This tutorial offers a brief introduction for academic and administrative program approvers to how to approve program narratives and supplemental data in Prioritization Plus.
Prioritization Plus (P+) is the web-based software system that NIU is implementing as part of the program prioritization process. In this online tutorial for approvers learn the basics for how to login, access institutionally-provided data, review and approve your program write-up.
Through this tutorial, we will 1) briefly describe the approver workflow for the Prioritization Plus system; 2) demonstrate how to login to Prioritization Plus and successfully navigate the system to view program data; 3) demonstrate how to review program narratives and supplemental program data in Prioritization Plus and approve; 4) highlight important considerations for program approvers.
Let’s begin with a brief background and overview to the data platform that NIU is implementing for Program Prioritization during Fall 2015.
Prioritization Plus is a web-based data platform designed for use with the program prioritization process. It provides secure, online, program-specific access for program authors, program approvers, and task force members to relevant program data. Prioritization Plus facilitates the review and decision-making process.
Within the system there are three key system roles. The first, Program Author, is for those individuals responsible for completing the program narratives. There can be one or more authors per program. The second role, Program Approver, is reserved solely for those vice presidents, deans, and other senior university administrators who will be reviewing and approving program narratives. There can be only one approver per program. The third system role, Task Force, is for task force members and allows them to review and score program narratives once approved.
The data platform is integral to the facilitation of the program prioritization process. Program-specific institutional data is pre-loaded into the system by the NIU data support team. Program authors then receive access to institutional data, aligned to established program prioritization review criteria questions. Program authors then draft narrative responses to program criteria questions and add supplemental program data as desired.
Program approvers then review completed data and narrative write-ups and approve within the data platform. Task force members will collectively develop a scoring methodology and then review approved program data and score programs using established review criteria.
NIU’s established Program Prioritization academic and administrative criteria questions are available for download from go.niu.edu/ppcriteriaquestions
Within the system, institution-provided trend data is pre-loaded. The data follows standardized and equitable reporting, across all academic and administrative programs, consistent with institutional reporting practices, both internally and externally. Since data has been extracted from existing institutional reports and data systems for specific periods in time, these data snapshots may or may not provide the granularity that program authors need. There will be cases where data are reported at a department level rather than a program level, e.g. faculty/staff FTE, enrollment headcounts, and credit hour reporting. This level of reporting follows the structure of much of our institution’s data, which is collected, stored and organized at the department level rather than at the program level.
There will also be cases where measurable changes in the underlying program have occurred since the time period reported. Where these cases exist, program authors have the opportunity to supply more recent and/or local level data. For these cases, program authors should review the institutionally provided data and, where applicable, supply their own data to substitute or complement that which was institutionally provided. The Add Data Table wizard provided for each criterion question makes it easy for program authors to build their own supplemental program data tables, 1 additional data table permitted for each criterion question. Additionally, 1 chart, graph, or other image can also be added in response to each criterion question. More details are available in the program author training workshops and provided online resources.
Program authors have been given an offline template in Microsoft Word which can be used to draft program narratives to then copy/paste into P+. As a program approver, you can work with your author and review the narratives in the offline template if you wish, prior to logging into the online data platform for final approval. If you choose to have your program authors share their written program narratives and data offline, you will still need to ultimately login to Prioritization Plus and approve the completed narrative and supplemental data tables and charts or graphs that authors prepare.
The offline templates in Microsoft Word format, for both existing and proposed programs, are available for download from go.niu.edu/pptemplates
Completed program write-up reports, matching the report format that likely will be reviewed by Task Force members, can be generated from the system, either by program authors or program approvers. You may choose to have your program authors generate and email to you a PDF copy of the finalized program write-up report as part of your review and approval process, if you wish.
Let’s recap the overall approval workflow for program approvers: 1) Program authors complete their program write-up, either offline and then copy/paste into the data system, or directly in the online system. After doing so, program authors notify their program approver that the program write-up is ready to be proofed in P+. The program approver then reviews the program write-up in P+, makes any final revisions as needed, and then approves the program in the system. At this point, the program is ready for task force review.
You can lookup the currently assigned program authors and approvers for all NIU academic and administrative programs using the program author / approver lookup tool available at go.niu.edu/myprograms.

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Let’s briefly take a look now at how to approve a program in Prioritization Plus. We’ll login to Prioritization Plus, navigate to a program, review the program narrative, and click the approve button.
Here you can see that we are at the login page for Prioritization Plus. After logging in with your NIU username and password that has been assigned to you for use with Prioritization Plus, you’ll be logged into the system. Here within the system, navigating to Program Information and then clicking Edit Program Information, you’ll be at the Program Information Form where you can select from the Program drop-down the menu the program that you wish to approve. After doing so, you’ll see the Program Summary. Scrolling down you’ll see an Approve Program Write-up button. This is what you will click on when you are ready to approve the program. However, you may wish to browse through the program write-up to take a final look at the criterion summaries or the data questions the data that is provided, any additional data that the program author may have listed, you can access that. When you’re ready again to approve the program, you’ll want to navigate back to the Program Summary and scrolling click on the Approve Program Write-up button. In doing so, the system will then compile in a final overview for you the responses to all of the various criterion questions, program summary, and criterion summary. So here you can see we see the program summary and for each question we see just the text write-up responses to each, at this level the criterion summaries are listed here. By clicking the little plus sign to the left of a particular criterion it expands the listing of that criterion you see the criterion questions are listed, any institution provided data or author provided data is provided for additional review. When we’re ready to approve the program write-up we click the Approve Program Write-up button. After doing so, you will see a confirmation at the top of the screen that will say, “Program has been approved! All Author/Approver input for this program is now locked. Task Force members may now begin the review process.”
Keep in mind the due date for all programs to be approved and ready for task force review has been extended to December 11, 2015. Program approvers should set their own internal deadlines as needed for program authors to complete their write-up reports for the internal review process. Program approvers are responsible for confirming all supplemental program data and written narratives provided by program authors.
Questions about any aspect of the program prioritization process can be emailed to helpdesk@niu.edu. More Program Prioritization resources are available on the Program Prioritization website at go.niu.edu/pptraining