

Standard III

Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience

An institution provides students with learning experiences 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.

Requirement of Affiliation 1: *The institution is authorized or licensed to operate as a postsecondary educational institution and to award postsecondary degrees; it provides written documentation demonstrating both. Authorization or licensure is from an appropriate governmental organization or agency within the Middle States region (Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands), as well as by other agencies as required by each of the jurisdictions, regions, or countries in which the institution operates. Institutions that offer only postsecondary certificates, diplomas, or licenses are not eligible for accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.*

Requirement of Affiliation 8: *The institution systematically evaluates its educational and other programs and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes.*

Requirement of Affiliation 9: *The institution's student learning programs and opportunities are characterized by rigor, coherence, and appropriate assessment of student achievement throughout the educational offerings, regardless of certificate or degree level or delivery and instructional modality.*

Requirement of Affiliation 15: *The institution has a core of faculty (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals with sufficient responsibility to the institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution's educational programs.*

3.1: Certificate, Undergraduate, Graduate, and/or Professional Programs Leading to a Degree of a Length Appropriate to the Objectives, Designed to Foster Coherent Learning Experiences

As a public research-oriented comprehensive doctoral institution, our campus provides diverse academic offerings that include 61 undergraduate programs, 47 master's degrees, 4 postgraduate certificates, 17 doctoral programs, 1 juris doctor, and varied professional development experiences through the Division of Continuing Education and Professional Studies¹ (DECEP by its Spanish acronym). Academic activity on campus is dynamic, comprehensive, complex, and diverse. Accordingly, the delivery of the student learning experience is subject to ongoing evaluation. In fact, this process of student evaluations aligns with recent changes in the Puerto Rican Board of Post Secondary Institutions' current policies published in 2021 (Regulation for the Licensing of Post-Secondary Education Institutions) and contributes to institutional structures by outlining the requirements for academic offerings, all with which our programs comply.

Additionally, the University of Puerto Rico has established a series of policies and academic regulations approved by its Governing Board that guide and provide coherence to institutional

academic processes. Notably, these include the Guide for the Establishment of New Program Proposals and the Guidelines for Academic Change Proposals, both revised in 2019-2020. These policies establish uniform and compliant procedures to ensure that our offerings contain the aspects required by the agencies that license and accredit the institution.

Program Variety

As described in the UPR-RP Catalogs, our campus offers academic programs in different levels: 130 programs with specializations, including doctoral degrees (Ph.D., EdD.), master's degrees (MS, MA, MEd, MBA, LLM) baccalaureate degrees (BA, BS, BBA), a Juris Doctor degree and certificates, both Post-Master and Post-Baccalaureate. These programs cover a wide variety of disciplines and areas of knowledge in higher education. They are offered by seven colleges and three schoolsⁱⁱ:

- School of Architecture
- Law School
- Graduate School of Planning
- College of Business Administration
- College of Social Sciences
- College of Natural Sciences
- College of Communication and Information
- College of Education
- College of General Studies
- College of Humanities

As of 2023-2024 the campus also offers five online academic programs, all granting master's degrees.

Regulatory Compliance

The UPR-RP has official and strict guidelines regarding the creation of academic programs that describe the criteria for designing coherent learning experiences which are of appropriate lengths according to their objectives (Cert. #163, 2022-23)ⁱⁱⁱ of the Governing Board - Academic Program Creation Policy). Similarly, recent policy initiatives (such as Cert. # 95 2019-2020v Academic Policy for Graduate Studies at UPR RP) further govern and provide guidance for graduate programs in making sure programs are rigorous and taught by competent and qualified professors. Most of these efforts to foster a coherent and dynamic learning environment for the students at the undergraduate level are based on the principles exposed in the bachelor's degree revision of the Río Piedras Campus (Cert. 46, Academic Senate, 2005-2006vi).

Accreditation And Quality Assurance

Our campus has consistently emphasized the importance of linking its pursuit of excellence and high-quality educational experiences to program-level accreditation. Currently the campus has 49 accredited programs, representing 34 percent of program offerings. Accrediting agencies rigorously evaluate our programs' curriculum to ensure they meet the highest standards set by the accreditation process. This ensures our programs are on par with other institutions that prioritize academic excellence. It also evidences that the student learning experience responds to the highest standards of excellence and that our curricula are current and meaningful to students.

One of the achievements in terms of new accreditations during this Self Study period is that the Clinical Psychology emphasis area of the Psychology Department received accreditation from the American Psychological Association (APA) for the maximum of 10 years in November 2020.

In other words, the accreditation of programs guarantees institutional compliance with professional standards and keeps the UPR-RP programs attuned to new knowledge development and emerging trends in their respective fields. In addition, the MSCHE accreditation process allows the institution to examine areas and issues shared by programs and units that contribute to the complete execution of the campus’ mission and common goals. Therefore, all the academic programs subjected to accreditation are accredited as of February 17, 2023.

For programs that are not subject to accrediting agencies, evaluation is required every five years pursuant to Cert. #55, 2021-22^{iv}- Policy on Periodic Academic Program Evaluation in the UPR, UPR-RP Guide for the Evaluation of Academic Programs, Academic Affairs’ Deanship Office, 2014). Thus, our campus requires that all programs be continuously monitored so that they are rigorous, appropriate in length, coherent, and promote synthesis of learning. It should be noted that, as part of the evaluation process, external evaluators are invited to share their expert opinions on the programs under review. All changes that are made must correspond to assessment findings, including graduate profiles, competencies, objectives, course contents, and curriculum sequences, among others.

In accordance with recommendations made by accreditation bodies for programs with accreditation as well as the results of the 5-year program evaluations of non-accredited programs, our campus has revised 41 undergraduate and 28 graduate programs since 2018, demonstrating how active the campus has been in modernizing academic programs and complying with institutional and federal requirements related to accreditation.

Regarding the achievements of graduates in their professional licensing, the following table summarizes some of those obtained during this Self-Study period.

College or School	Professional certification	Data- Average from 2016-2024
Social Sciences	Psychologist / Therapist	95%

Natural Sciences	Registered Dietitian Nutritionist	100%- Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RND)
Law	Lawyer	Standard 316 of the American Bar Association (ABA), the accrediting agency of the Law Schools of the United States and Puerto Rico, requires that at least 75% of graduates pass the bar admission exam two years after graduation. In Puerto Rico, our Law School is the only one that meets that standard: Class of 2020: 75%; Class of 2021: 79%; Class of 2022: 78%.
Education	Teacher's Certification	98%- Teacher's Certification Test

3.2: Student Learning Experiences Designed, Delivered, and Assessed by Faculty and/or Other Appropriate Professionals

Faculty Composition and Qualifications

Student learning experiences are shaped by the well informed and academically prepared professors who teach them. The faculty profile for the 2023-2024 academic year consisted of 1,033 teaching faculty members, of which 52% were female and 48% were male. The campus currently has 48% of professors in tenured or tenure track positions, with the remaining professors occupying full time or part time adjunct positions (See [Dashboard de Empleados](#) for more details^v).

The campus has been able to maintain a highly qualified professor profile, as demonstrated by the 71% of teaching personnel with a doctoral degree and 25% of teaching personnel holding at least a master's degree (See [Dashboard de Empleados](#) for more details^{vi}). UPR-RP boasts some of the most highly qualified university professors on the island of Puerto Rico and, unlike many state-side universities, the UPR-RP does not use graduate teaching assistants as the primary instructors, with few exceptions in the College of Humanities.

