

# PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS for NON-ACCREDITED PROGRAMS

(Revised for Pilot Program Review Process implemented AY 2022-23)

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## **Purpose**

The purpose of periodic program review is to provide a process for faculty to assess curricular design and develop strategic action plans to innovate or refine curricula based upon research. In this way, it differs in aim from annual student learning outcome assessment, which examines whether pedagogies effectively support student learning within an already approved curriculum.

The program review process is a tool to be used by departments to increase their responsiveness in creating high-quality programs which improve student learning, and to assure that a curriculum effectively prepares students for work environments seeking the credential earned via focused study in a particular discipline.

This review process is aligned with Criterion 4 for accreditation as set forth by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement, which states “[t]he institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs...and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.” Periodic program review also conforms with the guidelines and procedures for assessment of program standards set forth by the Ohio Department of Higher Education.

Finally, a periodic review can serve as an important tool for updating the campus community regarding about the vitality of an academic program, and how it functions to serve students and the institutional mission. It is thus important to note that this updated process results in a document, part of which will be broadly disseminated to campus stakeholders (Faculty Senate, Committee on Assessment, Deans’ Council, President’s Council, etc.)

## **Initiation of Program Review**

A departmental program review can be comprehensive, or it can focus on a specific area (e.g., capstone, introductory sequence, High Impact Practices, concentrations, integration of fully online courses, academic/career advising). A review shall occur at least every four years. The dean of the respective college will initiate the review in consultation with department chairs and/or program directors and may, upon the advice and consent of the Committee on Assessment, require a special review of a program when warranted.

## **Overview of Program Review Process**

Each academic department/program conducts an academic program review on a 4-year cycle. The cycle, from initial planning to submission of a program review action plan, should take approximately 10 months to complete. The periodic program review can be summarized as a six-step process from the perspective of the department/program:

**Step 1:** Initiate the planning for the program review.

**Step 2:** Develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) listing specific tasks and deadlines.

An MOU outlining the scope and purpose of the Academic Program Review is developed in consultation with the Department, Dean, and Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE). It should be informed by prior Assessment Reports, Program Reviews, and other relevant evaluative data. At this stage, determination is made whether the review will be comprehensive or focused.

**Step 3:** Conduct a data-driven self-study and needs assessment that engages all program faculty, and then prepare a comprehensive report of the findings, a program action plan, and an executive summary.

The first component of Program review is a data-driven assessment of how the academic program (or the feature of a focused review) is currently operating. To prepare for this work, the department chair/program director will work with the Dean overseeing the program and a member of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE). The OIE will provide metrics and available data to the department for the self-study and the Committee on Assessment will be available to provide guidance during the self-study and in preparation of the final report. The self-study should include the following:

- A brief summary of the accomplishments related to the department's current action plan,
- A brief summary of prior Committee on Assessment feedback on accomplishments since the last review,
- A brief summary of program metrics provided by the OIE and the business office as they relate to program outputs of financial efficiency.

The second component of a Program review is a needs assessment. An Academic Program Review should prioritize research regarding innovative and effective curricular/program design and delivery over reports of prior outcomes. Such research can be drawn from disciplinary scholarship on teaching, peer reviews from highly effective IHE's, and from professionals in the industries/workplaces that seek our graduates. The latter is perhaps the most important, given the rapid pace of change in how we work. Ideally this work is shared by the entire department.

- Research, undertaken by all members of a department/program, to include data and information provided by key stakeholders such as alumni, prospective employers, employment search engines, targeted graduate schools, advisory groups, collaborating departments, internship sites, and co-curricular programs. The self-study may also include comparisons to programs offered at other institutions for benchmarking, or the educational arms of national/international disciplinary organizations. The rationale for the selection should be included in the report. Research is intended to identify whether curricular design and student learning outcomes meet the existing and emerging needs of stakeholders. Department/programs must demonstrate how it used this research as well as statistical data provided by OIE and/or external sources to inform the needs assessment.
- An analysis of all resources (i.e., human, physical, technological, informational) and their impact on any proposed changes in curriculum design, pedagogy, student learning outcomes and/or program effectiveness.
- An analysis of emerging needs that are identified in the program review and the research undertaken in the study. What are the issues or aims that emerge from the review and research? These may relate to program effectiveness, which may include program and

University mission-centeredness, enrollment trends, market demand, curriculum design and delivery, or financial viability.

