



Division of Academic Affairs

**Handbook for the External Reviewer for
Academic Program Review**

June 18, 2014

Office of Institutional Planning & Effectiveness

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WCU Campus Profile

Western Carolina University is a premier regional university with nationally and internationally recognized teacher-scholars dedicated to student learning. A constituent member of the University of North Carolina, WCU deploys its resources statewide either singly or collaboratively with other institutions to address state needs. The university offers courses in the arts, sciences, technologies, humanities, and professions through degree programs at the bachelor's, master's, educational specialist and doctoral levels. Western offers the advantages of a large university while maintaining its small college atmosphere.

The Regional University

As a regional university, WCU is committed to serving constituents within its geographic domain by offering services and appropriate educational programs that serve bona fide needs. Wedded to its region, WCU strives to take advantage of its locational advantage by capitalizing on assets unique to the region. As a result, WCU's educational portfolio and services will be strongly influenced by its location and the opportunities within it. Although WCU has a defined region as specified below, it will utilize venues outside of the region including national and international sites for educational purposes and training.

WCU's Region

WCU's core geographical region is defined as the 17 western most counties of North Carolina. As such, it is obligated to work most closely with educational, governmental, and business entities in this area. Historically, WCU has provided educational programs and services to an extended region as far east as the I-77 corridor when invited to do so. WCU will continue to serve its extended region selectively when called upon and when it fits within the university's resources and programming. Further, WCU has multiple programs that will interact with its larger economic region extending from Atlanta in the west, Raleigh in the east, Knoxville in the north, and Greenville/Spartanburg in the south.

Our Mission (who we are)

Western Carolina University creates learning opportunities that incorporate teaching, research, service, and engagement through on campus, off campus, on-line and international experiences. The university focuses its undergraduate, master's and three doctoral programs, educational outreach, research, creative, and cultural activities to sustain and improve individual lives and enhance economic and community development in Western Carolina and beyond. (Approved February 21, 2014)

Our Core Values and Guiding Principles (what guides and inspires us)

- Excellence, Scholarship, Teaching and Learning
- Collaboration with and Respect for our Communities
- Free and Open Interchange of Ideas
- Responsible Stewardship and Organizational Effectiveness
- Organizational and Environmental Sustainability
- Cultural Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Our Vision Statement (who we want to be)

To be a national model for student learning and engagement that embraces its responsibilities as a regionally engaged university.

Website: www.wcu.edu

Founded: 1889

Location: Cullowhee, North Carolina, near the Great Smoky and Blue Ridge mountains, fifty-two miles west of Asheville.

Character: A coeducational residential public university within the University of North Carolina system.

Enrollment: Approximately 10,000 students from the United States and from Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. Student body is 57% female and 43% male.

Academic programs: More than 250 majors and concentrations for undergraduates in addition to over 35 graduate-level programs of study.

Campus: 680-acre campus (approximately).

Calendar: Two semesters (August to December and January to May) and multiple summer sessions.

Faculty: Almost 500 full-time faculty members; 75% hold doctoral or terminal degrees.

Class size: More than 75% of classes have fewer than 30 students; the average class size is 25; the student/faculty ratio is 16 to 1.

Accreditations: Western Carolina University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) (1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097; telephone number 404-679-4501; www.sacscoc.org) to award bachelor's, master's, education specialist, and doctor's degrees. Also, the university holds 21 special program accreditations and is a member of more than 30 state and national associations and organizations to which its professional programs are related.