Hiring and Appointment Process

All individuals hired to teach within the UPR-RP must hold a minimum of a master's degree (with few exceptions) and go through a rigorous, and often lengthy, hiring process where committees at the Department and College /School level evaluate the applicants' teaching experience and credentials. Ultimately, the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs is responsible for qualifying individuals to teach within the institution. This set of checks and balances ensures that only faculty who are duly prepared academically and professionally are teaching courses on our campus.

Teaching and Assessment Excellence

Our faculty includes several professors who have recently received prestigious international awards and prizes such as The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) with the Award for Faculty at Hispanic Serving Institutions; the SSWAA 2023 Book Award for the book titled “Ruta AprendÉxito: Guidelines for Success since Preschool Stage; the Sterling Stuckey Book Award offered by the Association for the Study of Worldwide African Diaspora (2018); the Caribbean distinction “Este Caribe Nuestro” offered by Cátedra de Estudios del Caribe Norman Girvan; a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for \$4 million dollars for the development of a research project focusing on tropical butterflies by Professor Riccardo Papa, from the Department of Biology in the Faculty of Natural Sciences (2022); and the designation of Professor Martiza Barreto-Orta (2023) as the author of the United States Caribbean chapter in the Fifth National Climate Assessment (NCA5), by among others.

Teaching Assignments

Instructors and professors are tenured, tenure track or adjunct faculty, qualified and hired to teach the courses they are assigned. The absence of an articulated campuswide graduate teaching program has had an impact on the ability of graduate programs to attract doctoral students, but it also ensures that professors who are hired to teach are extremely qualified for their positions and not hired solely on their position as a graduate student in a particular program.

Faculty Development and Support for Innovation

The Center for Academic Excellence (CEA), which operates under the Dean of Academic Affairs, serves as an academic and professional development unit. It caters to professors, teaching staff in administrative roles, students, and non-teaching staff. The CEA’s academic excellence model closely adheres to faculty development guidelines put forth by professional organizations. It offers a comprehensive framework that ensures continuous support and opportunities for faculty members, keeping them informed about the latest advancements in pedagogy, technology, and research. Newly hired professors are required to attend a minimum of 6 hours of professional development and professors seeking tenure or promotion also are required to participate in a variety of different professional development opportunities (Cert. 101 Administrative Board, 2000-2001^{vii}). The Center also offers certificates on virtual learning environments to train teaching staff in Learning management Systems, effective online teaching strategies, course design, student engagement techniques, and online assessment methods. Completing the certification is a requirement for all professors hired to teach courses as part of an online program curriculum or courses that are scheduled to be taught online. The Division for Continuing Education (DECEP) also offered an online educator certificate to faculty during 2020-2022. By Spring 2023, 1,051 teaching and other faculty members had taken at least one of the online teaching certifications. The Dean of Academic Affairs follows up with departments to make sure teaching faculty are complying. CEA and DECEP provide extensive resources for faculty professional development, including training in online teaching and course design. The high percentage (88%) of faculty who have completed online teaching certifications indicates significant engagement with professional development opportunities.

The Faculty Resource Network (FRN) is a consortium of over 50 colleges and universities that provides additional professional development opportunities for its partner institutions. Our campus is involved in the FRN as one of the participating institutions in the network’s Winter

and Summer Seminars, the Scholars-in Residence Program, the Scholar Remote Fellowships, and the student exchange program.

UPR-RP collaborates with the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in an outreach collaboration funded by a Title VI grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The collaboration aims to create spaces for conversations about research and curriculum development projects among professors, graduate and undergraduate students, and school teachers from Puerto Rico (<https://ii.umich.edu/ii/outreach/um-upr.html>).

In terms of faculty recruitment, the UPR-RP follows the UPR System's Fiscal Plan for tenure-track faculty recruitment, which allows for the annual recruitment of 3% of its faculty. The prioritization of these 3% tenure-track faculty recruitments is focused on accredited academic programs and student support services like libraries and professional counseling.

Evaluation and Review Processes

Teaching faculty are evaluated regularly through a structured process that includes peer-to-peer course observations and end-of-semester student evaluations, ensuring that these assessments are based on clear and fair criteria. As a result of Cert. 32 (2022-2023)^{viii}, the Academic Senate approved a new instrument to measure students' perceptions regarding faculty's performance in teaching a course. The outcomes of these observations and student evaluations play a pivotal role in decisions related to promotion, tenure, and the rehiring of adjunct faculty. Furthermore, faculty members utilize these ongoing evaluation processes not only as formative assessments but also as opportunities for their own professional development. The introduction of a new instrument to measure student perceptions of faculty performance demonstrates the institution's commitment to refining and improving evaluation methods. These ongoing assessments are clearly outlined in the various certifications and displayed on the Dean of Academic Affairs website.

Scholarly Inquiry and Research Activity

Our campus boasts professors with the strongest publication record in Puerto Rico and one that can compete with many comparable state-side R2 universities. Many professors are leaders within their respective fields and the campus has been designated as one of high-intensity research activities. This is evidenced in the rate of publications per year. For instance, from 2020-2021 to 2022-2023, an average of 54 books, 93 book chapters, 201 academic articles in peer-reviewed journals and 95 articles in non-peer reviewed journals were published. This scholarly output roughly equates to at least one publication per year on behalf of 43% of the teaching faculty on campus (See Producción intelectual y creativa docente – Publicaciones^{ix}).

3.3: Academic Programs Clearly and Accurately Described in Official Institutional Publications

Our academic programs are clearly and accurately described in official publications to help students understand and follow program requirements and expected time to completion, as stated in the undergraduate and graduate Catalogs (Catálogo Subgraduado Tomo #1 (Spanish), Catálogo Subgraduado Tomo #2 (Spanish), [both undergraduate], Catálogo de Programas Graduados – (Spanish) [Graduate] and Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog 2022-2023 – (English), published both in Spanish and in English. Catalogs are available to all students and to

any member of the public who is interested in acquiring information about campus offerings. These direct links are easily accessible to the student body from the main UPR-RP website following the link labeled "Registrador" and "Catálogos."

Official website

The UPR-RP campus publishes academic program information on its official webpage, <https://www.uprrp.edu>^x, which also provides links to all colleges and schools. Information on academic programs is also included on the UPR-RP webpage (<https://www.uprrp.edu/academia>^{xi}), on each individual schools and program's electronic sites, and on internal documents.

Social and other Media

In addition to the catalogs and official website, UPR-RP is now sending each student, via email, a copy of their academic progress reports every semester. This tool helps students plan their next steps in terms of class enrollment, advancing their goals towards graduation, and to consider additional programs such as minors. Information is also shared through official UPR-RP Facebook^{xii}, X^{xiii}, and Instagram accounts^{xiv}.

3.4: Sufficient Learning Opportunities and Resources to Support the Institution's Programs of Study and Students' Academic Progress

The Río Piedras campus aims to cultivate well-rounded baccalaureate graduates who embody the institution's mission. These graduates are expected to develop reflective and critical thinking skills that promote lifelong learning and social responsibility. They are effective communicators in multiple languages and are knowledgeable about various cultural legacies. Understanding the creation and interconnection of knowledge across disciplines, they have a keen appreciation for the arts, sciences, and human processes. They are environmentally conscious, possess substantial expertise in a chosen field, and are equipped for research and creative endeavors. With a critical understanding of diverse thought processes and ethical practices, they are prepared to engage with and contribute to Puerto Rican society and beyond. Their competencies extend to information management, technological proficiency, and collaborative problem-solving, ensuring they are ready to make informed decisions and foster creativity and imagination.

