

University of Puerto Rico in Ponce



UPRP



SELF-STUDY DESIGN

March 10, 2023

Prepared for the Middle States Commission on Higher Education

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I. INSTITUTIONAL OVERVIEW

The University of Puerto Rico in Ponce (UPR-Ponce) is one of the eleven campuses of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and the only public institution of higher education in the southern part of the island. It is located in the city of Ponce in the southern coast of Puerto Rico, approximately 67 miles from the capital city of San Juan. Each campus is headed by a Chancellor who presides over the Academic Senate, the Administrative Board, and faculty meetings. The Chancellor holds the maximum academic and administrative authority of UPR-Ponce. Dr. Tessie Cruz-Rivera was appointed Chancellor on July 1, 2019. She is a Professional Counselor at the Counseling and Psychological Services Department and prior to being appointed Chancellor, she was the Chancellor's Special Assistant.

Established in 1969 and first accredited by Middle States in 1970, UPR- Ponce was originally authorized to offer associate degrees and transfer programs. This campus was founded to bring the state university closer to the southern region, offering quality education at an affordable cost to its inhabitants, and promoting the social and economic development of this zone. Nevertheless, students from around the island select UPR-Ponce to continue higher education studies.

In 1982, the institution received authorization from the Puerto Rico Council on Higher Education (PRCHE) to offer baccalaureate degrees in Secretarial Sciences (later Office Systems) and Business Administration. Thereafter, Certification 170 (1981-82) of the PRCHE changed the name of the institution to Ponce Technological University College.

In 1998, the Board of Trustees granted the institution its autonomy from the Regional Colleges Administration and changed the institution's name to Ponce University College through Certification 1997-1998-151. This autonomy meant the separation of the institution from the Administration of Regional Colleges and led to the creation of the Academic Senate and the Administrative Board, deliberative and representative bodies of the university community.

In 2000, the Puerto Rico Council on Higher Education authorized a change of name for the institution to University of Puerto Rico in Ponce. In 2002, the former President of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), Antonio García Padilla, Esq., designated the chancellors for the different campuses of the UPR System. This action allowed the beginning of a new administrative cycle, and, at the same time, the implementation of the work plans that the chancellors presented in the selection process.

The original academic offer consisted of the following technical programs: Accounting, Computer Sciences, Drafting, Commercial Management, Industrial Management, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning, Industrial Engineering Technology, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, as well as transfer programs in Arts and Sciences. One of the most important educational projects in

Puerto Rico began with an enrollment of 361 students coming from different municipalities of the southern region and a faculty composed of 24 professors.

UPR-Ponce is the backbone of the region. According to the Financial Student Aid standards, approximately 50% of UPR-Ponce students fall under poverty levels. Seventy-nine percent of our students receive some kind of financial aid. That is a significant percent when the fiscal situation of Puerto Rico is considered.

According to the Federal Reserve, public universities provide relief to students' debt due to the fact that they are more affordable and accessible than private ones. As part of the public system, UPR offers an additional benefit to the population since its tuition is under the National Public System costs. In addition, UPR-Ponce's default rate for FY 2018 is 7.5%, which is lower than the average in Puerto Rico (10.0%).

An important area of the Institution is the Honor's Study Program (HSP). It is a program that enriches the students' collegial experience by providing them with a curriculum that fosters leadership, social responsibility, independent study, and collaborative work. The students are enrolled in special sections of the program's core courses.

When compared to other institutions in the area, neither of the graduation rates are higher than those of UPR-Ponce and just one of the other institutions has a higher retention rate as shown in the next table.

**Comparison of Graduation and Retention Rates
Major Private Universities vs. UPR-Ponce**

Institution	Graduation rate (Cohort 2015)	Retention rate (Cohort 2020)
Inter American University-Ponce Campus	40	63
Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico- Ponce Campus	42	78
Caribbean University Ponce	29	88
UPR-Ponce	46%	78%

Source: College Navigator

At present, the institution offers twelve bachelor's degrees, four associate degrees (technical programs), and 36 articulated transfer programs to other UPR campuses. These transfer programs provide students the opportunity to study during their first two years in UPR-Ponce and then move to another unit from the UPR System. Being located on an economically underdeveloped zone within the island, UPR-Ponce promotes the economic and social development of the southern region by educating competent professionals in different disciplines aimed at fulfilling its stakeholders' needs. These had fostered the development of new and unique academic offerings such as Athletic Therapy Sciences, Psychology and Mental Health,

Forensic Psychology, Biomedical Sciences, and Civil Engineering Technology in Architectural Drafting.

It is important to mention that the current most subscribed academic programs are:

- Biomedical Sciences
- Athletic Therapy Sciences
- Biology
- Business Administration- Accounting
- Psychology and Mental Health

The emphasis of the academic programs is on undergraduate education to meet the needs of the community.

As part of the University of Puerto Rico system, UPR-Ponce is committed by law to serve Puerto Rico and the southern region by transmitting knowledge of sciences and arts to the community, by contributing to the development of ethical and aesthetic values with special emphasis on Puerto Rican and Western cultures, and by stimulating creative dialogue in the search for truth.

Another point of strength that UPR-Ponce has is the Ponce Research Initiative for Scientific Enhancement (PRISE). This project has been sponsored with over \$5,000,000 of funds from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) since 2011. It has been essential in the development of our campus and in providing research experiences for our students. This project provides the opportunity to participate in science research internships in and outside Puerto Rico at well-recognized research institutions, such as, John Hopkins, University of Minnesota, at different campuses of the University of Texas, University of Michigan, University of California, University of Wisconsin, New York University, University of Missouri, University of Pennsylvania, and Cornell, among others. More than 150 students have developed research in Biomedical and Biology areas. Since the first cohort of UPR-PRISE Trainees in 2011, 18 of them have been admitted to PhD programs, four in Puerto Rico and fourteen in mainland. These outstanding students represent the future researchers of the nation.

In 2002 a new systemic strategic plan, Ten for the Decade, was approved by the Board of Trustees. One of the strategic pillars of this plan was to promote the attainment of worldwide recognized professional accreditations on all qualified academic programs. As a result, today UPR-Ponce has a strong culture of accreditation. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) accredited UPR-Ponce since its first year of operation in 1970 and has been reaccredited every corresponding cycle; in 2019 the accreditation was reaffirmed. Most of its academic programs are accredited or in process of reaccreditation by the following agencies: Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP), Accreditation Board of Engineering Technology (ABET), and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). The Adelina Coppin Library is certified by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). In addition, the Counseling and Psychological Services Department is accredited

by the International Association of Counseling Services (IACS). These professional accreditations demonstrate the quality of UPR-Ponce's programs and its support services. It is crucial to mention that UPR-Ponce is the only institution in the southern region that holds all these professional accreditations.

Mission

“The University of Puerto Rico in Ponce is a teaching institution dedicated to the intellectual, humanistic, scientific, cultural, and ethical growth of its students. It is devoted to the integral development of citizens and professionals capable of contributing to a global society as critical, creative, and honest leaders committed to continuous learning and community service. It fosters equal access, academic rigor, enriching educational activities, and quality support services which contribute to the formation of graduates with a profile of academic excellence.

In all its undertakings, the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce promotes a democratic environment supportive of academic freedom, excellence, integrity, respect, tolerance, creativity, and research (UPR-Ponce Academic Senate Certification 2013-2014-60).”

UPR-Ponce mission has provided a framework to enact its institutional goals, strategic and operational plans that align all its academic and administrative activities. There are many ways in which the institution complies with its mission. For example, as a public institution it has to conform to the Puerto Rico Commonwealth's Law of Government Ethics (Law 12 July 24, 1985), which was established to preserve and promote the integrity of public employees and government institutions. Also, members of the university community can participate, collaborate, and express themselves in the deliberate bodies, through faculty and nonfaculty meetings and the General Student Council, among others.

Article 11 of the UPR General By-Laws indicates that academic freedom is the right of faculty members to teach their courses with objectivity and integrity, without other restrictions than those imposed by the moral and intellectual responsibilities to cover all the indispensable elements of the course subject, as approved by the corresponding authorities. This article also states that there will be respect for different opinions and educational methods.

Article 35 of the UPR General By-Laws encourages administrators to adopt measures that support an environment of harmony, respect and unity in the institution. To this purpose, two institutional labor unions, the Brotherhood of Exempt Non-Faculty Employees and the Workers Union, represent the non-faculty staff in the UPR-Ponce. The Puerto Rican College Professors Association represents the faculty members.

There are two activities that celebrate the creativity and research of faculty and students: Research and Academic Creation Congress and Research and Undergraduate Research and Creation Congress. The first one has been held for the last 24 years and the latter for the last 15.

Institutional Goals

Focus	Institutional Goals
<p>Student Learning</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To develop professionals who possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to contribute responsibly to their social, cultural, and environmental surroundings. 2. To offer and develop baccalaureate, associate, and transfer programs and other enriching educational experiences in response to the needs of society. 3. To cultivate knowledge through creative activities, research, and dissemination. 4. To strengthen support services in order to create an optimal environment for teaching and learning.
<p>Institutional Improvement</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. To provide professional development opportunities to faculty and administrative personnel so that they may contribute to the enhancement of institutional quality. 6. To offer student support services that facilitate their adjustment to university life, enrich the educational experience, and contribute to their academic success. 7. To sustain effective articulation of university endeavors among the administration, students, faculty, administrative personnel, and the external community for the optimal development of its academic offerings. 8. To promote an effective planning process and resource allocations based on institutional mission and goals and use the results of institutional assessment for continuous improvement.

These institutional goals were established through UPR-Ponce Academic Senate Certification 2008-2009-54. They are annually assessed through the Institutional Effectiveness Report that the Chancellor submits to the Presidency.

Statistical Profile

Total headcount enrollment for academic year 2022-2023 is 2,221. Ninety-one percent (91%) of the student population is full time. Approximately eighty-six percent (86%) receives financial aid, and fifty-five percent (55%) is female. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the student body is enrolled in bachelor's degree programs, seven percent (7%) in technical programs, and twelve percent (12%) in transfer programs. The remainder four percent (4%) was classified into other categories.

