

**Academic Review & Strategic Planning Guidelines**

A group of people sitting on a bench in a park

Description automatically generated with low confidence

**Academic Review & Strategic Planning**

**University of Nebraska at Omaha**

Academic review and strategic planning is an integral part of UNO’s academic program quality assurance model. They provide an opportunity for programs to reflect on accomplishments and progress since the last program review, assess current strengths and weaknesses, and to engage in long- term planning for the future. Program reviews facilitate strategic planning and academic program development at the unit and college level and inform planning processes at the institutional level. It is through the academic review and strategic planning process that the University systematically engages in a continuous improvement model, resulting in relevant and quality academic programming.

UNO’s academic review and strategic planning process is comprehensive. It focuses on departmental or school units and encompasses all aspects of the program including all undergraduate and graduate degree and certificate programs, academic and research centers/institutes, the program’s role in delivering the general education curriculum, and faculty qualifications and activities (e.g., teaching, research, service, outreach). The perspectives of varied stakeholders are included in the review process (e.g., students, alums, faculty, staff, community members, advisory board) to make the review as comprehensive as possible.

Program reviews provide an opportunity to:

* Improve effectiveness of a program by clarifying goals, assessing goal achievement, and evaluating future directions.
* Stimulate the review of policies, practices, procedures, and records to enhance program success.
* Assess student and program outcomes that lead to data-informed decisions regarding improvements in courses, curricula, and methodology or to support requests for additional program resources.
* Help the University develop a better sense of a current program and make more informed decisions regarding strategic planning.

The University of Nebraska’s Board of Regents requires that academic programs be reviewed at least once within a seven-year cycle. The reviews are conducted routinely and are coordinated with the reports prepared for the Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE). The academic review and strategic planning process is guided by the Academic Planning Council (APC), a campus-wide committee consisting of faculty representatives from each college and the Faculty Senate.

For externally accredited programs, the UNO review process is coordinated with the accreditation process in order to avoid duplication of tasks. In some cases, the internal review process is used to prepare for an external accreditation review. If the external process and related self-study do not fully address the criteria required in the APC review, additional documentation will be supplied by the academic program/unit.

**Academic Review and Strategic Planning Procedure**

The campus academic review and strategic planning process consists of four general components: a self- study, an external review, a report prepared by an external reviewer, and a follow-up meeting.

**Self-study**

The self-study is prepared by the program and is a narrative document consisting of the elements below. It is typically 15-25 pages in length. The self-study should be well organized and concise. It should include a table of contents and all sections and appendices should be clearly labeled.

The self-study should follow the prescribed format and include information on each of the components below. Programs are encouraged to include both quantitative and qualitative indicators and reference documentation as appropriate. Programs are also encouraged to incorporate tables and/or graphs that illustrate accomplishments since the last program review.

It should include the following:

* Overview of the program (i.e., degrees offered, student numbers, faculty/staff numbers, centers/institutes)
* Description of the program’s strengths and weaknesses, which are typically internal to the program, and opportunities and threats, which are typically external to the program
* Discussion of if/how previous recommendations were addressed
* Information on how the program aligns with the Higher Learning Commission’s (HLC) core components
* Several appendices pertaining to mission, strategic plan, assessment, CCPE report, and faculty curriculum vita

Though the program chair/director may assign responsibility for drafting the self-study to an individual or sub-group of faculty, the contents of the self-study should represent varied perspectives within the program.

The self-study is due to Academic Affairs in the fall term **by November 1.**

The self-study and supporting documents should be submitted to the SharePoint folder sent to you in your notification email.

### External Reviewer List for Academic Review & Strategic Planning

Programs are asked to submit a rank-ordered list of 3-4 potential external reviewers to Academic Affairs by November 1st. The list must include the proposed reviewers contact information, a CV (or link there to), and a brief rationale indicating why the reviewer is appropriate. External reviewer candidates should be a faculty member at a peer or aspirant institution who is regarded with respect in the discipline. Faculty from institutions that serve similar student populations, are located in metropolitan areas, and who are from institutions that have similar programmatic offerings being reviewed, often bring useful insights to the review process.

