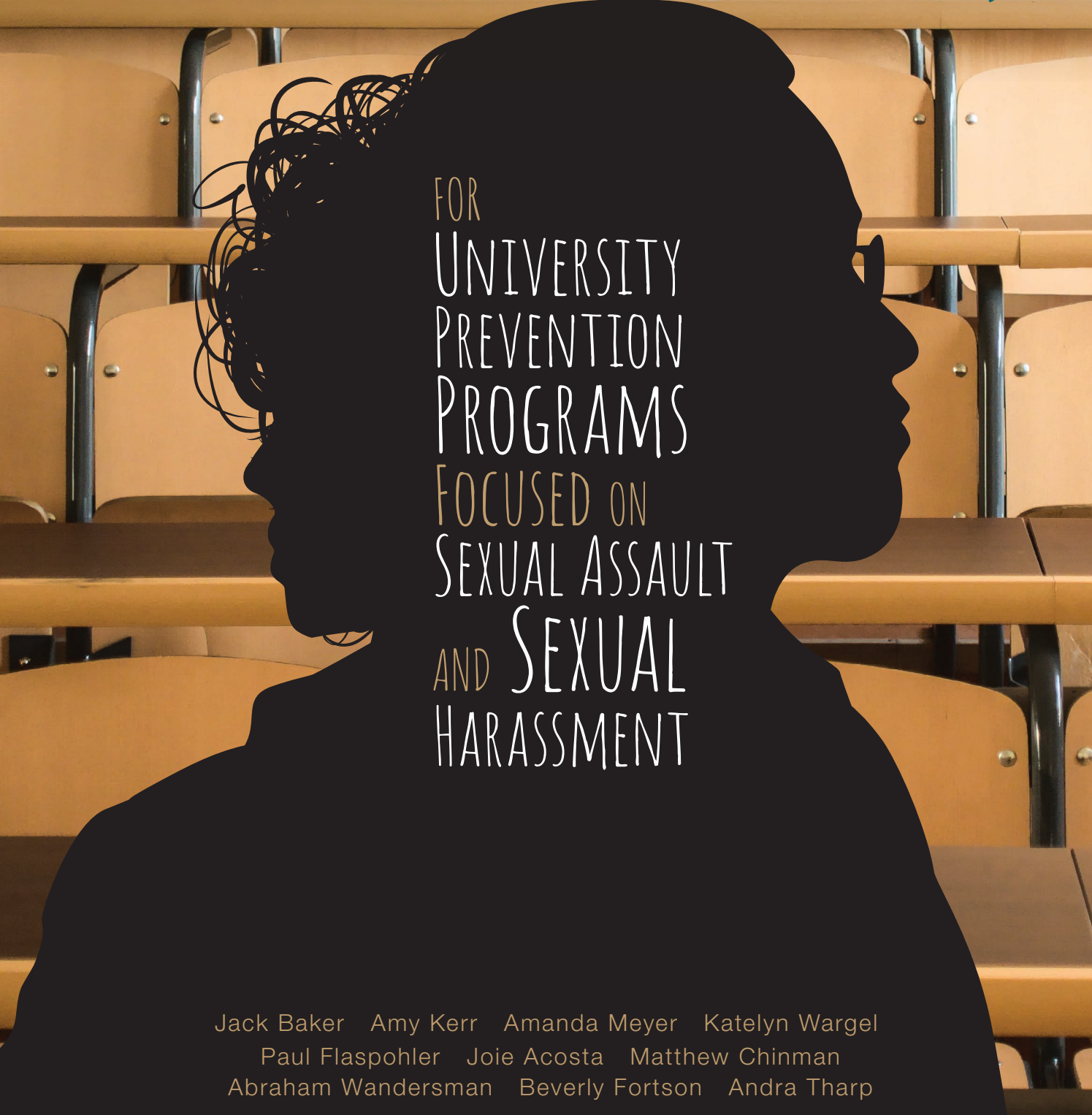


# SELF-ASSESSMENT GUIDE



FOR  
UNIVERSITY  
PREVENTION  
PROGRAMS  
FOCUSED ON  
SEXUAL ASSAULT  
AND SEXUAL  
HARASSMENT

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## About This Tool

As part of an initiative to reduce rates of unwanted sexual contact at military service academies (MSAs), the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office funded an assessment targeting organizational best practices for comprehensive sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts in June 2019. This assessment aimed to support MSAs in their continued efforts to eliminate sexual assault and harassment at their institutions.

A RAND Corporation team used the structured RAND/UCLA Appropriateness Method to develop the assessment, conducted a literature review, and solicited expert feedback about what a comprehensive organizational approach to sexual assault prevention should entail. Expert feedback was solicited from 15 individuals with experience in program evaluation and implementation, sexual assault prevention, and military culture. The assessment was then pilot tested with three military service academies. The final assessment consisted of 63 criteria that represent what right looks like in sexual assault and harassment prevention (Acosta et al., forthcoming). Thirty-one of these criteria addressed prevention at the academy level—i.e., system issues—and 32 criteria addressed the quality of specific prevention activities currently being implemented at MSAs. The academy-level criteria dovetail with DoD's comprehensive Prevention Plan of Action (PPoA), released in 2019, and the activity-level criteria closely follow the ten implementation best practices supported by the Getting To Outcomes<sup>®</sup> approach to program planning and evaluation.

These criteria formed the basis of this self-assessment guide, which allows civilian colleges and universities to independently conduct comprehensive evaluations of their sexual assault and harassment prevention programming. This guide provides detailed, step-by-step instructions for determining how an institution's efforts align with best practices in sexual assault and harassment prevention and what

can be done to improve areas for growth. Steps included in this guide involve the creation and subsequent activities of a working group designed to collect and review information about its school's prevention efforts on the levels of both systems (e.g., leadership, staffing, resources) and individual activities. Users are provided with guidance on how to collect and synthesize information on individual prevention activities and university-wide efforts and how to use this information to rate prevention efforts using the best-practice criteria described above. The guide also provides information on interpreting ratings, generating recommendations, and communicating results with university administrators and other stakeholders. An example demonstrating how the process may be used to improve a university or college's approach to sexual assault and harassment prevention is also included.

A companion volume contains nine appendixes: [www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TLA746-3](http://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TLA746-3).

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## Foreword

Despite a variety of prevention efforts, sexual assault and harassment remain significant problems at universities and colleges. To address these issues, universities and colleges should take a comprehensive approach to prevention that relies on best practices in sexual assault and harassment prevention and in implementation and evaluation. This self-assessment guide has been created to help colleges and universities systematically determine how their prevention efforts align with these best practices and to help identify areas for improvement.