Graduated level students at the Río Piedras Campus demonstrate a multifaceted set of skills. They engage in research and problem-solving, creating solutions and generating knowledge. Their critical thinking abilities allow them to evaluate information from diverse theoretical and methodological perspectives. Independence, creativity, and initiative are hallmarks of their approach. Integrating theories, practical protocols, and ethical codes, they excel in their professional or research work. Effective communication within their field is a priority. These graduates embrace continuous learning, demonstrating commitment to environmental and social responsibility. They respect human rights, promote diversity, and collaborate through multidisciplinary teamwork. As leaders, they contribute to individual and collective transformations.

The UPR-RP was selected by the Governing Board, through [Certification 134, 2023-2024](#), to host a pilot project aimed at "increasing satisfaction levels and sense of belonging as a basis for retention and, eventually, graduation rates, with improvements in the offering and access to

student services and support.” The certification also establishes that “the path of this project will be guided by the students themselves through focus groups and satisfaction surveys related to student services, which seek to identify the areas or offices with the greatest need in order to prioritize and focus transformation efforts.” This project includes a summer immersion program, expanded individualized orientations, an individualized tutoring program, redesign of information technologies to monitor course withdrawals, and the creation of a student manual.

Learning Assessment

The University has implemented a learning assessment process to assess undergraduate and graduate students' learning in areas such as information literacy and critical thinking skills. The student learning assessment is faculty led, data driven, and course embedded, as illustrated in Figure 1. It is an ongoing systemized and sustainable effort to evaluate and improve student learning. It is directed by the faculty to improve the teaching and learning process. The assessment activities are guided by the Institutional Student Learning Assessment Plan and program-level plans.

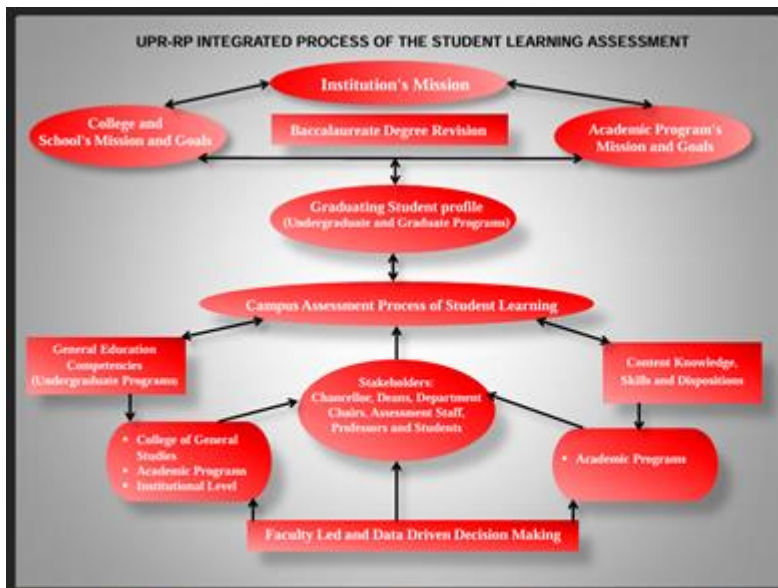


Figure 1 UPR-PR integrated process of the student learning assessment (<https://oeae.uprrp.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Esquema-del-proceso-de-assesmet-de-la-OEAE.pdf>)

Besides providing coherent academic programs, our campus provides a wide variety of learning opportunities and resources to support students' academic progress. Students from all disciplines are eligible to use these resources across campus. Using these resources, in conjunction with their academic coursework, allows students to collaborate with experts in their fields to enrich their educational experience and prepare for their future. Several units are distributed across colleges and schools to provide support for academic programs, thereby enhancing the faculty's technological competencies and the student learning experiences. These do so by providing equipment (e.g., computers, laptops, tablets, video cameras, audio recorders) and guidance on the use of technology for the classroom as well for academic activities such as workshops, trainings, and special events (e.g., conferences, talks, presentations).

Aware of the impact of artificial intelligence on teaching, research, and service, the Office of the Chancellor [activated a task force to design a policy for the use of artificial intelligence at the Campus](#). This team will also provide guidelines for the ethical implementation of these technologies. This project is currently in development.

Academic Support Services

Every semester, faculty provide their office hours and availability for student consultations and support. There are also faculty-student interaction initiatives that promote engagement between faculty and students. Some of the services available are:

Tutoring and Writing Centers

To help students succeed academically, UPR-RP offers tutoring and support programs for areas such as math, academic writing, and other disciplines. These programs supply an added, personalized learning environment. For example, the [Center for the Development of Linguistic Competencies^{xv}](#) (CDCL) provides tutoring as well as face-to-face and online workshops related to improving communicative effectiveness in both Spanish and English. Open five days per week as well as offering online tutoring sessions, the CDCL has seen a major increase in its use over the past three years. [Their annual reports^{xvi}](#) show that text revision appointments increased from 290 in 2021-2022 to 591 in the 2022-2023 academic year. The most recent report states that 530 students requested services in the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, and peer tutoring is only one of the many services provided by the center. In addition, the CDCL disseminates [Xlingües](#), a podcast which discusses topics related to writing skills, research, and critical thinking. With regards to tutoring and support in mathematics and natural sciences, the [Tutoring Center^{xvii}](#) (Centro de Tutorías) helps students who need extra support in these subject matters and it is also open five days per week.

Student Learning Support

Another initiative that supports student learning is the [Academic Accompaniment Program^{xviii}](#), which is located in the College of Communication and Information. It is run by a team of graduate and undergraduate students that provides individualized tutoring to students with identified needs for improvement in critical thinking, effective communication, and other domains. This program was created as a transformative action in conjunction with the AY 2018-19 institutional assessment cycle.

Advising and Mentorship Programs

Institutional initiatives such as the Program for Student Support Services^{xix} ([PSAE by its Spanish acronym](#)) use formalized individual and group counseling with cultural and academic activities to help undergraduate students develop their academic and professional goals. Program participants are first generation students, students from families with low income, and/or students with diagnosed disabilities. The program works to ensure that first-year students have a solid foundation in English, Spanish, and mathematical reasoning and offers a holistic support system to help students in need.

Academic Resource Centers

The Center for Academic Excellence (CEA) is the unit responsible for providing professional development opportunities. Since 1997, the Center has been offering workshops, webinars, and self-led online modules to professors and students alike. As shown in table 2, in the last

academic years, student participation in CEA’s activities increased due to a larger number of offerings as well as programming that is of interest to both professors and students alike. For example, in the 2023-2024, the CEA offered a several workshops and activities related to Artificial Intelligence, which had significant participation.