For the academic year 2022-2023, the retention rate is seventy-seven percent (77%). The first to second year retention rates for the last five years average eighty percent (80%). The institutional graduation rate average for the last five years has reached forty-six percent (46%), which is similar to those reported nationally and compares favorably to other UPR units.

The institution has a legacy of more than 50 years in which more than 30,000 students have graduated. These students are now part of the labor force of Puerto Rico, United States, and many other countries around the world. Also, around fifteen percent (15%) of the students admitted at the institution during the last three academic years are first-generation college students. UPR-Ponce is helping them to achieve progress for their whole family. That has positive results not only for their immediate family but for their entire communities. Moreover, it stimulates the economy of the region while forming well-cultured and wise citizens. In the academic year 2021-2022, 379 students graduated from UPR-Ponce.

According to the institutional research entitled Labor Insertion and Alumni Connection: UPRP 2017-2019 created by the Office of Planning and Institutional Research, sixty-two percent (62%) of the alumni continued graduate studies. The rest are working (full or part time) or have joined the military forces.

The student body is served by 187 faculty and 207 non-faculty staff members. On average, the student/faculty ratio is 12:01. The 2022-2023 faculty profile revealed that 58 of the 80 full-time faculty are tenured, which represents 73%. Fifty-five percent (55%) percent holds a doctoral degree. Twenty percent (20%) of faculty are classified in the rank of full professor, ten percent (10%) associate professor, thirty-six percent (36%) assistant professor, and thirty-four percent (34%) instructor. Students and faculty have active participation in deliberative university bodies such as Academic Senate, Administrative Board, University Board, and Governing Board.

Of the 394 employees, almost sixty percent (60%) are proud alumni of the institution. This is significant to mention because it demonstrates the important role UPR-Ponce has in its staff. Having been part of the university as students and now as employees has had a positive impact on their lives and that of their families. In different interviews, they had expressed their feelings of gratitude and sense of high compromise to work and serve “their university”.

Because students and faculty members have participation in the main deliberate bodies of the institution (Academic Senate, Administrative Board, University Board, Governing Board) and since the University of Puerto Rico is highly respected and appreciated among Puerto Ricans, considered by most as the crown jewel of the island, there is a high sense of ownership that drives the passion, pride, and resilience among all its members to ensure the pertinency of UPR-Ponce as a major and indispensable post-secondary institution in the southern area of Puerto Rico. Alumni often collaborate with the institution providing advice on accreditation processes, mentoring students, and serving as a liaison between the institution and the industry.

UPR-Ponce has a consolidated budget of \$41,290,284 for the academic year 2022-2023. Of these, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico has provided a revised budget of \$20,849,661.

Major Challenges

In recent years government fiscal problems have caused reductions in the budget assigned to the institution. As a countermeasure tuition fees, which have been very low during decades, have been raised and now are almost equal to those in private institutions. Additionally, recent catastrophic events like hurricanes María (2017) and Fiona (2022), a series of earthquakes (2019) and the COVID-19 pandemic have provoked many challenges to the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce. But despite difficult times, the institution has demonstrated a great deal of resilience and continues to fulfill its mission providing top quality higher education.

To improve retention, the institution has been strengthening its student support services and promoting additional extracurricular and co-curricular experiences that foster commitment to the learning process such as:

- Tutoring program
- Institutional Retention and Student Success Committee
- Digitalized reasonable accommodations processes
- Hybrid academic counselling process
- Math, Spanish, and English remedial courses
- Emotional and psychological aid
- Continuous education to staff in topics related to topics such as assertive communication, conflict management, and anxiety management

Providing high quality services is crucial to recruit, enroll, and retain students. A continuous improvement process is in place assessing all academic and supporting services annually.

Furthermore, to face the decline in the K-12 population on the island, UPR-Ponce has created new academic programs in traditional and distance learning modalities to attract non-traditional students, therefore increasing institutional enrollment. These strategies have been outlined in the UPR-Ponce's Strategic Plan Vision 2026.

Finally, there is no denying that migration, demographic changes, and the financial recession that the country is experiencing are part of the major challenges the institution faces. This summary of events provides an idea of all the difficult moments the institution and its constituents had had in a short period of time.

Recent Achievements

Recently, UPR-Ponce has achieved various goals and has worked on different initiatives to keep strengthening the institution. One of these initiatives was the new strategic plan. UPR-Ponce's Strategic Plan Vision 2026 was approved by the Administrative Board on September 20, 2021, through Certification 2021-2022-18. The foundation of this plan rests on four basic pillars: academic excellence and innovation, student success, sustainability and resilience, and technology and administration. This plan is the basis for an academic transformation in the institution outlining strategies for the offering of online courses and the diversification of the curricular offer, among other important aspects. The Plan is the guide for the planning and distribution of human, economic, and physical resources according to the institutional vision and goals. The document is the product of a profound analysis of the most relevant factors (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) that the University of Puerto Rico in Ponce will face in the next five years and of having recommendations from the university community.

The approval of the Distance Education Institutional Policy was another important recent institutional achievement. It was approved by the Academic Senate on May 27, 2021, through Certification 2020-2021-58. With this policy and the inauguration of the Virtual Education Development Center (VEDC) on February 10, 2022, UPR-Ponce is at the forefront to provide a high-quality online education to the island and beyond. At a cost of over \$300,000 with funds from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Angel Ramos Foundation and the Fonalledas Foundation, the VEDC is in the main academic building providing services to the development of new online and hybrid courses. The VEDC is a fundamental project that has allowed the institution to:

- Create new hybrid and online courses.
- Provide attention to the nontraditional student population.
- Support faculty in the development of material for hybrid and online courses.

Conversely, the bid process for the Learning Skills Center (LSC) and Center for Rehabilitation and Integrated Services (CRIS) was completed in March 2022. CRIS's budget was increased by Government Board's Certification 171-2021-2022 to address the change in estimated costs. CRIS will become a unique interdisciplinary center for health-related fields in the southern area of Puerto Rico. It will consolidate tutoring services, create a makerspace, become a practicum center, generate new financial resources through proposals and charge private entities for the provided services. In relation to the LSC, it will be a practicum center for different disciplines, generate new sources of income through services to the external community, increase recruitment, retention and academic achievements, and function as a tutoring center for various disciplines. These innovative actions represent important efforts that will strengthen the Institution's sustainability while continuing to ensure its financial stability and comply with its strategic plan.

Another important project for UPR-Ponce and the southern region of the country is the Smart Hub. This resilient building, which can be defined as a critical mass development center with high-speed Internet, is financed with US Economic Development Administration (EDA) funds and its

project design phase is completed. The final construction drawings and technical specifications phase including the permits processes had begun. This Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) multidisciplinary learning and service center is projected to be completed by February 2025. The Smart Hub will enable UPR-Ponce to develop new research lines, generate patents, and foster entrepreneurial ideas and emerging business. Total activities that will take place in the Smart-Hub will also strengthen the financial stability of the institution and will create a cornerstone for the community where the institution fosters its academic and research activities.

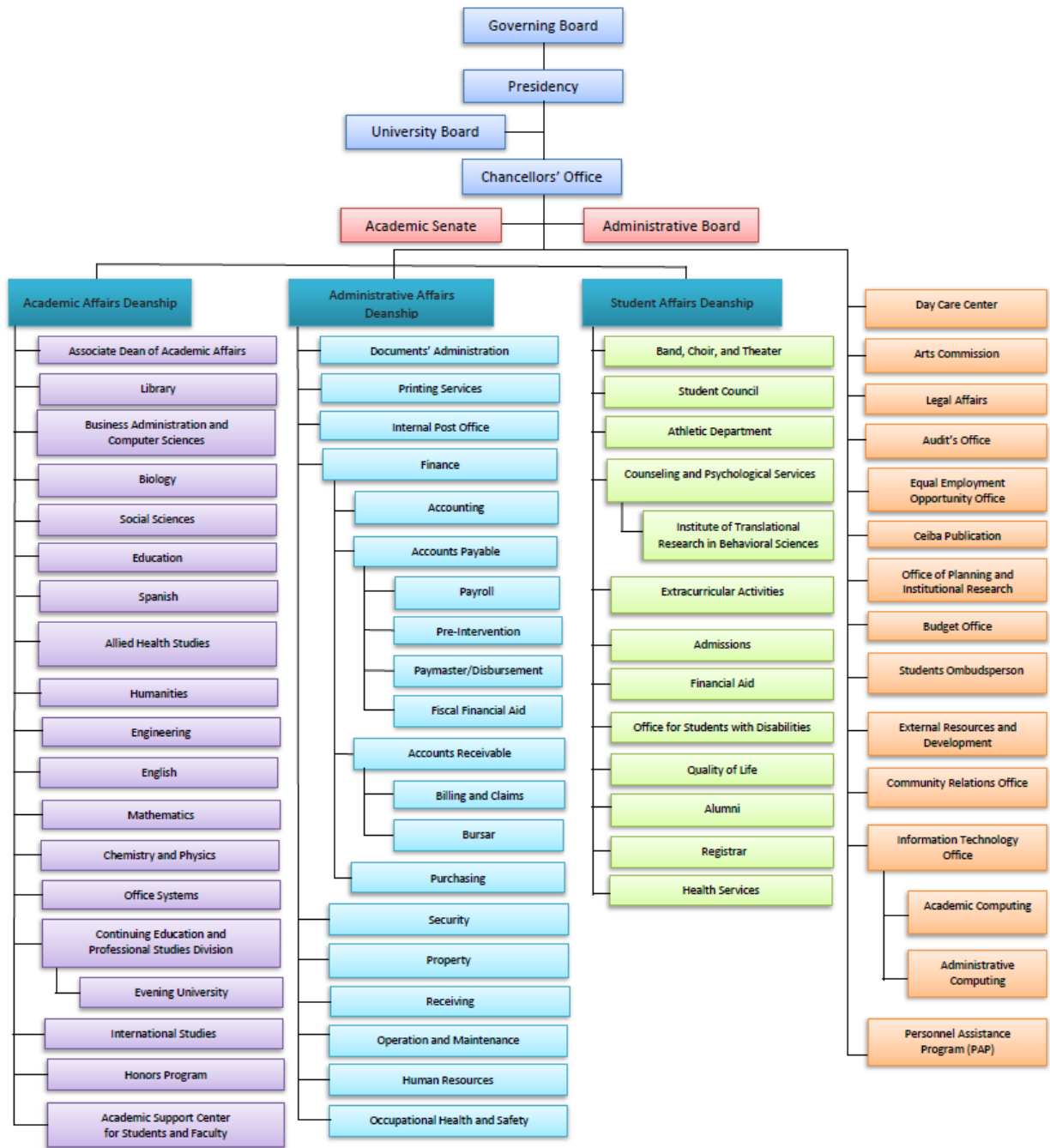
Finally, most of the faculty are certified to teach on-line courses. This was achieved in record time during the pandemic to help adapt the traditional courses into virtual ones and ensure academic continuity. It is important to mention that the institution provided the tools and trainings for the faculty to get the certification. Also, during that last five years, the Business Administration and Computer Sciences, Elementary Education, Office System Administration and Technology, Engineering programs obtained their professional re accreditation affirmation demonstrating full compliance with all accreditation standards.