This guide is an adaptation of a similar self-assessment guide created for use in the military context and pilot tested at three military service academies (MSAs). That original guide was created as part of an assessment targeting organizational best practices for comprehensive sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts, in which the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office funded the RAND Corporation to develop an assessment consisting of a set of 63 criteria that represent what right looks like in sexual assault and harassment prevention. These criteria were developed using the structured RAND/UCLA Appropriateness Method. Acosta et al., forthcoming, conducted a literature review and solicited expert feedback about what a comprehensive organizational approach to sexual assault prevention should entail. Thirty-one of these criteria addressed prevention at the academy level—i.e., system issues—and 32 criteria

addressed the quality of specific prevention activities currently being implemented at MSAs (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness [OUSD P&R], 2019). The academy-level criteria dovetail with DoD's comprehensive Prevention Plan of Action (PPoA), released in 2019, and the activity level criteria closely follow the ten implementation best practices supported by the Getting To Outcomes® approach to program planning and evaluation (OUSD P&R, 2019; Chinman et al., 2016; Chinman et al., 2018).

Following the identification of the criteria, a subset of experts used these criteria to rate the prevention efforts of three MSAs. These reviews, which assessed prevention efforts at both the system and activity levels, laid the groundwork for the development of a self-assessment tool to allow MSAs to comprehensively evaluate their own sexual assault and harassment prevention programming. We then adapted this guide for use at civilian universities and colleges, based on feedback from individuals working in university sexual assault and harassment prevention.

This tool is designed to guide users through the process of conducting a comprehensive evaluation of their university's prevention efforts to determine how these efforts align with best practices in sexual assault and harassment prevention. The evaluation produces a report detailing the strengths and areas for growth in the university's efforts toward preventing sexual assault and harassment. The companion volume provides resources to help guide improvement of prevention efforts.



## Introduction

While university students' knowledge about sexual assault and sexual misconduct has increased in recent years, rates of sexual assault have not seen similar improvement (Cantor et al., 2020). Survey data indicate that, between 2015 and 2019, rates of nonconsensual sexual contact increased by 3 percent for undergraduate women and 1.4 percent for undergraduate men (Cantor et al., 2020). Overall, 25.9 percent of undergraduate women, 6.8 percent of undergraduate men, and 22.8 percent of students who are transgender or nonbinary have reported experiencing sexual assault since enrolling at their schools (Cantor et al., 2020). Many sexual assaults occur in on-campus locations, such as university residence halls and fraternity houses (Cantor et al., 2020). In addition, one survey found that up to 19 percent of students reported experiencing sexual harassment at their colleges or universities (Cantor et al., 2020). The data make it clear that effective university prevention efforts are critical; however, data about rates of officially reported sexual assault and harassment tell us more about student trust in the system and willingness to report than they do about how effective the university's prevention strategies are. *This guide can help universities improve their sexual assault and harassment prevention capabilities and efforts by offering a tool to assess current efforts across several dimensions and providing recommendations.*

There is a clear need for effective sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention programming at colleges and universities. However, many existing programs are either ineffective at reducing rates of assault and harassment or lack the evaluation needed to determine their efficacy (DeGue et al., 2014). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified several evidence-based strategies for preventing and responding to sexual assault and harassment that include promotion of positive social norms, education in skills related to sexual vio-

## Key Points

- Sexual assault and harassment remain problems at colleges and universities.
- Comprehensive evaluation of sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts can help improve programs to decrease sexual assault rates.
- The university self-assessment is straightforward, leads to easily understood results, and bases recommendations on the outcomes.
- Changes and improvements in university prevention efforts are easily identified when multiple evaluations are completed over time.

lence prevention, empowerment of women and girls, creation of protective environments, and support for victims and survivors (CDC, 2021b). Comprehensive evaluation of current sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts can help universities determine how well their programming aligns with evidenced-based practices.

MSAs face similar issues of sexual assault and harassment to universities. DoD has begun implementing large-scale organizational changes to support sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts in the armed forces, including at MSAs. As part of these efforts, the DoD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office developed a PPOA outlining a comprehensive prevention system (OUSD P&R, 2019). The PPOA focused on three domains necessary for supporting the prevention process and effec-

tive planning and execution of sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts:

- human resources (leadership and prevention workforce)
- infrastructure (policy, resources, and data)
- collaborative relationships.

The PPoA also outlines four steps in the prevention process that are critical to decreasing sexual assault and harassment:

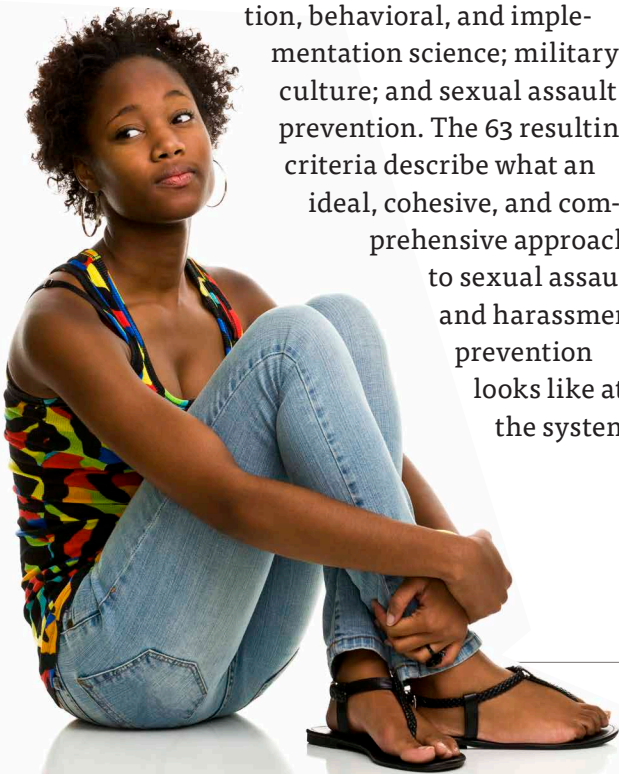
- understanding the problem and its contributing factors
- developing a comprehensive approach that targets contributing factors and engages service members in solutions
- implementing the comprehensive approach with fidelity in supportive climates
- evaluating the comprehensive approach.

The PPoA laid the groundwork for the development of a set of best practices for the development and assessment of sexual assault and harassment prevention activities and the organizational factors that support them. Using the steps outlined in the PPoA, Acosta et al., forthcoming, identified a set of criteria for best practices through a review of the literature and consultation with an expert panel. The panel consisted of 15 individuals, representing

significant expertise in prevention, behavioral, and implementation science; military culture; and sexual assault prevention. The 63 resulting criteria describe what an ideal, cohesive, and comprehensive approach to sexual assault and harassment prevention looks like at the system

(university-wide) and activity (single program) levels. Thirty-one of these criteria addressed prevention at the system level, covering the domains of leadership, workforce, collaborative relationships, data, resources, comprehensive approach, quality implementation, and continuous evaluation. Thirty-two criteria were at the activity level, covering the domains of understanding the problem, taking a comprehensive approach, quality implementation, and continuous evaluation. Within each broad domain, each individual criteria assesses an aspect of best practice in preventing sexual assault and harassment and provides examples of what full, moderate, and low alignment with this practice may look like. While originally developed for the use of MSAs, the criteria have been applied throughout DoD and can also help civilian colleges and universities assess how well their sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts align with best practices. Using feedback from civilian university prevention staff, the authors revised some of the criteria to be more relevant to a civilian university setting and added two university-level criteria, one in the leadership domain and one related to taking a comprehensive approach. Additional detail about the creation of the guide and adaption for university use can be found in Appendix A.

