

# Academic Planning Process 2024

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# Academic Planning Process

The Academic Planning Process is carried out within the framework of the University Academic Planning Policy [S17-11](#) (i.e., Section V). Program planning is future-oriented and evidence-based; department priorities provide a strategic framework intended to guide all key aspects of the department's activities, such as student recruitment, student success, assessment of program learning outcomes, curriculum development and revision, faculty hiring, research, scholarship or creative activities (RSCA), infrastructure and space needs, and interaction with the community. Program planning and evaluation involves faculty, students, staff, and administrators at the department, college, and university levels and culminates with the Provost's approval of clearly articulated priorities and a plan for achieving these priorities (the Action Plan).

A well-written academic program plan is the starting point of the process. It provides evidence to build a picture of a department's environment (e.g., technological, social, economic, political, environmental, and legal) and the needs of key stakeholders (e.g., students, potential employers, the University, the CSU, professional and industry associations, relevant interest groups). The academic program plan is an opportunity for data-informed reflection that should highlight both what is working well and where there are opportunities for growth. The culmination of the process is an agreement on the resources and steps necessary to achieve the proposed plan and its outcomes during the next planning cycle. Aims are clearly stated objectives the department wishes to accomplish in the coming years and can include, but are not limited to, faculty hires, research directions, space renovations, curriculum updates and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. A well-stated argument for faculty and staff hires, space renovations, and other capital investments should be supported by evidence from the Academic Planning documentation.

Any references throughout these guidelines to 'department(s)' are done so for the sake of brevity and intend to include academic programs organized as an academic department or school or programs offered outside of a traditional department or school.

## Accredited Programs

All departments will complete the academic program plan, regardless of accreditation status. For departments that have a mix of accredited and unaccredited programs, one academic program plan document should reflect all programs. Departments should include the letter (outcome) of the programmatic accreditation process as an appendix to the academic program plan.

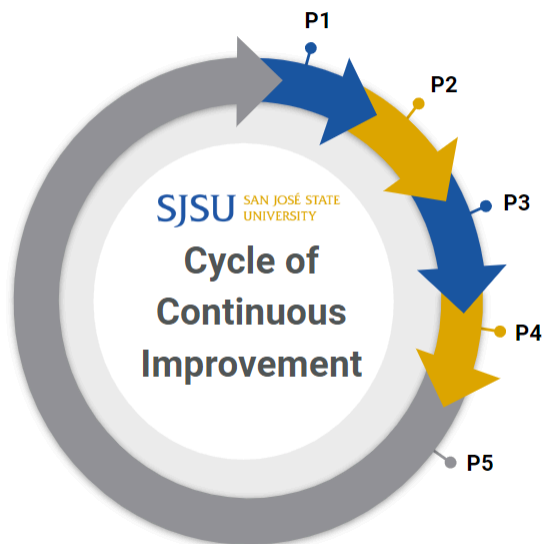
Reviews by external accreditation agencies fulfill the requirement of an external program reviewer; however, departments with combinations of accredited and non-accredited programs should still schedule an external review for non-accredited programs.

Per [University Policy S17-11](#), accredited programs undergo an academic planning review within a year of completing an accreditation review. Programs with eight years or more of accreditation cycles will also complete an academic planning mid-cycle progress review.

## Academic Planning Procedures and Timeline

As is summarized in the graphic below, Academic Planning represents a continuous cycle of improvement, typically 7-years in duration or in alignment with program accreditation cycles, that includes improvements informed by ongoing program assessment, participation in GE program assessment, GE recertification, and reflection on the department's current status and future directions, also termed the academic program plan. The Academic Planning cycle starts with a four-semester sequence of events, beginning with submitting the academic program plan and concluding with its Action Plan, which guides improvement over the next cycle.

### The 5 Phases of Academic Planning



#### **Phase 1 Prepare Academic Program Plan (Year 1 Semester 1)**

Collaborative reflection on the department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and actions/resources needed to achieve the department's new vision.