Table 2 Student participation in CEA's Academic Support activities

Annual report	Total Activities	Professor Participants	Student Participants
CEA Annual Report 2023-2024-in process	--	--	--
<u>Informe-Anual-CEA-2022-2023</u>	120	1,107	1,273
<u>Informe-Anual-CEA-2021-2022</u>	142	1,326	987
<u>Informe Anual CEA 2020-2021</u>	89	771	449
<u>Informe Anual CEA 2019-2020</u>	83	809	338

Library and Research Resources

Our Library System also provides opportunities to enhance information literacy and academic writing and research through live workshops and guided tutorials provided by experienced personnel. These resources complement a variety of initiatives located in our various colleges and schools. For example, the Graduate Program of Information Sciences and Technology maintains a thematic guide that allows users to find high-quality information resources. It is available online and in the program’s library. The Program for Integration of Information Competencies into the Curriculum provides a catalog of varied topics that can be incorporated into courses. These are relevant across academic levels and vary from ethics in research and database search strategies, to the subjects covered in our library’s special collections. These resources are complemented by a variety of workshops offered by different Research Centers, each of which is affiliated with a particular college or school. In the College of Natural Sciences, the Information and Technology Center, situated in the Nestor M. Rivera Rodríguez Library, focuses on services and resources related to research. Similar units operate in the Colleges of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences, among others.

3.5: General Education Program, Freestanding or Integrated into Academic Disciplines

The institution’s general education program is designed to expand intellectual experiences, promote essential skills, and include the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives. Additionally, it is guided by ongoing assessment and support mechanisms to ensure these goals are met effectively.

General Education Requirements

General Education (GE) at the UPR-RP provides the foundation for students’ intellectual growth and personal and professional development. Students’ learning in this area focuses on the

acquisition of competencies that are essential to their academic, intellectual, and professional lives. These competencies, which are detailed in our Graduating Student Profile, are:

- Spanish - 6 credits
- English - 6 credits
- Literature (in Spanish, English, another language or comparative literature) - 6 credits
- Logical-mathematical thinking or quantitative analysis - 3 credits
- Natural Sciences - 6 credits
- Social Sciences - 6 credits
- Humanities - 6 credits
- Arts - 3 credits

Since August 2007, all incoming undergraduate students have been required to take a minimum of 42 credits in General Education (GE)—12 credit-hours more than the minimum stipulated by MSCHE. For the purpose of this discussion, we have grouped our coursework requirements in General Studies into two categories: Group A and Group B. Of the 42 minimum credits, the College of General Studies offers courses in Spanish, English, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities (30 credits).

General Education Areas	Group A	Group B	Total of Courses	Distribution
Arts	7	35	42	17.87%
Natural Sciences	37		37	15.74%
Social Sciences	2		2	0.85%
Spanish	8		8	3.40%
Humanities	13		13	5.53%
English	12		12	5.11%
Literature	27	83	110	46.81%
Logical-mathematical thinking or quantitative analysis	2	9	11	4.68%
Total	108	127	235	100.00%

Group A requirements consist of “core” or “threshold” courses given within the College of General Studies (CGS). These nurture the core competencies mentioned below and provide a solid foundation of knowledge for subsequent specialization. At the same time, they inspire students’ interest in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to knowledge formation.

General Education Areas	Total of Courses
Arts	7
Natural Sciences	37
Social Sciences	2
Spanish	8
Humanities	13
English	12

Literature	27
Logical-mathematical thinking or quantitative analysis	2
Total	108

Group B requirements consist of courses given by other colleges and schools as well as the CGS.

College or School	General Education Areas			Total of Courses	Distribution
	Arts	Literature	Logical-mathematical thinking or quantitative analysis		
Business Administration		1	1	2	1.57%
Architecture	1			1	0.79%
Natural Sciences			7	7	5.51%
Social Sciences			1	1	0.79%
Humanities	34	82		116	91.34%
Total	35	83	9	127	100.00%

This two-tiered model allows students to complete a common core and to select additional courses based on their individual needs, goals, and interests. Students choose from robust selections of courses in meeting Group B requirements. For example, there are over 90 courses to choose from to fulfill the literature requirement, 75% (82/110) are taught in the College of Humanities. An analysis completed by Humanities in the first semester of 2015-16 shows that over half (61%) of the sections given in its English, Hispanic Studies, and Comparative Literature departments are taken by students in fulfillment of their GE literature requirement. Approximately a dozen courses fulfill the requirement in the area of mathematical reasoning and/or quantitative analysis. These are distributed across the colleges of Business Administration, General Studies, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences. In the case of the arts requirement, students choose from over 30 courses distributed across the CGS, the School of Architecture, and the College of Humanities.

For instance, the CGS along with the College of Humanities is oriented to comprehensive student training, teaching, interdisciplinary research, knowledge integration, and artistic creation. The CGS provides the core curriculum which is combined with literature and courses related to the Arts primarily offered in the College of Humanities. It also provides a General Studies Bachelor's Degree, four minors and one area of emphasis. It incorporates in its mission statement the promotion of interdisciplinary activity (research and practice) as well as the innovative use of technology.

In addition to the core GE requirements, students develop their various academic competencies in their respective programs. Combined, students' course load provides specific and essential competencies in the areas of oral and written communication skills in English and Spanish as well as scientific reasoning, critical thinking, and fosters cultural competencies in diversity.

To ensure rigor and coherence in academic programs, the CGS has the General Education Skills Assessment Project, a permanent project that engages in constant appraisal of student learning outcomes. Consequently, student learning assessment includes a systematic process that compiles, organizes, and interprets information that shows how our institution, its programs, and academic courses or dependencies are effectively achieving their goals and objectives. This on-going assessment of student learning has impacted a more balanced distribution of academic competencies, revised syllabi, inclusion of technology and information literacy, among others. For a complete list of reports and achievements related to this office, see: Logros.

Curriculum and Essential Skills

The General Education curriculum ensures students acquire essential skills, including:

1. Oral and Written Communication: Courses in both English and Spanish are required, emphasizing the development of these skills.
2. Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning: A specified number of credits in mathematics and natural sciences ensures competence in these areas. Assessment data indicates general success with some identified areas for improvement.
3. Critical Analysis and Reasoning: The curriculum is designed to include critical thinking across various disciplines. Data shows students consistently meet expectations in this area.
4. Technological Competency: Various programs and resources are available to enhance technological skills, including specific courses and support from the Center for Educational Resources and Technology.
5. Information Literacy: Recent integration into the curriculum, with ongoing assessments indicating areas for improvement in achieving literacy goals.

Oral and written communication is embedded into the course objectives and content of required courses across general education requirements. Students are required to take 6 credits in Spanish and a minimum of 6 credits in English courses as part of their general education requirements. According to the most recent report by the Student Learning Assessment Project from within the College of General Studies^{sx}, undergraduate students are meeting expectations regarding their oral and written communicative skills in English, though there is room for improvement in Spanish competencies, particularly in relation to grammar and composition in ESPA 3003 Competencies in Writing and Information.

Scientific and Quantitative reasoning is also required and all students need to take 9 credits in general education mathematics and courses in natural sciences. In addition to numerous resources described below, the Learning Assessment Project from within the College of General Studies identifies sixteen different courses offered to undergraduate students where the primary focus is on building scientific and quantitative reasoning. According to the aforementioned assessment project, students tend to meet expectations regarding scientific and quantitative reasoning, findings that are corroborated by the data from OLAS with the exception of semester 1 of 2019-2020 and semester 2 of 2014-2015.

Our undergraduate programs include General Education courses that purposely prepare students to promote critical thinking competencies. The undergraduate course catalog and the graduate

course catalog provide a brief description that reflects the general scope of the courses that conform our academic offerings. These descriptions show critical thinking as a central component of several courses in the Colleges that form our Campus: General Studies, Humanities, Business Administration, Architecture, Social Sciences, Communication and Information, Natural Sciences, Education and School of Planning.

