



September 24, 2025

From: Kevin B. Vichcales, Ph.D.
Associate Provost for Institutional Accreditation and Academic Effectiveness
SACSCOC Liaison

To: Deans, Chairs, Directors, Coordinators

Re: 5-Year Program Reviews 2025-26

As part of the University of the Incarnate Word's commitment to educational excellence and support for a culture of assessment, we allocate time every five years to deeply assess program goals and student learning outcomes using the 5-Year Program Review template (see attachment).

The template has undergone numerous changes from prior years. The majority of changes consist of minor edit and formatting changes or clarifying instructions. Major changes include: (a) removal of the four-part question pertaining to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on your programs as this question is no longer applicable to current operations; and (b) addition of questions pertaining to (i) existing external partnership and how they enhance student learning, employability, or program reputation; (ii) student engagement with information literacy; (iii) connection between faculty development and program objectives; (iv) use of the Center for Teaching and Learning; (v) integration of technology into the curriculum; and (vi) visioning for the future.

Let us remember that the primary goal of assessment is to help students learn and to seek continuous means of improvement. The reporting process is designed to foster meaningful dialogue among program faculty and their deans, while encouraging the use of current assessment findings to strengthen degree programs. These reports also serve a broader audience, support the work of faculty and students, inform prospective members of the community, and provide essential documentation for accreditation efforts.

A frequently asked question pertains to the required length of responses to the questions posed on the template. Report authors should feel free to keep their responses succinct. In many cases, two to three paragraphs or a bulleted list will suffice to answer most questions. It is allowable, perhaps preferable, to focus on highlights of particular interest to your dean and/or other faculty members who teach related coursework with you.

Another common question is how our 5-year program review process fits into external discipline accreditation processes as these typically have varying time cycles (e.g., 6, 7, or 10 years)? UIW's long-standing practice has been to substitute the external discipline accreditation self-study used for reaffirmation for our 5-year program review with one caveat – questions not addressed by the discipline accreditation standards are addressed in a separate attachment/addendum. The rationale for such action is (a) to lessen the burden on departments by eliminating or reducing duplication; and (b) recognition that most (but not all) discipline accreditation self-studies are equivalent to or exceed our institutional requirements.

A further recurring question is how our annual academic program assessment process and the 5-year program review process fit together? In short, academic programs are involved in assessment work each year, completing either an annual academic program assessment or a 5-year program review (or discipline accreditation self-study). To illustrate the typical cycle / pattern, two examples are provided, one for non-discipline accredited programs and one for discipline accredited programs on a 6-year cycle.

	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>	<u>Year 5</u>	<u>Year 6</u>	<u>Year 7</u>
Non-Accredited Program	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	5-year	Annual	Annual
Discipline Accredited Program (6 yr cycle)	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Annual	Self-Study	Annual

If you have any questions or require assistance, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for your assistance with facilitating UIW's 5-Year Program Review process.