All these projects will help the institution to strengthen its ties with the surrounding community and with the southern region of the country. UPR-Ponce while increasing its pertinency in today's society.

UPR-Ponce's Organizational Structure

The following chart represents the institutional organizational structure as established by the Administrative Board Certification 2019-2020-16:

UPR-Ponce Organizational Chart



II. INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE SELF-STUDY

UPR-Ponce has identified four institutional priorities that align with the Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation: Innovation, Student Success and Satisfaction, Sustainability, and Service. These were selected based on the institutional mission and vision,

current strategic plan, and the UPR System Strategic Plan to which the four of them are aligned, too. UPR-Ponce's constituents were presented with these priorities through an open process to encourage their participation in the review and presentation of recommendations, which strengthened this Self-Study Design.

Also, the priorities are framed within the present reality, that of the island, its southern region, and the institution: hurricanes, earthquakes, pandemic, demographic changes, and financial recession, among many others. Finally, these priorities will help to lead the institution towards the future. Following are the priorities and their definitions:

Innovation

UPR-Ponce includes the academic and administrative areas in this priority. In contrast, innovation refers to the renewal of academic offerings and the diversification of instructional delivery methods. These will allow greater institutional development and impact beyond geographical limitations, reaching traditional, non-traditional, and international students. Innovation of its academic offerings also includes the creation of new programs, professional certifications, double majors and minors, and a continuous curricular review.

In terms of administrative innovation, it includes looking at existing processes with new eyes to make them more agile and effective. The use of technology is key to achieving this endeavor. Institutional technological resources need to be continuously updated to also serve institutional academic and operational needs. This priority is aligned with Standard II: Ethics and Integrity and with Standard III: Design and Delivery of Student Learning Experience. It is also aligned with Requirements of Affiliation 5, 6, 8, 9, and 15.

Student Success and Satisfaction

Increasing enrollment is extremely important. As a result, a new admission policy with recruitment strategies directed towards non-traditional students has been incorporated. Also, media strategies targeting high school students and a retention plan based in student support services, academic counseling, tutoring, mentoring, and reviewing traditional teaching methodologies to address students' needs must be included into the institutional mindset and its regular processes. These services are being reinforced to enrich the student's college experience. Finally, retention, persistence, and graduation rates are considered as part of student success indicators. This priority is aligned with Standard III: Design and Delivery of Student Learning Experience, Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience, and Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment. It is also aligned with Requirements of Affiliation 8, 9, 10, 11, and 15.

Sustainability

The fiscal situation of the government has been affecting the University for many years. Therefore, initiatives and efforts to identify and implement external sources of income through institutional enterprises, philanthropy, and research is an institutional responsibility. UPR-Ponce is committed to achieving sustainability and to diversify its financial base. The sustainability priority leads every effort directed towards keeping institutional finances solid by obtaining revenues additional to the regular budget assigned by the UPR Central Administration. Among the efforts to diversify institutional funding are increasing external funding through research and proposals, expanding the online education offerings, and creating networks and alliances with public and private sectors. This priority is aligned with Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement and Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration. It is also aligned with Requirements of Affiliation 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14.

Service

Total involvement with the internal and external community and Puerto Rico at large has always, and will continue to be, one of the main institutional priorities. As a matter of fact, the service component is part of the institutional mission. Most UPR-Ponce students are not only required, but also encouraged, to give back to the community through service. This involvement means that the institution recognizes that the students need to prepare themselves to be professionals in their selected fields to meet the needs of the community in which they live and to which they will serve. UPR-Ponce also recognizes the importance of having community leaders, alumni, and other constituents directly providing input and ideas through academic programs advisory boards. These boards have provided sound recommendations that have enabled the institution to face different challenges as it moves forward looking for continuing improvement and excellence. This priority is aligned with Standard I: Mission and Goals, Standard III: Design and Delivery of Student Learning Experience, and Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience. It is also aligned with Requirements of Affiliation 7, 9, 10, 11, and 15.

The alignment of the selected institutional priorities is shown in the next table.

MSCHE Requirements of Affiliation and Standards of Accreditation Aligned with Institutional Priorities

Requirements of Affiliation	Standards of Accreditation	UPR-Ponce's Institutional Priorities (X)			
		Innovation	Student Success and Satisfaction	Sustainability	Service
7	I. Mission and Goals				X
5, 6, 8	II. Ethics and Integrity	X			
9, 15	III. Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience	X	X		X
10, 11	IV. Support of the Student Experience		X		X
8, 9, 10	V. Educational Effectiveness Assessment		X		
10, 11	VI. Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement			X	
12, 13, 14	VII. Governance, Leadership, and Administration			X	

UPR-Ponce's Mission Aligned with Institutional Priorities

Elements of the Mission Statement	UPR-Ponce's Institutional Priorities (X)			
	Innovation	Student Success and Satisfaction	Sustainability	Service
Dedicated to the intellectual, humanistic, scientific, cultural, and ethical growth of its students	X	X	X	X
Devoted to the integral development of citizens and professionals	X	X	X	X

Elements of the Mission Statement	UPR-Ponce's Institutional Priorities (X)			
	Innovation	Student Success and Satisfaction	Sustainability	Service
Develop students with critical and creative thinking skills	X		X	X
Fosters students' leadership and community service	X	X		X
Fosters equal access, academic rigor, enriching educational activities, and quality support services	X	X		X
Promotes a democratic environment supportive of academic freedom, excellence, integrity, respect, tolerance, creativity, and research.	X		X	X

Trends in Enrollment, Degrees Awarded, Human Resources, and Academic Offerings

Institutional Data	2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023	
Fall enrollment	2,540		2,382		2,262		2,221	
Freshmen admitted	513		549		605		599	
Degrees awarded	429		491		379		Not available	
Faculty	165		159		164		187	
Non-faculty staff	216		201		209		207	
Academic offerings by degree levels (BA and AS) *	BA 12	AS 4	BA 12	AS 4	BA 12	AS 4	BA 12	AS 4
Accredited academic programs	11		11		11		10	

BA: Bachelor degrees, AS: Associate degrees

III. INTENDED OUTCOMES OF THE SELF-STUDY

The intended outcomes of the Self-Study are the following:

1. Provide evidence on how UPR-Ponce meets each of the 15 requirements of affiliation and seven MSCHE standards and achieve reaffirmation of accreditation.
2. Address areas that have opportunities for continuous improvement and innovation.

3. Engage the university community in an inclusive and transparent process that actively and deliberately seeks to involve members from all its sectors.

The three intended outcomes are directly aligned to institutional planning and renewal. They are useful, meaningful, and attainable. These outcomes will guide the work of the Executive Committee, Steering Committee, and Working Groups by forming the base for outlining the charges that will contribute to meeting these outcomes.

IV. SELF-STUDY APPROACH

UPR-Ponce will use a standards-based approach to evidence the alignment between institution’s mission and the MSCHE requirements of affiliation and standards. The established four priorities: Innovation, Student Success and Satisfaction, Sustainability, and Service will permeate among the requirements of affiliation and standards. The academic departments and service programs are familiar with using a standards-based approach in their professional accreditations and decision-making processes. A standards-based approach will help document evidence for the Self-Study. Furthermore, this model allows for a broad appreciation of the relevant information in different areas of the institution regarding the standards and promotes the broad participation of the university community.

The Steering Committee and Working Groups are charged with using a standards-based approach in the Self-Study process. The members by standard are:

Standard	Members	Standard	Members
<p>Standard I: Mission and Goals</p>	<p>Dr. José V. Madera, Chair Prof. Geoffrey Vega Prof. Hernando Valero Prof. Frances Torres Prof. Carmen Bracero Ms. Enid Vidal Ms. Paola Vargas, student</p>	<p>Standard V: Educational Effectiveness Assessment</p>	<p>Dr. Neyla Rivera, Chair Dr. Carmen Soto Prof. Maritza Rodríguez Dr. Jennifer Alicea Dr. Eunice Mercado Ms. Karimarie Díaz Ms. Sofía de los Ángeles Robles, student</p>

Standard	Members	Standard	Members
Standard II: Ethics and Integrity	Dr. Michele Beauchamp, Chair Prof. Regino Megill Prof. David Forestier Dr. Ana Nadal Dr. Ericka Rodríguez Ms. Maisie Pagán Mr. Josué J. Cancel, student	Standard VI: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement	Dr. Diana López, Chair Mr. Carlos Franceschi Mr. Pedro I. Martínez Dr. Leisha Martínez Dr. Eva Cabán Ms. Romarie Mesa Ms. Dalerys Feliciano, student
Standard III: Design and Delivery of Student Learning Experience	Dr. Wilfredo Ayala, Chair Dr. José López Dr. Marilia Villafañe Dr. Edda Rodríguez Ms. Arline Torres Ms. Anayarí Batista Mr. Robert Torres, student	Standard VII: Governance, Leadership, and Administration	Dr. Milton Rivera, Chair Dr. Yannira Rodríguez Dr. Ismael San Miguel Dr. Mayra Montero Dr. Lourdes Ortíz Ms. Vanessa Torres Mr. Gabriel Rodríguez, student
Standard IV: Support of the Student Experience	Prof. Dalmid Correa, Chair Ms. Marya Santiago Ms. Emily Matos Ms. Mariel Nazario Dr. José Oliveras Dr. Marisel Ramírez Ms. Camelia Torres- student		

Dr. Michelle Méndez, professor from the English Department, is the editor of this document and of the Self-Study Report.

V. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, STEERING COMMITTEE, AND WORKING GROUPS

Executive Committee

Member	Title
Dr. Jennifer Alicea, Chair	Full Professor, Social Sciences Chairperson, Institutional Accreditation Coordinator, and MSCHE Liaison
Dr. Ismael San Miguel, Co-chair	DBA, Assistant Professor, Business Administration and Computer Sciences Department Chairperson

Mr. Pedro I. Martínez, Co-chair	MBA, Sub-Director Finance Office
Ms. Anayari Batista, Executive Assistant	MA. Ed., Administrative Assistant IV, Office of Planning and Institutional Research

The Executive Committee is the main responsible for coordinating all stages of the self-study process and for providing the necessary leadership on campus. This Committee is in charge of presenting and discussing results to the Chancellor, Deans, and other leaders on campus. Also, its members coordinate arrangements for the Team Chair and Evaluation Team visits and collaborate with the Chancellor on the Institutional Response Report. Finally, the Executive Committee ensures that the timetable is met as closely as possible, organizes public hearings on the drafts of the Self-Study report, and guarantees that the final version is produced and sent on time.

Executive Committee Collaboration with Working Groups

The Executive Committee members are proactively collaborating with the Working Groups by being a member of various standards:

- Dr. Jennifer Alicea: Standard V
- Dr. Ismael San Miguel: Standard VII
- Mr. Pedro I. Martínez: Standard VI
- Ms. Anayari Batista: Standard III

Having the Executive Committee members as part of the Working Groups will reinforce the evidence-gathering and decision-making that is part of the Self-Study process by generating a stronger, more efficient cooperative structure.

Steering Committee

Member	Title
Dr. Jennifer Alicea, Chair	Full Professor, Social Sciences Department Chairperson, Institutional Accreditation Coordinator, and MSCHE Liaison
Dr. Ismael San Miguel, Co-chair	DBA, Assistant Professor, Business Administration and Computer Sciences Department Chairperson
Mr. Pedro I. Martínez, Co-chair	MBA, Finance Office Sub-Director
Ms. Anayari Batista, Executive Assistant	MA. Ed., Administrative Assistant IV, Office of Planning and Institutional Research
Dr. José V. Madera, Standard I Chair	Assistant Professor, Spanish Department

Member	Title
Dr. Michele Beauchamp, Standard II Chair	Assistant Professor, Humanities Department
Dr. Wilfredo Ayala, Standard III Chair	Professor, Biology Department
Prof. Dalmid Correa, Standard IV Chair	Assistant Professor, Business Administration and Computer Sciences Department
Dr. Neyla Rivera, Standard V Chair	Associate Professor, Education Department and Institutional Assessment Coordinator
Dr. Diana López, Standard VI Chair	Assistant Professor Computer Science Department and Office of Planning and Institutional Research Chairperson
Dr. Milton Rivera, Standard VII Chair	Associate Professor, Chemistry-Physics Department Chairperson
Dr. Michelle Méndez, editor	Assistant professor, English Department

Steering Committee Responsibilities

The Steering Committee provides guidance to the seven working groups that are leading the self-study process. The responsibilities of the Steering Committee include:

1. Identifying the key issues of developing a self-study.
2. Developing the Self-Study Design.
3. Establishing the working groups charges.
4. Preparing templates and documents for the working groups and revising the provided evidence.
5. Scheduling meetings and workshops with the working groups.
6. Acting as an intermediary among working groups.
7. Supervising the completion of the Self-Study Report.
8. Informing the institution's deliberative bodies and university community about the self-study process.

Working Groups General Charges

The Steering Committee identified seven general charges for the Working Groups:

1. Reading and reviewing resources provided by MSCHE and Executive Committee.
2. Identifying policies, procedures, and structures to assess each standard to be used as part of the Evidence Inventory.

3. Revising relevant documents and processes to assess how each corresponds to verifying that standards are met.
4. Demonstrating periodic assessment of policies, evidence, and processes inherent in each standard.
5. Crafting opportunities for improvement based on findings and analyses.
6. Citing at least three lines of inquiry that will compose the specific charges each group will use for evidencing a standard is met.
7. Identifying gaps in the institution's processes and documentation to meet standards.
8. Recommending best practices on how gaps can be resolved using short, medium, and long-term strategies.

Working Groups will engage in gathering data by reviewing documents, policies, and processes. The evidence will be analyzed according to the institution's mission, goals, and priorities. Furthermore, the alignment with the key elements and specific criteria of the corresponding standards will be analyzed. The Working Groups will verify if the evidence clearly identifies that a standard has been met and recommend how gaps in the evidence can be resolved.

Strategies for Working Groups Interaction

The Working Groups will interact with one another in the interest of engaging in common areas of inquiry and reducing undue duplication of effort. Some strategies that will promote this interaction are:

- Holding periodic meetings (monthly)
- Reviewing the interrelationship of all standards to identify overlaps
- Maintaining constant communication with the Steering Committee
- Sharing the evidence of meeting standards with other working groups for continuous feedback and cross-referencing

As part of the revision process, each working group chair will have to read and provide recommendations to the other chapters. A meeting with the complete Steering Committee will be held to discuss these recommendations and make decisions about them.

Working Group 1: Mission and Goals

- José V. Madera-chair, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Spanish Department
- Geoffrey Vega, M.S., Instructor, Engineering Department
- Hernando Valero, M.S., Professor, Business Administration and Computer Sciences Department
- Frances Torres, M.Ed., Assistant Professor, English Department
- Carmen Bracero, M.A., Professor, Chancellor’s Special Assistant
- Enid Vidal, M.Ed., Administrative Secretary, Allied Health Sciences Department
- Paola Vargas, Elementary Education student

Description of Standard I: The institution’s mission defines its purpose within the context of higher education, the students it serves, and what it intends to accomplish. The institution’s stated goals are clearly linked to its mission and specify how the institution fulfills its mission.

General Questions

1. How is the institutional mission developed by a wide participation of the constituents including governing boards?
2. Which strategies are implemented to widely disseminate the institutional mission to the community?
3. How does the mission direct the planning process, resource allocation, curricular revision, and educational outcomes?
4. How do the institutional goals lead the institution to fulfill its mission?

Specific Criteria and Evidence

Criteria	Evidence
<p>1. Clearly defined mission and goals that:</p> <p>a) Are developed through appropriate collaborative participation by all who facilitate or are otherwise responsible for institutional development and improvement.</p> <p>b) Address external as well as internal contexts and constituencies.</p> <p>c) Are approved and supported by the governing body.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission and goals of academic departments • Mission and goals of administrative offices • Operational plans (Implementation) • Assessment plans (Implementation) • Evidence of public hearings and other participation strategies both for internal and external constituencies in Mission evaluation • Evidence of academic, art and aesthetics activities, and community services both in campus and external scenarios

Criteria	Evidence
<p>d) Guide faculty, administration, staff, and governing structures in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program and curricular development, and the definition of institutional and educational outcomes.</p> <p>e) Include support of scholarly inquiry and creative activity, at levels and of the type appropriate to the institution.</p> <p>f) Are publicized and widely known by the institution's internal stakeholders.</p> <p>g) Are periodically evaluated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of external community members collaboration in program's professional accreditation process • Administrative Board Certifications • Strategic Plan: UPR-Ponce Vision 2026 • Institutional annual effectiveness reports • Academic departments and service offices assessment plans • Academic program evaluations or accredited program's self-studies • Syllabi • Evidence of academic department and offices inquiry to define the institutional mission • Institutional catalog • Brochures • Institutional webpage • Institutional social networks • Governing Board certifications and Chancellor Office policy letters • Evidence of Governing Board meetings minutes, agendas, and certifications
<p>2. Institutional goals that are realistic, appropriate to higher education, and consistent with mission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reports of each university unit (academic departments and offices) • Academic program evaluations and self-studies
<p>3. Goals that focus on student learning and related outcomes and on institutional improvement are supported by administrative, educational, and student support programs and services, and are consistent with institutional mission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic program evaluations or self-studies • Academic programs and academic departments annual reports • Academic departments and services offices assessment plans • Institutional assessment reports • Annual institutional data profiles • Professional accreditation reports
<p>4. Periodic assessment of mission and goals to ensure they are relevant and achievable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic departments and offices mission and goals alignment • Annual reports and assessment plans • Mission and goals alignment in the institutional annual reports

Criteria	Evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic programs five-year evaluation reports

Working Group 2: Ethics and Integrity

- Michele Beauchamp-chair, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Humanities Department
- Regino Megill, M.A., Assistant Professor, English Department Chairperson
- David Forestier, M.S., Associate Professor, Biology Department
- Ana Nadal, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Spanish and Humanities Departments Chairperson
- Ericka Rodríguez, Ed. D., Human Resources Office Chairperson
- Maisie Pagán, B.A., Administrative Secretary V, Chancellor’s Office
- Josué J. Cancel, Athletic Training student

Description of Standard II: Ethics and integrity are central, indispensable, and defining hallmarks of effective higher education institutions. In all activities, whether internal or external, an institution must be faithful to its mission, honor its contracts and commitments, adhere to its policies, and represent itself truthfully.

General Questions

1. How has the institution fostered an educational and administrative environment that respects and represents the diversity, individual freedom, and rights of all members of the university community?
2. What mechanisms allow the institution to listen, collect, and assist, in an impartial and fair manner, the possible conflicts and problems that may arise among the members of the university community?
3. How are students informed of the costs and benefits of obtaining an academic degree at the institution? How does the institution ensure that students are also aware of potential cost changes and how the funds received are used by the institution so that they can make informed decisions about their education?
4. Which are the mechanisms for members of the university community to access updated information and data on the different processes that are carried out on campus with their corresponding results?

5. How does the institution perform periodic assessment of ethics and integrity as required in institutional policies, processes, practices, and the way the procedures are implemented?

6. How does the institution demonstrate that it performs fair and impartial procedures in hiring, evaluating, promoting, and dismissing employees? How often are these procedures revised?