**Step 4:** Outline an action plan draft based upon the self-study and needs assessment.

**Step 5:** Assist the external consultant(s) as they evaluate the program/department. This may occur in the form of a site visit or virtual interactions. (Note: A traditional visit by a peer institution faculty member may not be the sole mechanism of external review.)

**Step 6:** Finalize a Program Review Action Plan in response to the self-study finding and the external reviewer's comments and recommendations.

**Step 7:** Submit a finalized Program Review documents to all stakeholders: (Dean, Provost, Faculty Senate, Committee on Assessment, OIE).

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## **ORGANIZATION OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT**

If a program is undertaking a comprehensive review, all areas of analysis outlined below should be completed. If a more focused project is approved, not all sections may be relevant, but are left here for reference. The department/program will determine which areas to emphasize.

**Final reports will be comprised of 1) an Executive Summary, 2) Self-Study and Needs Assessment, 3) Action Plan, and 4) External Consultant Evaluation and Analysis.**

### **I. Executive Summary**

Provide a one-page overview (executive summary) of both the department's/program's goals for this self-study, and the proposed action plan. This is your opportunity to highlight areas you would love reviewers to pay significant attention. This will be used to share the outcomes of this reach effort with relevant committees (Assessment, Curriculum, Senate), administration, and advisory boards as warranted.

### **II. Self-Study and Needs Assessment**

#### **1. Mission and goals:**

- What is the department's/program's mission?
- Review program outcomes since the last review.
- How does the focus of your proposed self-study and needs assessment align with current institutional or College strategic priorities related to academics?

#### **2. Curriculum:**

Within the rationale and structure of the program's curricula, including majors, minors, and concentrations, briefly comment on the following questions with respect to the analysis undertaken in the self-study and research in support of the needs assessment (Note: If this is a focused project, answer questions with respect to its aims, rather than the curriculum as a whole.)

- Describe the departmental discussions that led to the area of focus for this review (whether comprehensive or focused). What are the key questions examined in this study?
- Utilize data to identify curricular adjustments (content areas, skills) that would result in a program that is current and thorough. Please provide data identified from key program stakeholders such as alumni, and prospective employers, employment search engines, targeted graduate schools, advisory groups, collaborating departments, internship sites, and co-curricular programs. The self-study may also include comparisons to programs offered at other institutions for benchmarking, or the educational arms of national/international disciplinary organizations. To what extent have students been consulted on your ideas?
- If the review focuses on a senior culminating experience or foundational sequence, briefly review how it is currently designed and assessed, and what evidence suggests that modification (outlined later in the Action Plan) is warranted.

### III. Action Plan

**NOTE:** A **draft action plan** is required for the Consultant Evaluation. A **revised action plan** is required for the final submission.

Ideally, a periodic review results in exploration of multiple avenues of programmatic change. Drafting an action plan demonstrates that the program review process stimulated curricular and programmatic planning that aims to deepen student learning and improve program effectiveness. An effectual action plan should contain the following sections:

#### 1. Introduction:

Review the key aims of the self-study, and the methodology for determining the needs of students, accreditors, employers, graduate programs, communities. NOTE: Departments will use the draft of this plan to explore various opportunities with their reviewers and key stakeholders and revise in the final program submission.