The external reviewer is selected by the Academic Assessment and Planning Lead in Academic Affairs responsible for academic review and strategic planning. The external reviewer is provided a stipend for their review. Travel and accommodation arrangements for the external reviewer are made by Academic Affairs. External reviewers should not have any conflict of interest with program faculty, and thus, should generally not be individuals considered to be friends or who have a close working relationship with program faculty.

### Final Report

Following the external review, the **external reviewer is responsible for preparing a summary report** on behalf of the review team. The report should include the following:

* An overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats faced by the program.
* Recommendations for the future, to inform the overall quality and relevance of the academic program. Recommendations should be prioritized and distinguish between short- and long-term goals.
* A rating of the program on each of the HLC components as well comments geared toward improving on components where expectations are either minimally met or not met.

The report is due 30 days following the external review. A single report should be submitted on behalf of the entire team. A report template is available from Academic Affairs. Once the review team report has been submitted, a follow-up meeting will be scheduled with the Department Chair or School Director, the College Dean, and representatives from Academic Affairs.

**Follow-Up Meeting**

The follow up meeting is typically attended by the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the Dean of the College, the Dean of Graduate Studies (if the program has graduate degrees), the Associate Dean, Academic Assessment and Planning Lead, the Department Chair or School Director, and selected members of the APC review team. The purpose of themeeting is todiscuss the review, associated issues, strategic planning for the program and to determine what informed decisions and actions would appropriately follow.

**Self-study Template**

1. **OPENING STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR**
2. **MISSION**
3. **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Provide an overview of the program including degree programs and certificates offered, number of students, number of faculty (i.e., tenured/tenure track, other full-time, part-time), and number of staff. Indicate if there are academic research centers or institutes that are a part of the program. This section should also include an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) facing the program.

1. **REVIEW OF PROGRAM CRITERIA**

The HLC has established Core Criteria for the accreditation of institutions of higher learning. Several facets of the Core Criteria pertain to academic programs. As part of the academic review & strategic planning process, programs are asked to address how they contribute to each of the Core Criteria components listed below. The review team assesses the degree to which expectations regarding the components are met (i.e., meets, minimally meets, does not meet). The text in blue describes the type of information requested.

* 1. **Education Offerings**

The following Core Criteria components are intended to assure 1) academic degree programs are appropriate to higher education (3.A.), 2) intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to educational programs (3.B.), 3) the program has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high quality programs and student services (3.C.), and, 4) programs help foster and maintain an enriched educational environment (3.E.).

* *The program’s courses and offerings are current and require levels of performance by students appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded (HLC 3.A.1).* Describe how the program ensures degree and certificate programs are current (i.e., relevant, up-to-date) and the process by which the program ensures expectations for student work are commensurate with the level of the program (i.e., undergraduate, graduate).
* *The program’s degrees and offerings engage students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments (HLC 3.B.3).* Briefly describe how the programs courses, curricula, and/or other educational opportunities and experiences (e.g., FUSE, GRACA) help students develop a sense of information literacy and flexible and adaptable cognitive skills.
* *The program contributes appropriately to the general education program of the University (HLC 3.B.1).* List any approved general education courses and the general education area for which they are approved. If the program does not have any courses approved as part of the general education curriculum, briefly explain why.
* *The program communicates about its educational offerings with students and other constituencies, and ensures that its quality and learning goals are consistent across all modes of delivery and all locations (on the main campus, at additional locations, by distance delivery, as dual credit, through contractual or consortial arrangements, or any other modality) (HLC 3.A.3). The program ensures that instructors in its dual credit, contractual, and consortial programs are appropriately credentialed (HLC 3.C.2).* Briefly describe how the program ensures that courses and programs offered in a variety of settings and delivery modes (e.g., on campus, online, dual credit, alternative locations) are of the same quality and curriculum. Also, describe how the program ensures that instructors in dual credit and other off campus programs meet credentialing requirements.
* *Co-curricular programs or community engagement opportunities are offered that contribute to the educational experience of the program’s students (HLC 3.E.1).* Briefly describe the availability of cocurricular (e.g., academic support center, student organizations) and community engagement opportunities (e.g., service learning courses, internships, other program events) for students.
  1. **Students**

The following Core Criteria components are intended to assure 1) intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to educational programs (3.B.), 2) the program has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high quality programs and student services (3.C.), and, 3) there is support for effective teaching and student learning (3.D.)