The authors designed the following guide to provide an accessible, straightforward process for any institution of higher education (henceforth referred to as *universities* for brevity) to evaluate its sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts. This process has been designed to lead users through a comprehensive assessment process that is compatible with current university processes and addresses multiple areas that are known to affect program efficacy. A clear-cut process is laid out for gathering relevant data. Examples of various levels of alignment with each criterion are provided to help users rate their university's performance in each domain. In addition to determining how well-aligned current prevention activities are with best practices, this self-assessment will provide universities with the informa-



tion needed to better address motivation and capacity issues related to sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts (Scaccia et al., 2015). The guide also contains information on how to adapt the assessment process to suit a variety of unique institutional characteristics (e.g., university size, student population). Completion of this assessment results in a comprehensive report that can be used to inform decisionmaking processes related to sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts. The assessment activities and the information they provide may support other university compliance or reporting requirements (e.g., Title IX, university policy requirements); any overlap in these efforts can help reduce the burden on prevention staff and others conducting the assessment. To assist users, a glossary defines terms used in the guide. The companion volume provides resources for improving various aspects of prevention efforts.

When multiple assessments are conducted over time, the systematic evaluation process allows the university to observe changes and improvements in their prevention efforts. This tracking process could provide universities with a more straightforward process of assessing progress, finding relevant recommendations, and improving their overall approach to sexual assault and harassment prevention.

### Self-Assessment Process

This self-assessment guide provides step-by-step instructions to universities for assessing how their sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts align with each university-level and activity-level criterion using multiple sources of data.

University prevention activities can include any program that may reduce sexual assault and harassment. This can include, but is not limited to, programs that aim to change social norms related to sexual assault and harassment, address alcohol misuse, empower women, teach about healthy relationships, develop character, engage bystanders, and prevent male per-

## Follow-Up Assessments

If a university has completed this assessment before, previous documents can be reviewed to see whether anything has changed. Changes made to certain components (e.g., staffing) will warrant rerating of criteria likely to be affected by the changes (e.g., prevention staff). If there were no changes from previous university or activity efforts, past documents (e.g., prior ratings and recommendations) can be used, and rerating of the criteria will not be necessary.

When completing a prevention inventory form for activities that were previously assessed, the university can update previous forms as needed.

petration. While some of the examples provided here specifically focus on male perpetration and female victimization of sexual assault and harassment, males can also be victims of sexual assault and harassment. University sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts should aim to prevent sexual violence toward people of all genders.

The prevention inventory form (Appendix B) will be the primary way to document individual prevention activities. This form asks for various pieces of information about all prevention activities at the university. The form will need to be completed for all new activities not included in any previous assessment. Completing the form for each relevant prevention activity will be an important task for the prevention assessment team or working group at the university (described later).

While this guide has been designed to be accessible to many types of colleges and universities, working groups at particularly small universities may choose to adapt the process.

Possible adaptations may include omitting the interview step or choosing not to rate criteria that are not relevant to their institutions. However, working groups should carefully consider the reasons for any omissions.

Follow-up assessments using this tool can be conducted on a regular schedule to assess progress in sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts. Universities can choose an assessment schedule that fits their needs, based on capacity and anticipated pace of improvement (e.g., every two years). Ideally, universities should identify a specific interval for conducting the assessments to encourage regular evaluation of prevention efforts.

### Prevention Assessment Team— Working Group

Ideally, each university should convene a prevention assessment team as a working group to complete the self-assessment. Prevention assessment teams could take multiple forms. Universities should select the team structure that best fits with their capacities (e.g., staff skills and motivation) and resources (e.g., institutional support and funding). For example, a university could

- use a standing prevention team (if available)
- create a new prevention assessment team
- identify a point of contact and an assistant (if neither of the first two options is possible).

Universities that have a standing prevention team can divide tasks in the self-assessment process among team members according to their expertise and skills. Information can then be compiled and synthesized as a team.

Universities that do not have a standing prevention team can create a new prevention assessment team specifically to lead this self-assessment. The team should include staff and administrators from all relevant parts of the university. More information about forming the working group can be found later in this guide.

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University prevention activities can include any program that may reduce sexual assault and harassment.

If it is not possible to create a new prevention assessment team, the self-assessment can be completed by someone within the university who can serve as the point of contact along with an assistant who can assist the point of contact with the process. However, given the amount of time it takes to complete the self-assessment, the last option is suitable only if the first two options are not possible.

Regardless of team structure, the working group may want to involve the help of departments that are not directly connected to prevention but that could offer relevant skills, such as interviewing, scoring, and rating synthesis. The working group may also choose individuals from university or departmental administration to oversee the overall self-assessment process.

Throughout the self-assessment, the working group should meet often (e.g., multiple times per week) to specify roles and responsibilities, discuss initiatives, provide updates on progress, identify gaps (e.g., additional information needed), and plan for the next step. The group is also encouraged to meet with university administrators frequently to provide updates and obtain feedback throughout the process.

Further, university working groups can conduct any of the steps in this self-assessment in person or virtually, but in-person meetings are preferable when possible. Other options can be put in place if in-person meetings are not possible, such as using a virtual private network, secure file-sharing services, videoconferencing, and computer software that allows real-time

communication. If virtual options are chosen, the working group may call on information technology staff to help implement the online tools and address technical issues that arise.

Working groups may benefit from practices aimed at creating an effective team, especially because group members will be coming from a variety of departments and organizational levels, each of which may have its own working style and culture. Such practices include holding meetings at times and locations that are convenient for all members, having a clear and consistent meeting structure, clearly defining roles and responsibilities, specifying decision-making methods in advance, and evaluating team functioning (Cohen, Baer, and Satterwhite, 2002).

