



# Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure

**Subject:** Academic Program Review

**Number:** UW SAP 2-122.2

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## I. PURPOSE

Academic Program Review (APR) provides an opportunity for the institution and faculty to examine the quality of academic programs to affirm ways that the program is working well, and to implement improvements. APR is a mechanism for demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement and continuing to meet accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). At the University of Wyoming, comprehensive institutional reviews will generally be conducted on a department-by-department basis, every seven years. Other types of program reviews may occur as described below.

## II. DEFINITIONS

**Academic Program:** Degree program, certificate program, department or division of instruction, school or college, interdisciplinary program or unit, or other academic program unit. For the purposes of this Regulation, Academic Program does not include academic courses.

**Institutional Academic Program Reviews:** Each academic department shall undergo a comprehensive review of its academic programs at least once every seven years. The purpose of conducting the reviews on a departmental basis is to assure that the degree programs are assessed in the context of the faculty's overall workload. Degree programs that are interdisciplinary or are housed outside an academic department will be reviewed independently. From time to time, institutional reviews may be requested for special circumstances.

**Reviews of New Degree Programs:** For effective long-range planning and continuous improvement, it is important to monitor the progress of a new degree program soon after implementation. All new academic degrees, options, and certificates shall undergo a first review approximately five years after initiation to assess the health of these programs. The Provost's Office will initiate the review. The Provost's Office, Deans, or Directors may also initiate an earlier review of the new program if not performing as expected.

**Reviews of Low Producing Programs:** When an academic program produces relatively few graduates over an extended period of time, it is often a signal that the program is not performing well and that university resources are not being effectively deployed. In general, low-producing

programs are defined as those that average fewer than 5 graduates per year for undergraduate programs and 3 graduates per year for masters programs, over a 5 year period. On an annual basis, the Office of the Provost will review degree production for all academic programs. Those that are low producing, will be required to conduct an immediate review with a report on the status of the program due back to the Office of the Provost within six months. If in the judgement of the Office of the Provost, a compelling case has not been made for continuation, the program will be recommended for reorganization, consolidation, reduction or discontinuance pursuant to UW Regulation 2-13.

**Reviews of Programs on Suspended Admissions:** Departments may suspend admission into a degree program for up to two years with the approval of the Provost and notification to the Faculty Senate. Within the two-year window, the program faculty must prepare a detailed recommendation on the future of the program for consideration by the Provost. If the decision is made to close the program, the process governed by UW Regulation 2-13 and UW SAP 2-13.1 for discontinuance of academic degree programs will be initiated.

**Specialized Accreditation Reviews:** Specialized accreditation reviews are conducted by professional organizations and typically require a self-study and an outside evaluation team named by the professional organization. Such reviews are the responsibility of Deans and Directors, with the expectation that the Office of the Provost is provided with documentation from the reviews and is kept informed of their status. Programs with specialized accreditation should provide any update reports that occur between accreditation cycles to the Compliance and Review Specialist in the Provost's Office. For undergraduate and professional programs, the accreditation review may meet the requirement for institutional program review, depending upon the nature of the external organization's review. If a program accreditation review does not cover a department holistically, a separate Institutional Program Review may be required to cover other programs in the unit.

### III. OVERVIEW OF REVIEW PROCESS

The Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (VPUE) or designee oversees and coordinates program review on behalf of the Provost, except in the case of interdisciplinary graduate programs, in which case oversight and coordination lies with the Vice Provost for Graduate Education. College and School Deans, as applicable, hold primary responsibility for working with the Vice Provosts to schedule reviews and for ensuring that a high-quality review is carried out.

The department faculty has responsibility for producing a self-study prior to a visit from an external review team. The Provost will appoint an external review team in consultation with the relevant Dean and Department Head.

It is the responsibility of the Office of the Provost to track program review status by academic department. The VPUE will maintain a schedule for reviews that is staggered to ensure that colleges are not burdened with an inordinate number of reviews in any given year. The VPUE will provide Deans and Directors with at least annual summaries of which departmental reviews are upcoming, due, and/or past due. The Office of the Provost will also serve as the repository for all

material related to program review. Summary information regarding program reviews will be reported annually.

The Provost's Office will maintain the following data:

- A list of departmental reviews that were completed in the prior year.
- Copies of the external review team's report, the program's response and the self-study.
- A list of departments and programs that are due for follow up
- An up-to-date list of reviews of any programs that were identified as low producing in the prior year.

A list of all department reviews that are at the new program five-year mark or later in the external seven-year cycle, including confirmation that the review has been charged, a status update on the self-study, the review committee's progress, and the expected submission date for the review committee's report to the Dean and the timeline for the Dean's final summary. Departments will also provide an updated report of timeline progress during the fall of the third year after the last external review visit.

