

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

Final Version

The Purpose of Program Review

The purpose of program review is to enhance the quality of academic programs, to provide guidance for academic planning decisions, and to enable the institution to determine an appropriate level of support for its programs.

While the primary emphasis is on program improvement, the review process should also lead to identification of those academic programs that are most central to strategic priorities of the university and therefore are most appropriate targets for growth and increased investment.

The Program Review Process

Program review is an internal process that should be both meaningful to the program being reviewed and closely aligned with planning and budgetary decisions of the University. The process requires careful organization and planning, recognition of specific program/departmental characteristics, and development of a comprehensive data profile for each program.

The review must be evaluative as well as descriptive, directed toward improvement, result in specific actions, and be aimed at coordinating programs' objectives with institutional mission and priorities. The outcomes of such reviews will normally address some or all of the following questions:

1. What is the mission of the program?
2. How well do the program's mission and goals align with institutional priorities?
3. What quantitative evidence supports the hypothesis that the program is vital, attractive to students, and meets the CPE's minimum productivity standards? [The University will provide to each program under review a standard set of demographic data including a recent history of enrollments, graduates, and retention rates. The University also will assist programs in obtaining information on similar programs at benchmark institutions]
4. What evidence supports the hypothesis that faculty of the program are well-trained, current in their field, and are teaching effectively?
5. What evidence supports the hypothesis that the program's curriculum is educationally challenging and offers an opportunity for students to realize their full intellectual and creative potential?
6. What are students in this program expected to know and be able to do when they complete the program's curriculum?
7. What measures are used to assess whether or not students are meeting the educational objectives of the program's curriculum? How is assessment information used to improve and/or maintain the quality of the program?
8. Are University resources adequate to enable the program to fulfill its mission?
9. How do the program's mission, faculty, curriculum, and student profile compare with those of similar programs at NKU benchmark institutions?

During the review process, particular attention will be paid to programs defined as "low-productivity" majors by the Council on Postsecondary Education. The CPE monitors data on

enrollments and graduates by major and identifies programs with a five-year average of fewer than twelve degrees granted for associate and baccalaureate programs and fewer than seven degrees granted for master's level programs. Programs in this category must provide commentary on the reasons for their enrollment and graduation levels and on the prospects for increasing numbers of majors and graduates. Strategies for improving enrollments and the number of graduates should be incorporated into these programs' self-study documents.

Program Review Participants

Groups involved in the program review process are the Provost, a Program Review Steering Committee (see below), the appropriate college dean (and dean of graduate programs in the case of graduate programs), the department chair, a program review self-study committee, faculty of the program, and students in the program. The results of the review (self-studies and responses) are reported to the President, the Provost, the appropriate Dean or Deans, the Department, and other University parties involved in the planning, assessment, and budgeting processes. A copy of the final self-study report is sent to the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

Program Review Schedule

Program reviews for all degree programs are scheduled on a five-year cycle. To minimize duplication, units are encouraged to schedule reviews at a time that coincides with other reviews (e.g., professional accreditation or board reviews). It is expected that all associate, baccalaureate and master's level degree programs, excluding Law, will undergo review and will be assigned a place on a program review master calendar (Sample in Attachment 1).

Typically, the program review process takes 6-9 months for completion.

The Program Review Steering Committee

Each year of the review cycle, the Provost will appoint members of a committee whose responsibility it is to coordinate the review process University-wide and:

- review of all the self-study reports submitted by the programs;
- negotiate variations in report format and calendar with programs which have recently undergone review by external accrediting agencies; and
- prepare a brief response to each report to share with the program, its Dean or Deans, and the Provost.

The responsibility of this committee is to promote consistent standards throughout the review process and to give advice and counsel to the program, the appropriate college dean (and dean of graduate programs where appropriate), and the Provost.

The committee will be composed of at least eight members representing a cross-section of University programs and colleges including:

1. One faculty member from each college (from departments whose programs are not under review)
2. One faculty member chosen by the Faculty Senate, and
3. One department chair or his/her designee from each department with programs under review
4. For the review of graduate programs, the Graduate Council shall elect one of its members to serve on the Steering Committee.

The Provost shall appoint a chair of the Steering Committee each year.

Program Review Results

The program review results will be used in strategic planning, programmatic planning, and the institutional budgeting process. As a key component of the Academic Strategic Plan, program review supports responsiveness to needs for programmatic development and restructuring, as well as for other changes, and may be modified pending strategic planning outcomes.

The information gathered will provide critical internal data about size and stability of program, current and future resource needs, market demand, equipment and space needs, strengths and weaknesses, and how the program relates to the mission of the University, the Academic Strategic Plan, and the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education's *Key Indicators of Progress*.

