.

COMMITMENT

NAU will educate, support, and empower students from all backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences to reach their full potential and contribute to a more just, equitable, inclusive, prosperous, and sustainable future.

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Purpose

This document sets forth the procedure for academic units seeking or renewing specialized accreditation for one or more of their programs. We want to ensure that the Office of the Provost can provide necessary and timely support in accreditation and reaccreditation processes. A second goal is to integrate programs with specialized accreditation into institutional strategic academic program review.

Policy

Arizona Board of Regents policy ([ABOR 2-225](#)), which requires review of all academic programs every seven years states:

“An accreditation review may be used to satisfy the requirements of this Policy only if the review meets all of the criteria established by the Board and the university.”

Therefore, if an accrediting organization does not require all areas of review required by ABOR and NAU (Table 1), a supplement to the specialized accreditation review addressing those areas is required by the Office of the Provost. Such supplements required by ABOR are reviewed by the College Dean, University Provost, and relevant Vice Provost(s) (i.e., for Statewide, Online, and/or Graduate programs), etc.), and the Associate Vice Provost for Curriculum, Assessment, and General Studies.

Table 1. ABOR and NAU Requirements for Academic Program Review

<i>ABOR Requirements (Policy 2-225)</i>	<i>NAU Requirements</i>
For both undergraduate and graduate programs in the unit, assess: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adequacy of physical and fiscal resources available to the unit• Quality of the faculty and staff• Research and scholarly or creative activities• Student performance• Outcomes of the program• Level of degree productivity• Plans and performance related to diversity in hiring of faculty and staff• Recruitment and retention of students from underrepresented groups	For both undergraduate and graduate programs in the unit, provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Description of academic unit• Context of academic programs• Progress & substantive changes since the previous review• Website accuracy• Trends for degree conferrals, student credit hours & enrollment• Alignment of multi-section courses• Service to other NAU programs• Student success beyond NAU• Curricular design• Systematic assessment of degree program student learning outcomes• Improvement efforts• Minor or Certificate purpose statement and learning outcomes• Review academic unit syllabi (all courses)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty composition • Teaching and mentoring • Research, scholarship & creative activities • Service & community engagement • Unit patterns of assignment of faculty effort to teaching, scholarship and service • Resources & governance • Strategic Questions • SWOT summary • Future goals
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Degree programs engaging in a discipline-specific [specialized accreditation](#) are reviewed in compliance with the standards and procedures established by the accrediting organization and following the accrediting organization’s calendar of review. When an accreditation review does not apply to all programs in an academic unit, NAU’s full academic program review (APR) process is required for the programs not covered by the accreditation. It is not necessary to do both reviews in the same academic year.

All costs associated with seeking or renewing specialized accreditation are the responsibility of the unit seeking program accreditation, or reaccreditation.

Steps for Seeking, or Renewing Specialized Accreditation

1. Intent

Units seeking first-time specialized accreditation or beginning a renewal process for specialized accreditation are required to email a short statement of intent and brief rationale to the College Dean and the Provost, with the Associate Vice Provost for Curriculum, Assessment, and General Studies (AVP-CAGS) cc’d. The email should also include a link to the accrediting organization and an anticipated broad timeline (i.e., Fall 2023 Letter of Intent; Spring 2024 Self-study; Fall 2024 Site Visit, etc.). The purpose for this email is to allow the Dean and Provost the opportunity to have a conversation with the Unit Leader about whether proceeding with accreditation or reaccreditation is in the interest of the University. The email will also ensure that the Office of the Provost has ability to provide necessary and timely support throughout the accreditation process.

2. Self-study

Prior to delving into the work of the Self-study, the program’s Unit Leader will email a list of the required contents (i.e., Table of Contents) of the Self-study to the College Dean and Associate Vice Provost for Curriculum and Assessment (AVP-CAGS). The purpose of for providing this list is to allow the Office of the Provost to assess whether any ABOR-specified review areas are not included in the

accreditor's requirements and to devise a plan and timeline with the Unit Leader for completing any necessary supplement sections.

Unit Leaders should also apprise the AVP-CAGS of any data needs at this time. Review the [Strategic Planning, Institutional Research & Analytics \(SPIRA\)](#) website for published data (e.g. Fact Book, Quick Facts, web reports) and inform the AVP-CAGS of remaining data needs. The AVP-CAGS will make any data requests to SPIRA and other campus offices on the unit's behalf. The *minimum* turnaround time for data from SPIRA and other campus offices is at least two weeks.

