



ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

GUIDELINES

Assessment & Institutional Research Office

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW GUIDELINES

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References:

- Assessment Institute Pre-Conference Workshop, *From Soup to Nuts: Program Review as a Value-added Assessment Activity*, November 2000.
- Change, The Magazine of Higher Learning, *Is there an Academic Audit in Your Future?: Reforming Quality Assurance in U.S. Higher Education*, July/August 2000, Heldref Publications.
- Change, The Magazine of Higher Learning, *Revolution or Evolution?: Gauging the Impact of Institutional Student-Assessment Strategies*, September/October 1999.
- Council of Graduate Schools, *Academic Review of Graduate Programs: A Policy Statement*, 1990.
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education, *Characteristics of Excellence: Standards for Accreditation*, November 1, 2000 Ed.
- New Directions for Institutional Research, *Using Academic Program Review*, No. 86, Summer 1995, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- The Academic Program Review at the University of Scranton, January 1996 Ed.



GUIDELINES FOR THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

PURPOSE OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

Although our University and its departments, programs, faculty, and students are the subjects of various studies for internal and external reporting, the Academic Program Review provides the only opportunity for a comprehensive, periodic review of an entire academic program. The review provides a context and rationale for the short-term and long-range planning addressed in annual reports and operational plans.

The ultimate purpose of the review is **improvements in the academic program**. The review documents student learning in an organized manner, provides perspective on the teaching-learning process and examines the environment(s) in which it takes place. The results are used for planning and implementing improvements over the next seven years. The progress of those implemented improvements is recorded and relayed through the annual report.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for the review includes the program's faculty, department chair(s)/program director(s), relevant dean(s), and the AVP/Provost. Deans share executive summaries of academic program reviews with their respective deans' conferences and the AVP/Provost. The AVP/Provost discusses review executive summaries with the Academic Policy Council (APC). The review is semi-public in nature and is archived in the University library.

Please note that the review is not being done for the Assessment and Institutional Research Office (AIRO). The review is conducted for the betterment of the program itself, and as a source of dialogue and planning information for department faculty and chair(s)/program director(s), deans and the AVP/Provost. AIRO simply assists departments with certain data and information needs. AIRO also assists deans and department chairs/program directors by coordinating the review process and maintaining the review schedule.

DEFINITION OF AN ACADEMIC PROGRAM

In this document, an academic program is defined as any valid major in which students can earn a degree, or any combination of courses that lead to special student designation such as honors, interdisciplinary programs, and others, as outlined in our university catalogs and appearing on an official University transcript. The dean(s), department chair(s)/program director(s), and department faculty determine what "academic program" or aspect of a program a review will cover.

PROGRAMS WITH UNDERGRADUATE AND GRADUATE STUDENTS

These review guidelines encourage programs with both undergraduate and graduate students to complete the review process at the same time, producing separate but related reports. However, it is the responsibility of the relevant dean(s) and department chair(s)/program director(s) to make a final determination on this point. There are two reasons for this suggestion. First, the programs' faculty often teach both programs' undergraduate and graduate students. Thus, completing the review at the same time for both sets of students best utilizes faculty resources. Secondly, the two program levels are seldom completely separate.

DEPARTMENT CHAIR/PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Academic departments conduct the review. Programs will vary in how they complete the review. In some instances, the department chair(s)/program director(s) may do most of the work, presenting a draft review report for department faculty review. In other instances, in consultation with the department chair(s)/program director(s), various faculty members/groups will complete various review sections. In yet other instances, the department may act as a committee-of-the-whole to complete the review.

During the review, the dialogue occurring within the department and between the department and relevant dean(s) about the program is a very important part of the process.

The department chair(s)/program director(s) is/are ultimately responsible for completing the review and submitting the final review report to the relevant dean(s) on schedule.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW SCHEDULE

Planning the Review

September	Dean's office notifies departments scheduled for review
October	Department chair(s)/program director(s) and dean(s) meet to outline review process
December 1	Department chair(s)/program director(s) notify dean(s) of their intended review method, comprehensive or focused, and if they desire an external reviewer
December 1	Department chair(s)/program director(s) submits review assessment plan and data request check list to dean(s) and AIRO

Conducting the Review - Gathering Data/Evidence

Dec.-May	Department conducts planned assessment projects and gathers data and information
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Writing the Review Report/Gathering Feedback

May-Nov.	Department constructs review report
November 1	Department submits review report to relevant dean(s)
December 1	Dean(s) submits departments' executive summary to AVP/Provost
January	Department chair(s)/program director(s), dean(s), AVP/Provost meet to review department's executive summary
February	Dean's conference reviews department's executive summary
March	APC reviews department's executive summary
April 1	Dean(s) communicates dean's conference & APC comments back to department chair(s)/program director(s)

Incorporating the Review into Annual Report/Operational Plan

May	Department incorporates review findings into their annual report to dean & AVP/Provost
May	Dean(s) incorporate review findings into their annual report and operational plan