Specific Criteria and Evidence

Criteria	Evidence
1. A commitment to academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional mission, vision, goals, values, and objectives as elaborated in the UPR Strategic Plan 2017-2022 and UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 • Departmental missions, visions, goals, and objectives related to academic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of expression, and respect for intellectual property rights • Institutional policies and procedures related to academic freedom • Institutional policies and procedures related to intellectual freedom and freedom of expression • Institutional policies and procedures related to intellectual property rights • Student Manual - Certification No. 13, 2009-2010, Board of Trustees • Faculty Manual • UPR By-Laws - Certification 160, 2014-2015 Amended – September 2015 • UPR-Ponce Student By-Laws • Office of the Student Ombudsperson policies and procedures
2. A climate that fosters respect among students, faculty, staff, and administration from a range of diverse backgrounds, ideas, and perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional mission, vision, values, and goals and objectives as elaborated in the UPR Strategic Plan 2017-2022 and UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 • Documents related to the promotion of respect for physical and philosophical diversity

Criteria	Evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departments missions, visions, goals, values, and objectives related to promotion of respect for physical and philosophical diversity • Administrative offices missions, goals, values, and objectives related to promotion of respect for physical and philosophical diversity • Institutional policies and procedures related to the promotion of respect for physical and philosophical diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. UPR-Ponce Policy Letter 22-23-03: Statement of Policy against Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity in Employment b. UPR-Ponce Policy Letter 22-23-01: Affirmative Action Policy Statement for Women's Employment c. UPR-Ponce Diversity Statement (Certification 2018-2019-28 AS) d. UPR Anti-Discrimination Policy (Certification 58-2004-2005 GB) (implementation) e. Americans with Disabilities Act (implementation) f. Title IX (implementation) policies g. Student organizations – Student Coalition in Search of Equity, Association of Pro-Deaf University Students, among others h. Office for Students with Disabilities policies
<p>3. A grievance policy that is documented and disseminated to address complaints or grievances raised by students, faculty, or staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional policies and procedures related to grievances among employees and students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. UPR By-Laws - Certification 160-2014-2015 / Amended – September 2015 b. Student Manual – Certification 13-2009-2010 Board of Trustees c. UPR-Ponce Student By-Laws

Criteria	Evidence
	d. Office of the Student Ombudsperson
3.1 The institution's policies and procedures are fair and impartial, and assure that grievances are addressed promptly, appropriately, and equitably	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional documents related to fair, impartial, and timely resolution of employee and student grievances <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Office of the Student Ombudsperson b. Disciplinary Board
4. The avoidance of conflict of interest or the appearance of such conflict in all activities and among all constituents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governmental Ethics Law • Institutional Goals (Certification 59-2008-2009 AS) • Institutional Values (Certification 50-2007-2008 AS)
5. Fair and impartial practices in the hiring, evaluation, promotion, discipline, and separation of employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional policies and procedures related to avoidance of conflict of interest and/or the appearance of conflict of interest in all matters related to employees • Institutional policies and procedures related to avoidance of conflict of interest and/or the appearance of conflict of interest in all matters related to purchases and service contracts • Institutional policies and procedures related to avoidance of conflict of interest and/or the appearance of conflict of interest in all matters related to student admissions and academic progress • Certification 13-2021-2022 Administrative Board: Reconstitution Special Committee with the task of reviewing form ORHP-54-Application for Leave and/or Financial Aid (Certification 23-2012-2013) with the intention that there is manifest evidence that the employee was guided. (Amendment to Certification 49-2020-2021) • Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy (Implementation) • Americans with Disabilities Act (Implementation)

Criteria	Evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor Agreement with the Brotherhood of Exempt Non-faculty Employees • Collective Bargain Agreement with the Labor Syndicate • UPR By-Laws
<p>6. Honesty and truthfulness in public relations announcements, advertisements, recruiting and admissions materials and practices, as well as in internal communications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission and vision of the institutional Communications Office • Representative sample of institutional communications (digital and print) • Assessment plans • Representative sample of student recruitment and admissions materials (digital and print) • Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Policy (Implementation) • Institutional webpage and social networks • IPEDS reports
<p>7. As appropriate to its mission, services, or programs in place:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. to promote affordability and accessibility informed decisions about incurring debt b. to enable students to understand funding sources and options, value received for cost, and methods to make informed decisions about incurring debt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions Office policies and procedures • UPR Strategic Plan 2017-2022 • UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 • Institutional webpage • Net Price Calculator • Financial aid policies and procedures
<p>8. Compliance with all applicable federal, state, and Commission reporting policies, regulations, and requirements to include reporting regarding:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the full disclosure of information on institution-wide assessments, graduation, retention, certification and licensure or licensing board pass rates b. the institution's compliance with the Commission's Requirements of Affiliation c. substantive changes affecting institutional mission, goals, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional policies and procedures related to compliance with federal, local, and MSCHE reporting requirements on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The full disclosure of information on institution-wide assessments, graduation, retention, certification and licensure or licensing board pass rates the Commission's Requirements of Affiliation • IPEDS compliance • Office of Planning and Institutional Research (OPIR)- Institutional Dashboards • UPR Strategic Plan 2017-2022

Criteria	Evidence
<p>programs, operations, sites, and other material issues which must be disclosed in a timely and accurate fashion;</p> <p>d. the institution's compliance with the Commission's policies; and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 • Admissions Office policies and procedures • Retention policies and procedures
<p>9. Periodic assessment of ethics and integrity as evidenced in institutional policies, processes, practices, and the manner in which these are implemented</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organic Law of the Puerto Rico Government Ethics Office • Government Ethics Office approved workshops • Assessment plans • Office of Planning and Institutional Research documents and studies

Working Group 3: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

- Wilfredo Ayala-chair, Ph.D., Professor, Biology Department
- Marilia Villafañe, Ed.D., Assistant Professor, Education Department Chairperson
- Edda Rodríguez, Ed.D., Associate Professor, English Department
- José López, Ed.D., Assistant Professor, Math Department
- Arline Torres, MBA, Moodle Functional Administrator, Center for Academic Support for Students and Faculty
- Anayarí Batista, M.Ed., Administrative Assistant IV, Office of Planning and Institutional Research
- Robert Torres, Business Administration student

Description of Standard III: An institution provides students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence at all programs, certificate, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, regardless of modality, program pace/schedule, level, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations.

General Questions

1. How does UPR-Ponce provide students with learning experiences that are rigorous and coherent at all programs, certificate, and degree levels?
2. In what ways does the institution guarantee that the learning experiences through online learning modalities compare with traditional delivery methods?

3. How has technology been used to enhance student learning and integrate the wider community in university life?
4. In what ways are the learning experiences offered at UPR-Ponce consistent with higher education expectations?
5. What policies has the UPR-Ponce implemented to hire highly qualified professors for teaching at the university level, using classical and emerging technologies? How do professors stay up to date?
6. To what degree does the institution provide students with learning experiences that reflect the effectiveness of all programs, certificates, or degrees?
7. How does the institution support students and faculty in the development of research, scholarships, grants, and independent studies?

Specific Criteria and Evidence

Criteria	Evidence
1. Certificate, undergraduate, graduate, and/or professional programs leading to a degree or other recognized higher education credential, of a length appropriate to the objectives of the degree or other credential, designed to foster a coherent student learning experience and to promote synthesis of learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Plan: UPR-Ponce Vision 2026 • Academic department operational plans • Institutional catalog • Institutional webpage • Institutional and professional accreditation reports • Academic programs 5-year evaluation reports • Exit graduate surveys
2. Student learning experiences that are designed, delivered, and assessed by faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals who are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. rigorous and effective in teaching, assessment of student learning, scholarly inquiry, and service, as appropriate to the institution's mission, goals, and policies b. qualified for the positions they hold and the work they do c. sufficient in number 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPR General By-Laws • UPR-Ponce's General Student By-Laws • New faculty orientation activity • Faculty evaluations (student, peer, and inherent to teaching) • Departmental, institutional, and systemic professional development plans • Tenure and promotion manual • Assessment Plans • Research Proposals (Faculty and Students) • Faculty Hiring Plan • Human Resources reports

Criteria	Evidence
<p>d. provided with and utilize sufficient opportunities, resources, and support for professional growth and innovation reviewed regularly and equitably based on written, disseminated, clear, and fair criteria, expectations, policies, and procedures</p> <p>e. reviewed regularly and equitably based on written, disseminated, clear, and fair criteria, expectations, policies, and procedures;</p>	
<p>3. Academic programs of study that are clearly and accurately described in official publications of the institution in a way that students are able to understand and follow degree and program requirements and expected time to completion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional catalog • Academic departments curricular booklets and publications • Institutional and academic department webpages • Admissions Office advertisement • UPR advertisement • Course syllabi • Academic departments social media
<p>4. Sufficient learning opportunities and resources to support both the institution's programs of study and students' academic progress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic departments operational plans • UPR-Ponce's Budget • Academic department annual reports • Institutional annual reports • Academic departments annual budget reports • Admissions Office advertisements • Institutional catalog • Graduation and persistence studies • Student Services offices reports • Office for Students with Disabilities reports

Criteria	Evidence
<p>5. At institutions that offer undergraduate education, a general education program, free standing or integrated into academic disciplines, that:</p> <p>a. offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments outside as well as within their academic field.</p> <p>b. offers a curriculum designed so that students acquire and demonstrate essential skills including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy. Consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives</p> <p>c. in non-US institutions that do not include general education, provides evidence that students can demonstrate general education skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Education Component Academic Senate Certification • Institutional General Education Component Committee reports • Assessment reports • Student associations activities reports • Institutional catalog
<p>6. In institutions that offer graduate and professional education, opportunities for the development of research, scholarship, and independent thinking, provided by faculty and/or other professionals with credentials appropriate to graduate-level curricula</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>7. Adequate and appropriate institutional review and approval on any student learning opportunities designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party providers</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>8. Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of programs providing student learning opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Assessment Policy • Institutional assessment reports • Assessment Forums • Departments assessment plans and reports

Criteria	Evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment plans • Departments webpage publications of assessment reports • Academic departments five-year evaluation reports • Professional accreditation reports

Working Group 4: Support of the Student Experience

- Dalmid Correa-chair, MBA, Assistant Professor, Business Administration and Computer Sciences Department
- Marya Santiago, M.A., Registrar
- Emily Matos, M.A., Admissions Office Chairperson
- Mariel Nazario, M.A., Professional Counsellor, Counseling and Psychological Services Department
- José Oliveras, Ed. D., Adelina Coppin Library Chairperson
- Marisel Ramírez, Ed. D., Counseling and Psychological Services Department Chairperson
- Camelia Torres, Elementary Education student

Description of Standard IV: Across all educational experiences, settings, levels, and instructional modalities, the institution recruits and admits students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings. The institution commits to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system sustained by qualified professionals, which enhances the quality of the learning environment, contributes to the educational experience, and fosters student success.