#### **Phase 2 External and Institutional Reviews (Year 1 Semester 2)**

A dispassionate assessment of the department by an external leader in the field followed by an assessment and recommendations by the Academic Planning Committee.

#### **Phase 3 College Strategy Meeting (Year 2 Semester 3)**

A meeting with the college leadership to discuss recommendations, resources, and priorities resulting in a draft Action Plan.

#### **Phase 4 Action Plan (Year 2 Semester 4)**

In collaboration with all stakeholders, including the Provost, an Action Plan will be developed to guide the department's actions for continued improvement over the remaining cycle.

#### **Phase 5 Implement Action Plan (Years 3 through 7)**

Regularly revisit the action plan and departmental priorities in curriculum, hiring, student success, RSCA, etc., and reflect on the impact of change.

The department is expected to complete an academic program plan that considers all programs in a department, including if there are programs shared with another department. For academic planning, a program is a sequence of studies leading to a degree, minor, certificate, or teaching credential, and all programs within a single department are reviewed simultaneously. Minors that are specified and required by a major degree program are evaluated in conjunction with the major degree program. Concentrations are separate degree programs within individual departments. Teacher education programs that meet the requirements of the California Commission on Teacher Credentials (CCTC) are reviewed as programs. *Departments should submit one academic program plan document that encompasses all programs, not separate documents for each program.*

Approximately two years before the academic program plan is due, the Academic Planning Committee chair notifies the chair/director about the upcoming due date. The Academic Planning Committee (APC) chair answers any questions about the academic planning process. Access to the department's required data element (RDEs) dashboards is confirmed, and any optional data is

requested from Institutional Research.

## Phase 1 - Preparing the Academic Program Plan (Year 1 Semester 1)

1. The department meets, perhaps on multiple occasions, to reflect on its successes over the past academic planning cycle and areas of opportunity that still remain. This holistic reflection, including student success efforts and metrics, curriculum, staff and faculty hiring, RSCA, infrastructure, etc., culminates in a set of strategic priorities for the department in the next Academic Planning cycle, including identifying the resources necessary to achieve those priorities.
2. An APC member liaison, typically the APC college representative for that department, is assigned to provide further guidance as necessary.
3. Using the academic program plan template in [Appendix A](#), the department prepares its academic program plan, including all graduate and undergraduate requirements. This is ideally done as a collaborative process, although some departments may identify a single person who is responsible for compiling the various narratives into a single cohesive document.
  - a. If not done throughout the academic planning cycle, the department now updates each item on the Action Plan assigned to the department during the last review using the institutional Action Plan Dashboards in Nuventive.
4. Upon its completion, the department submits the academic program plan, GE Recertification materials, relevant appendices, and, for unaccredited programs, a ranked list of three potential external reviewer candidates, including their CVs, to the Dean and Vice Provost.
5. The Dean either approves the external reviewers as ranked, proposes a new ranking, or requests that the department provide additional external review candidates.
6. Once the list of external reviewers is approved, the Vice Provost's office will send a formal invitation and finalize the visit dates.

## Phase 2 - External and Institutional Reviews (Year 1 Semester 2)

### External Review

1. See [Appendix B External Review](#) for more information.
2. For accredited programs, the external review associated with the accreditation process is used for this step.
3. The department creates a schedule for the external review, and travel arrangements, if necessary, are made with the support of the Vice Provost's office.
4. External Reviewer visits department/program.
5. Within three weeks after the visit, the external reviewer sends a report electronically to the Vice Provost and Department Chair.
6. In a memo to the College Dean and Vice Provost, the department can either respond to the External Reviewer's Report or indicate that no response is required.

### APC Committee Review

1. Once the External Reviewer's Report is received, the Vice Provost's office provides all materials to APC for review.
2. For undergraduate programs with GE courses, the General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) reviews the GE recertification materials submitted with the academic program plan and returns feedback on GE courses to APC.
3. The APC prepares a committee-approved Letter to the Provost that provides a university-wide perspective on the department and makes recommendations for future planning.