#### 2. Detailed Objectives:

Details of each objective, and a timeline for implementation. NOTE: Departments may use the draft of this plan to explore various opportunities with their reviewers and key stakeholders. The following steps should be included for each objective in the action plan:

- State the objective(s) in measurable terms.
- Identify indicators of success or desired outcomes.
- List action steps to achieve each objective.
- Include a timeline for completion including the begin date and completion date.
- Identify the lead person(s) who, or position(s) that will lead guide each objective.
- Identify additional resources necessary to implement each proposed objective (e.g., physical resources, technology, staffing, professional development).

Please provide a curriculum map for each relevant major/sub entity to indicate that all proposed changes to learning goals and objectives will be intentionally addressed (introduced, reinforced, and

mastered) by the change, either within or beyond the classroom. If presenting a focused review, share a detailed draft of the proposed project/activity or experience.

### **3. Evidence of planning for learning outcome assessment and high impact practices:**

In this section, we ask programs to analyze how the department plans to critically examine the impacts of proposed curricular changes based upon their design.

- What direct measures of student outcomes, such as tests, learning artifacts, portfolios, faculty evaluations/reflections etc., might be used to evaluate changes your program is envisioning? Where might you see evidence of students excelling, or needing to improve under the new plan?
- What indirect measures of student learning outcomes, such as alumni surveys, job placement rates, exit interviews etc. will be used to evaluate the proposed action plan?
- What novel experiential learning, special forums, honoraria, paper-reading sessions or conferences, involvement in professional organizations, working with professionals within discipline and other activities of a professional nature will be available to students to amplify their learning?

### **4. Attracting and retaining students:**

- Summarize and discuss the evidence you identified that your intended curricular design or programmatic change helps to better retain and prepare students for professional goals after graduation. What is needed to assure that advising, mentoring and or tutoring adjusts to the changes proposed?
- Address issues of diversity and inclusion as they relate to your proposed (e.g., recruiting diverse student populations and faculty members, international experiences, curriculum, co-curricular learning, advising systems, performance tracking).
- What trends in student enrollment are affecting the proposal? Summarize pertinent demographic statistical data. What are the threats and opportunities that lie ahead for recruitment?

### **5. Conclusion:**

A general reflection on your study and needs assessment, and a summary statement of how meeting the objectives of the action steps will improve the program.

## **IV. External Consultant Evaluation and Analysis**

### **1. Identification of Reviewers:**

A department/program undergoing a program review must engage in external consultations that will help shape a program's final plan. This should be determined in consultation with the Dean and Office of Institutional Effectiveness, but may include:

- A distinguished colleague outside of the University who is demonstrably knowledgeable about the current academic goals, practices, and desired learning outcomes of a particular discipline.

The appropriate dean will work with the department chair/program director to arrange the scope of work for the external review (s).

- One or more professionals working within the discipline of the major(s) involved in the review. These may be drawn from a program's Advisory Board or recommended by them, or industry experts known by the University (through alumni networks or within the community). Invitations and the scope of work should be made in consultation with and approval of the director/chair, dean, and OIE.

## **2. Process:**

The self-study report and draft program action plan should be provided to the external consultant(s) and dean thirty days prior to any proposed site visit, and 60 days prior the final draft due date. The consultant(s) will be asked to review the program in a comparative context and to provide recommendations for quality improvements in terms of student learning outcomes, program design, and/or program effectiveness.

Programs contemplating external accreditation may find it beneficial to provide this information to the reviewer to ensure the site visit is conducted with a keen focus on potential obstacles to future accreditation approval.

The dean and program director should receive the external reviewers' written evaluations of the department/program thirty days after a visit or virtual consultation. Consultant evaluations will be used to shape the final action plan and will be submitted with the final report.

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## **INSTRUCTIONS ON SUBMISSION OF THE FINAL PROGRAM REVIEW**

Departments will finalize their action plans and submit their complete report to the appropriate dean, the OIE, and the Committee on Assessment. The Committee on Assessment will be responsible for reviewing the report and submitting the executive summary and any feedback to the Faculty Senate. The OIE will make sure the report is archived for future use. The dean will share the executive summary with the Vice President of Academic Affairs, who will make it available to President's Council and the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board.