

Western Carolina University

Guidelines and Procedures for Academic Program Review

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Academic Program¹ Review

I. Introduction & Purpose

Academic Program Review is a component of the University's Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness System. The primary purpose of this component is to advance the quality of core teaching and learning, research, professional/creative activity, and public service/academic outreach functions through a periodic system of review at the unit level (i.e., department or program). Each unit will assess its mission, curriculum, operations, and resources relative to the same core effectiveness standards, as approved by the WCU Faculty Senate March 22, 2002 (see Appendix A), understanding that these standards will have varying degrees of relevance and applicability across programs/departments.

It is the intent of the program review process that each academic program will have the opportunity to articulate their aspirations and goals and to explain how the program's current curriculum and activities support their accomplishments. As the primary record of this process, the unit will work incrementally toward developing a Program Portfolio to help capture the thoughtful, detailed analysis of the program's key issues and challenges as informed by the feedback from students, institutional effectiveness activities and other program assessments. It is expected, then, that the program's ongoing assessment and strategic planning activities will be critical to the review process.

II. Goals of Academic Program Review

1. Maintain high-quality programs that are competitive and consistent with the University's mission.
2. Encourage and support program self-improvement by:
 - highlighting strengths of programs,

¹ For purposes of this document, 'program' refers to an academic department or an independent academic degree program within a larger department, either undergraduate or graduate.

- identifying opportunities for strategic change,
 - validating that programs are meeting the changing needs of stakeholders,
 - identifying areas for improvements and supporting improvement changes, and
 - providing data necessary in the process of allocating resources.
3. Advance the mission of Western Carolina University by:
 - reaffirming the relationship between the mission of the program and the mission of the University,
 - fostering cooperation and collaboration between departments and programs, and
 - meeting the region's educational and labor force needs.
 4. Provide a formative and summative review of programs.

III. Structure of Review Process

Academic Program Review will occur on a regular 5-7 year cycle and is a three stage process, which culminates in a comprehensive Program Portfolio².

1. Internal Program Evaluation is conducted by the program faculty utilizing data provided by institutional sources such as the Institutional Research and Planning Office, the Office of Assessment, the Graduate School, etc. as well as data generated by the program itself. The Internal Program Evaluation consists of a program's initial response to the Review Standards (outlined in Appendix A) and a subsequent opportunity to reflect on the review process and to offer a rationale to support a plan for program development (see Section V for outline of Executive Summary).
2. The External Program Evaluation consists of an off-site review of the program's Response to the Review Standards, a site visit by the review team, and a written report summarizing the team's findings and recommendations. External Program Evaluation is provided by a team of

² The Program Portfolio consists of a program's Response to the Review Standards, the External Review Team Report, and the Executive Summary provided by the program.

two non-Western Carolina University reviewers and one reviewer from WCU.

3. The Program Development Plan (PDP) addresses the substantive findings and recommendations from both the internal and external evaluations.

IV. Procedures

1. Academic Program Review Standards are included in Appendix A of this document.

2. a). Non-accredited Programs

Non-accredited programs will conduct a program review every five years.

- b). Accredited Programs

Accredited programs on a cycle of seven years or less will complete the program review in conjunction with the timeline established by their external accrediting agency. If the accreditation cycle is more than every 7 years, the program will be subject to the 5 year review process.

Documentation used in the accreditation study may also be used for the program review; however, the Provost, in consultation with the college dean and the Graduate dean, if appropriate, will determine the need for an external review team evaluation based on a comparison of accreditation guidelines and the program review standards. When using an accreditation report in the program review process, a Table of Contents will need to be developed indicating the page of the report providing the requested information in WCU's review. If information is not included in the accreditation report the program will need to supplement the Table of Contents with the requested information.

3. External Program Evaluation:

Two non-WCU reviewers will be selected by the Provost, from a list of six nominees provided by the department head, after consulting with the program faculty and the college dean. Nominees must be from high quality, respected programs at Masters I institutions. One WCU reviewer will be

selected by the Provost from a list of three nominees provided by the department head and program faculty, following consultation with the Chair of the University Faculty and college dean. The WCU reviewer must be a tenured faculty member not holding an administrative position above department head³.