## Phase 3 - College Strategy Meeting (Year 2 Semester 3)

1. Once the External Reviewer report and APC Letter to the Provost are received, the department coordinates a meeting with the College leadership, which the department faculty and staff are invited to attend. Discussion focuses on the recommendations identified in each section of the academic program plan, the external review/accreditor report, and the APC Letter to the Provost.
2. As a result of this meeting, the Dean (or designee) prepares a draft Action Plan Meeting Agenda that outlines bullet points regarding the department's goals for the next academic planning cycle. In creating this document, the following should be

considered:

- a. What are the most pressing challenges and/or opportunities for the department?
  - b. What are the resources necessary to promote their progress? At this stage, it is helpful for the Dean's office to distinguish between resources that can be provided by the College vs. resources that go beyond the College.
3. Upon receipt of the draft Action Plan Meeting Agenda, the Vice Provost's office will schedule an action plan meeting as described below.

#### Phase 4 - Action Plan (Year 2 Semester 4)

1. In collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, including the Provost, an Action Plan meeting is held to determine the priorities guiding the department's continued improvement over the remaining cycle. Department faculty and staff are all encouraged to attend.
2. The Vice Provost's office will circulate the agenda for the Action Plan meeting. Following the Action Plan meeting, the Vice Provost's office submits the finalized Action Plan for signature to the department chair, College Dean, and Provost.
3. The Action Plan notes the due date for the department's next academic program plan. It is scheduled for 7 years after submitting the most recent academic program plan or aligns with the professional accreditation due date.

## Phase 5 - Implement the Action Plan (Years 3 through 7)

1. Some time-sensitive tasks may need to be addressed *immediately* following the Action Plan Meeting.
2. Discuss and plan how to address the Action Plan with the department and college leadership, including planned implementation dates, required collaborations, and necessary resources.
3. Revisit your Action Plan items regularly or *at least annually* to ensure progress or see if priorities have shifted.
4. Toward the end of this planning cycle, begin discussions with the full department about long-term plans: Where does the department see changes happening in the next 7 years?

Some departments set aside time for academic planning discussions during faculty meetings and/or set aside a different time for key department members (GE/Assessment/Graduate Program coordinators) to meet to discuss the department's strategic directions.

5. In year 6, the Chair/Director will be notified about their upcoming due date and confirmed access to the department's required data elements (RDEs) dashboards. At this time, any optional data requests are made to Institutional Research.
6. Begin thinking about topics to address in the next academic program plan. These could include the department's strengths, its programs, and RSCA's changes since the last plan.

### General Education Course Recertification Process

Departments offering General Education courses must also satisfy the recertification process detailed in the SJSU [General Education Guidelines](#) (2022) to recertify any GE courses by the General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC).

### Questions?

For questions, support, and guidance, please contact your college administration and the chair of the Academic Planning Committee.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Academic Program Plan Template

The goal of the academic program plan, which should be no more than ten (10) pages in length, is to consider both the current and future state of your department so you may identify the necessary resources to achieve this goal. Leverage your Required Data Elements (RDEs), the [CSU Student Success Dashboards](#), SJSU's [University Dashboards](#), program metrics, and any relevant disciplinary context, external factors, and trends throughout your academic program plan to support your narrative. The relevant WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) questions are provided as references for some sections. Conclude each 'success' section by summarizing how these reflections on student or department success guide the department's strategic directions and recommendations.

It is recommended that the academic program plan writer(s) discuss each narrative section at department meeting(s). In your meetings about student success, be sure to provide any program metrics and the RDEs, curriculum flowcharts and mapping, assessment rubrics, etc.