#### **IV. RELATIONSHIP OF INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAM REVIEW TO PROPOSALS FOR NEW PROGRAMS**

In general, proposals for new degree programs will only be considered when a recent UW institutional academic program review or external accreditor review is available to provide context for the implementation of the new program. Exceptions to this requirement may be made as the new institutional process is implemented. The proposing unit should also be prepared to provide a rationale for existing degrees in their unit that are low producing as part of any request for adding degree programs. Deans, Directors, or the Provost's Office may initiate an earlier internal review upon request if a new program is not performing as expected.

#### **V. PROCESS FOR INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

##### **Step 1: Annually, the Provost's Office provides a list of departments and programs due for review to Deans and Directors**

Annually, the Provost's Office will remind the Deans and Directors of reviews that are scheduled for the upcoming year, and of those which are in the fifth year of the seven-year cycle and due to be charged with program review the following year. The Dean, Director or Provost may initiate a review at any time if deemed necessary.

##### **Step 2: Provost Initiates the Program Review**

Upon notification by the Provost in the Spring term (usually no later than February), the review is initiated by a charge memo from the Provost to the Dean or Director and lead member of the department's faculty, usually the academic unit director, Department Chair or Head. The Provost's Office will provide a charge memo to directors of independent academic programs. The charge memo will include the following elements:

1. A request that a self-study be developed and a request that a lead study director be appointed. This director may be the Department Chair or Head, or their designee;
2. A description of specific issues to be addressed, such as degrees offered in the department or program, characteristics of students and graduates, faculty activity including scholarly and creative activity, extension and experiment station activity, advising, mentoring, service, and teaching;
3. A due date for completion and submission of the self-study, typically at the beginning of the Fall term;
4. Directions for how to obtain assistance with data resources;
5. For programs that have undergone a previous review, the Dean's summary memo from that previous program review is attached for reference.

### **Step 3: Program Faculty Prepare the Self-study**

The program faculty will prepare a self-study according to the instructions in the charge memo, the self-study [template](#) and [guidelines](#). The self-study should include institutional data wherever possible. The self-study should reflect on the recent past and present to provide context for the external reviewers but need not review the entire previous seven years in detail. The self-study will also serve as a reference against which progress can be measured at the next program review.

The study should also reflect on the value the department and programs contribute to the University, innovations made in degree programs and curricular offerings, program productivity (e.g. enrollment and graduates), accomplishments related to private fundraising and grant and contracts, research and creative work, and other departmental/program accomplishments that have been occurred to adapt to changes in the profession and higher education.

When complete, the self-study is submitted to and approved by the Dean, Director or the University official who requested that it be prepared before it is forwarded to the Office of the Provost.

### **Step 4: The external team is appointed and carries out the review**

The external review team is comprised of two or more experts appointed and convened by the Provost. In general, the majority of the team will come from outside of the University, but members may also come from programs or departments within the University as long as they are not affiliated with the programs under review. The program faculty, in consultation with the Dean or Director, will provide the Provost with a list of possible reviewers who have familiarity with the discipline and are outstanding leaders in the field and/or higher education. A member of the program faculty should be appointed to serve as a liaison to the external review team.

The Provost's office will provide the external review team with a written charge that outlines the expectations of their work. This charge will specify the chair of the committee and will provide guidelines for the work of the committee and a due date for the report. Their charge will generally be to review the self-study and to collect additional data, feedback, and information that will speak to the quality of the department and programs during a campus visit. A [sample charge letter](#)

provides context for the faculty preparing the self-study. A [sample external review team schedule](#) is here.

The department liaison will be responsible for developing a visit schedule, in consultation with their Dean or Director and the Provost's Office, and for scheduling required meetings for the review team.

The chair of the committee is responsible for convening the meetings, setting the meeting agendas, making any specific assignments to review team members, overseeing the process, producing the review report, soliciting feedback from the committee, and submitting the final APR report to the Provost's Office.

### **Step 5: Completing the Academic Program Review**

The external review team report is submitted to the Office of the Provost, which will immediately provide the report, along with a cover memo and timeline for formulating a response, to the relevant Dean, Department Head, or Director. After departmental review, the Dean or Director or designee will lead a discussion with the department about the program review documents, the self-study, the APR review committee report, and the program's response, which will include formulation of action items that support UW's strategic plan and the program's mission.

The Dean or Director or designee, in consultation with the Department Head, prepares a final summary of the review. This summary identifies program strengths and recommendations for improvement or any requirements and action items for follow-up. The Dean or Director and Department Head sends the final summary of the review, the external APR review team's report, and the program's response, as outlined below, to the VP for Undergraduate Education, VP of Graduate Education, and the Provost. The department will work with their college/school and the Provost's Office to create a timeline of change/recommendations for six years leading to the next program review in year seven.

