

New England Regional Student Program (RSP), Tuition Break Procedure: Annual Program Review & Proposal of New Programs

The annual program review begins in the spring and culminates in the late summer with the announcement of approved programs for the following academic year. (Example: The 2024 review results in the 2025-26 lists of approved programs, published online at nebhe.org/tuitionbreak).

New England Regional Student Program, Tuition Break, Policies

Direct Participants

- NEBHE RSP Director and Coordinators.
- Campus Representatives: Every participating college and university has at least one campus representative. Every graduate school has a representative.

Definitions:

“Program”: Used interchangeably to refer to major, degree, certificate, concentration, etc.

“Specialized program of study”: ([Policy 3B1](#)) A specialized program is distinguished by its academic and course content and is a major, specialized concentration or option that approximates a major in its requirements.

Specialized program eligibility for residents of a particular state is approved when it has been determined, via an institutional review, that a comparable program is not offered by any of that state’s public colleges or universities.

“Institutional review”: Institutions review all specialized programs proposed by another institution. Institutions report to NEBHE whether they offer a comparable program to the proposed specialized program.

“Comparable program”: A program offered by another institution is considered comparable to another academic program when it is comprised of similar course content and volume of credits. A comparable program may be a major, option or concentration.

“Flexible program of study”: ([Policy 3B2](#)) A flexible program is any degree program or certificate chosen by the institution to be eligible to the other states of New England, independent of comparable programs offered by any home-state public college or university. *Certificate/diploma programs are always considered to be flexible.*

Eligibility for Flexible Programs is not dependent on approval by the home-state public colleges.

“Proximity program of study”: ([Policy 3B2](#)) A subset of flexible programs, institutions may choose to allow eligibility for certain academic programs on the basis of proximity for residents of one or more states.

Eligibility for Flexible Programs is not dependent on approval by the home-state public colleges.

Overview

The Annual Review has two phases requiring institutional participation, which is managed through a [secure online database](#). Each respondent has a unique username and password.

Phase I:

NEBHE initiates the annual review with an email notification in April to all RSP campus representatives, asking them to review and verify their current RSP offerings and to propose new programs.

Phase II:

Institutions conduct Review of Specialized Programs of Study (see below*) and report their results and any additional revisions to NEBHE.

Outcome:

At the completion of the review process, NEBHE informs campus representatives of the status of the new programs, which institutions are offering them, and which states' residents are RSP-eligible. NEBHE announces the final list of programs and updates by early September.

*Review of Specialized Programs of Study ([Policy 3B1](#))

1. Institutions notify NEBHE that they would like to offer additional specialized programs through the RSP and provide a detailed description for each program, including a list of required courses, number of credits and course descriptions.
2. NEBHE RSP Director conducts a preliminary review of a proposed new program to determine one of the following:
 - a. The program *matches a program already offered* through the RSP by one or more institution(s) and the “new” institution can be added to the list of institutions offering that program in the RSP catalog.
 - b. The program is a *candidate for a new RSP listing* and must be reviewed. NEBHE circulates a detailed program description to campus representatives for their approval.
3. Campus representatives conduct an institutional review of a proposed RSP program to determine whether they offer a comparable program. As needed, they forward the description of the proposed program to the appropriate academic department on campus for an in-depth review.

The representative reports one of the following in a response form provided by NEBHE:

 - a. Their institution *does not offer* a comparable program, therefore RSP eligibility for that state's residents is a possibility. Note: If *all* the institutions of a particular state *do not have* a comparable program, the residents of that state *will be* RSP-eligible.
 - b. Their institution *offers a comparable program*; therefore, the residents of that state *will not be* RSP-eligible.
 - c. Their institution *offers a comparable program* and would like to also offer that program through the RSP.
4. NEBHE RSP Director manages the review process to determine one of the following:
 - a. All institutions of a particular state indicate they *do not* have a comparable program; therefore, the residents of that state *will be* RSP-eligible.
 - b. At least one institution of a particular state indicates it *has* a comparable program; therefore, the residents of that state *will not be* RSP-eligible.

- c. At least one institution of a particular state indicates it *has* a comparable program that it would like to also offer through the RSP; therefore, the residents of that state *will not be* RSP-eligible.

Review of Flexible Programs ([Policy 3B2](#))

1. Participating institutions notify NEBHE about specific programs of study they wish to offer through the RSP and if there are any special requirements or restrictions. Eligibility for Flexible Programs is not dependent on approval by the home-state public colleges.
2. Proximity-Based Programs of Study. Institutions notify NEBHE during the annual RSP review of their intent to participate in the Proximity policy.
 - a. Institutions reserve the right to limit students' eligibility under the Proximity Policy to certain approved programs and/or to commuting students. Institutions establish criteria regarding eligible distances and make final decisions regarding which students they accept on this basis.

Additional Relevant Policies

Withdrawal, Limitation or Elimination of RSP-Eligible Programs: ([Policy 8](#))

- a. An institution must provide a two-year advance written notice to NEBHE, during the annual RSP review, to withdraw an approved program from RSP eligibility. NEBHE will include the withdrawal notice with the program's listing and delete the program from the RSP catalog, effective two years from the notice.

Note: RSP students enrolled in a program at the time of its withdrawal retain their RSP status until they complete the program.
- b. An institution/system may limit or cap the enrollment of RSP students by providing a two-year advance written notice to NEBHE, during the annual RSP review, indicating the intent to limit or cap future RSP enrollment at the present level.
- c. If an institution is eliminating a program from the RSP because it is no longer classified as a major, but the course requirements for the program remain the same, the institution may continue to offer it as a concentration under the RSP.

Note: If the institution chooses not to continue offering the program, students currently enrolled in the program will be grandfathered if they continue to pursue the required courses.
- d. If it is determined by NEBHE during an annual review that a state's residents will lose eligibility for an RSP program because a home-state institution offers a comparable program, *currently enrolled students will retain their RSP status until they complete their program.*
- e. If an institution eliminates a program of study, the institution must notify NEBHE in a timely manner so that the program can be deleted from the next RSP catalog.

Graduate Programs – Petition for Eligibility ([Policy 3B1c](#))

A prospective graduate student may petition for RSP eligibility for a specialized program that is not listed as RSP-eligible. The petition process is as follows:

1. The student requests letter(s) from the graduate deans at the public institutions in their state indicating their institutions do not offer the program;
2. Letters are sent to the graduate dean at the institution offering the desired program with the student's request for RSP eligibility. Approval is at the discretion of the receiving institution.

Note: The participating institutions participate voluntarily in this review.