When working with a deadline, provide as much advanced notice as possible. Allow at least 2 weeks for the fulfillment of your request. SPIRA cannot guarantee same day/short notice data requests. Additional processing time may be needed depending on SPIRA's mandated reporting cycle, nature of the data being requested (which may be subject to approval), and volume of requests currently in queue.

Once the Self-study is complete and approved by the College Dean, the Unit Leader will send the Self-study to the AVP-CAGS for review. The purpose of the AVP-CAGS review is to focus on institutional-level information and offer institutional-level edits as appropriate. The Office of the Provost does not want to be an impediment to timely submission of a program's Self-study to its accreditor. Therefore, it is imperative that the AVP-CAGS is given a minimum of 5 days for review. After the Self-study has been submitted, please send it to the AVP-CAGS for the Office of the Provost's records.

If the program receives accreditor feedback on the Self-study prior to the accreditor's Site Visit, please forward this feedback and the unit's response to the AVP-CAGS before the response is submitted to the accreditor. There are times when it is necessary to have the Provost provide information for a response to feedback. The AVP-CAGS will ensure that the unit receives any necessary information from the Provost in a timely manner.

3. Site Visit

The Office of the Provost recognizes it is the accrediting body who often determines the timing of the program's site visit. As soon as the program has been made aware of the accreditor's site visit plans, they should email the AVP-CAGS who will assist with scheduling any required meetings with the Provost. Some accrediting bodies specify meetings with the President and in those cases the program should also contact the [Office of the President](#) immediately and specify

coordination with the AVP-CAGS so that all in attendance will have the requisite materials for a successful meeting.

In preparation for the Site Visit meeting(s) with the Office of the Provost, the unit leader will provide an **Executive Summary** to the AVP-CAGS who will attach it and provide a link to the program's Self-study to the meeting invite. In addition, the Unit Leader will provide a ½ to 1 page **Accreditor Description** that describes the organization and summarizes the value of its accreditation to NAU. If the program knows the names and affiliations of their external site reviewers, they will include these in the Accreditor Description with any available links to biographical information.

4. After the Site Visit

When the program receives the accrediting body's report of the site visit, they will make that report available to the AVP-CAGS. If a response to the report is required, they will provide the AVP-CAGS with a draft of their response to the accrediting body for the Provost's review. The AVP-CAGS will return Provost feedback to the unit in a timely manner.

5. Action Plan

If an action plan is required by the accreditor, the program may submit that action plan to the AVP-CAGS in fulfillment of this step. If an action plan is not required by the accreditor, in the semester following the site visit, the program will engage in an action planning process. If an accreditor provides a determination of "no action required," the unit will still engage in a future-oriented discussion of goals to work toward over the next review cycle and create an action plan.

The faculty may use a planning tool such as [SWOT](#) (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), or [NOISE](#) (Needs, Opportunities, Improvements, Strengths, Exceptions), or other method as appropriate in their discipline.

The action plan will be submitted to the College Dean who will review it with the Unit Leader. Following the Dean's approval, the Unit Leader will send the action plan to the AVP-CAGS who will schedule a leadership meeting with the Unit Leader, College Dean, Provost and relevant Vice Provost(s) for feedback. When the Unit Leader has incorporated the Office of the Provost's feedback, they will send the action plan to the AVP-CAGS for the Provost's files.

6. Annual Reporting

According to NAU's [Annual Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Requirements](#), by May 31st of each year, every program will submit an annual assessment report. If the program's accreditor requires annual, or biennial reporting, those reports may be submitted to the Office of Curriculum and Assessment in fulfillment of

their NAU annual reporting requirement. Please send to: curriculum.assessment@nau.edu or attach the report to the Qualtrics Form linked on the Annual Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Requirements webpage. Please consult with Stephanie.Winters@nau.edu if you have any questions.

7. Midpoint Review

Each program will review its action plan progress midway through their review cycle. The AVP-CAGS will provide updates to the College Deans and Unit Leaders that list which programs are due for their Midpoint Review. The AVP-CAGS and the Assistant Director for Assessment will orient programs undertaking Midpoint Review, provide guidelines, and specify a due date for the review. Upon completion and approval by the College Dean, the Midpoint Review will be submitted to the AVP-CAGS.