### **Step 6: Progress Report on Academic Program Review**

Departments will also provide an updated progress report in the third year following the most recent review. The Provost's Office will meet with the Dean and Department Head of the program to discuss the progress report.

## **VI. FIVE YEAR REVIEW FOR NEW MAJORS/DEGREES**

The Provost's Office will initiate five-year reviews for new degree/majors. New programs are initiated after a lengthy study of market conditions, faculty strengths, and curricular trends pursuant to UW Regulation 2-119, Degrees and Diplomas. To ensure that the program's faculty can make appropriate adjustments to the program, it is essential that it circle back to the program's goals and objectives and assess performance after the degree has been launched. Thus, a review of the new degree itself, separate from the department or program that offers it, is critical after data on it can be collected. Deans, Directors, or the Provost's Office may initiate an earlier internal review upon request if a new program is not performing as expected.

The department offering the program will be notified the semester before the review is due that it should prepare to collect, analyze, and share data with the Provost's Office on:

1. The number of students in the major by year, and the number of graduates.
2. Current degree/major requirements, and an analysis of any courses or requirements that are:
  - a. Routinely oversubscribed
  - b. Routinely undersubscribed
  - c. Have high D/F/W rates
3. How does the mission of the degree programs fit with the home department/unit, the school/college, and the mission of the University?
4. What are the approved learning goals, and how are they being assessed? How is the curriculum being adjusted to reflect assessment results.
5. Are there any substantial and structured collaborations with other programs, such as dual, double or joint degrees, and any articulation agreements with Wyoming or other community colleges, and benefits of these arrangements.

**Responsible Division/Unit:** Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Source:** None

**Links:** <http://www.uwyo.edu/regs-policies>

**Associated Regulations, Policies, and Forms:** Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure: Policy and Guidelines for Suspending, Restructuring and Discontinuing Academic Degree Programs; HLC Accreditation Criterion (4.A.1)

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## Appendix A: Guidelines for Structuring the Self-Study

The self-study provides an opportunity for departmental and program faculty to think in a focused and strategic way about the value and quality of the programs they deliver, their scholarship and creative activity, their service and value to the University, their college, and their state. A self-study should include the main report and any appendices/evidence that support the main report.

Guiding principles for the self-study include:

- Building a basis for continuous self-evaluation and improvement in scholarship, teaching, learning, engagement, service, and extension activities.
- Focusing on the recent past and key points over the previous review period as context for present and future improvements.
- Concentrating on the academic degrees delivered, the undergraduate and graduate, student experience, and the scholarly, engagement, extension, service, and other contributions of the department or program.
- Reviewing program learning goals and assessment of learning in undergraduate and graduate programs.
- Understanding the current student experience with regard to academics, advising, climate, and career development.
- Understanding the current faculty composition and profile, the range of faculty scholarly activity, and how the department culture supports the development of excellence.
- Identifying program strengths and recommendations for improvements.

In some cases, a review will need to address specific program or department issues that are outside of these questions. In such cases, the initiating memo from the Dean or Director should specify these other program issues.

## **Appendix B: Components of the Self-Study**

### **A. Overview of the Program**

Describe the mission of the program and how its structure supports them. Consider the following questions:

- Provide current degree/major requirements as approved for both undergraduate and graduate offerings.
- How does the mission of the degree programs fit with the home department/unit, the school/college, and the mission of the University?
- What are the degrees' structures? For example, is there a single undergraduate program in the department, or does it have informal tracks/concentrations, formal named options or certificates?
- Describe any substantial and structured collaborations with other programs, such as dual, double or joint degrees, and any 2+2 articulation agreements with Wyoming or other community colleges, and benefits of these arrangements.

### **B. Current Departmental Faculty**

Outline faculty job descriptions, expectations, and accomplishments, including:

- What are the teaching loads of faculty? mentoring loads? Research loads?
- Describe the grant and external funding activities of the faculty, if applicable.
- Using internal and external gauges of scholarly productivity, describe the quality of scholarly work in the department.
- Describe significant University, community, statewide, national, and international contributions of the department's faculty, including scholarly publications, creative activity, service to the University and state, extension and experiment station work, et al.
- What are the tenure and promotion guidelines used by the department and college?

### **C. Departmental Community and Climate for Students and Faculty**

Describe the efforts taken to foster professionalism a sense of community by considering the following:

- Discuss efforts to welcome, orient, and retain new students. What is offered to connect students within the program, as well as with the greater campus community?
- Discuss efforts to welcome, orient, and retain new department faculty and staff. What is offered to connect faculty and staff within the program, as well as with the greater campus community?
- What efforts are there to enhance faculty/staff and student sense of engagement?

#### **D. Departmental Governance and Resources**

Describe the department's structure, resources, and accreditation status.

- How do the department's governance model, committees, and hiring criteria lead to active faculty engagement? How does succession planning work for leadership?
- What are department's resources, including facilities, collections, data resources, computing resources, laboratories, and University budgets? What are the department's grant budgets?