* *The program’s students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate (HLC 3.B.5).* Briefly describe the opportunities that students have in this regard (e.g., FUSE, GRACA, independent study, capstone project, honors thesis, masters thesis) and explain why the opportunities available are appropriate for the degree program.
* *The program ensures that its instructors are accessible for student inquiry (HLC 3.C.5*). Briefly describe how the program ensures students have access to faculty. For example, are faculty required to hold office hours and/or to list contact information on syllabi?
* *The program provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students (HLC 3.D.3).* Briefly describe how academic advising occurs and why this model is appropriate for meeting students’ needs.
  1. **Faculty and Staff**

The following Core Criteria components are intended to assure 1) intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to educational programs (3.B.), and, 2) the program has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high quality programs and student services (3.C.).

* *The program faculty members contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate (HLC 3.B.5).* Briefly describe how the program ensures this is occurring (e.g., RPT and/or annual review guidelines that speak to scholarship or creative work, review process itself).
* *The program’s instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures (HLC 3.C.3).* Briefly describe how faculty (i.e., full-time, part-time, tenure track/tenured, instructors/lecturers) are routinely evaluated. The processes may vary across these groups.
* *The program has processes and resources for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles; it supports their professional development (HLC 3.C.4).* Briefly describe how the program supports new faculty on-boarding and orientation and professional development opportunities for all (i.e., full-time, part-time, tenure track/tenured, instructors/lecturers).
* *The program ensures that all of its staff members are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development (HLC 3.C.6).* Briefly describe the processes associated with ensuring the appropriate qualifications and training of staff (e.g., steps in hiring process, on-boarding and orientation process for new staff) and how staff professional development is supported (e.g., opportunities available, funding for training or conference attendance).
  1. **Ethical and Professional Practice**

The following Core Criteria components are intended to assure 1) programs operate with integrity in all functions (i.e., financial, academic, personnel, auxiliary) and establish and follow fair and ethical policies and processes (2.A.), 2) policies and procedures call for the responsible acquisition, discovery, and application of knowledge by faculty, students, and staff (2.E.), and, 3) there is support for student learning and effective teaching (3.D.).

* *The program operates with integrity, and establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and procedures (HLC 2.A).* Briefly describe how integrity, fairness, and ethics are ensured in the development and administration of unit policies and procedures (e.g., policies are reviewed and adopted according to a democratic process, transparency in policies and procedures, policies include appeal processes).
* *The program has established policies with respect to academic honesty and integrity (HLC 2.E.3).* Briefly describe if the program has developed academic honesty and integrity policies in addition to the Faculty Senate’s policy and how the program ensures that academic integrity policies are communicated to faculty and students.
* *The program offers support to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by the program’s students (HLC 2.E.1).* Briefly describe how/when information about ethics and integrity of conducting research is provided to students.
* *The program offers its students guidance in both the ethical and effective use of information resources (HLC 2.E.2 and 3.D.5).* Briefly describe how/when information about ethical and effective use of information resources is provided to students.
  1. **Performance Measures**

The following Core Criteria components are intended to assure 1) he quality of educational programs (4.A.), 2) a commitment to improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates of degree and certificate programs (4.C.), 3) programs work systematically to improve their performance (5.D.), 4) the mission conveys an understanding of society (1.C.), and, 5) the mission demonstrates commitment to the public good (1.D.).