General Questions

1. How does the institution recruit and admit students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals are congruent with its mission and educational offerings?
2. In what ways does the institution commit to student retention, persistence, completion, and success through a coherent and effective support system?
3. What academic and extracurricular experiences does the institution offer students that contribute to their professional academic experience and student success?
4. What evaluations are conducted that demonstrate the effectiveness of students' support services?

Specific Criteria and Evidence

Criteria	Evidence
<p>1. Clearly stated ethical policies and processes to admit, retain, and facilitate the success of students whose interests, abilities, experiences, and goals provide a reasonable expectation for success and are compatible with institutional mission, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. accurate and comprehensive information regarding expenses, financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, repayment, and refunds b. a process by which students who are not adequately prepared for study at the level for which they have been admitted are identified, placed, and supported in attaining appropriate educational goals c. orientation, advisement, and counseling programs to enhance retention and guide students throughout their educational experience d. processes designed to enhance the successful achievement of students' educational goals including certificate and degree completion, transfer to other institutions, and post completion placement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition fees • Financial Aid policies • Scholarships policies • Mentoring and tutoring programs • Counseling and Psychological Services Department procedures • Academic Advising procedures • Office for Students with Disabilities procedures • Retention plans and reports • Institutional catalog • Student support services offices assessment reports • Student support services satisfaction surveys
<p>2. Policies and procedures regarding evaluation and acceptance of transfer credits and credits awarded through experiential learning, prior non-academic learning, competency-based assessment, and other alternative learning approaches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admissions and transfer policies • Course validation charts • Institutional catalog • Continuing Education and Professional Studies Division policies • ASCIENDE program policies • Registrar policies

Criteria	Evidence
3. Policies and procedures for the safe and secure maintenance and appropriate release of student information and records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registrar policies • Institutional catalog • Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) • Information Systems Office policies
4. If offered, athletic, student life, and other extracurricular activities that are regulated by the same academic, fiscal, and administrative principles and procedures that govern all other programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional annual effectiveness reports • Athletic program policies • Student organization policies • Extracurricular activities • Institutional webpage • Institutional social networks • Artistic groups (choir, band, color guards, dance team)
5. If applicable, adequate, and appropriate institutional review and approval of student support services designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party providers	N/A
6. Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of programs supporting the student experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office of Planning and Institutional Research surveys • Services evaluations • Institutional annual effectiveness reports • Institutional assessment reports

Working Group 5: Educational Effectiveness Assessment

- Neyla Rivera-chair, Ed. D., Associate Professor, Education Department and Institutional Assessment Coordinator
- Carmen Soto, Ed.D., PT, MA, DPT, Professor, Allied Health Sciences Department
- Maritza Rodríguez, MBA, Assistant Professor, Business Administration and Computer Sciences Department
- Jennifer Alicea, Ed. D., Professor, Social Sciences Department Chairperson, Institutional Accreditation Coordinator, and MSCHE Liaison
- Eunice Mercado, Ph.D., Professor, Chemistry and Physics Department
- Karimarie Díaz, B.A., Administrative Secretary IV, Pre School Center
- Sofía Robles, Social Sciences student

Description of Standard V: Assessment of student learning and achievement demonstrates that the institution's students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their program of study, degree level, the institution's mission, and appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education.

General Questions

1. To what degree do the assessment of student learning and its achievement demonstrate that the students have accomplished educational goals consistent with their program of study and degree level?
2. How is the assessment of student learning and achievement aligned with the institution’s mission?
3. In what ways are the assessment of student learning and its achievement aligned with the appropriate expectations for institutions of higher education?
4. How are assessment results used for decision-making?
5. To what degree has the assessment process transformed student learning according to goals and objectives?

Specific Criteria and Evidence

Criteria	Evidence
1. Clearly stated educational goals at the institution and degree/program/levels, which are interrelated with one another, with relevant educational experiences, and with the institution’s mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional mission and vision • Academic programs mission, vision, and goals • Academic programs assessment plans • Graduate surveys • Academic programs operational plans
2. Organized and systematic assessments, conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals, evaluating the extent of student achievement of institutional and degree/program goals. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. defines meaningful curricular goals with defensible standards for evaluating whether students are achieving those goals b. articulate how they prepare students in a manner consistent with their mission for successful careers, meaningful lives, and, where appropriate, further education. They should collect and provide data on the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic programs assessment plans • Institutional Assessment Policy • Institutional alumni profile • Institutional webpage • Academic programs learning goals • Academic programs alumni profile

Criteria	Evidence
<p>extent to which they are meeting these goals.</p> <p>c. support and sustain assessment of student achievement and communicate the results of this assessment to stakeholders;</p>	
<p>3. Consideration and use of assessment results for the improvement of educational effectiveness. Consistent with the institution’s mission, such uses include some combination of the following:</p> <p>a. assisting students in improving their learning.</p> <p>b. improving pedagogy and curriculum.</p> <p>c. reviewing and revising academic programs and support services.</p> <p>d. planning, conducting, and supporting a range of professional development activities.</p> <p>e. planning and budgeting for the provision of academic programs and services.</p> <p>f. informing appropriate constituents about the institution and its programs.</p> <p>g. improving key indicators of student success, such as retention, graduation, transfer, and placement rates.</p> <p>h. implementing other processes and procedures designed to improve educational programs and services;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduate surveys • Assessment instruments • Counseling assessment plans • Academic programs five-year evaluation reports • Professional accreditation reports • Curricular revision policies • Academic Program Creation and Evaluation Policy • Professional Development activities • Planning and budgeting processes • Institutional Retention Plan
<p>4. If applicable, adequate, and appropriate institutional review and approval of assessment services designed, delivered, or assessed by third-party providers; and</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>5. Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of assessment processes utilized by the institution for the improvement of educational effectiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment plans • Professional development plans

Working Group 6: Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement

- Diana López - chair, DBA, Assistant Professor Computer Science Department and Office of Planning and Institutional Research Chairperson
- Carlos Franceschi, BBA, Budget Office Chairperson
- Pedro I. Martínez, MBA, Sub-Director Finance Office
- Leisha Martínez, Ph.D., External Resources and Development Chairperson
- Eva Cabán, DBA, Continuing Education and Professional Studies Division Chairperson
- Romarie Mesa, MBA, Finance Office Chairperson
- Dalerys Feliciano, Social Sciences student

Description of Standard VI: The institution’s planning processes, resources, and structures are aligned with each other and are sufficient to fulfill its mission and goals, to continuously assess and improve its programs and services, and to respond effectively to opportunities and challenges.

General Questions

1. How does the institution improve its programs and services?
2. How does the institution distribute its budget?
3. Which processes does the institution perform to align its mission, goals, programs, and services?
4. What criteria are considered during planning processes and resources allocation?
5. How is the improvement of programs and services performed and documented?
6. How are opportunities and challenges identified, assessed, and documented?

Specific Criteria and Evidence

Criteria	Evidence
1. Institutional objectives, both institution wide and for individual units, that are clearly stated, assessed appropriately, linked to mission and goal achievement, reflect conclusions drawn from	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Assessment Reports • Alignment of UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 Goals with UPR Strategic Plan 2017-2022 • New students profile reports • Graduate students research reports

Criteria	Evidence
assessment results, and are used for planning and resource allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic departments operational plans aligned with UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026
2. Clearly documented and communicated planning and improvement processes that provide for constituent participation, and incorporate the use of assessment results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Assessment Plan • UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 • New students profile reports • Graduate students survey reports • Curricular revisions
3. A financial planning and budgeting process that is aligned with the institution's mission and goals, evidence-based, and clearly linked to the institution's and units' strategic plans/objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual budget requests from offices and department's chairs • Executive Committee of Institutional Renewal agendas and minutes • Technology Use Plan
4. Fiscal and human resources as well as the physical and technical infrastructure adequate to support its operations wherever and however programs are delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial projections • Physical development plan • Human Resources development plan • Budgeting process
5. A well-defined decision-making processes and clear assignment of responsibility and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPR General By-Laws • Governing Board certifications • Organization charts (UPR-Ponce and UPR) • Job descriptions • Academic Senate certifications • Administrative Board certifications
6. Comprehensive planning for facilities, infrastructure, and technology that includes consideration of sustainability and deferred maintenance and is linked to the institution's strategic and financial planning processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPR fiscal plan • UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 • Operational plans
7. An annual independent audit confirming financial viability with evidence of follow-up on any concerns cited in the audit's accompanying management letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial statements • Government Comptroller Office reports • External audits • Internal audits

Criteria	Evidence
8. Strategies to measure and assess the adequacy and efficient utilization of institutional resources required to support the institution's mission and goals;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational plan • Financial statements • UPR Strategic Plan 2017-2022 • UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026
9. Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of planning, resource allocation, institutional renewal processes, and availability of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deanship of Administrative Affairs assessment reports • Executive Committee of Institutional Renewal minutes and reports

Working Group 7: Governance, Leadership, and Administration

- Milton Rivera-chair, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Chemistry-Physics Department Chairperson
- Yannira Rodríguez, Ed.D., Professor, Office Systems Department Chairperson
- Ismael San Miguel, DBA, Assistant Professor, Business Administration and Computer Sciences Department Chairperson
- Mayra Montero, Psy.D., Professor, Social Sciences Department
- Lourdes Ortíz, Ed.D., Associate Professor, English Department
- Vanessa Torres, B.A., Administrative Secretary V, Academic Senate
- Gabriel Rodríguez, Physical Therapy student

Description of Standard VII: The institution is governed and administered in a manner that allows it to realize its stated mission and goals in a way that effectively benefits the institution, its students, and the other constituencies it serves. Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, religious, educational system, or other unaccredited organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose, and it operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

General Questions

1. How does the institution evidence clear articulation and transparency of governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for decision making by teaching staff, administration, student body, and other constituents?
2. How does the institution guarantee that it is a legal, effective, and independent governing body, and how does it show conformity with related MSCHE criteria?
3. How does the institution show that the Chief Executive Officer meets MSCHE criteria?