Throughout our campus, there are also several programs that provide opportunities to enhance technological competencies in students, professors and the university community. From equipment (computers, laptops, tablets, video cameras, audio recorders, among others) available for use for academic activities such as workshops and trainings, there are diverse resources to enhance technological skills. The Center for Educational Resources and Technology ascribed to the CGS supports academic programs through content development, technical support in the classroom and online education design. Furthermore, results from an analysis of student competencies related to technological competencies in ESPA 3101, the basic Spanish course offered on campus showed that 90% of students received the highest score on using technology for research and evaluation of information.

Information literacy has been the most recent objective to make its way into general education courses and that is evident in the percentage of students achieving the goal of 70% in this learning outcome, as evidenced by the data in OLAS. For example, within this learning outcome, the average achievement score from 2014 to 2021 is approximately 81%, far lower than the other competencies. The three semesters where achievement was below 70% show that the campus needs to do a better job incorporating information literacy into the undergraduate curriculum.

With a three-year Andrew Mellon Foundation grant, the CGS sponsors the Academic Diversification in Studies of Afro-descendance and Racialization Project. Diversification Project in the Study of People of African Descent and Racialization. Research on topics related to African descent is being conducted by 20 faculty members and 21 student interns. This project organizes the International Summit of African Descent, which includes keynotes speakers and forums featuring research, book presentations, and co-curricular academic activities.

A diverse academic outlook is also fostered through the CGS's Instituto Interdisciplinario y Multicultural, which promotes an international perspective focused on Puerto Rican and Caribbean studies. This institutional initiative coincides with the objectives of our Campus Strategic Plan to further expand formative opportunities for students through collaborative agreements with local and international institutions that allow for interaction with other institutions of higher learning and academic formative trips to Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States.

In 2018 and 2019, the CGS's Physics Department organized several conferences and academic events with local and international speakers. These events included the Ciencia en el Arte conference in 2018, an interdisciplinary series of talks connecting science and art. In 2019, the celebration of Earth Week also provided students and community members with innovative and globally oriented perspectives on issues related to climate change, food insecurity, and the

relationship between scholarship and responsible citizenship. These activities promoted both global awareness and offered students the opportunity to learn about new ways of thinking about science and the world.

3.6: Opportunities For the Development of Research, Scholarship, and Independent Thinking

Research Support Services

Students can take part in professor-led research projects and collaborate on ongoing research. These experiences allow participants to gain practical experience, develop research skills and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their fields of study. The Undergraduate Research and Learning Resource Center (CriiAS) promotes students’ research or creative projects under the supervision of faculty members who have expertise in their area of interest, specifically STEM (Statistics, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) projects via Title V funds described extensively in Chapter IV, focused on student support services. This provides students with integrated, interdisciplinary research initiatives as well as opportunities for publication and advanced training. An example of how external funds are used to develop projects that have a long-term impact on institutional structures, this project builds on the accomplishments of a prior program known as iINAS that began in 2010 and was funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Since December 2019, CRiiAS has had its home in a new innovative project space located in the College of Natural Sciences. It also helps students identify research-related summer internships and produces the peer-reviewed academic publication *Ingenios* which showcases research and creative projects.

Table 2 CriiAS Services

CriiAS Services

The Totals include graduate and undergraduate students, professors, employees and visitors

Year	Totals
2016	536
2017	857
2018	1084
2019	1797
2020	2002
2021	265
2022	814
Total	7355

The Deanship of Graduate Studies and Research, also coordinates an important program titled Academic Experiences Training Program (PEAF according to its Spanish acronym).

Participating graduate students are hired to work 9 to 18 hours weekly, serving as research or teaching assistants to university administrators or professors. In exchange for their work, participants receive a tuition waiver and a small stipend. From 2020-2021 until the 2022-2023 academic years, an average of 419 graduate students have participated in the program. While the funding for positions has declined in recent years, the program provides crucial economic support for graduate students by providing them with employment on campus, usually in areas related to their area of study, and thereby enriches the formation of students who participate in it.

One area of future improvement concerns the processing of applications and the calendar for offering positions to students. Currently, many students receive confirmation that they have a position only days or weeks before the semester begins. Given that the budget cycle makes it difficult to process these earlier, one way of dealing with this may be to offer some early contracts. Doing so could make some of our degrees more attractive to newly accepted students as well as to international students who may need the financial assistance to be eligible for their student visa. Another possible way to bolster the PEA program would be to use funds that are currently earmarked for temporary contracts and instead assign those to graduate students to teach undergraduate courses. Doing so would make graduate programs more attractive to potential students.

Technology and Digital Resources

Online learning platforms, such as the Learning Management Systems (LMS), display online course availability and technical support for online learning. Several others promote developing technological competency in the College of Education, including the Reach Project (*Proyecto Alcanza*) and Little Steps (Pasitos). For example, the Center for Educational Resources and Technology supports academic programs through content development, technical support in the classroom, and online education design

Extracurricular and Co-curricular Activities

The University also supports student-led organizations, many of which are associated with academic programs, professional interests, and community work. Student organizations are supported and must be officially recognized by the university (Student Handbook - RRP). In the 2023-2024 academic year, there were a total of 88 registered student organizations covering many disciplines and opportunities for students to grow as future professionals and as culturally sensitive members of their communities (see Directory of Student Organizations). This is an increase from the 2021-2022 academic year (table 2) in which we see a significant drop in the number of student organizations likely due to the pandemic.

Table 2 Number of Student Organizations by Academic Year

Academic Year	Number of Student Organizations
2019-2020	94
2020-2021	63⁺
2021-2022	61⁺
2022-2023	83 ⁺
2023-2024	88 ⁺

During the 2019-2020 academic year, 9 organizations were classified as academic, 46 were associated with specific academic programs (such as Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities). Additionally, 3 organizations were classified as cultural and 11 as civic and community-work related organizations. The cultural and civic and community-work provide rich experiences to students by engaging with diverse communities in Puerto Rico and supporting the study of cultural heritage. All these organizations are required to conduct activities in order to remain formally recognized as student organizations (Reglamento de Estudiantes-RRP). Student organizations are an important part of the efforts to foster academic development, professional skills and networks, and cultural awareness. Furthermore, these organizations can opt to have

faculty members as advisors who can also share their expertise, experiences, and professional networks.

In addition to scaffolding future professionals by allowing them to have first-hand experiences, other student organizations provide valuable insight and connections with global and cultural issues. For example, some student associations, such as the Business Professionals of America, are the local chapter of global student organizations ([Directory of Student Organizations](#)). The Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS UPR-RP) is, among other things, focused on diversity in the Natural Sciences, providing a meaningful platform to engage in topics related to diversity in the academic and professional world. At the same time, the *Mentores a lo Boricua* (Mentoring Puerto Rican Style) is a student organization with a global consciousness that promotes the cultural immersion of exchange students from all over the world ([Directory of Student Organizations](#)). By actively participating in mentorship programs with exchange students, UPR students promote a global and cultural perspective on Puerto Rico and develop cultural awareness and sensitivity through their interactions with fellow students.