* *The program has identified the available external accreditation options for its degrees and maintains such accreditation wherever applicable (HLC 4.A.5).* If the program is accredited, identify the accrediting body. If not, briefly explain why the program is not accredited (i.e., no accreditation available, accreditation available but not appropriate).
* *Using appropriate indicators, the program evaluates the success of its graduates, including whether its degree and certificate programs prepare students for advanced study or employment (HLC 4.A.6).* Briefly describe how the program engages in degree program assessment.
* *The program gathers and analyzes data about student retention, persistence, and completion in its degree programs, and uses this information to make improvements as warranted by the data (HLC 4.C).* Briefly describe how this data are obtained and used for program improvements.
* *The program employs effective procedures to improve its own performance (HLC 5.D).* Briefly describe how the program uses a continuous improvement model to improve performance in all areas.
* *The program addresses its role in society. Its processes and activities reflect attention to human distinctness as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves (HLC 1.C.1 and 1.C.2).* Briefly describe how the program engages with and prepares students for society.
* *The program has identified and engaged with external constituencies and communities of interest, responding to their needs as its mission and capacities allow (HLC 1.D.3).* Briefly describe if/how the program engages and works with external constituents (e.g., community partners, legislature, employers).
  1. **Resources**

The following Core Criteria components are intended to assure 1) the program has the faculty and staff needed for effective, high-quality programs and student services (3.C.), and, 2) there is support for student learning and effective teaching (3.D.).

* *The institution has provided the program, including its students and instructors, with the infrastructure and resources necessary to support effective teaching and learning (HLC 3.D.4).* Briefly describe if the program has the resources necessary for teaching and learning (e.g., classrooms, faculty-student meeting space, administrative support).
* *The program employs its resources efficiently and strategically (HLC 3.D).* Briefly describe how the program uses its resources to achieve program goals.
* *The program has sufficient numbers and continuity of faculty to carry out both the classroom and non-classroom roles of faculty (HLC 3.C.1).* Briefly describe if there are sufficient numbers of faculty to carry out faculty roles, and if not, identify the areas where gaps occur.

1. **RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS PROGRAM REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS**

Describe how the program addressed or responded to recommendations from the previous program review.

1. **RESOURCE ALLOCATION PLAN**

Briefly describe how resources should be invested in the unit in the case of increased funding levels. Also, in the event of decreased funding, what areas should be reduced/eliminated?

1. **ACADEMIC RIGOR**
2. **ASESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING**
3. **ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN INSTRUCTION**
4. **ACADEMIC PREPARTION AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF FACULTY**
5. **ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN RESEARCH/SCHOLARSHIP**
6. **ACCOMPLISTHMENTS IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, OUTREACH, AND SERVICE**
7. **NEED AND DEMAND FOR PROGRAM**
8. **REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS**

Include the following as appendices to the self-study:

* 1. **Appendix A: Program Strategic Plan and Mission Statement**

Include the unit’s strategic plan and mission statement as well as a statement indicating how the program’s plan and mission align with those of the University. Also, how does the program communicate its strategic plan and mission? (HLC 1A, IB, IC, ID)

* 1. **Appendix B: Assessment Report and Feedback**

Include the most recent assessment plan/report submitted to the Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) for each degree program and for any affiliated centers. For example, if the program grants the M.A., B.A., and B.S. degrees, then three assessment plans should be included or it should be noted that the same plan is included for multiple degrees. Assessment plans for any concentrations or certificates may be included, but are not required. Additionally, include the feedback received from the AAC on the most recently submitted assessment report. (HLC 4.B and 3.A.1)

* 1. **Appendix C: Academic Department Indicators and CCPE Report Draft**

Academic department indicator data is available on Digital Commons or from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. A draft of the CCPE report for each degree program is available from the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. If a degree program is not meeting CCPE threshold requirements for student credit hour production or degrees granted, the self-study should include a plan for reaching those thresholds. CCPE threshold requirements are available on the CCPE website, which is also linked to from the Academic Program Review website.