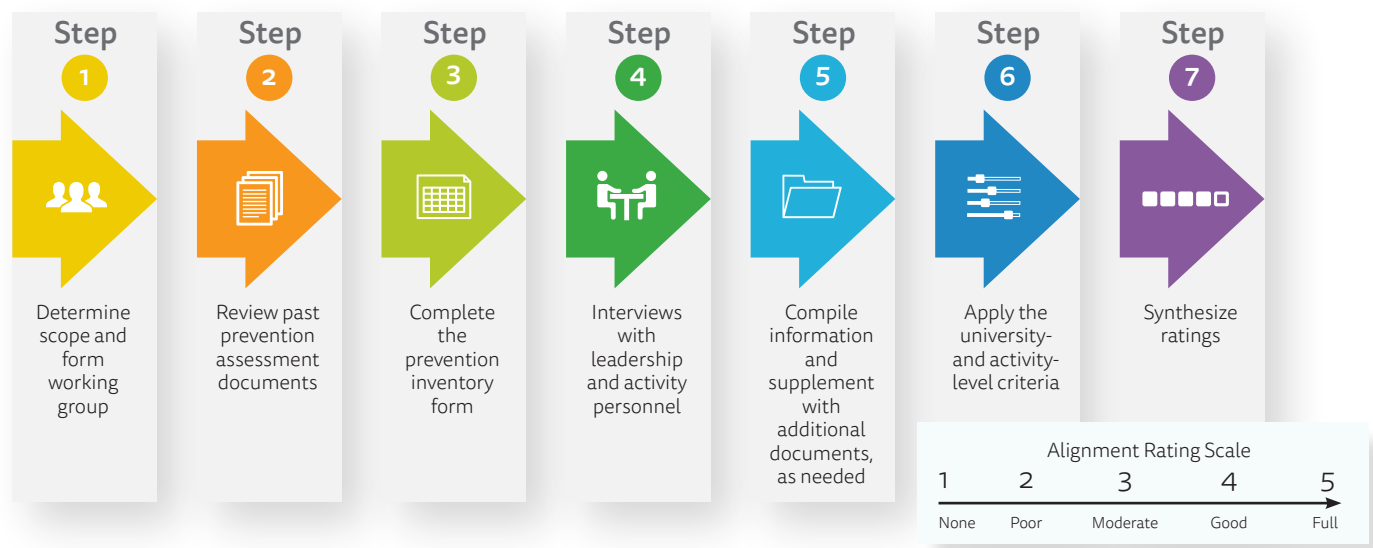
### Self-Assessment Steps

The self-assessment process includes seven key steps that will guide the university working group (see Figure 1):

- **Step 1.** Determine the scope of the assessment and form a working group.
- **Step 2.** Review the most recent sexual assault and harassment prevention assessment documents, if applicable.

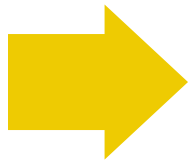
- **Step 3.** Complete prevention inventory forms (Appendix B) for all new prevention activities, and update forms for previously assessed activities, as needed.
- **Step 4.** Conduct separate interviews with stakeholders at the university and activity levels (Appendixes C and D). The interviews can yield contextual data not captured in the prevention inventory and other documents that may be useful for informing the final ratings and interpretation.
- **Step 5.** Compile information into summary documents and supplement with additional documents, as needed.
- **Step 6.** Use the information to rate (or rerate) the university- and activity-level criteria using a five-point Likert scale (from no alignment to full alignment; see Appendixes E and F for criteria descriptions).
- **Step 7.** Synthesize the ratings and provide university administration and other stakeholders with a report of the findings.

FIGURE 1  
Steps to Self-Assess University Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention Efforts



To assist universities in understanding how this self-assessment can work in practice, Appendix G provides an example from a hypothetical university.

## More Information About Each Step



### **STEP 1** **Determine Scope of Assessment and Working Group**

- Prior to beginning the assessment, administrators and other relevant stakeholders should determine its scope (i.e., whether it will focus strictly on activities directly related to sexual assault or will include a wider variety of prevention activities related to harassment, discrimination, etc.). This is an important first step because it will inform the development of the university working group.
- If the university has a standing prevention team, that team may complete the self-assessment. Depending on the scope, universities may consider recruiting additional stakeholders to assist the prevention team with the assessment.
- If the university does not have a standing prevention team, a team can be assembled specifically to lead this self-assessment. The team should include staff and administrators from all relevant parts of the university, as determined by the scope of the assessment. The team should also include individuals from various levels of the university structure (e.g., staff, department-level administration, university-level administration). Potential staff members who may be useful to this process include Title IX coordinators, prevention staff, university administrators, campus police, and women's or gender center staff. The box on the next page lists titles of those who may be relevant for inclusion in the work-

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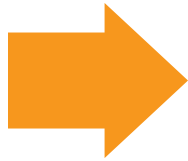
Interview responses should be documented in writing, but there should be no discussion of open cases to respect the privacy of individuals.

- ing group. This list is not exhaustive—any stakeholder with a role or interest in prevention of sexual assault and harassment may serve as a useful member of this group. Staff and others listed here are generally found across universities, but other relevant staff may be unique to a specific university. The group should include stakeholders from all areas of prevention that are being assessed, as well as stakeholders who can represent or advocate for specific student populations (e.g., students of color, international students, sexual and gender minority students).
- A university may also consider bringing in an outside evaluator (either from a different area of the university or an external partner) to provide technical assistance for the assessment process. Working groups may want to consider relevant skills sets for evaluators, such as experience in collecting and/or analyzing data, conducting program evaluation, and generating recommendations (although many other skills may be useful to this process). This may be especially useful for small institutions with limited personnel and time.



## Individuals and Roles to Consider Including in the Working Group

- Sexual assault prevention staff
- Health promotion staff
- University-level administrators
- Department-level administrators
- Program-level administrators
- Student or residence life staff
- Greek life staff
- Compliance office staff (e.g., Title IX coordinators)
- Victim advocates
- Medical services staff
- Health center staff
- Wellness staff
- Athletics staff
- Ombudsman's office staff
- Staff from women's or gender centers or offices serving other specific populations of students (e.g., students of color, international students, students who are sexual or gender minorities)
- Staff from offices of diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Student conduct office staff
- Religious- or faith-center staff
- Representatives from student organizations
- Members of the student body
- Faculty with related research interests
- Members of university or local law enforcement
- Staff from the university assessment office, if one exists
- Individuals from partner organizations, e.g., sexual violence support services, community organizations, nonprofit organizations



## STEP 2 Review Past Prevention Assessment Documents, if Applicable

- If a sexual assault and harassment prevention assessment has been conducted before, the working group would need to review the resulting documents, criteria ratings, and recommendations. These documents would be used to identify changes made to any component at the university or activity level (e.g., staffing, organizational policies) that warrant rerating all criteria likely to be affected by the changes (e.g., prevention workforce). These documents will also help determine whether additional information is needed to inform the reratings. If the working group determines that no changes have occurred since the previous assessment, past documents (e.g., prior

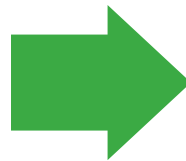
ratings and recommendations) can be used, and rerating of the criteria would not be necessary. New activities not found in these documents would require a completely new assessment (Steps 3–7).