If you are concerned that you can not meet your academic program plan submission deadline, you can request an extension from the Academic Planning Committee. All requests for extensions are first routed to the Dean for review. The request goes to the Academic Planning Committee (APC) extensions subcommittee for review. The full APC committee is informed of the subcommittee's decision and can provide input. The APC extension decision is final unless new additional information is provided by the department for the committee's review.

Please remember that the committee considers several factors when reviewing an extension request, such as whether this is the first request for an extension and how many other programs have similar due dates so that the committee can adequately manage the workload. The [Extension Requests Guidelines](#) inform the subcommittee's decisions. Please note that the decision of the APC is final unless the department provides new information for committee consideration regarding an extension request.

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### SECTION I - MISSION AND VISION

Reflect on the vision of the department and its program(s), including a) what you learned during this academic planning cycle related to that vision and b) what needs to happen moving forward to address the vision, especially within the evolving context of your discipline. Connect the department's vision to university priorities, particularly around [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion priorities](#) and [strategic plan](#). Address the following question in your response:

- How do the design and structure of the department's degree programs align with and reinforce the institution's mission and values?



## SECTION II - STUDENT SUCCESS

How does your department center students, what is their experience, and what is their success in your department and program(s)? What changes has your department made to center students and equity in your efforts further? Use the following questions to guide your reflection.

- Reflect on how your academic and GE program assessment findings have meaningfully impacted student success over the last academic planning cycle (i.e., How have you closed the loop?). In your response, share your department's evidence that students are meeting the stated learning outcomes and how this evidence is used to improve student outcomes.
- Review your department's ["Who Are My Students" dashboard](#). How are you planning for any changing trends in academic and demographic characteristics of entering students and the relevant impacts it will have on the program(s)?
- How are your curricular and co-curricular programs supporting students? How do you incorporate advising, [High Impact Practices \(HIPs\)](#), RSCA, community engagement, and/or other activities supporting intellectual engagement in your curriculum?
- Review your department's [equity gap dashboard](#). Describe the pattern that stands out with regard to equity gaps in your department. Summarize the conversations the department has had to address these gaps.
- How will you address any expected changes in career opportunities, professional practice, technology, or other relevant discipline characteristics? How will these changes/trends affect how the department serves its students?

## SECTION III - DEPARTMENT SUCCESS

Reflect on your department's culture and climate from the perspectives of students, faculty, and staff. How does your department culture align with the university priorities, particularly regarding [diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities](#) and [strategic plans](#)? Where do you see growth opportunities? Use the following questions to guide your reflection.

- What changes in support resources (e.g., staff, equipment, infrastructure, travel funds, etc.) are needed to maintain or change the department's program(s) quality, size, and/or student success?
- What challenges do faculty and staff face internally at SJSU and externally in Silicon Valley that influence their career and RSCA development?
- What faculty and staff recruitment and development opportunities are needed to support the department program(s)? How are faculty hiring and workload practices related to the program's priorities and student success?

- Reflect upon the departmental RSCA concerning your own expectations, discipline expectations, student engagement and success, and challenges with meeting those expectations. Reflect on RSCA investment (release and buyout) with benefits to faculty and students and the mission of SJSU (student training, papers, patents, book presentations, art exhibits, the career trajectory of students, etc.).
- In light of responses to the above questions, what are the department's priorities in the upcoming academic planning cycle related to RSCA, faculty and staff support, and resources?

#### **SECTION IV - EMERGING RECOMMENDATIONS & PRIORITIES**

- Considering the responses to the above questions, propose an initial set of priorities for the next academic planning cycle. The department is encouraged to include specific sections related to student success, faculty/staff success, infrastructure, and curriculum. These priorities will guide discussion at the optional College Strategy Meeting.

#### **General Education Course Recertification Process**

Departments offering General Education courses must also satisfy the recertification process detailed in the SJSU [General Education Guidelines](#) (2022) to recertify any GE courses by the General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC).