Workshops, Seminars, and Co-Curricular activities

Within the campus there are numerous entities that offer a whole variety of different workshops and educational activities. More broadly, these events and experiences are carried out at the Faculty/School level with events sponsored by a particular College, or they could be sponsored by the various libraries housed around campus or within the different research centers or a combination. The events created by these entities, give students and faculty opportunities to learn about the latest developments in their fields of interest, interact with experts, and expand their understanding in specific areas and provide a safe space for students and professors to engage in dialogue related to research and relevant topics outside of the classroom. Furthermore, these opportunities, which the majority of students participate in, in one way or another, allow students to develop holistically and as they participate in opportunities of interest.

Examples of a College sponsored event is the annual [Graduate Student Conference of Research and Creative Projects](#) which is a student led initiative where graduate students are able to showcase their work. Another example of a student run conference is the annual [Caribbean Without Borders Graduate Student Conference](#) sponsored by the English Department in the College of Humanities. In addition to College/School sponsored conferences students, and faculty alike have access to numerous workshops and seminars offered by our host of Research Centers and Libraries around campus, each offering tailored workshops and experiences that are discipline specific. Some examples of Library Workshops and resources are the College of Education's workshops on avoiding plagiarism and the College of Natural Sciences' resources on creating well-formed bibliographic references. Such experiences better prepare students for their coursework as well as future job opportunities by providing them with conference presentation experiences as well as much needed hands-on experience in research.

Undergraduate students also have the opportunity to further develop their areas of interest and life-long learning experiences through elective courses. These courses often provide experiential practice and field opportunities. Accordingly, the [Honor Students Study Program](#) (PREH) provides undergraduate students with academic excellence the opportunity to further enhance their formation through an interdisciplinary approach to expand their scientific knowledge and

linguistic competencies. Scholarship and internship endeavors, as well as research opportunities and academic publications and presentations are part of what students can experience through PREH.

At the graduate level, all programs culminate in either a thesis, capstone project, or final seminal paper. Coupled with the variety of research centers around campus along with the professional development opportunities offered by the CEA and the Deanship for Graduate Studies and Research, students are given a number of opportunities to conduct their own research or participate in the on-going research of their professors and mentors. While support for research assistants in conjunction with the PEA program have been reduced over the past few years due to budget cuts, nevertheless, approximately 350 graduate students each year have participated on average in this valuable program (See Ayudantías y estipendios a estudiantes graduados 2020-2023^{xxi}). Moreover, many colleges and graduate programs have their own journals where professors and graduate students play a major role in the writing, editing and dissemination of peer-reviewed texts. Some examples of these journals are Revista Jurídica from the School of Law, Caribbean Studies from the College of Social Sciences, Revista de Educación de Puerto Rico (REduca) from the College of Education. Of the 28 journals published by the UPR System in an electronic format 13 are published by the UPR-RP campus, along with 5 additional journals^{xxii} that are not online.

3.7: Internship and Career Services

Through collaborative agreements with other prestigious institutions, the Office of the Assistant Dean of International Relations (DARI) promotes undergraduate students with diverse internship and scholarship opportunities abroad. Furthermore, the office oversees campus participation in the National Student Exchange (NSE) and the International Student Exchange (ISEP) programs which provide students opportunities to study abroad giving students the opportunity to learn from educators from other jurisdictions, countries, and universities with different academic traditions. The office also works with international students who come to PR on a student exchange or who have elected to study at UPR-RP. The DARI's role with these students is to help in their transition to Puerto Rico and the campus at large, further helping internationalization efforts. Furthermore, DARI also facilitates processes related to bringing international faculty to the campus, which gives students the opportunity to learn from internationally renowned researchers and professors

Through the Exchange Program^{xxii}, our students move for a semester or an academic year to any of the universities affiliated with one of our agreements through Bilateral Agreements, ISEP, MICEFA or NSE. There are also summer study programs.

Internship opportunities exist for students in areas such as nutrition, agriculture, education, counseling and natural resources. While there is not a central repository of internship and research opportunities, here are two examples of campus websites where individual programs announce the various research and internship opportunities related to their students: Nutrition and Dietetics Program and Natural Sciences.

The **School of Architecture** also has an internship program aimed to develop professional skills required by professional practice (IXP- Internado de Experiencia Profesional).

The **Law School** offers several programs and initiatives that provide students professional experience, cultural awareness, and promote scholarly experiences. This includes exchange programs as well as collaborative programs where students can either spend some time of their studies abroad or acquire a combined degree with the Universitat de Barcelona (Experiencia Internacional). Its Center for the Support of Victims (Centro Integral de Apoyo a Víctimas) offers legal services and support to diverse victims of crimes. Students acquire professional experience while working with diverse populations (older adults, victims of domestic violence, and victims of human trafficking).

Through the *Enlace* Program^{xxiii} students have the opportunity to participate in practical experiences that contribute to the learning process about business management in local and global contexts. The program allows students to explore various internship, employment, scholarship or competition opportunities.

The Employment Office, attached to the Auxiliary Dean of Programs and Initiatives of the Dean of Students, supports the students of the Río Piedras Campus in searching for jobs, in obtaining tools for professional improvement and training, and in correcting resumes. In this way, it makes it possible for students to integrate and compete successfully in the world of work. In addition, it serves as a link between the students of the Río Piedras Campus and professional leaders, locally and internationally, to increase the placement possibilities of graduates and recent graduates in jobs. In their Internships and job search section, students can find information about Internships opportunities.

Having professors who are leaders within their fields and up to date on the latest in research and practice in their given field is extremely important for any institution offering graduate degrees at UPR-RP takes the credentials and professional development of graduate-teaching faculty seriously. The Dean of Academic Affairs is required to individually assess the academic background, research and overall preparedness of professors identified to teach graduate courses. While this can lead to delays in hiring paperwork, it is a necessary step to ensure that personnel committees and dean's offices are indeed hiring professors to teach graduate courses that meet the high expectations of the UPR-RP. Furthermore, with the help of the former Dean of Graduate Studies and Academic Research, Certification 95 was passed that provides clear guidelines on the profile of professors of graduate courses. In addition to requiring that all graduate professors hold a doctoral degree or equivalent terminal degree, Certification 95 requires professors of graduate courses to have an active research agenda demonstrated by academic activity in the past five years. While the active research agenda portion of the policy has been challenging to implement due to budget cuts and the reliance on adjunct professors who often teach in numerous institutions of higher education, with little time and incentive to conduct research, the expectation is that professors have at one point in their career been active and successful researchers.

Upon culmination of graduate studies, all students are assessed with an exit component (a master's thesis, comprehensive exam, capstone project or dissertation) using rubrics that fit the Online Learning Assessment System (OLAS) and allows UPR-RP to track both undergraduate and graduate student attainment of key educational milestones inherent across graduate programs. These learning outcomes used at the graduate level, which are: research and creation,

critical thinking, content knowledge, skills or dispositions, information literacy, and effective communication skills are assessed for each student upon completing the final exit requirement for their respective program. The OLAS data can be disaggregated by program and provides valuable information on how different programs are meeting the learning outcomes set forth by the institution. For example, according to the OLAS Learning Outcomes Data published [here](#), students graduating from the Juris Doctor program have above the target of 75% in all categories with the lowest averages coming in information literacy and consistent numbers above 90% in all of the other categories. Another program, the Master's in Clinical Psychology in the College of Social Sciences reports that all of their graduating students are above the target of 75% in meeting the learning outcomes described above. Across the board, graduate programs at UPR-RP report that their students meet the identified learning outcomes and are well prepared to enter or continue as leaders in their respective industry.