NOTE: This guidance assumes that previous assessments were conducted using the process described in this guide. If previous documentation exists from another comprehensive assessment, it may have little utility for this process, and working groups may want to proceed as though they are conducting an assessment for the first time.



## STEP 3 Complete the Prevention Inventory Form

- The university working group will complete the prevention inventory form (Appendix B) for each prevention activity. This involves obtaining detailed information about all existing sexual assault and harassment prevention activities at the university, such as the activity's goal, how often the activity has been evaluated, the target population of the activity, the activity's concrete benchmarks, and the rating for the activity using the CDC's levels of evidence. For previously assessed activities, the working group may just need to update a prevention inventory form with any changes to items in the most recent assessment (see Step 2).



## STEP 4 Interview Administrators and Activity Personnel

- To supplement the prevention inventory, the working group may choose to interview administrators and personnel involved in prevention programming to gather contextual information about how the university's efforts align with the university- and activity-level criteria.

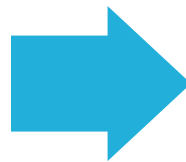


- If such interviews were previously completed, provide all the requisite information. If no new prevention activities or university-level changes in prevention efforts occurred, past interview responses (e.g., recordings and notes) could be used, and the working group could proceed to Step 5.
- If the working group decides to conduct new interviews, it can use the university-level interview guide (Appendix C) to collect information about the sexual assault and harassment prevention activities from prevention staff and/or administrators. The interview guide is intended to assess how prevention efforts correspond with the process and system dimensions of the PPOA. Potential stakeholders to interview include university administrators; Title IX and sexual assault response coordinators; staffs for women's or gender centers, health centers, student life, and Greek life; and/or sexual assault victim advocates.
- Some of the stakeholders who would be appropriate to interview may be part of the working group. In this case, working group members should consider how to obtain the most accurate and most complete information. This may include recruiting individuals outside the working group to conduct the interview(s) or having working group members who work less closely together conduct the interview(s). If there is significant overlap between those who may be interviewed and those involved in the working group, this step may be less useful, and the group may choose to forgo this step (see note).
- The prevention assessment team can use the activity-level interview guide (Appendix D) to collect in-depth information about specific prevention activities from the personnel running an activity. This guide is intended to assess the prevention process outlined by the PPOA and the best

practices for high-quality programming identified in the prevention performance interview tool.

- Interview responses should be documented in writing, but there should be no discussion of open cases to respect the privacy of individuals who may have experienced sexual assault and harassment and alleged offenders.

NOTE: While interviews can provide valuable information for this process, the working group may choose to omit this step in some situations. For example, at a very small institution, all administrators and staff involved in sexual assault and harassment prevention may be part of the working group, potentially reducing the utility of this step. The working group should consider the capacity of the group and the information the interviews may provide when deciding whether to complete this step.

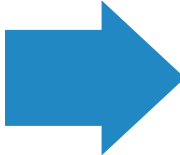


## STEP 5

### Compile Information and Add Supplemental Documents, as Needed

- The prevention assessment team should identify documents specific to the university (e.g., strategic plans, climate survey) and prevention activities (new and previously assessed), such as reports, presentations, and learning objectives.
- The prevention assessment team will then compile the information from the prevention inventory form and update any previously completed inventories.
- The prevention assessment team should also condense the information from the prevention inventories, interview responses, and additional documents into summary documents, both for the university level and for each prevention activity being reviewed. This involves reviewing all the different sources of information and considering the following:

University Criteria	Activity Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Prevention workforce</li> <li>• Collaborative relationships</li> <li>• Data</li> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Comprehensive approach</li> <li>• Quality implementation</li> <li>• Continuous evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the problem</li> <li>• Comprehensive approach to prevention</li> <li>• Quality implementation</li> <li>• Continuous evaluation</li> </ul>

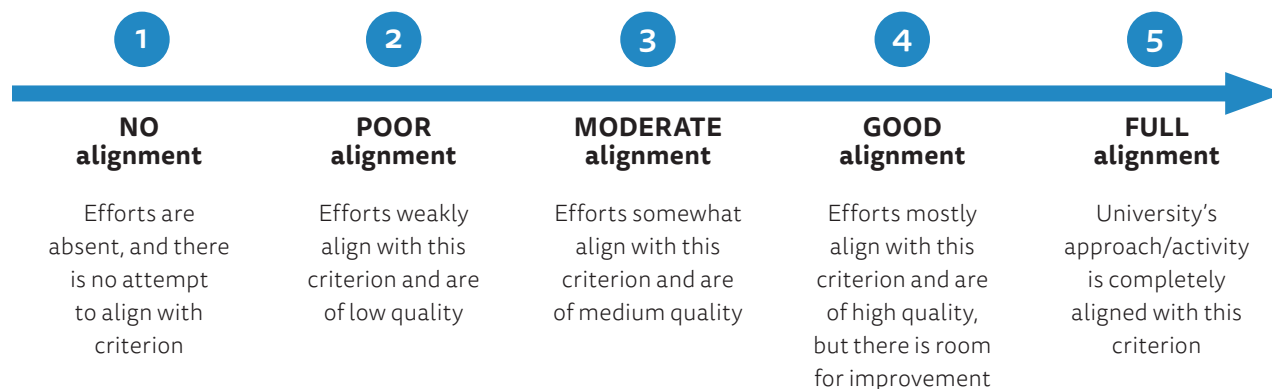


**STEP 6**  
**Apply the Criteria**

- ❑ What are the overall conclusions from the different sources of information on strengths and gaps in prevention efforts?
- ❑ Do different sources of information (e.g., an evaluation that shows an activity was well implemented, interviews that discuss how the activity was perceived to be well implemented) point to a similar conclusion? If so, this conclusion should be given more weight.
- ❑ Do multiple sources of information relate to the same theme (e.g., lack of communication mentioned by multiple interviewees)? If so, this theme should be given more weight.
- ❑ If any activities were rerated, take note of how the ratings may have changed from the previous assessment.
- ❑ Using the above information, develop summary documents for the university-level assessment and each prevention activity reviewed.

- The university- and activity-level criteria (Appendixes E and F, respectively) each represent a wide range of best practices in sexual assault and harassment prevention. Each criteria set is organized into subdomains (with some overlap in domains between the two criteria sets), which are listed in the box at the left. The university-level criteria are designed to assess a wide range of organizational capacities and practices that support prevention efforts. The activity-level criteria assess adherence to the principles of effective sexual assault and harassment prevention.
- Universities may use several options to apply the criteria. Working groups might decide to have each individual assign criteria ratings, to designate several individuals to assign ratings, or to convene for a group discussion to review the material and jointly assign ratings.
- When applying the criteria, the working group should use the summary documents to assess the level of alignment of the university's approach to sexual assault and harassment prevention against each of the university-level criteria using a five-point Likert scale (Figure 2). In applying ratings at the university level, raters may notice that their institution's approach to sexual assault and harassment prevention may differ by activity (e.g., differential application and enforcement of policies, differential funding). In this case, raters should select the rating that best averages the two approaches (i.e., if the university's approach reflects full alignment [5] for one program but only poor alignment [2] for another program, raters would assign a rating of 3.5). It may be worth noting any large

FIGURE 2  
Rating Scale and Definitions



discrepancy between how the university approaches or supports different programs in the final evaluation report.