## Appendix B: External Reviewer Guidelines and Process

### Budget

External reviewer visits are now virtual unless the department makes a compelling reason for an on-campus review. The designated Vice Provost's office covers the \$1,000 honorarium. If the program/department wishes to offer additional funds, it may do so at its own expense. If the Vice Provost approves an on-campus review, the cost of travel (not to exceed rates available from a university-contracted travel agency) and accommodations will be covered.

### Procedures

1. **While working on the academic program plan**, the Department contacts potential external reviewers and asks them if they are interested.

Here is a potential email script:

I hope this email finds you well. I serve as the Department Chair for [name] in the College of [name] at San José State University. The [list of programs] is undergoing a program review. We would like to invite you to serve as a reviewer for this program.

This would involve reading the academic program plan, visiting the campus (virtually), and writing a report summarizing your observations and recommendations. Ideally, the visit would occur this spring semester. The honorarium for your participation is \$1,000. The visit usually takes one to two days.

If you are interested in serving in this capacity, please send me a recent CV and I will submit your name as a candidate to our administration.

2. **At the time of the academic program plan submission**, the department/program submits to the Dean the CVs of the three candidates who are acceptable to the department and able to serve within the required time period as agreed upon. The department provides their preferred ranking to the Dean, who then approves the rankings and provides them to the designated Vice Provost with the CVs.
3. The designated Vice Provost selects one reviewer from the candidates and notifies the department of the selection.
4. In consultation with the department, the designated Vice Provost's office arranges the date of the review and the site visits. The office engages the reviewer and sends the contract and other relevant documents (academic program plan and letter of invitation) to the reviewer.

5. The department then arranges the visit schedule, including the entrance and exit interviews, in consultation with the College, the Academic Planning Committee Chair, the designated Vice Provost office, and the Division of Research and Innovation. The designated Vice Provost's office schedules the entrance and exit meetings.
6. The department contacts the reviewer one month before the visit to see if they need any additional information.
7. The reviewer must submit an electronic final report to the designated Vice Provost within three weeks of the visit's completion.
8. After receiving the report, the designated Vice Provost's office reimburses the reviewer for travel costs and the honorarium.

### **External Reviewer Role**

The reviewer's role is to bring an informed and dispassionate view to the assessment of the plan as it is presented. Before visiting the campus, the reviewer should review the academic program plan submitted by the department. The external reviewer may request support materials, including selected student products (e.g., papers, projects, creative works, awards, publications, presentations), to be available for review.

### **Guiding Elements / Possible Questions for the External Reviewer**

- How does the department/program address important trends in the technological, social, political, and economic environment and trends in the discipline, nationally and locally?
- How does the plan respond to the challenges and opportunities identified?
- How does the plan respond to assessment materials included in the report?
- How does the plan address curricular, advising, and research needs to enhance equitable student success and prepare students for their future careers?
- How is the plan aligned with the current university strategic plan and priorities as well as program, departmental, and university learning outcomes?
- What are the measurable outcomes of the plan? Are they germane and realistic?
- How does the plan address the educational needs of the diverse community of which SJSU is a part?

Note: this list is neither exhaustive nor definitive.

The reviewer will meet with students, faculty, and administrators during the visit. An initial interview with the dean/associate dean, designated Vice Provost, and other critical administrators will be held on the first day. At the end of the visit, the reviewer will be asked to present initial impressions

and findings at an exit interview, which will include the dean, faculty from the department, designated Vice Provost(s), representative(s) from the Provost's office, the Director of Assessment, and a representative from the Academic Planning Committee.

### **External Reviewer Selection Criteria**

The department nominates at least three candidates as external reviewers who meet the following criteria:

1. Demonstrated leader in the field (publications or creative works; reputation in instruction; active participation in appropriate scholarly and/or professional activities).
2. Familiarity with academic/professional priorities of the departments and the nature of the program being reviewed (e.g., experience with similar programs, experience with graduates of the program being reviewed).
3. Affiliation with an accredited academic department/program or with a professional organization appropriate to the program being reviewed.
4. No conflict of interest (i.e., no program graduate, recent employee, friend or relative of any program member, recent contractual arrangements with the program).
5. Willingness to work within the financial constraints of SJSU (see Budget above).
6. The department contacts potential candidates to confirm that they would be willing to serve as an external reviewer before submitting their CVs with their academic program plan.