4. How does the institution evidence that the administration possesses or demonstrates compliance with MSCHE criterion?
5. How does the institution sustain periodic assessment of the effectiveness of governance, leadership, and administration?

Specific Criteria and Evidence

Criteria	Evidence
<p>1. A clearly articulated and transparent governance structure that outlines roles, responsibilities, and accountability for decision making by each constituency, including governing body, administration, faculty, staff, and students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPR University Law • UPR General By-Laws • UPR and UPR-Ponce organizational charts • Institutional policies and reports (Academic Senate, Chancellor, and Deanships) • UPR Strategic Plan 2017-2022 • UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 • UPR Faculty Manual • UPR Ethics Policy
<p>2. A legally constituted governing body that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. serves the public interest, ensures that the institution clearly states and fulfills its mission and goals, has fiduciary responsibility for the institution, and is ultimately accountable for the academic quality, planning, and fiscal well-being of the institution; b. has sufficient independence and expertise to ensure the integrity of the institution. Members must have primary responsibility to the accredited institution and not allow political, financial, or other influences to interfere with their governing responsibilities; c. ensures that neither the governing body nor its individual members interfere in the day-to-day operations of the institution; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPR University Law • UPR General By-Laws • UPR-Ponce Organization Chart • Governing Board reports • Institutional policies and reports (Academic Senate, Chancellor, and Deanships) • UPR Strategic Plan 2017-2022 • UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 • UPR Ethics Policy • Institutional mission, vision, objectives, and goals • Financial statements • Institutional webpage

Criteria	Evidence
<p>d. oversees at the policy level the quality of teaching and learning, the approval of degree programs and the awarding of degrees, the establishment of personnel policies and procedures, the approval of policies and by-laws, and the assurance of strong fiscal management;</p> <p>e. plays a basic policy-making role in financial affairs to ensure integrity and strong financial management. This may include a timely review of audited financial statements and/or other documents related to the fiscal viability of the institution;</p> <p>f. appoints and regularly evaluates the performance of the Chief Executive Officer;</p> <p>g. is informed in all its operations by principles of good practice in board governance;</p> <p>h. establishes and complies with a written conflict of interest policy designed to ensure the impartiality of the governing body by addressing matters such as payment for services, contractual relationships, employment, and family, financial or other interests that could pose or be perceived as conflicts of interest;</p> <p>i. supports the Chief Executive Officer in maintaining the autonomy of the institution;</p>	
<p>3. A Chief Executive Officer who:</p> <p>a. is appointed by, evaluated by, and reports to the governing body and shall not chair the governing body;</p> <p>b. has appropriate credentials and professional experience consistent with the mission of the organization;</p> <p>c. has the authority and autonomy required to fulfill the responsibilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPR University Law • UPR General By-Laws • UPR Systemic Regulations • UPR-Ponce Organizational Chart • UPR Ethics Policy • UPR Governing Board internal rules and regulations • Chancellor requirements certification • Chancellor appointment certification

Criteria	Evidence
<p>of the position, including developing and implementing UPR-Ponce plans, staffing the organization, identifying and allocating resources, and directing the institution toward attaining the goals and objectives set forth in its mission;</p> <p>d. has the assistance of qualified administrators, sufficient in number, to enable the Chief Executive Officer to discharge his/her duties effectively; and is responsible for establishing procedures for assessing the organization’s efficiency and effectiveness;</p>	
<p>4. An administration possessing or demonstrating:</p> <p>a. an organizational structure that is clearly documented and that clearly defines reporting relationships;</p> <p>b. an appropriate size and with relevant experience to assist the Chief Executive Officer in fulfilling his/her roles and responsibilities;</p> <p>c. members with credentials and professional experience consistent with the mission of the organization and their functional roles;</p> <p>d. skills, time, assistance, technology, and information systems expertise required to perform their duties;</p> <p>e. regular engagement with faculty and students in advancing the institution’s goals and objectives;</p> <p>f. systematic procedures for evaluating administrative units and for using assessment data to enhance operations;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPR University Law • UPR General By-Laws • UPR-Ponce Organizational Chart • UPR Ethics Policy • UPR Governing Board internal rules and regulations • Chancellor requirements certification • Chancellor appointment certification • Institutional mission, vision, objectives, and goals • UPR-Ponce Chancellor’s Office reports • UPR-Ponce Deanship Offices reports
<p>5. Periodic assessment of the effectiveness of governance, leadership, and administration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPR Governing Board reports • UPR Presidency reports • UPR University Board reports • UPR-Ponce Administrative Board reports

Criteria	Evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPR-Ponce Academic Senate reports • UPR-Ponce Chancellor’s Office reports • UPR-Ponce Deanship Offices reports • UPR-Ponce OPIR reports • UPR-Ponce offices and departments annual reports • Evaluations completed to trusted personnel, as established in the regulations

VI. GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING

The Self-Study Report will be organized as described in this section. The Steering Committee will integrate the different sections developed by the working groups. The Steering Committee is responsible for the drafts and final Self-Study Report and incorporates all input and recommendations provided at the various levels of the institution and the constituents of the university community.

The organization of the Self-Study report is outlined as follows:

1. Cover Page
2. Table of Contents
3. List of Tables
4. List of Figures
5. Executive Committee, Steering Committee, and Working Groups
6. Executive Summary
7. Institutional Overview
8. Standard 1 – Mission and Goals
9. Standard 2 – Ethics and Integrity
10. Standard 3 – Design and Delivery of Student Learning Experience
11. Standard 4 – Support of Student Experience
12. Standard 5 – Educational Effectiveness Assessment
13. Standard 6 – Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement
14. Standard 7 – Governance, Leadership, and Administration
15. Evidence Inventory

Each standard documentation will be organized using the following template:

1. Standard

2. Criterion
3. Institutional response by criterion
4. Conclusions regarding compliance with the standard
5. Recommendations
6. Compliance with associated requirements of affiliation

The evidence will be identified based on the standard or requirement of affiliation in the same order as they appear in the Self-Study document with its correspondent name, for example:

- Standard 1, criterion 1, evidence 1: 1.1.1 Sample Document

VII. ORGANIZATION OF THE SELF-STUDY REPORT

The following guidelines are to be followed when preparing the Self-Study document and working groups' reports.

Font	Calibri size 12
Page margins	Unbound (1" left; 1" right)
Major headings	Left justify, bold, double space after heading, all caps
Minor heading 1	Left justify, bold, double space after heading, capitalized first letter of each word
Minor heading 2	Left justify, italic, double space after heading, capitalized first letter of each word
Paragraphs	Single space, double space after each paragraph, full justify
Page numbering	Bottom right
Headers	Top left
Tables	Numbered left justify, title left justify, title in columns center, source and notes left bottom
Charts	Numbered left justify, title left justify, title in columns center, source and notes left bottom

The full report will include the following elements:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Chapter for each standard or institutional priority
- Conclusion

Each chapter will be submitted in Microsoft Word format in the Microsoft Team channel created per each working group.

Recommendations will be vetted and selected for inclusion in the final Self-Study Report by the Executive Committee. Nonetheless, all the recommendations derived from the consultation process will be informed to the Executive Committee of Institutional Renewal (ECIR). It is composed of the Chancellor, Deans, Office of Planning and Institutional Research Director, Finance Director, Budget Director, Institutional Assessment Coordinator, and the Audits Coordinator.

VIII. VERIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE STRATEGY

The UPR-Ponce Self-Study Design provides a description of several strategies to ensure a productive completion of a Verification of Compliance (VOC) process. These include:

1. Identification of institutional key personnel and office responsible for assisting in providing relevant information to the Executive and Steering Committees.
2. Preparation of a table to illustrate VOC areas and people and office responsible.
3. Research and request of key documentation and regulations required for VOC completion.
4. Examination, analysis, and cross-reference of documentation submitted by key personnel.
5. Continuous communication and feedback between the Executive Committee members and institutional key personnel.

The Executive Committee will oversee the work of the people responsible for submitting materials and will compile the evidence for each verification of compliance area.

Verification of Compliance Area	Person Responsible	Office/Department
Student Identity Verification in Distance and Correspondence Education	Ms. Damaris Hernández	Information Systems Office Chairperson
Transfer of Credit Policies and Articulation Agreements	Dr. Ineabelle Montes	Dean of Academic Affairs
Title IV Program Responsibilities	Ms. Vanessa Vélez	Financial Aid Office Chairperson
Institutional Records of Student Complaints	Prof. Carlos Pagán Dr. José V. Madera	Dean of Student Affairs Student Ombudsperson

Verification of Compliance Area	Person Responsible	Office/Department
Required Information for Students and the Public	Dr. Diana López Mr. Efraín Álvarez	Office of Planning and Institutional Research Chairperson Webmaster
Standing with State and other Accrediting Agencies	Dr. Jennifer Alicea	Institutional Accreditation Coordinator
Contractual Relationships	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Assignment of credit hours	Dr. Ineabelle Montes	Dean of Academic Affairs

IX. SELF-STUDY TIMETABLE

Date	Process
I. Organizational Phase	
January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Committee and Steering Committee members are selected and named
January – February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working groups members are selected and named
March 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings with Steering Committee to establish work plan/orientations
II. Self-Study Design	
April – October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutional priorities are identified and defined
October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Study Institute attendance
October – December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First draft Self-Study Design is created
January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual meeting with Commission staff liaison
February – March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second draft Self-Study Design is created and shared with the community and stakeholders for feedback Self-Study Design final revision by Executive and Steering Committees Draft submission to Commission staff liaison
April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission staff liaison Self-Study preparation visit
April – June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revision of the Self-Study Design based on the recommendations made by the Commission staff liaison Submission of Self-Study Design to Commission staff liaison Acceptance of Self-Study Design by the Commission
III. Data Gathering and Analysis Phase	
August – December 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working groups gather/analyzed data to write chapters Submission of chapters to the Executive Committee for revision
October – November 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-Study Chair named by MSCHE