- The working group should also use the summary documents and any activity-specific documents (if applicable) to assess the level of alignment of each *sexual assault and harassment prevention activity* against each of the *activity-level criteria* using the same five-point Likert scale (Figure 2). Rerate activities from previous assessments if they have changed in some way.
- If in doubt about what rating to give when applying ratings for both the university- and activity-level criteria, universities should ask raters to default to the lower rating. Given the specific topics being assessed in this evaluation, defaulting to the lower rating can help avoid inadvertently overrating the alignment of university efforts and activities with best practices in sexual assault and harassment. In doing this, universities can see the full range of improvements that may be needed and avoid the potential harm that may come to students from overrating prevention efforts, which could result in less action toward improvement.
- See Appendixes E and F for the criteria descriptions and rating definitions. Definitions are provided for *full, moderate,*

and *no alignment* for each criterion, but the full range of the scale should be used when making the ratings. For example, a criterion may receive a rating of 4 (good alignment) if the university or prevention activity falls more in between the full and moderate alignment definitions.

**STEP 7**  
**Synthesize the Ratings**

If individual members of the working group provided independent ratings of the criteria, the working group would gather all ratings and take an average across the raters for each criterion. If one or more ratings differ by more than two points from the rest of the scores, the team can discuss and resolve any disagreements. Alternatively, the group may choose a designee to evaluate rating discrepancies and assign a final rating. If the working group chose to rate the criteria collaboratively through group discussion, consensus on ratings will have been reached through that process. We recommend that the working group provide university leadership with a copy of the ratings to allow for the opportunity to identify incorrect or missing information for any criteria. The working group can reassess their ratings if needed and rescore the criteria.

## EXAMPLE: How to Interpret Mean Ratings

### Collaboration of prevention team

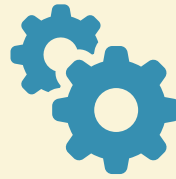
**1.5** mean rating  
(no to poor alignment)

### Collaboration with partners

**3.5** mean rating  
(moderate to good alignment)

#### What is the best practice criterion?

A team devoted to preventing sexual assault and harassment exists; team stakeholders include university leaders, prevention staff, and students from multiple levels and departments, including sexual assault and sexual harassment and other related prevention efforts; **AND** there is some mechanism to ensure meetings are productive and useful for prevention efforts (e.g., a mandate outlining the group's responsibilities).



Prevention staff have consistent working partnerships internal to the university (i.e., with response and referral staff) **AND** external to the university (i.e., with experts from other institutions) to continually improve practice.

#### What did stakeholders say?

"We have a team that works on prevention, but the team just formed organically and is just made of folks who deal with sexual harassment."



"We have pulled in a lot of folks from within the university. We haven't done as much outside the university."

#### How the combined rating could be interpreted

University may have a prevention team, but it does not comprise diverse stakeholders, and member responsibilities are poorly defined.



Prevention staff have internal partnerships but are in the process of identifying external partnerships.

## Rating Interpretation

The universities can use the mean criteria ratings to identify strengths (highest scores) and gaps (lowest scores) within each PPOA dimension. The interviews and other information can be used to better interpret and provide context to the ratings (i.e., addressing why the prevention efforts align or do not align with the criteria). While full alignment (a rating of 5) is aspirational, it may be infeasible in reality to achieve full alignment in each area. Interpretation of ratings should focus on identifying both strengths and gaps contributing to the rating. This information can then inform recommendations for improving the university- or activity-level efforts for sexual assault and harassment prevention at the university. To assist with making recommendations, Appendix H provides a list of resources that universities can use to improve their sexual assault and harassment prevention efforts.

For example, at the university level, two criteria represent best practices in the Collaborative Relationships PPOA domain. In the box on page 12, a hypothetical university was rated as having no to poor alignment (score of 1.5) for the *prevention team* criteria but moderate to

good alignment (score of 3.5) for *partnerships*. As shown in the box, the combination of the mean rating and the interviews can lead to a possible interpretation.

Given this information, this university working group may recommend a reorganization of the prevention team in which diverse stakeholders are equally represented and have clearly defined roles so that future meetings are more effective. Furthermore, the working group may recommend greater assistance to the prevention staff with facilitating external partnerships.

When making recommendations, the working group may want to consider several things. First, what are the highest priorities for change? This may be informed by which ratings are lowest, institutional or departmental values, or other factors specific to the university. The working group may want to emphasize or highlight these domains and the associated recommendations within the report. The working group may also consider what is most relevant and realistic in their university context. For example, a working group at a small institution may have rated the “Workforce: Communication” criterion as having low to moderate alignment because of a lack of or infrequent use of formal communication mechanisms connecting administrators and prevention staff. However, the lack of these mechanisms may not hinder effective prevention work at this institution. In this scenario, it is possible that the university administration and the prevention workforce are so small that roles overlap and informal communication methods are sufficient. In such instances, the working group will want to reach careful consensus on what suggested areas of improvement may be less relevant in the university’s context and to be able to provide data (e.g., from interviews) to support these conclusions.

In addition, the working group may want to consider suggesting or assigning ownership for leading each of the recommended changes. This may be with members of the working group or at different levels of leadership; for example, prevention staff may focus on improving the



delivery of specific prevention activities, while leadership may collaborate with prevention staff and the working group to develop a mission or vision statement about sexual assault and harassment prevention. Specifying who will take responsibility for implementing the recommended changes can help avoid diffusion of responsibility and facilitate action toward improvement.