### **External Reviewer Report**

*Within three weeks* after the external review visit, the reviewer must submit their findings and analysis in an official report. Per the SJSU Academic Planning Guidelines, the external reviewer report should:

- Be between 3-5 pages in length; and,
- Include findings based on evidence that is collected in response to the primary focal points of the academic program plan.

If and where possible, the report should include comparisons with other programs in institutions and communities that are similar to SJSU. The External Reviewer Report should minimally include:

- I. **Executive Summary.** Summarize key recommendations. Include recommendations for change if the reviewer's evaluation finds that the proposed priorities are inadequate in the light of assessment responses or other reasons that are explained.
- II. **Vision/Mission of the Department.**
- III. **Student Experience and Success.** Review of student experience and success, including curriculum and assessment, equity gaps, and relevant changes within the discipline.

- IV. **Department Success.** Provide an evaluation of resources for faculty, staff, and students, including related to research, scholarly work, and creative activity.
- V. **Department Priorities.** Identify challenges and opportunities based on the external review.
- VI. **Conclusions and Recommendations.** Summarize your conclusions and recommendations.

### **Submitting the Report**

Reviewers are encouraged to submit their draft report to the department chair or program director for factual review but should submit the final report to the designated Vice Provost's office.

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## Appendix C: Extension Request Guidelines for the APC Subcommittee

Extension requests are submitted via an APC Google Form. Before submitting the form, all requests for extensions must be discussed and approved by the Dean. The Academic Planning Committee (APC) extensions subcommittee then reviews the request. The full APC committee is informed of the subcommittee's decision, who may provide input. The APC extension decision is final unless new information is provided by the department for the committee's review.

### 1. Unaccredited Programs

- a. Scenario #1: The program asks for a six-month extension to finish the academic program plan.

Plan: Pending approval from the dean, grant an extension and ask for a list of external reviewers within the next 1-2 months to start the process of scheduling the external review.

- b. Scenario #2: The program asks for a first extension of 9 months to 1 year.

Plan: Ask for a list of external reviewers and an update on its progress with the Action Plan Items from the last cycle. Both should be delivered to the APC within 3 months. Extension granted pending approval from the dean and the extensions subcommittee

- c. Scenario #3: The program asks for a second or third extension.

Plan: Bring this to the full APC for discussion. Approval of a 2nd or 3rd extension request is typically denied unless extenuating circumstances can be documented.

### 2. Accredited Programs

- a. Scenario #1: The program asks for a six-month extension to finish the academic program plan.

Plan: Pending approval from the dean, grant an extension. No additional information is needed.

- b. Scenario #2: The program asks for an extension of 9 months to 1 year.

Plan: Ask for an update on its progress with the Action Plan Items from the last cycle, delivered to the APC within 3 months. Extension granted pending approval from the dean and the extensions subcommittee

- c. Scenario #3: The accreditation agency will not complete its visit in time for the original academic program plan due date.

Plan: Pending dean approval, grant an extension as needed to match the accreditation visit. Ask for an update on its last Action Plan, delivered to the APC within the next 1-2 months.

- d. Scenario #4: The academic program plan and accreditation cycle are not aligned, so an extension is requested to align these two processes.

Plan: Pending dean approval, grant an extension and ask for an update on its last Action Plan, delivered to the APC within the next 1-2 months.

- e. Scenario #5: The program asks for a second or third extension.

Plan: Bring this to the full APC for discussion. Approval of a 2nd or 3rd extension request is typically denied unless extenuating circumstances can be documented.

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