3.8: Periodic Assessment of The Effectiveness of Programs Providing Student Learning Opportunities

The University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras (UPR RP) is committed to the continuous evaluation of student learning outcomes. The Online Learning Assessment System (OLAS) serves as the primary tool for collecting, analyzing, and using data to improve educational programs across the institution.

Online Learning Assessment System (OLAS)

The OLAS platform enables our campus to conduct comprehensive assessments of student learning without relying on third-party vendors. OLAS provides institutional data that allows program administrators to compare learning outcomes across campus, supporting program evaluations, accreditation, and internal reviews.

At the undergraduate level, OLAS assesses key learning outcomes including Content Knowledge, Skills or Dispositions, Critical Thinking, Effective Communication Skills, Information Literacy, Logical-Mathematical Reasoning, Research and Creation, and Social Responsibility. Data is collected and analyzed to determine whether students meet or exceed these outcomes.

According to the 2017-2018 Undergraduate Performance by Learning Outcome Criteria, all 19 participating programs met or exceeded the expected values for each learning objective. Recent data from the [OLAS Dashboard](#)^{xxiv} (2020-21) allows users to compare academic years, semesters, and specific programs. Notably, Information Literacy was identified as an area needing improvement, as it failed to meet the target threshold of 75% on two occasions between 2014 and 2021.

Graduate programs submit final rubrics aligned with learning outcomes such as Research and Creation, Critical Thinking, Content Knowledge, Information Literacy, and Effective Communication. These rubrics document and compare the achievement of all graduating students. Graduate program data is integrated into the OLAS Dashboard, where individual program performance is evaluated. Although all reviewed programs overwhelmingly met their

learning outcomes, continuous data collection and analysis ensure alignment with external accreditation and internal program reviews.

This approach focuses on the constant monitoring of student progress, with regular reviews to assess the effectiveness of learning experiences. The use of this information strengthens the process by providing a unified system for planning, collecting and analyzing data. Its ability to identify trends and areas of improvement, in addition to promoting communication between different institutional actors, makes it essential for institutional review. All academic programs go through an additional accreditation process with an agency associated with their discipline, or in the event that the program is not eligible for an external accreditation, the program undergoes a review every five years. Both for external accreditation and for the internal program review, academic programs are continually collecting data from students and their professors as to the effectiveness of their programs that allows for programs to assess how they compare to others on campus and to assess whether their program is meeting, or not, the core institutional content standards in the OLAS digital platform.

Evaluation Instruments

The institution uses rubrics that are aligned with the learning outcomes published on the OLAS Dashboards discussed above. Over the last five years, assessment coordinators at the graduate level throughout our colleges and schools have worked diligently to align program specific rubrics associated with culminating coursework so that the learning outcomes of all graduating students can be documented and compared. Nevertheless, ongoing work needs to be done to obtain 100% compliance from all graduates. Now that the data has been collected and analyzed through the process of program evaluations, assessing the effectiveness of efforts to improve teaching and learning and potentially revising them must be considered.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection of data on students meeting learning objectives has largely fallen on the program coordinators and administrators, but more systemic and institutionalized data collection procedures are needed to allow for results to be shared at the campus level. Thus, while the OLAS Digital program is a step in this direction, more data needs to be made widely available to students, professors, and program administrators.

Feedback and Evaluation of Results

The institution adopts a dual approach to formative and summative evaluation. While the former provides instant feedback for immediate adjustments, the latter provides a more comprehensive view of student achievement. In addition, using the OLAS platform, some programs create focus groups to discuss assessment results, as well as surveys of alumni and the employers of alumni to document and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of their particular programs. These initiatives are largely organized in conjunction with guidelines provided by a specific body program level accreditation. They are not standardized across campus, but some could serve as models for programs that do not have program-level accreditation. Regarding OLAS, various programs continue to situate the result of assessment in terms of specific courses. These should discuss results as they relate to broader contexts, in particular program-specific graduate profiles and data that generalizes about learning at the level of the college or school. In addition, the

campus would benefit from an office or unit that was directly engaged with alumni and industry to assess how our programs have prepared them for the current work.

Academic Program Evaluation Policy

The periodic evaluation of academic programs seeks to establish a culture of excellence, through 5-year itineraries and cycles so that each program completes the evaluation and looks at its effectiveness through performance indicators. The current cycle began in 2022 and ends in 2026. The 49 degree-granting academic programs subject to accreditation on campus are currently evaluated by their corresponding accrediting agencies and are included in this cycle. For these programs, accrediting agencies closely monitor the curricular content of such programs to guarantee their compliance with standards of excellence established for the disciplines to which they belong.

For programs that are not subject to accrediting agencies, evaluation is required pursuant to Cert. #55, 2021-22- Policy on Periodic Academic Program Evaluation in the UPR, UPR-RP Guide for the Evaluation of Academic Programs, Academic Affairs' Office, 2014. Our campus requires that all programs are continuously monitored so that they are rigorous, appropriate in length, coherent, and promote synthesis of learning. It should be noted that, as part of the evaluation process, for the graduate level, external evaluators are invited to share their expert opinions on the programs under review. The results for this cycle establish that all the programs had completed with the evaluation process included in the five year calendar.

UPR-RP undergraduate and graduate academic programs offer curricula that allow students to acquire and demonstrate both general education and disciplines core knowledge and skills. To do so, all academic programs on campus are designed to comply with institutional guidelines and regulations that reflect current academic standards that arise from regulatory institutions in Puerto Rico and the United States. At the local level, the Puerto Rican Board of Post-Secondary Institutions is responsible for the regulation and the licensing of post-secondary education institutions in Puerto Rico. UPR-RP academic offerings are in compliance with the Board requirements under the UPR 2018 license. Moreover, the number of accredited programs, validates that our academic offerings and curriculum fulfill the highest academic standards across disciplines and professions.

Regarding the evaluation of professors in the classroom, in November 2023, the Office of the Chancellor and the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs activated the Student Perception of Instructor Performance at the Río Piedras Campus on the UPR Next platform for students to complete. This instrument was designed by Professors María Medina, Marta Álvarez, and Edwin Martínez and enabled on the UPR Next technological platform so that every student enrolled at the Campus can report their perception of their instructors' performance.

Oversight and Support

The Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs (DAA) enforces compliance with our UPR academic policies and norms as well as for academic program evaluation. Curriculum coherence, course syllabi and academic programs are evaluated periodically to ensure compliance with our campus mission and discipline knowledge and core skills. DAA guides undergraduate academic program evaluation. The Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research (DEGI by its Spanish acronym) oversees and conducts graduate program evaluations.

The DAA is important for all academic programs on our campus. At the undergraduate level, it provides support for and oversees academic program design, curricular sequences, and course outlines, ensuring compliance with all relevant regulations and academic norms. Curriculum coherence, course syllabi, as well as academic programs are evaluated at multiple levels to ensure compliance with our campus mission. There is a regulation for course evaluation. Also, the UPR Governing Board establishes regulations for academic program evaluation, and the Office of the Dean of Academic Affairs provides a guide for academic program evaluation. Any time a course is revised, the professors and/or program responsible for offering the course are required to update the master syllabus to fit current syllabus guidelines. These revisions require reflection and action on the part of the professors as they rethink their manners of course objectives, modes of assessment, how offering the course in different modalities changes assessments and/or delivery, as well as taking a critical look at the academic and electronic references that should be included in the revised syllabus.