* 1. **Appendix D: Faculty Curriculum Vitae**

CVs for all full-time faculty are required. A summary form is acceptable. (HLC 3.B.5 and 3.C.2)

## **Optional Attachments**

## These may include items such as unit annual reports, summaries of other external reviews such as accreditation reports, summaries of student evaluation results, and web pages or other informational or promotional materials

**External Review Itinerary**

The purpose of the External Review is for the Academic Review & Strategic Planning (ARSP) Team to meet with the program’s constituents and stakeholders and to discuss various aspects of the self-study with these groups. Some of the meetings are arranged by Academic Affairs and are required elements of the academic review & strategic planning process. These will be scheduled first. It is the program’s responsibility to organize the rest of the itinerary for the External Review including all local transportation for the external reviewer, the identification and organization of relevant stakeholders.

Common stakeholder groups are listed below, and they are typically scheduled for 30-60 minute meetings with the review team. However, it is the discretion of the academic program to identify the appropriate groups for the meetings given knowledge of the program’s culture, structure, and interests. The goal is to have as many different perspectives represented as possible with the expectation of full participation of all involved parties.

* Department chair or school director
* Tenure-Track Faculty
* Tenured Faculty
* Undergraduate Students (include online and dual enrollment, if applicable)
* Graduate Students (include online and dual enrollment, if applicable)
* Alums, Community Members, and/or Advisory Board Members
* Instructors and Lecturers
* Adjunct Faculty
* Staff
* Representatives from Research Centers or institute (if applicable)

Things to consider in developing the itinerary:

* A campus or facility tour may be useful.
* Build in breaks for the review team into the itinerary.
* Reserve meeting space for all External Review meetings.
* Working lunches on campus are recommended.
* A drop-in session can be useful to include on the agenda for people who cannot attend at the time their group is scheduled to meet with the committee.
* A team meeting with the Department Chair or School Director, Academic Assessment and Planning Lead, College Dean, and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs will be scheduled near the end of the visit to give the team an opportunity to discuss their general impressions and findings with the Chair/Director.
* Time will be reserved on the last day for the team to meet on their own to coordinate the major report findings.

**[Program Name] – External Review**

**[Dates of Visit]**

Academic Review & Strategic Planning Team:

* External Reviewer: Name, Affiliation
* Academic Planning Council and Team Facilitator: Name, Unit
* Academic Planning Council Member: Name, Unit
* Graduate Program Council Representative: Name, Unit (if applicable)

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## **DAY 1**

5:30 PM Pick up External Reviewer from airport – Flight details

Hotel check in: Hotel details including hotel name and confirmation number

6:30 Dinner – External Reviewer and Department Chair or School Director

**DAY 2**

8:00 AM Pick up External Reviewer at hotel by

8:30-9:00 Welcome and APR Team meeting

9:00-9:45 APR Team meeting with Chair

10:00-11:00 APR Team meeting with Dean

11:00-12:00 APR Team meeting with

12:00-1:00 Working lunch on campus is suggested given the time constraints of multiple stakeholder group meetings. Boxed lunches can be arranged, if desired. Lunch is often a good time for meeting with students.

1:00-5:00 Team meetings with stakeholders

6:00-8:00 APR Team dinner and return to hotel

**DAY 3**

8:00 AM Pick up External Reviewer at hotel by

9:00-10:00 APR Team meeting with Academic Assessment and Planning Lead

10:00-11:00 APR Team meeting with Senior Vice Chancellor (EAB 202)

12:00-1:00 Plated lunch in MBSC for team, Chair/Director, Academic Assessment and Planning Lead, College Dean and Senior Vice Chancellor to review preliminary findings and recommendations. Alternatively, this can be a working lunch just for the APR Team and the exit meeting can be scheduled later in the day.

1:00-3:30 APR Team work on report and HLC component scores

3:30 Depart for airport

5:40 Flight details

**For additional information about the academic program review process, please go to the UNO Academic Program Review website:**

**https://www.unomaha.edu/academic-program-assessment-and-review/review/index.php**



**For additional information contact:**

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