4. a). The review cycle will be coordinated with external productivity reviews mandated by the UNC Office of the President and developed to allow departments with multiple programs the opportunity to undergo review of all programs in the same year. The cycle will be set to review similar programs within the same academic year, thus allowing for coordinated use of internal and external reviewers and promoting interdisciplinary review.

Undergraduate and graduate programs in the same discipline will be reviewed as a single program unless the department head offers a compelling reason to review those components separately. The decision to review undergraduate and graduate programs separately will be made by the Provost in consultation with the dean and the Associate VC for Academic Affairs. The initial cycle will be developed by the academic deans, in collaboration with Institutional Research and Planning, the Office of the Provost, and the Office of Assessment.

- b). Under certain extenuating circumstances programs may be subject to review outside of the regular five year cycle. Expedited review may be triggered by:

- ▶ low productivity as determined by UNC guidelines (see Table 1 below), or
- ▶ issues related to students or faculty/staff that impact the ability of the program to meet its educational mission.

³ All expenses related to travel and honoraria for the External Review Team will be paid by the Office of the Provost.

Table 1. Current UNC Low Productivity Guidelines and Criteria

Program Level	Criteria
Bachelor's	# of degrees awarded in last 2 years is 19 or fewer - unless upper division enrollment in the most recent year exceeds 25, or # of degrees awarded in the most recent year exceeds 10.
Terminal Master's	# of degrees awarded in last 2 years is 15 or fewer – unless enrollment in the most recent year exceeds 9.
Ed.S. and CAS	# of certificates awarded in last 2 years is 15 or fewer – unless enrollment in the most recent year exceeds 9.
Doctoral	# of degrees awarded in last 2 years is 5 or fewer – unless enrollment in most recent year exceeds 18 or the # of degrees awarded in most recent year exceeds 2.

Programs identified as low productivity may require expedited review in anticipation of the biennial request from UNC General Administration to develop a plan to increase productivity in or delete those targeted programs. Productivity indicators will be monitored on an annual basis and the Office of Assessment will work with the Provost and academic deans to identify programs that would benefit from such a review.

Programs selected for expedited review will be determined by the Chancellor and/or Provost. Department Heads or Deans also may request an expedited review of programs in their department or college. Such requests should be made to the Provost and offer a compelling reason for expediting a scheduled review. All requests for expediting a program review should be made prior to the fall start of the academic year and are subject to availability of resources.

5. The University Director of Assessment will be responsible for notifying department heads about the cycle of program review and will provide oversight to the review process in conjunction with the Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs.
6. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning, in consultation with the Office of Assessment and faculty of the program under review, will provide departments with supporting data, as identified in Section V below, to include in the Program Portfolio.

V. Calendar for conducting the Academic Program Review and Outline of Contents for the Program Portfolio.

Calendar:

Year 1	Task	Responsible Party	Date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notification sent to departments undergoing review 	Office of Assessment	By May 15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardized data sent to programs under review (Highlighted items in Appendix A will be provided by Institutional Research and Planning) 	Institutional Research and Planning	By May 15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Dean with program accreditation documentation 	Department Head	By May 31
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision on need for external review team 	Provost	By August 1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preliminary fall enrollment data supplement to standardized data 	Institutional Research and Planning	September 1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit nominees for external review team to Dean 	Department Head	By September 1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify selected reviewers for External Review Team 	Provost	By September 15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite external reviewers and make appropriate travel arrangements 	Dean	By October 1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit Response to Standards (see Appendix A) to Dean and Provost 	Department Head	By November 30
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit Response to Standards to External Review Team 	Department Head	1 month prior to site visit
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop schedule for site visit 	Department head, Assessment Director, Assoc. VC- Acad. Affairs	1 month prior to site visit
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit External Review Team Report to Department head, Dean, Graduate Dean, if applicable, and Provost (see below for outline of External Review Team Report) 	Chair of External Review Team	Within 1 month of visit.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit Executive Summary to Dean, Graduate Dean, if applicable, and Provost (see below for outline of Executive Summary) 	Department Head	By April 15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrange meeting with Provost, Dean, Graduate Dean, if applicable, Department Head and/or Program Director, Assoc. VC for Academic Affairs, and the Director of Assessment to discuss the Program Portfolio. 	Provost	By May 15
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalize Program Development Plan (see Appendix B) 	Assoc. VC-Acad. Affairs, Department Head, Assessment Director	By June 15