Implementing Planned Improvements/Reporting Progress

Year		
2	June	Implement planned improvements and report progress in annual report
3	June	Implement planned improvements and report progress in annual report
4	June	Implement planned improvements and report progress in annual report
4	February	Dept chair(s), dean(s), AVP/Provost meet to discuss progress on improvements
5	June	Implement planned improvements and report progress in annual report
6	June	Implement planned improvements and report progress in annual report
6	September	Start planning the next review

DEAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Deans are ultimately responsible for their programs completing the review process and final report. In consultation with the department chair(s)/program director(s) and faculty, deans determine if programs with external accreditation should also complete the university's review process. Deans may assist programs in deciding an appropriate review method, either comprehensive or focused, determining what data to request from offices on campus, prioritizing short-term and long-range improvements in the academic programs, and determining the necessity of an external reviewer from another institution, among other review activities. During the review process, the dialogue between the program's faculty, department chair(s)/program director(s) and dean(s) about the program is an important part of the process.

THE PLACE OF EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

Accredited Programs

Academic programs completing external accreditation self-studies do not, ordinarily, also complete our entire internal review process. However, it is the responsibility of the relevant dean(s) to make a final determination on this point. Often, external accreditation self-study criteria do not cover certain categories treated in our review. It is the University's expectation that each of the review categories listed in this guideline will be treated in the review report.

Reviewers From Another Institution

It is a common practice in higher education to employ an external reviewer from another institution to conduct a review on behalf of a department. For our review, it is not required. However, the relevant dean(s) and some departments may wish to consider this option. The funds to cover the associated costs of such external reviewers should be agreed upon by the relevant dean(s) and department chair(s)/program director(s) by December 1st of the review planning phase (see the review process schedule on page 5).

There is no fixed procedure for selecting an external reviewer, if one is used. The most common practice is for a department to provide the dean(s) with the names and vitas of 3 or 4 qualified reviewers, identifying the department's relationships with the suggested reviewers, from which the dean(s) selects one.

REVIEW METHODS

There are two methods available to complete our review, comprehensive or focused. A comprehensive review examines each of the review categories listed below. Each of the categories is examined and discussed in the final review report. A focused review examines only some of the categories, or entirely different aspect(s) of the program, in particular detail. If a focused review is conducted in place of a comprehensive review, the department chair(s)/program director(s) and relevant dean(s) should agree on the focused review topic(s) by December 1st during the review planning phase.

The following paragraphs contain examples of the content that might be covered in the categories of a review report. The department chair(s)/program director(s) and/or faculty will determine the actual content covered in each of these review categories.

Comprehensive Review

A comprehensive review consists of six sections: executive summary, program goals/objectives, resources, processes, outcomes, and planned program improvements. For each section, these guidelines identify possible topics to cover and the relevant potential sources of information.

Executive Summary

Succinctly summarize the major findings of the review, focusing primarily on the plans for implementing program improvements over the next five years. Tie all of the review sections together providing the context and rationale for the planned improvements. Planned program improvements should be based primarily on the outcomes section.

Program's Goals/Objectives

Clearly identify the purpose(s) and student learning objectives of the program. Provide a brief history of the program. Describe the program's relevance in today's higher education environment describing internal demands for it and its national and regional employment and occupational opportunities. If appropriate, clearly identify its goals/objectives and relevance to the University's General Education curriculum.

Potential sources of information: Department of Labor data, relevant professional association information, University catalog, recruitment materials, departmental annual reports, operational plans, and the University's strategic plan.

Program's Resources

Using relevant data and information, provide a profile of the following aspects of the program:

- Students served by the program, indicators of their quality such as SAT scores, QPI statistics, etc.
- Faculty teaching the program's courses, possibly including their instructional credit load, indicators of their expertise such as degrees held, scholarly activities, awards, recognition, service records, faculty developments opportunities, etc.
- Library holdings
- Physical facilities
- Finances and productivity, average class size, average faculty workload, income/expense ratio, etc.

Potential sources of information: Admissions, Financial Aid, Registrar, Treasurers, AIRO, Research Services, Physical Plant, Library, Career Development and Placement, Provost, Human Resources, Alumni (see the review data request checklist – appendix A).

Program's Processes

Describe the curricula and content of the program. Describe how the curriculum is appropriate for the program's purpose(s) and student learning objectives stated above. Does the program adhere to current guidelines or standards from professional associations or compare well to similar curriculum at other respected institutions? Describe how the program's courses are aligned to promote the program's stated purpose(s) and student learning objectives.

Describe the current student support systems for the program. Do course placement procedures exist? From the department's and student's perspective, describe the program's support systems, from orientation, advising, tutoring, mentoring, out-of-class faculty contact, faculty-student research projects, faculty monitored independent study, internships/field experiences, professional associations/clubs, to career placement and alumni relationships. Describe how these student support systems are coordinated with the program's curriculum. Describe how the support systems assist students' in achieving their individual goals.

Potential sources of information: university catalogs, advising manuals, co-curricular stated purposes, professional association guidelines, and course evaluations.