Roles and Responsibilities of the External¹ Reviewer

The centerpiece of any meaningful review of academic programs is the evaluation of program strengths and weaknesses by qualified experts in the discipline. At WCU, we assume that external reviewers have the breadth of knowledge and expertise necessary to assist faculty and staff in advancing the quality of their program's curriculum and services. To that end, WCU solicits the service of up to four external reviewers (two of whom are external to WCU; one of whom is external to the program/department under review but within the same division/college; one of whom is external to the program/department/division in which the review is occurring, but internal to WCU) to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of an academic program every five to six years. Your role as a part of the external review team is critical to the ultimate success of the evaluation. The duties and tasks include:

- ▶ participating in an on-site visit to the campus where you will meet with key program constituents including faculty, staff, administrators, students, and, when possible, program alumni;
- ▶ evaluating all program materials provided to you prior to and during the campus visit for consistency and quality; and
- ▶ producing, in consultation with other selected reviewers, a report summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of the program under review as well as making suggestions for improvement no later than 30 days following the campus visit. See Appendix A for a suggested format/outline.

Determination of the quality of an academic program is a complex undertaking and must be considered not only in terms of disciplinary standards but also in light of the institutional context and program-specific mission and goals. To assist you in your evaluation, we will provide you as much information as possible on WCU, the UNC System, and the program under review. See Appendix A for a list of additional resources.

¹ External reviewer in this case means outside of the program/department under review.

In this handbook, you will find the WCU Standards for Academic Program Review, a summary of UNC program performance indicators, and a list of numerous web links to key institutional and program documents. In addition, you can expect to receive the following documents at least 30 days prior to the scheduled campus visit.

- ▶ A copy of the program's internal self-study document.
- ▶ A profile of the program under review provided by the Office of Institutional Planning & Effectiveness.
- ▶ A copy of the required documentation outlined in the WCU Program Review Standards.

Your visit to campus will be designed to accommodate several key activities including interviews with selected University administrators, meetings with important program constituents, and private work meetings between the external reviewers. A typical visit schedule can be found in Appendix B. The final itinerary and schedule for your campus visit will be sent to you prior to your arrival on campus.

Travel and Honoraria²

Travel Arrangements

Staff from the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE) will work with you to make travel arrangements to and from campus. Lodging on or near campus will be arranged and billed directly to the University for you in advance of your visit. OIPE office staff will assist you in making flight arrangements. Program faculty or other University staff will provide ground transportation during your visit.

Travel Expenses

WCU will reimburse documented travel costs per The State of North Carolina and UNC travel policies. Typical expenses include airline fare or mileage and meals not provided by WCU for the duration of the campus visit³. All travel expenses must be submitted through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning. Reimbursement typically takes 2-3 weeks once all completed forms are submitted to WCU Accounts Payable.

Honoraria

Each non-WCU reviewer will be paid an honorarium for his or her services. The honorarium will vary by discipline and extent of review (e.g., undergraduate and graduate, undergraduate only; multiple programs within one department, etc.). The honorarium will be submitted for payment following receipt of the External Review Report, which is due to the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness no later than 30 days following the campus visit.

² Travel and honoraria guidelines are applicable only to reviewers not employed by WCU.

³ Meals' reimbursement cannot exceed the \$37.30 per diem.

Goals of Academic Program Review at WCU

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,
 - 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.

WCU Academic Program Review Standards

The standards outlined below are used by program faculty as a template to complete the internal self-study. Programs are asked to limit their narrative to 15 pages and to provide the required documentation in appendices. These documents will be provided to you at least 30 days prior to the campus visit.

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 programs are asked to 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

Documentation:

- Strategic vision of Western Carolina University
- Mission/purpose of program

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

When responding to this standard programs are asked to 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

Documentation:

- Description of program's ongoing planning process
- Program's strategic plan

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

When responding to this standard programs are asked to 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

Documentation:

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

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 programs are asked to reflect on the following items:

1. Faculty (full-time, part-time, and instructional staff) credentials consistent with SACSCOC 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

Documentation:

- Tabular distribution of age, tenure status, gender, and ethnic origin of faculty
- Roster identifying credentials for all full and part-time faculty for last academic year and, where necessary, matched to student learning outcomes
- Summary of sponsored research activities for all faculty
- Current *curriculum vitae* for full-time faculty
- Department AFE/TPR document
- FTE for program faculty for previous three years
- Student credit hour (SCH) production for previous three years
- Course load and enrollment, by instructor name, for previous three years