At the graduate level, DEGI ensures that each academic graduate program complies with Cert. 95 of 2019-2020 regarding institutional academic policies related to graduate studies and also oversees program self-evaluations every five years as well as compliance with any outside accreditation body.

UPR-RP policies ensure that all academic programs are systematically evaluated. All changes that are made must correspond to assessment findings, including graduate profiles, competencies, objectives, course contents, and curriculum sequences, among others. These systematic program reviews impact hiring decisions, program changes and curricular revision. For example, the external evaluator for graduate programs in Educational Leadership recommended that the programs transition to a trimester calendar, a recommendation that the program leaders are actively pursuing. This is only one of the dozens of examples of programs making important changes that came as a direct result of internal and external evaluations.

The UPR-RP, in its mission of providing educational opportunities to the different sectors of Puerto Rico, is committed to offering alternatives that respond to the changing demands and professional needs of non-traditional students. In response to these challenges, each unit's strategic development plans provide sustained evidence of the programmatic agenda established to transform and innovate programs focused on self-management, the emerging discipline-attached scenarios, and the labor market, collaborating with a workforce targeted to the country's development goals.

Our campus continues to provide students with learning experiences that are characterized by rigor and coherence in all programs, certificates, and degree levels, regardless of instructional modality. All learning experiences, program pace/schedule, level, and setting are consistent with higher education expectations. This is evidenced by rigor in our hiring practices and systematic program revisions along with continued success of our programs. Specific accreditations are evidence that UPR-RP is providing rigor and coherence across all programs. Furthermore, the multitude of curricular changes that have come because of recommendations from outside evaluators demonstrate that programs are keeping up with the times and continuing to reinvent themselves. Given that few graduate students work as graduate teaching assistants, we rely on

our hiring practices of adjunct faculty to ensure that qualified individuals are teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses and that there are ample resources for professional development on campus as offered by the CEA.

UPR-RP is also actively engaging in academic agreements and collaborations with well-respected organizations, joint academic experiences with internationally recognized higher education institutions by means of Memorandums of Understanding with US and international higher education institutions such as those in the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, the US, and Spain, among other countries.

Our institutional commitment with ongoing, data-driven program evaluation to guide decision making processes also maximizes investment of fiscal resources in the strengthening of academic programs, even in moments of budget constraints and institutional commitment with annual recruitment of 3% tenure-track faculty.

Findings

- The UPR-RP complies with Standard III criteria.
- Since 2016, our campus has experienced natural disasters and financial events that forced academic programs to execute high-paced actions to adapt and change in order to comply with academic excellence. Such actions provided opportunities to transform academic programs and the student experience. Given the major demographic shifts in Puerto Rico over the past decade, with a decline in the birthrate and thousands moving to the United States and other countries, academic programs and the campus at large engage in reassessing the core population we seek to serve.
- Five online master's degrees, the most at any campus within the UPR system, demonstrate our commitment to offering alternative programs of study that address student interests and needs.
- Since 2020, the DECEP has been successful in generating revenue through offering courses to Puerto Rican Government Employees. One of the most successful programs started in January 2021 known as the Accelerated Professionalization Program for Puerto Rico Department of Education (PADE) employees. The offering of these courses has helped more than 1,500 teachers from PRDE become certified and improve their teaching.

Next Steps

- Potential decreases in student enrollment could be partially mitigated through curtailing program objectives towards Puerto Ricans living in the diaspora, Spanish speakers in the US or abroad, and those in Puerto Rico who are interested in university studies but prefer

to complete them online. Hence, academic programs will align offerings and student recruitment with our current economic, social, and technological realities.

- Given that the campus does not have an articulated Graduate Teaching Assistant program, creating one that is aligned with the PEA program should be evaluated. However, to do so would also require examining the stipends paid to Graduate Assistants since the stipends in the PEA program have not been revised in more than two decades and are no longer competitive. This lack of opportunity forces graduate students who would like to study full-time to seek employment opportunities off campus. DEGI will work on increasing graduate teaching assistantships, strengthen graduate programs, and require the campus to rely less on adjunct faculty.
- The use of multiannual contracts or clinical/practice-oriented positions have not been authorized at any large scale at UPR-RP and in the UPR systemwide. DAA will consider creating a category of practice or clinical professors, as they are known at most US institutions, that would allow the campus to enter into multiyear contracts, without the promotion and tenure obligations that could potentially have negative consequences on the budget. Such multiannual contracts would also provide much needed reassurance to adjunct professors, many of whom have been teaching in non-tenure track positions for years, on a yearlong contract. The creation and implementation of clinical/practice-oriented contracts could potentially allow professors with these contracts to teach more than standard contracts, for the same cost, but with less expectation in terms of research and service. This should not, however, discourage the institution from offering tenure-track positions, since these are the most beneficial to an institution of higher education and the most respectful to the rights and development of professors with doctoral degrees, heavy course loads, and other responsibilities in academia.
- While the Accelerated Professionalization Program for Puerto Rico Department of Education (PADE I and PADE II) have been successful in providing additional streams of income to the campus and University system, more needs to be done in assuring all of the campus procedures are put into place to protect the quality of instruction and that student learning outcomes are met as well. As a campus, we obtained valuable lessons from the PADE I and II experience and steps are being taken administratively to more fully integrate future students who participate in programs like PADE into the campus community to ensure they receive the same quality education as any other programmatic offering on campus.
- Reflections throughout this standard have opened discussions as to how the campus might expand program offerings that go beyond the traditional two semesters, face-to-face format. For example, there are on-going proposals to transition some graduate programs to a trimester calendar (MEd and EdD in Leadership in Educational Organizations) as well as transition face-to-face programs to online (as has happened with the MA in Translation). Colleges, departments, and programs will examine the advantages and disadvantages of such changes. Major changes will be informed by assessment and careful planning. For example, the administration might poll program graduates as well as potential applicants about their interests and preferences.

Professional opportunities and trends related to the job market will also be considered and consulted.

- Embracing a paper-free culture and data management in the administration of academic programs and academic processes is currently in place and will continue. Digitizing processes via a workflow signature system, already being used in most of the other UPR campuses, will cut down on paperwork and allow easy tracking of processes throughout the various steps in any approval. Thus, the campus will commit to using digital signatures and workflow mechanisms to allow efficiency in the bureaucratic paperwork flow.
- Academic programs will continue to develop the skills necessary in a changing and interconnected world to turn students into critical and ethical thinkers, social leaders, researchers and creators, professionals and entrepreneurs. Therefore, the campus is committed to constantly creating and maintaining the conditions for the change from an organizational culture to a service culture through a holistic experience focused on student success, as well as articulating and strengthening educational practices and support services, using the results of learning assessment, institutional effectiveness, and information and communication technologies for continuous improvement.
- The campus will commit to developing structured processes for turning assessment data into actionable insights. This includes setting clear objectives for improvement based on data analysis and tracking the implementation and outcomes of these initiatives.
- Finally, the campus will implement a centralized data collection system across all programs to ensure consistency and comprehensiveness. This could include standardized templates and protocols for data submission to ensure that data from all programs, including those not currently using OLAS, are integrated into a single platform for ease of access and analyses.