## Final Assessment Report

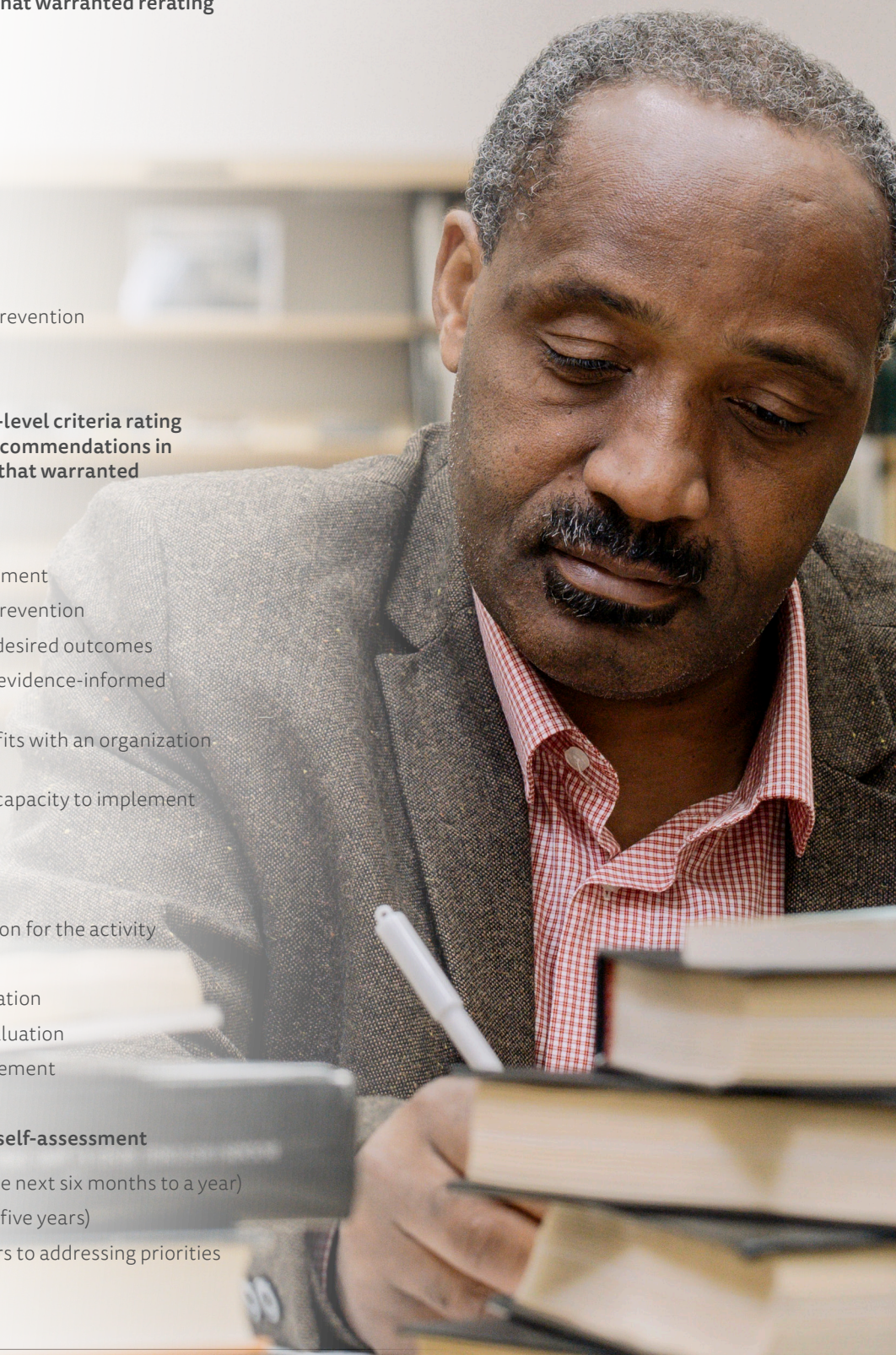
Once the self-assessment process is complete, the working group should develop a final self-assessment report for university administrators and other stakeholders to review. Report writing can be delegated to certain working group members, but all members should review the report prior to dissemination. Groups may choose to seek technical assistance in the writing, editing, and formatting of the report; this assistance may be found in social sciences departments, assessment offices, or elsewhere. The box on the next page suggests an

outline for the report; Appendix I provides additional details and examples.

The university's organizational structure will dictate who should review the report. At a minimum, it should be shared with higher-level administrators (e.g., chancellor's office, president, provost, board of trustees), university compliance offices (e.g., Title IX, civil rights offices), and other relevant university offices or divisions (e.g., college deans and offices of student affairs; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and residence life). The information contained in the report should also be shared with a broader university community, including students. The working group may also choose to share the results with relevant entities outside the organization, such as community nonprofit partners. The working group should choose which information is most relevant for each audience and tailor communication accordingly. When sharing findings with the broader community, choosing brief, easy-to-understand means of communication may encourage individuals to engage with the information. Infographics or



## Final Self-Assessment Report Outline

- 
- I. Executive summary
  - II. Brief description of the information collected as part of the self-assessment
  - III. Brief summary of each university-level criteria rating (include key strengths, gaps, and recommendations in each domain and any changes that warranted rerating of criteria)
    - A. Human resources
      1. Administration
      2. Prevention staff
    - B. Collaborative relationships
    - C. Infrastructure
      1. Data
      2. Resources
    - D. Comprehensive approach to prevention
    - E. Quality implementation
    - F. Continuous evaluation
  - IV. Brief summary of each activity-level criteria rating (include key strengths, gaps, recommendations in each domain, and any changes that warranted rerating of criteria)
    - A. Understanding the problem
      1. Needs and resources assessment
    - B. Comprehensive approach to prevention
      1. Setting goals and concrete desired outcomes
      2. Searching for and choosing evidence-informed activities
      3. Ensuring identified activity fits with an organization and community
      4. Ensuring there is sufficient capacity to implement identified activity
    - C. Quality implementation
      1. Planning implementation
      2. Ensuring adequate motivation for the activity
    - D. Continuous evaluation
      1. Conducting a process evaluation
      2. Conducting an outcome evaluation
      3. Carrying out quality improvement
      4. Ensuring sustainability
  - V. Prevention priorities based on self-assessment
    - A. Near-term priorities (within the next six months to a year)
    - B. Longer-term priorities (one to five years)
    - C. Key considerations and barriers to addressing priorities
  - VI. Planned actions for next steps

public service announcements may be helpful for this purpose.

Figure 3 is a suggested timeline, with key steps noted. Following this timeline can help the university maintain momentum to complete the reporting. However, some institutions may find that a different timeline might meet their needs (for example, structuring the assessment within the academic year or over the course of two years).