Date	Process
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit date chosen • Accepted SSD sent to Self-Study Chair
May 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Study draft is shared with the community and stakeholders for feedback
June – August 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisions of Self-Study Draft
IV. Self-Study Submission to the MSCHE Evaluation Committee	
September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft is sent to Chair (two weeks before visit)
October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary visit from Chair
November 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision based on the Chair’s feedback
V. Commission Visit to UPR-Ponce and response to the final report	
December 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final version Self-Study Report uploaded to portal and shared with the community and stakeholders
January – March 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site visit is organized and conducted
June 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSCHE meets to determine action

X. COMMUNICATION PLAN

The Steering Committee developed an initial communication plan to continually update stakeholders on the Self-Study process, integrate input and feedback, and ensure that it is inclusive. The main goal of the communication plan is to keep the university community and any related stakeholders well informed of the reaccreditation process to encourage participation and providing their feedback. To achieve this, several strategies have been put into action:

1. A hyperlink will be featured on the main page of the institutional website leading to the Self-Study Design. The reaccreditation schedule and other related documentation, including formal public communications between the institution and MSCHE, will be disclosed.
2. All working groups are using Microsoft Teams to work and share on the documentation related to the Self-Study process.
3. A kick-off activity will be held to inform the UPR-Ponce’s community the start of the Self-Study process.
4. A bi-monthly progress report will be shared with the Department Chairs, the Academic Senate, and the Administrative Board.
5. Once the Self-Study draft is completed, it will be presented to the university community and to UPR Central Administration for feedback.

6. Public hearings will be held to gather feedback from the stakeholders.
7. Focus groups will be created to reach individuals and groups who may not be heard or that might be underrepresented.

All information related to the status of the Self-Study will be notified through the UPR-Ponce's official digital media, including e-mail, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Progress reports, updates and solicitation of feedback and participation regarding the Self-Study process will be shared with all constituents via email, which is the familiar form of communication on campus, but also through the Office of Planning and Institutional Research bulletin, social media, and meetings.

As an additional measure, informative literature will be strategically distributed throughout the campus to create awareness in the university community of the reaccreditation process's importance. This will help reach community members that do not regularly use email. The intended audience includes faculty, students, collaborators, administration, alumni, staff, governance, and other stakeholders.

This communication plan will be scheduled as follows:

- Articles in Office of Planning and Institutional Research bulletin: one per semester
- Self-Study status report in Academic Senate meetings: monthly
- Self-Study status report in faculty meeting: one per semester
- Self-Study draft revision sent to the community: May 2024
- Public hearings and focus groups to get community feedback: May and June 2024
- Publish the final version of the Self-Study Report: December 2024
- Self-study visit promotion: January – March 2025

XI. EVALUATION TEAM PROFILE

The following information is provided to facilitate the organization of an Evaluation Team to assess the institution's compliance with the Standards for Accreditation, Requirements of Affiliation, policies and procedures, and federal requirements.

Team Chair

- Chief Academic Officer
- Experience with public university systems
- Experience with UPR-Ponce's institutional priorities: Innovation, Student Success and Satisfaction, Sustainability, and Service

- Experience with diverse student populations (Latinos, Hispanics, variety of social classes, rural and urban habitants, public and private schools' graduates)
- Bilingual English/Spanish

Peer Evaluators

- Professors from comparable academic programs
- Professors from primarily teaching institutions
- Expertise/experience in student affairs
- Expertise/experience in academic affairs
- Expertise/experience in faculty issues
- Expertise/experience in financial issues
- Expertise/experience in professional program accreditation
- Knowledgeable in commuter and public universities
- Bilingual English/Spanish

Comparable Peers

- University of Pennsylvania
- Bronx Community College
- University of Pennsylvania
- Delaware State University
- SUNY College of Technology at Delhi
- SUNY College of Technology at Canton

UPR-Ponce Institutional Profile – (2022-2023)

- Faculty: 187
- Undergraduate retention rate: 77%
- Non-faculty personnel: 207
- Freshmen enrollment: 599
- Undergraduate graduation rate: 44%
- Total Enrollment: 2,221
- Degrees Conferred 2021-2022: 379

XII. EVIDENCE INVENTORY

The Evidence Inventory is a strategy to identify and manage the evidence from the beginning of the Self-Study process forward. The Working Groups for each standard for accreditation are responsible for the identification, gathering, relevance, and depth of the Evidence Inventory.

The Executive Committee will create a channel in Microsoft Teams in which the working groups chairs will upload the evidence collection that will be used across the standards and requirements of affiliation. The requesting of materials across campus will be handled only by the Executive Committee in order not to duplicate petitions.

Standards for Accreditation	Evidence Inventory
I. Mission and Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mission and goals of academic departments • Mission and goals of administrative offices • UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 • Operational plans • Assessment plans • Institutional annual effectiveness reports • Academic program evaluations or program’s self-studies • Syllabi • Brochures • Institutional catalog • Institutional webpage • Institutional social networks • Governing Board minutes and certifications • Policy letters from the Chancellor’s Office • Academic Senate certifications • Administrative Board certifications • Annual reports of academic departments and service offices • Public hearings related to mission evaluation • Evidence of academic, art, aesthetics activities, and community services • Annual institutional data profiles
II. Ethics and Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UPR By-Laws • Institutional mission, vision, values, and goals • Academic departments’ missions, visions, values, goals, and objectives • Administrative offices’ missions, visions, values, goals, and objectives • Policies and procedures on intellectual property rights • UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 • Government Ethics Law

Standards for Accreditation	Evidence Inventory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and procedures related to grievances among employees and students • Policies and procedures related to avoidance of conflict and/or the appearance of conflict in all matters related to purchases and service contracts • Policies and procedures related to avoidance of conflict and/or the appearance of conflict in all matters related to student admissions and academic progress • Policies and procedures related to hiring, evaluation, promotion, disciplinary actions, and separation of employees • Representative sample of institutional communications (digital and print) • Representative sample of student recruitment and admissions materials (digital and print) • Policies and procedures for informing students of tuition and related costs • Policies and procedures for enabling students to understand funding sources and options
<p>III. Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and procedures related to compliance with federal, local, and MSCHE reporting requirements • UPR-Ponce Operational Plan evaluation cycles • Faculty Manual • Academic Program Creation and Evaluation Policy • Recruitment, evaluation, and promoting processes • Professional improvement activities • Conferences and training workshops attendance lists • Systemic and institutional marketing plans • Course and program evaluation cycles • Institutional webpage • Institutional email • Official institutional social networks • Institutional catalog • Analysis of time to completion, graduation rates, and compliance with curriculum sequences • List of institutional extracurricular activities • List of student organizations • General Education Component Policy • Study of graduates from academic programs • List of research projects • Research policies

Standards for Accreditation	Evidence Inventory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study regarding fair and honor program report • Closure of assessment cycles • Faculty evaluations results • Office of Planning and Institutional Research bulletins
IV. Support of the Student Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition fees and policies • Financial Aid policies • Student support services programs • Mentoring and tutoring programs • Services offered by the Counseling and Psychology Services Department • Academic advising procedures • Retention plans • Institutional catalog • Registrar policies • Family Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) • Athletic Program policies • Extracurricular activities • Evaluations of student services • Annual report of academic departments and service offices • Library services reports • Student Deanship annual effectiveness reports
V. Educational Effectiveness Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional mission and vision • Institutional webpage • Institutional retention and graduation rates • Institutional Assessment Plan • Academic departments assessment plans • Assessment forums documents • Service Offices assessment plans • Alumni surveys • Employers' surveys • Employment rates • Academic departments webpages • Open houses and expos • Institutional social media • Promotional materials • Identification of stakeholders at differing levels • Systemic policies • Institutional policies • Office for Students with Disabilities reports

Standards for Accreditation	Evidence Inventory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance Education Policy • Academic programs 5-year evaluation • Professional accreditation of academic programs reports • Completion of 10 hrs. of yearly professional development reports • Completion of 20 hours of ethics every two years reports • Technology fee requests • Programs and offices budget requests • Institutional Effectiveness Policy aligned with planning • Office of Public Relations reports • Office of Admissions reports • Institutional catalog • Assessment of Economic Aid Services (FAFSA) Time to Completion/Employment
VI. Planning, resources, and Institutional Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic departments and offices missions and goals • UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 • Operational plans • Executive Committee of Institutional Renewal documents • Assessment reports • Budget alignment • Administrative Board certifications • Financial Plans • Academic department and service offices annual reports • Resource allocations tables • Budget alignment documents • Budget certifications • Academic departments budget priorities and requests • Quarterly budget projections • Institutional budget annual reports • Infrastructure Development Plan • Property reports • Technology fee and allocation reports • Information Systems reports • Human Resources Office reports • Academic departments priority inquiries • Institutional organizational chart • Satisfaction surveys • Service assessment reports

Standards for Accreditation	Evidence Inventory
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donations and agreements reports • Accounting closing reports • Trial balances • Monthly financial reports • Budget committee reports • Quarterly budget reports • Audited Financial Statements
VII. Governance, Leadership, and Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional policies • Institutional organizational chart • UPR By-Laws • Puerto Rico Government Ethics Act of 2011 • Previous institutional accreditation statements • UPR Strategic Plan 2017-2022 • UPR-Ponce Strategic Plan Vision 2026 • Administrative Board policies and reports • Academic Senate policies and reports • UPR Governing Board Internal Rules and Regulations No. 100-2013-2014 • Chancellor appointment selection protocols and procedures • Chancellor evaluation protocols and procedures • Audited financial reports • Institutional mission, vision, values, and goals • Chancellor appointment certification • Institutional official designations and appointments of deans, department chairs, and other trusted personnel and staff • Academic Senate reports evidencing Chancellor appointing protocols and processes • UPR Governing Board reports and guidelines • UPR Presidency reports • UPR-Ponce Administrative Board reports • Deanships, offices, and departments reports • Deanships annual reports