Years	Task	Responsible Party	Date
2-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of PDP and on-going annual program of assessment. Program representatives meet with Assoc. VC-Academic Affairs and the Director of Assessment to assess progress and update PDP 	Department Head/Program Director Director of Assessment	On-going By April 1

Year 6	Task	Responsible Party	Date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cycle begins again-Notification of upcoming review 	Director of Assessment	By May 15

Contents of Program Portfolio:

- I. Cover Page
 - a. Program Title
 - b. Program College/School
 - c. Year of Review
 - d. Name and Contact Information for Program Director
- II. Executive Summary – **maximum length 2 pages, minimum font size 11pt., minimum line spacing 1.5-** will accompany Response to Standards
 - a. Reflections from the process
 - b. Summary of key findings from Response to Standards
- III. Response to Standards – **maximum length 15 pages not including appendices, minimum font size 11 pt., minimum line spacing 1.5** (see Appendix A for a complete outline of Review Standards)
 - a. Program’s response to each Review Standard
 - b. Appendices of all supporting data/materials
- IV. External Review Team Report
 - a. Program Strengths
 - b. Areas for Improvement
 - c. Summary of Recommendations
- V. Program Development Plan (see Appendix B for PDP template)

Appendix A
Program Review Standards
(Endorsed by Faculty Senate March 22, 2002)

Response to Program Review Standards:

The program should provide a brief, but comprehensive response to each standard outlined below. The maximum length for the entire narrative is 15 pages. The *minimum* font size is 11 pt., using either Times New Roman or Arial style. The minimum line spacing is 1.5. The standards are arranged thematically in order to contextualize the review in the larger planning and effectiveness framework of the institution. **Sample relection items to guide the response to each standard are provided for clarification purposes only and do not constitute a checklist.** Required documentation and other supporting materials should be included as appendices and only referenced in the body of the report. Highlighted items under required documentation will be provided to the program by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. All other documentation and supporting material will be provided by the program with the assistance and support of the Office of Assessment.

Significance and Scope of the Program

Standard 1. The purpose of the program reflects and supports the mission and strategic vision of Western Carolina University and the mission of its School and/or College.

When responding to this standard please reflect on the following items:

1. Program purpose
2. Alignment of program's purpose with the University's mission and that of its School and/or College
3. Distinctive aspects of this program at Western Carolina University
4. The primary strengths/weaknesses of the program

Required Documentation:

- Strategic vision of Western Carolina University (Source: Chancellor's Office)
- Mission/purpose of program (Source: Program Office)

Standard 2. The program engages in ongoing, systematic planning that is reflective of the University's strategic priorities.

When responding to this standard please reflect on the following items:

1. Program's strategic goals/objectives
2. Process for developing and modifying goals/objectives
3. Relation of program goals/objectives to its curricular and programmatic activities (i.e., curriculum, enrollments, pedagogy, faculty scholarship, creativity, and service, etc.)
4. Process of implementing program goals/objectives

Required Documentation:

- Description of program's ongoing planning process (Source: Program Office)
- Program's strategic plan (Source: Program Office)

Standard 3. The program provides and evaluates a high quality curriculum that emphasizes student learning as its primary purpose.

When responding to this standard please reflect on the following items:

Curriculum

1. Alignment of curriculum with disciplinary standards
 - a. Establishment of and adherence to pre- and co-requisite courses
 - b. Rationale for selection and organization of courses in the curriculum
 - c. Logic, sequence, and coherence of the curriculum
2. Amount of time needed to complete the curriculum
3. Multi- or interdisciplinary strengths of the programs
4. Alignment of curriculum to meet University needs (i.e., liberal studies)
5. Statement of course objectives that reflect the expected student learning outcomes of the program in all syllabi
6. Internal process(es) used by the program to modify the curriculum

Learning Outcomes Assessment

1. Learning outcomes expressed as measurable statements of what students will know or be able to do upon completion of the program
2. Consistency between the required curriculum and the intended learning outcomes
3. Assessment measures that are explicitly designed to provide results to inform curricular decision-making
4. Consistent use of assessment results to make changes/modifications to the curriculum

Required Documentation:

- WCU Catalog copy of program curriculum (Source: WCU Catalog)
- Curriculum and/or advising check sheets (Source: Program Office)
- Course syllabi (Source: Program Office)
- Frequency of course offerings and mean class size for previous five years (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)
- Number of junior-senior majors or number of graduate students, as appropriate, during the past five years (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)
- Time to degree data for program graduates for previous five years (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)
- Course sequence for 4-year graduation (UG) and 2 year graduation (G) (Source: Program Office)
- Student transcripts - available for review team upon request (Source: Program Office/Registrar's Office)
- Program's most recent assessment plan (Source: Program Office/Office of Assessment)
- Program's annual assessment reports for the last 5 years (Source: Program Office/Office of Assessment)
- Matrix of curriculum and program learning outcomes (Source: Program Office/Office of Assessment)
- Student work – samples available to review team upon request (Source: Program Office)

Faculty Resources, Teaching, Scholarship, and Service

Standard 4. The program has sufficient faculty resources to meet its mission and goals.

When responding to this standard please reflect on the following items:

1. Faculty (full-time, part-time, and instructional staff) credentials consistent with SACS and, if applicable, program accreditation standards
2. Faculty backgrounds that adequately span the major concentrations in the program
3. Representative nature of faculty in terms of demographics, tenure, and diversity
4. Faculty that demonstrates continuing growth as professional practitioners, teachers and scholars
5. Adequacy of professional and pedagogical development opportunities for faculty
6. Presence of a positive, productive work environment for all faculty in the program
7. Equitable distribution of instructional loads among the faculty
8. Rational and coherent performance standards for faculty review, tenure and promotion
9. Orientation of graduate teaching assistants to the mission and goals of the program, if applicable
10. Mentoring and evaluation opportunities for graduate students, if applicable

Required Documentation:

- Tabular distribution of age, tenure status, gender, and ethnic origin of faculty (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)
- Roster identifying credentials for all full and part-time faculty for last academic year and, where necessary, matched to student learning outcomes (Source: Program Office)
- Summary of sponsored research activities for all faculty (Source: Office of Sponsored Research)
- Current *curriculum vitae* for full-time faculty (Source: Program Office)
- Department AFE/TPR document (Source: Program Office)
- FTE for program faculty for previous three years (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)

- Student credit hour (SCH) production for previous three years (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)
- Course load and enrollment, by instructor name, for previous three years (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)

Standard 5. The program attracts, retains, and graduates high quality students.

When responding to this standard please reflect on the following items:

1. Size and demography of students enrolled in the program appropriate to its mission and goals
2. Diversity of student population
3. Enrollment patterns in the program relative to institutional and national enrollment patterns
4. Future viability of the program in terms of enrollment
5. Academic qualifications of students admitted to the program compared to the general profile of Western students
6. Accuracy and consistency of student advising
 - a. Mechanisms to monitor students' progress toward degree
 - b. Use of or collaboration with professional advisors and other student support services to provide quality advising to their students
7. Student opportunities to engage in enriching activities that have been shown to promote retention and graduation such as involvement with faculty research, independent study, study abroad, internships and cooperative education, volunteerism, honor societies, and student organizations
8. Processes/activities to recruit and retain students
9. Student performance on licensure or professional certifications exams relative to regional and national standards
10. Adequacy of financial support/opportunities to recruit and retain high quality students

Required Documentation:

- Five year program profile to include:
 - Number of applicants to program (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)

- Number of students admitted to program (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)
- Academic qualifications of admitted students (standardized test scores, GPA, rank, etc.) (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)
- Number of women, minority, and international students in program (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)
- Number of students graduated each year (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)
- Entry requirements for admission to the program (Source: Program Office)
- Enrollment in relevant courses (e.g., internships, independent studies, etc.) during past three years (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)
- Number and types of minors or concentrations completed by students in past three years (Source: Office of Institutional Research and Planning)
- List of student research projects and attendance at conferences for past three years (Source: Program Office)
- Student transcripts - available for external review team upon request (Source: Program Office/Registrar's Office)
- Student advising files – available for external review team upon request (Source: Program Office/Advising Center)
- Employment positions or graduate institutions/degrees held by recent graduates (Source: Program Office/Office of Career Services)
- Senior, alumni and employer survey responses, as appropriate (Source: Program Office/Office of Assessment)
- Exam scores, as appropriate (Source: Program Office/Registrar's Office)

Administrative Structure and Operational Resources

Standard 6. The program has an administrative structure that facilitates achievement of program goals and objectives.