Program's Outcomes

Based on the program's stated purpose(s) and student learning objectives, provide evidence of student learning, improved abilities and skills, satisfaction with the program, achievements, and enhanced traits/characteristics. Describe how the processes above are interconnected in such a way as to promote achievement of the program's purpose(s) and student learning objectives. Examine student graduation, subject matter mastery, graduation placements, further education, certification examination passing scores, and student portfolios. If possible, compare your program's results with national norms or figures. If appropriate, provide evidence of student accomplishment in the University's General Education curriculum. Much of the data presented here can be based on the assessment activities identified in the department's assessment plan (appendix B).

Potential sources of information: department assessment plan, AIRO survey results, Career Placement and Development survey results, faculty student research program results, co-curricular transcripts.

Planned Program Improvements

Based primarily on the outcomes section, identify several areas in the program that could be improved. Describe the action plan to improve these areas over the next several years. Prioritize the improvement activities, describe the expected changes, and the criteria by which the program will monitor the program in order to document its improvements.

Focused Review

In special circumstances and in consultation with the relevant dean(s), a department may conduct a "focused" review. A focused review selects one or more of the comprehensive review topics, or entirely different ones, and examines it/them in exceptional detail. The purpose of a focused review is to allow departments to concentrate on a few areas of their program perceived to warrant special attention.

If a focused review is conducted in place of a comprehensive review, the department chair(s)/program director(s) and relevant dean(s) should agree on the focused review topic(s) by December 1st during the review planning phase.

APPENDIX A REVIEW DATA REQUEST CHECKLIST

Academic Program: _____ Majors included: _____

Department Chair(s)/Program Director(s): _____

Date of Request: _____ Review Year: _____

Please use this list to check-off the data you would like to include in your review final report.

Please submit this list to your dean and AIRO by December 1st. AIRO will coordinate with these campus offices to supply the data you requested.

Admissions

- Incoming student enrollment report (includes application activity, yield rates, enrollment)

Financial Aid

- Current student financial aid report (includes amounts and types of aid for current students)

Registrar

- Enrollment distribution across multiple sections, enrollment as % of caps in upper and lower division courses

Treasurer

- Departmental financial report (includes detailed budget, expenditures, and balances)

AIRO

- Program(s) profile report (includes SAT, gender, avg. age, day/dhc, avg. semester credits attempted, avg. QPI, FT-PT faculty, and avg. credits taught by FT-PT). University wide Alumni Survey data can also be provided.

Research Services

- Research report (includes scholarly activities, external/internal grants, and faculty student research program data)

Physical Plant

- Physical facilities report (includes floor plans, and allocated space by function)

Library

- Library report (includes collection development profile, holdings, periodical subscription list, relevant databases, interlibrary loan data, and periodical subscription list).

Career Development and Placement

- Placement/Further education report (includes placement rates, further education status, average salary, and other post-graduation activities data)

APPENDIX B - DEPARTMENTAL ASSESSMENT PLAN OUTLINE

(Submit to Dean/AIRO by December 1st during the REVIEW planning phase)

Departmental Assessment Plan Outline:

1. Clearly state the program(s)' purpose(s)
2. Identify three to five stated and measurable student learning objectives
3. Identify the criteria of success for each objective (minimal acceptable scores or performance)
4. Identify the means of assessment by which the objectives will be measured

(Include the results of these assessment activities in the Program's Outcomes section of the final review report and annual reports)

5. Identify how the assessment results will be used for the program(s)' improvement

APPENDIX C - ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR REVIEW

Articles/Books

- Angelo, T.A., and Cross, K.P. *Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers*. (2nd ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.
- Barak, Robert J., *Successful Program Review*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990.
- Gardner, John N., and Van der Veer and Assoc. *The Senior Year Experience: Facilitating Integration, Reflection, Closure, and Transition*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.
- Miller, Allen H., *Student Assessment in Higher Education: A Handbook for Assessing Performance*, London: Kogan Page, 1998.
- Nichols, Karen W., and Nichols, James O. *The Department Head's Guide to Assessment Implementation in Administrative and Educational Support Units*, New York: Agathon Press, 2000.
- Palomba, Catherine A., and Banta, Trudy W. *Assessment Essentials: Planning, Implementing, and Improving Assessment in Higher Education*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.
- Salant, Priscilla, and Dillman, Don A. *How to Conduct Your Own Survey*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994.
- Stern, Gary J., *The Drucker Foundation Self-Assessment Tool*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.
- The Program Evaluation Standards: How To Assess Evaluations of Educational Programs*, The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1994.
- Upcraft, M. Lee, and Gardner, John N., *The Freshman Year Experience*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1989.
- Walvoord, Barbara E., and Anderson, Virginia J. *Effective Grading: A tool for learning and assessment*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1998.

Internet URLs

- Association for Institutional Research
<http://www.airweb.org>
- Internet Resource for Higher Education Outcomes Assessment:
<http://www2.acs.ncsu.edu/UPA/survey/resource.htm>
- National Center for Teaching-Learning Assessment
<http://www.ed.psu.edu/cshe/htdocs/research/NCTLA/nctla.htm>
- National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience & Students in Transition:
<http://www.sc.edu/fye/>
- Policy Center on The First Year of College:
<http://www.brevard.edu/fyc/ListservHome.htm>

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