Reviews culminate in recommendations developed by the Program Review Steering Committee in consultation with the appropriate college dean (and the graduate dean in the case of graduate programs). The recommendations are communicated to the Provost, who will make a final determination on the response to the self-study document. The recommendation will include a statement identifying programs under review with one of the following four categories:

1. recommend program expansion;
2. recommend continuation of program in current form;
3. recommend program continuation, but with adjustments to current funding level and/or program modifications; or
4. recommend special attention to program and continuing review;
5. **recommend program be discontinued.**

The emphasis is on requiring plans for action in response to the reviews: the Program Review Committee might, in the absence of satisfactory findings and adequate plans for remedying deficiencies, recommend sanctions such as the phasing down or reduction of the program.

Program Review Steps (see Flowchart in Attachment 2)

1. **Appointment of self-study committee and orientation.** Once the program scheduled for program review is notified (at least one year in advance), the chair of the department

offering the program will appoint a self-study committee and a chair of the committee. The self-study committee is responsible for producing the self-study document in accordance with stated guidelines. Academic Affairs will arrange a self-study orientation for the benefit of all programs under review. The orientation will provide an overview of the process, materials, and outcomes.

2. Preparation and submission of the program's preliminary self-study report.

Programs have 8 months to complete their self-study report. **Institutional data will be distributed to programs under review on or before July 1 of the review year. Preliminary self-study documents are due to the appropriate college dean (and the Dean of Graduate Programs in the case of graduate programs) by March 1 of the review year. Review by dean(s) and consultation with programs will occur during March. The final self-study document and dean's (or deans') comments are due to the Steering Committee by April 1. The Steering Committee will forward its report and recommendations to the Provost by June 1.** After completion of the preliminary self-study report, the appropriate college dean (and the Dean of Graduate Programs in the case of graduate programs) has an opportunity to review the program's report and prepare formal written comments. **The Dean of Graduate Programs' comments are forwarded to the appropriate college dean and then are shared with the Steering Committee and Provost as part of the final report packet submitted to the Steering Committee.** Deans' comments are shared with the program prior to submission of the final version of the self-study to the Program Review Steering Committee.

3. Preliminary Response from Program Review Steering Committee. The Program Review Steering Committee summarizes its findings and recommendations in a written report. Copies of the response are provided to the programs to review for accuracy and to prepare any written comments they may choose to make.

4. Final report with recommendations to the Provost. The Program Review Steering Committee will submit a final report to the Provost for his/her consideration. The final report will include (1) the Committee's report and recommendations, (2) the program's self-study report, (3) the dean's (or deans' in the case of graduate programs) response to the self-study and (4) any responses to the Committee's report made by the program or the college dean or the Dean of Graduate Programs where appropriate.

5. Actions taken in response to recommendations. After reviewing the report and comments, the Provost meets with program representatives and the college dean (and the Dean of Graduate Programs **at the discretion of the Provost**) to determine future action related to the recommendations. Within 18 months after the review, a follow-up meeting will be scheduled by the Vice Provost to discuss the progress on recommendations, if required, and invite comments from the program about the review process. If ongoing action is required, additional follow-up sessions will be arranged. At the completion of the review process, comments from the program on all or any part of the program review process are invited. Actions taken in response to program review recommendations will be reported to the President, the Provost, the college dean (and Dean of Graduate

Programs where appropriate), the program, and all University parties involved in the planning, assessment, and budgeting processes. Normally, a copy of the program review report is shared with the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education.

Outline for Self-Study

Audiences for various sections of the self-study are indicated parenthetically in bold type (**SACS, Institutional, and CPE**). Some information is mandated by external agencies and therefore must be included in the report.

As a general guideline, the program review self-study report will be 12-15 pages in length (single-spaced). Here are the components of the report:

1. Brief program profile (maximum one page)

- a. Name and description of academic program.
- b. The mission of the program and the department offering the program (**SACS**).
- c. A summary of any previous reviews of the program and reference to accreditation status from professional organization (if any) (**SACS, Institutional, CPE**).

2. Program Objectives

Each program will provide the following information:

- a. Basic program objectives. (**SACS, Institutional, CPE**) What is the program trying to accomplish for its students, for its department, and for the University?

For example, a program in Social Justice might have these objectives:

- To develop in students an understanding and appreciation of diversity with equity.
 - To promote awareness of the relevance of social justice issues to disciplines across the curriculum.
- b. Relationship to existing institutional mission. Describe the program's relationship to the institution's mission and its relationship to other programs and/or administrative departments.
 - c. Strategic Plan. How is the program progressing in meeting the goals as outlined in its strategic plan or planning document? (Include most recent strategic planning document as an appendix.)

3. Program Organization (**SACS, Institutional, CPE**)

- a. Administration. Who is responsible for administering the program? Is there a special coordinator for this program? If so, please identify the current coordinator.
- b. Are there department committees charged with monitoring the program? If so, identify these committees and their function with regard to the program.
- d. Identify and describe any relationships between the program and other programs within the University.
- e. Identify and describe any partnerships the program has with business, industry, government, community organizations, or P-12 education. What are the purposes of any such partnerships.