When responding to this standard please reflect on the following items:

1. Processes in place to ensure efficient and effective decision-making
2. Support and training opportunities provided for faculty serving as department heads, program directors, or other leadership positions
3. Faculty involvement in ongoing program activities such as assessment, curriculum development and review, and faculty review, tenure and promotion
4. Involvement of students, alumni, and other program constituents in program decision-making
5. Evaluation of administrators

Required Documentation:

- Organizational chart, if appropriate (Source: Program Office/Office of the Provost)
- Minutes of departmental meetings - available to review team upon request (Source: Program Office)

Standard 7. The program has adequate resources to meet its goals and objectives.

When responding to this standard please reflect on the following items:

- Adequacy of budget to support the mission and goals of the program
- Currency and adequacy of facilities and laboratories, instructional technology, and library resources to support the mission and goals of the program
- Program staffing needs
- Effective and appropriate use of staff

Required Documentation:

- Equipment, travel, technology, and operating budgets for previous three years (Source: Program Office/Dean's Office/Office of the Provost)
- List of major facilities and equipment (Source: Program Office)
- List of major hardware and software used by the program (Source: Program Office/Office of CIO)
- Listing of major library resources, databases, and journals (Source: Program Office/Hunter Library)
- List of support personnel, including non-teaching graduate assistants (Source: Program Office/Human Resources)

Appendix B
Program Development Plan Template

Program Development Plan

Program:

Department:

Date:

Strengths:

Recommendations:

Recommendation	Strategic Action	Resources needed C=current R= reallocation N=new	Costs	Person(s) Responsible	Date of Review

Update #1 Date: _____

Comments:

Further Action Needed: (add to strategic actions)

Update #2 Date: _____

Comments:

Further Action Needed: (add to strategic actions)

Addendum

Selection Process and Qualifications for External Reviewers⁴

Selection Process:

Non-WCU Reviewers. The department head and/or program director should submit 4-6 names of potential reviewers and a brief summary of their academic and/or professional background to their college Dean. From that list, the Dean and Provost will select two individuals to serve on the external review team. Invitations to serve on a program review team will be issued jointly by the Dean and the Provost. Additionally, all offers regarding travel and honoraria will be negotiated by the Office of the Provost. Ideally, non-WCU nominees should be from high quality, respected programs at Masters I/Regional institutions. Although not a requirement, every effort should be made to submit nominees from southeastern regional institutions to minimize travel costs. If you would like a list of comparable institutions contact the Office of Assessment at extension 3084.

If you have difficulty identifying potential reviewers, check resources offered by your professional organizations. Professional organizations often maintain databases of faculty willing to serve as program reviewers or listservs on which you can post a query. Potential reviewers can also be identified by querying program faculty or peers at other institutions. If your program is unique or your program is of a multidisciplinary nature, reviewers from similar programs can be considered. Non-academics can be considered in exceptional circumstances.

WCU Reviewer. The department head and/or program director should submit 2-3 names of potential reviewers from the WCU faculty. From that list, the Dean and Provost will select one individual to serve on the external review team following consultation with the Chair of the University Faculty. Invitations to serve on a program review team will be issued jointly by the Dean and the Provost. Additionally, all offers regarding honoraria will be negotiated by the Office of the Provost. The WCU reviewer must not be affiliated in any formal manner with the program under review.

⁴ All expenses related to travel and honoraria for the External Review Team will be paid by the Office of the Provost.

Expected Qualifications of External Reviewers

Required Credentials

1. A terminal degree in the same or closely related discipline as the program under review.
2. Associate professor or professor rank (retired faculty are eligible if they have held an academic position within the past 3 years; non-academics can be considered under exceptional circumstances, but must be familiar with higher education)
3. Not hold an administrative position above department head.
4. Not be actively involved in any current or recent (within past 5 years) collaborative teaching or research activity with faculty in the program under review.
5. A distinguished record of research, teaching and service in the discipline.
6. Familiarity with current trends, theories, and standards in the discipline.
7. Ability to participate in a site visit within specified timeframe.

Preferred Credentials:

1. A national reputation in same discipline as that under review
2. Experience with program review and/or institutional effectiveness best practices
3. Knowledge of or experience in a SACS accredited institution
4. Knowledge of or experience in a North Carolina public institution of higher education