#### **E. Degree Programs - Assessment and Evaluation**

Summarize the assessment plan used to evaluate the extent to which students are meeting departmental or program learning goals and how the department is engaged in a coherent process of continuous curricular and program improvement.

- What has the department learned through assessment of its curricular learning goals? Provide evidence.
- What changes have been made to curriculum structure or content as a result of assessment?
- What are the emerging changes in the discipline? What is being done and can be done to move forward and seize emerging/future opportunities for degrees?
- If relevant to the program, how do leaders within industry, business, government, or non-profit organizations become involved in offering advice and perspectives on the program and the curriculum?
- What are the degree program(s) learning goals for each program offered (bachelor's, master's, and doctoral)?

#### **F. Student Recruiting and Enrollment**

Analyze current practices and trends to determine if enrollment levels are consistent with plans and resources. Discuss relevant program data in the context of the following:

- Are enrollment levels consistent with plans, program resources, and career outcomes?
- What efforts have the department/program made to enhance student access, enrollment, and success? Have those efforts been successful?
- If applicable, what do trends in enrolled students signal about program strength?

#### **G. Student Success and Completion**

Discuss the process by which students get regular advising, career counseling, and accurate program information. Reflect upon the following:

##### **Undergraduate**

- Who does advising for the department?
- What is the ratio of advisors to students? How often do students to meet with an advisor?

### **Graduate and Post-Baccalaureate (If Applicable)**

- How are advisors assigned and matched to students? How many advisees does each faculty member have?
- How often are program contacts and program information updated and made available online? Is the program information inclusive of program learning goals, program requirements as well as a program-level grievance procedure?
- How are students transitioned between advisors when personnel changes occur?
- How often and in what manner is satisfactory progress monitored? Do students receive written annual feedback on their academic progress? How is the impact of the advising assessed?

### **Degree Completion and Time to Degree**

Referencing relevant institutional data and campus goals, describe efforts to help students make timely progress to degree. Include the following in your discussion:

- Use institutional data sources to examine and evaluate progress to degree metrics and comparison to peers.
- What efforts have been made to improve progress to degree performance and completion rates?
- Are students succeeding within the program at rates comparable to students in similar programs at comparator institutions?
- What impediments to success might be contributing to lack of progress or non-completion?

Evaluate student career outcomes, exit survey, and alumni survey data, and reflect upon how these outcomes are consistent with program goals.

- What do students do after graduation? How does the program prepare them for careers or further academic training?
- What career resources are available to students?
- What is the range of student career outcomes, and are these outcomes consistent with program goals? Does the program track the career progression of its graduates?

## **H. Graduate Student Funding, Professional Development, and Breadth (if applicable)**

Discuss the professional development opportunities of graduate students and consider the following:

- What funding is being provided to graduate students for education and research?
- How does the program encourage graduate students to participate in professional development opportunities that will enhance their skills and support their career goals?
- What resources and guidance are available for exploring academic and/or non-academic careers?
- What opportunities and funding are available to attend and present at professional meetings?
- To what degree does the program offer teaching experience and teaching-related professional development to graduate students?
- How does the typical graduate's program ensure exposure to breadth training? Does the program require a doctoral minor for doctoral students or evaluate other breadth requirements?

## **I. Overall Analysis of the Self-Study and the State of the Department or Program**

What have you learned from the process of this self-study? Outline key findings from the departmental/program's self-study, including primary strengths and challenges, and priorities the department/program has identified for improvement. Highlight in your analysis the value the department/program contributes to the University, innovations made in degrees and curricular offerings, fundraising and grant-getting accomplishments and goals, research and creative work, and other departmental/program goals and changes that have been made to adapt to changes in the profession and higher education.

## **Appendix C: External Review Team Guidelines**

Within the broad charge of recommending ways the department can continue to improve are some specific questions that we would like you to address:

- Based on the data / information provided in the self-study report or gathered by the external review team, what are the department's overall strengths and weaknesses?
- How well do the department's strategic goals align with those of its college and with those of UW?
- How would you compare this department with its peers?
- What improvements (including student learning and faculty development) has the department made since the previous program review?
- With only current resources or a modest infusion of new ones, what specific recommendations could improve the department's performance, marginally or significantly?

**Appendix D: External Review Team – Sample Visit Schedule**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Activities</b>
<b>One</b>	<b>Travel Day to Laramie</b>
<b>Two</b>	Meeting with undergraduate/graduate students Meeting with support staff Meeting with faculty and academic professionals Review team meetings with additional stakeholders as needed Review team Meeting with Academic Affairs Administration Exit Meeting with Department Head/Chair or Director Tours of any necessary facilities or laboratories
<b>Three</b>	Travel exit from Laramie