4. Students (SACS, Institutional, CPE)

- a. Comment on enrollment data provided by Institutional Research. What trends or patterns are significant? Project numbers of declared majors for the next three years.
- b. Using data provided by Institutional Research, comment on the number of students who graduated from the program for the past three years. Project numbers of graduates for the next three years.
- c. Describe the program's recruitment strategies and any admissions standards that apply to the program?
- d. Does the program have a policy regarding "good standing" for students? If so describe the policy and its rationale.
- e. Comment on the retention data provided to the program. What strategies are used to retain majors in this program?
- f. How is academic advising delivered to students in the program? How is the effectiveness of advising determined?
- g. What kinds of special financial support are available to students of the program (i.e. scholarships and awards)? Please describe.
- h. Comment on the enrollment capacity of the program. How many majors can the program accommodate? Is the program at capacity?
- i. Provide estimates of growth or decline expected in the program's enrollment over the next three years. Explain reasons for growth or decline. What effect will growth or decline have on the program's resources, both instructional and operating?

5. Personnel (Faculty and Staff)

- a. Complete a faculty profile form (Attachment 3) for each full-time and part-time faculty person currently teaching in the program. Include proportion of time devoted to the program.
- b. What changes have occurred in the program's faculty over the past five years? Has the size of the faculty increased or decreased? Explain factors leading to increase or decrease.

- c. Describe current support staff—how many? What proportion of each staff member's time is devoted to the program?
- d. Project program's need for faculty and staff for the next three years in relation to the projection of program growth or decline in Item 4.i.

6. Curriculum (SACS, Institutional, CPE)

- a. Describe learning outcomes that shape the requirements and electives of the program's curriculum.
- b. Describe the program's rationale for its sequence of courses?
- c. Describe the cycle by which courses are offered? How is this information communicated to students?
- d. Does the program contribute courses to the general education curriculum? If it does, describe which courses and how they relate to general education categories.
- e. Does the program offer service courses for other degree programs? If it does, please identify courses and the program or programs for which they are offered.
- f. Identify specific strengths and any specific weaknesses of the current curriculum. How are weaknesses addressed?
- g. Describe the role of technology in delivery of the program's courses. To what extent are web-enhanced and web-based courses part of the curriculum?
- h. Describe use of cooperative education and internships as part of the program's preparation of its students.

7. Information Resources and Instructional Equipment (Institutional)

- a. Comment on adequacy of library holdings for program. What are the strengths and weaknesses of holdings and information resources?
- b. Describe quality of current facilities and capital equipment used by the program. What are strengths and weaknesses in these areas?
- c. What are the most pressing unmet needs of the program related to facilities and equipment? Explain these needs.

8. Public Engagement (Institutional)

- a. List any special initiatives currently underway with public audiences. What is the scope of such initiatives? What are their audiences?
- b. What are the outcomes of these initiatives (e.g. special events)?

9. Assessment of Program Quality and Effectiveness (SACS, Institutional, CPE)

- a. Describe methods used by the program to assess the effectiveness of its instruction and curriculum.
- b. Describe any assessment of student satisfaction with the program.

- c. Describe ways in which the outcomes of assessment activity are used to enhance or change the program.

10. Program Benchmarking

- a. From information provided to you by the University, identify and comment on any significant similarities and differences between your program and related programs at NKU benchmark institutions.
- b. Identify at least two features of analogous programs at benchmark institutions that are not currently practiced in your program but that you believe should be considered for adoption by your program. Explain your choices.
- c. What resources would be required to incorporate these features into your program?

11. External Evaluators

Use of external evaluators in program review is not required but may be incorporated in the process at the request of a program undergoing review and with approval of the Dean of the appropriate college (and Dean of Graduate Programs in the case of graduate programs) and the Program Review Steering Committee. Funding for compensating external evaluators and consultants must be requested from and approved by the Provost's office.

12. Program Planning (SACS, Institutional, CPE)

- a. Describe current and long-range opportunities and challenges facing the program.
- b. What are the program's strategies for taking advantage of these opportunities and meeting these challenges?
- c. How does the program's strategic plan relate to Academic Affairs' Academic Plan and to the University's Strategic Agenda?

13. Dean's Response and Recommendations

The appropriate college dean (and Dean of Graduate Programs in the case of graduate programs) will comment in writing on the program's self-study and make recommendations about issues raised in the report and a general recommendation as outlined in Program Review Results section above. College deans and the Dean of Graduate Programs will share their comments with each other during the response and recommendation phase of the review process (March). The dean's (or deans' in the case of graduate programs) response and recommendations will be attached to the self-study and the two documents will be forwarded together to the Program Review Steering Committee for review (by April 1).