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

When responding to this standard programs are asked to 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
7. Mechanisms to monitor students' progress toward degree

8. Use of or collaboration with professional advisors and other student support services to provide quality advising to their students
9. 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
10. Processes/activities to recruit and retain students
11. Student performance on licensure or professional certifications exams relative to regional and national standards
12. Adequacy of financial support/opportunities to recruit and retain high quality students

Documentation:

- Five year program profile to include:
 - Number of students admitted to the program
 - Academic qualifications of admitted students (standardized test scores, GPA, rank, etc.)
 - Number of women, minority, and international students in program
 - Number of students graduated each year
 - Entry requirements for admission to the program
- Enrollment in relevant courses (e.g., internships, independent studies, etc.) during past three years
- List of student research projects and attendance at conferences for past three years
- Student transcripts - available for external review team upon request
- Student advising files – available for external review team upon request
- Employment positions or graduate institutions/degrees held by recent graduates
- Senior, alumni and employer survey responses, as appropriate
- Exam scores, as appropriate

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 programs are asked to 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

Documentation:

- Organizational chart, if appropriate
- Minutes of departmental meetings - available to review team upon request

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

When responding to this standard programs are asked to reflect on the following items:

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

Required Documentation:

- Equipment, travel, technology, and operating budgets for previous three years
- List of major facilities and equipment
- List of major hardware and software used by the program

- Listing of major library resources, databases, and journals
- List of support personnel, including non-teaching graduate assistants

Appendix A

Additional WCU Resources

WCU Home Page	http://www.wcu.edu
Undergraduate Catalog	http://catalog.wcu.edu
Graduate Catalog	http://catalog.wcu.edu (select Graduate Catalog at top of page)
College of Arts & Sciences	http://www.wcu.edu/academics/departments-schools-colleges/cas/index.asp
College of Business	http://www.wcu.edu/academics/departments-schools-colleges/COB/index.asp
College of Education and Allied Programs	http://www.wcu.edu/academics/departments-schools-colleges/CEAP/index.asp
College of Fine and Performing Arts	http://www.wcu.edu/academics/departments-schools-colleges/FPA/index.asp
College of Health and Human Sciences	http://www.wcu.edu/academics/departments-schools-colleges/HHS/index.asp
Kimmel School of Construction Management and Technology	http://www.wcu.edu/academics/departments-schools-colleges/Kimmel/index.asp
Hunter Library	http://www.wcu.edu/hunter-library/index.asp
The Honors College	http://www.wcu.edu/honorscollege/
Office of the Provost	http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-provost/index.asp
Coulter Faculty Commons	http://facctr.wcu.edu
Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness	http://oipe.wcu.edu
Assessment	http://assessment.wcu.edu
International Programs and Services	http://www.wcu.edu/academics/office-of-international-programs-and-services/index.asp
Education Outreach	http://edoutreach.wcu.edu/
Academic Procedures and Regulations	http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-provost/resources-for-faculty-and-staff/academic-procedures-and-regulations-alphabetical-listing.asp
Faculty Handbook (General)	http://www.wcu.edu/fachandbook/
University Policies	http://www.wcu.edu/chancellor/policies/index.html
WCU 2020 Vision	http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-chancellor/wcu-2020-plan/

Appendix B

Tentative Schedule for Campus Visit

One Week Prior Conference call with External Review Team

Day One

5:00pm Arrival in Cullowhee
6:00pm Dinner for External Review Team

Day Two

7:30 – 8:30am Breakfast with Provost
8:45 – 9:45am Meet with Dean or Associate Dean
10:00 – 10:45am Meet with Department Head
11:00 – 11:45am Meet with Program Director(s)
12:00 – 1:00pm Lunch with Students and/or Alumni
1:15 – 2:45pm Meet with Program Faculty
3:00 – 3:30pm Meet with Library Representative
3:30 – 4:15pm Meet with Graduate Dean (if applicable)
4:15 – 5:30pm Private Work Meeting for External Review Team
6:00pm Dinner with selected program faculty