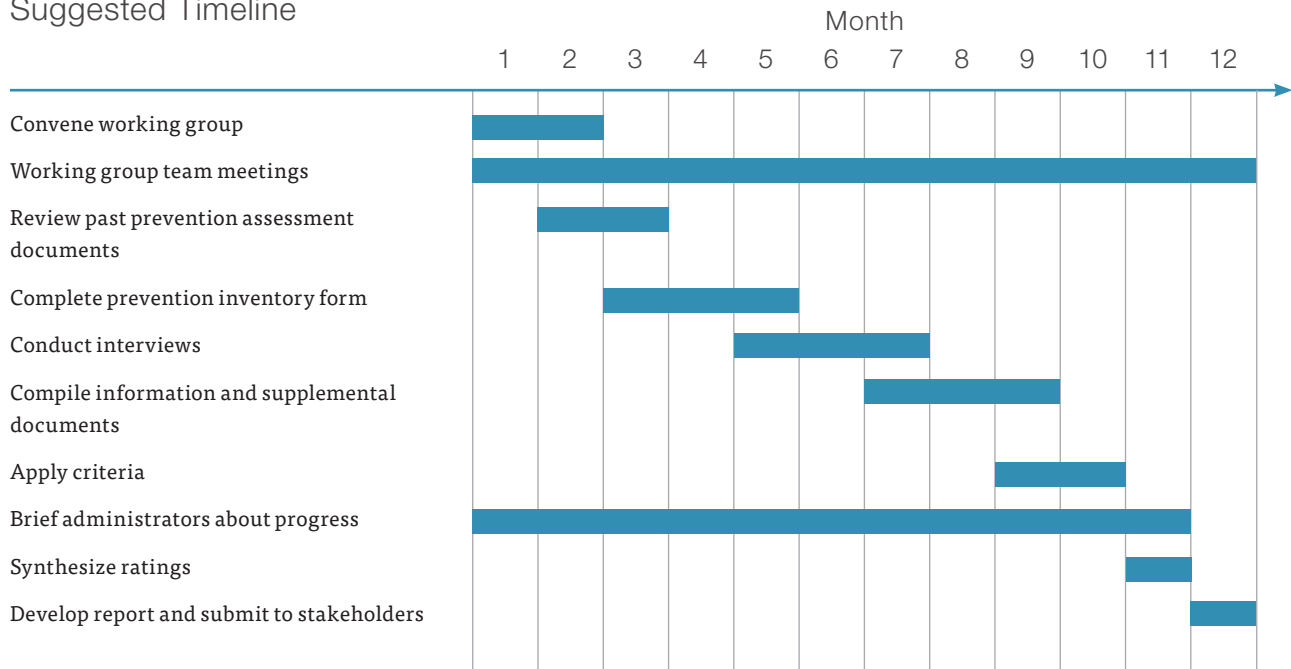
### Moving Toward Action

It is critical that the results of the report be used to facilitate improvement in university prevention programming. As prevention staff and other stakeholders consider how to approach planning for and implementing changes, strategic planning can help promote

positive outcomes and successful implementation of new initiatives. The Getting To Outcomes® framework is a ten-step process designed to assist groups in planning, implementing, and evaluating prevention programs (Wiseman et al., 2007). Adopting this framework can help empower prevention staff as they implement the recommendations generated as a result of the self-assessment.

Additionally, university teams that are selecting new programming can refer to the resources in Appendix H for guidance about selecting programs and evaluating their usefulness on the campus. Prevention staff may also wish to refer to the CDC guidance about best practices in sexual violence prevention strategies.

FIGURE 3  
Suggested Timeline



## Glossary

<b>Awareness education and activities</b>	These are designed to increase general knowledge about an issue. Take Back the Night is an example of an awareness program.
<b>CDC</b>	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
<b>Collaboration</b>	This refers to exchanging information, altering activities, sharing resources, and enhancing one another's capacity for mutual benefit and a common purpose.  See OUSD P&R, 2019.
<b>DoD</b>	U.S. Department of Defense
<b>Evaluation</b>	An evaluation involves systematic methods to collect, analyze, and use information to inform implementation of a policy, program, or practice.  In the context of this guide, evaluation refers to both the process (monitoring fidelity, delivery) and outcome (assessing the short-, intermediate-, and long-term goals of the prevention activity) evaluation.  See OUSD P&R, 2019.
<b>Leadership and administrators</b>	These terms can refer to upper-level leadership at a university, such as the president, deans, or provost, or may refer to other midlevel leadership or administrators at the institution, such as leaders in the office of student conduct or the director of the student wellness center. Prevention staff and university working groups can use their best judgment to determine which types of leadership they might want to include and think about in the assessment; this may vary across institutions.
<b>MSA</b>	military service academy
<b>OUSD P&amp;R</b>	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
<b>PPoA</b>	Prevention Plan of Action
<b>Prevention education and activities</b>	These programs are designed to increase students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills relative to sexual assault and harassment prevention. Examples might include bystander intervention programs or Green Dot. Prevention education programs are distinct from awareness programs in that they go beyond awareness-raising and increasing general knowledge, actively striving to change attitudes and opinions and to provide participants with skills.

<b>Protective factors</b>	<p>These are the factors that make it less likely that a sexual assault or harassment will occur or that increase an individual’s resilience when encountering risk factors. Examples include self-defense, access to resources, and emotional health and connectedness.</p> <p>See OUSD P&amp;R, 2019; CDC, 2021b.</p>
<b>Rapid results</b>	<p>This refers to a timely turnaround and timely action taken on the results of the evaluation. What actually constitutes timely will likely vary across institutions.</p>
<b>Risk factors</b>	<p>These factors increase the risk of a sexual assault or harassment occurring. Examples include alcohol or substance use, involvement in Greek life, and hostile environments toward women.</p> <p>See OUSD P&amp;R, 2019; CDC, 2021b.</p>
<b>Sexual violence (assault and harassment)</b>	<p>Sexual violence refers to sexual activity when consent is not freely given.</p> <p>Sexual assault refers to physical acts perpetrated against a person’s will or when a person is unable to freely consent.</p> <p>Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature and can include unwelcome advances; requests for sexual favors; and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.</p> <p>See CDC, 2021b; U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2020.</p>
<b>Sexual misconduct</b>	<p>This broad term encompasses sexual assault and harassment, as well as stalking and intimate partner violence.</p> <p>See Cantor et al., 2020.</p>
<b>Social-ecological model</b>	<p>This model is a framework for understanding violence and the potential effect of prevention strategies. The model examines factors related to violence prevention at four levels of influence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>individual—biological or personal factors of individuals</li> <li>relationship—relationships in an individual’s life that may increase risk of experiencing violence</li> <li>community—settings (e.g., schools, workplaces, neighborhoods) that may have characteristics that increase an individual’s risk of experiencing violence</li> <li>society—broad societal factors that create a climate in which violence is encouraged or inhibited (e.g., social and cultural norms, policies, issues of social and economic inequality)</li> </ul> <p>See CDC, 2021a.</p>

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In 2019, as part of an initiative to reduce rates of unwanted sexual contact at military service academies, the U.S. Department of Defense funded the development of an assessment tool to help military service academies assess whether they are aligned with best practices to eliminate sexual assault and harassment. The assessment was based on a literature review and expert feedback and consisted of 63 criteria that represent what right looks like in sexual assault and harassment prevention. These criteria form the basis of this guide, which is intended to help civilian universities and colleges assess their own programs to prevent sexual assault and harassment. The guide provides detailed, step-by-step instructions for determining how an institution's efforts align with best practices in sexual assault and harassment prevention and how its programs can be improved.

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