Day Three

7:30am Breakfast meeting
8:30am – 10:00am Reserved for additional meetings as necessary
10:00am – 11:00am Follow-up meeting with Dean
11:00am – 12:00pm Exit Interview including Provost, Dean, Graduate Dean (if applicable), Department Head, Program Director(s), Associate Provost – Undergraduate Studies, and Director of Assessment

12:00pm – 2:00pm Lunch for External Review Team
~2:00pm Depart from Cullowhee

Appendix C

Suggested Outline for External Review Report

- I. Introduction
 - a. A description of visit length
 - b. A summary and description of meetings conducted by the review team
- II. Analysis of Program
 - a. Undergraduate program – Provide a brief synopsis of:
 - i. the curriculum (Is it appropriate for WCU’s student body? Can students make adequate progress to degree? Are the prerequisites/required courses appropriate to the curriculum?);
 - ii. the student body (Is the faculty/student ratio appropriate? Is the student body representative of the region, mission, goals/objectives of the program?)
 - iii. the planning and assessment strategies (Can the program document student learning? Are the goals/outcomes appropriate? Do all faculty have an opportunity to participate in planning and assessment activities?)
 - b. Graduate program – Provide a brief synopsis of:
 - i. the curriculum (Is it appropriate given faculty interests/qualifications? Is the focus well-defined and appropriate to the mission of the program and needs of the discipline? Are the prerequisites/required courses appropriate to the curriculum? Is it of sufficient academic rigor?);
 - ii. the student body (Are the qualifications and mix of students appropriate to the program? Does the program offer adequate support for students admitted to the program? Is the student body representative of the region, mission, goals/objectives of the program?)
 - iii. the planning and assessment strategies (Can the program document student learning? Are the goals/outcomes appropriate? Do all faculty have an opportunity to participate in planning and assessment activities?)
- III. Analysis of Faculty
 - a. Qualifications – Provide a brief analysis of faculty qualifications (i.e., Does the faculty have the requisite degrees and credentials appropriate to the program?)

- b. Resources and Support – Provide a brief analysis of program and institutional support for faculty (i.e., Does the program have adequate and appropriate processes and procedures for rank, tenure and promotion decisions? Is faculty compensation appropriate and adequate? Are library holdings and access adequate? Does faculty have access to adequate lab space, technological resources?)
 - c. Teaching, Research/Creative Activity, and Service – Provide a brief analysis of faculty participation in teaching, research/creative activity, and service (i.e., Does the faculty sustain an adequate publication record or its creative equivalent? Does the faculty pursue and obtain an adequate amount of external funding? Are the program faculty recognized by their peers for scholarly contributions to their discipline?)
- IV. Analysis of Operational Facilities and Budget
- a. Does the program have adequate facilities to meet their educational mission?
 - b. Does the program have adequate budget to meet their educational mission?
- V. Summary of program strengths and areas for improvement
- a. What is your general impression of the program?
 - b. Overall, what are the areas of strength?
 - c. Overall, in what areas could the program make improvements?
- VI. Summary of Recommendations

Appendix D

UNC Criteria for Academic Program Productivity

Program Level	Criteria
Bachelor's	# of degrees awarded in last 2 years should be 20 or more - 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 should be 16 or more – unless enrollment in the most recent year exceeds 9.
Ed.S. and CAS	# of certificates awarded in last 2 years should be 16 or more – unless enrollment in the most recent year exceeds 9.
Doctoral	# of degrees awarded in last 2 years should be 6 or more – unless enrollment in most recent year exceeds 18 or the # of degrees awarded in most recent year exceeds 2.