Academic Program Review:
A Guide to the Review Process
Academic Program Review
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Academic program reviews are 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 program review process that the university systematically engages in a continuous improvement model, resulting in relevant and quality academic programming.

UNO’s academic program review 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, faculty qualifications and activities (e.g., teaching, research, service, outreach). The perspectives of a variety of stakeholders are included in the review process (e.g., students, alums, faculty, staff) in an attempt to make the review as comprehensive as possible.

Program reviews are important because they 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 program review process at UNO is guided by the Academic Planning Council (APC), a campus-wide committee consisting of faculty representatives from each college and the Faculty Senate.

For programs with external accreditation, the UNO review process may be coordinated to minimize a need for duplication. In some cases, the APC review process has been 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 Program Review Procedure

The campus academic program review process has four general components: a self-study, a site visit, a report prepared by an external reviewer, and a follow-up meeting.

**Self-study**
The self-study is prepared by the program. It should include an overview of the program (i.e., degrees offered, student numbers, faculty/staff numbers, centers/institutes); a description of the program's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats; a discussion of if/how previous recommendations were addressed; and information on how the program aligns with the Higher Learning Commission's core components. More information on the contents and organization of the self-study can be found later in this guide.

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

The self-study is due to Academic Affairs in the fall term at least one month prior to the scheduled review team visit and is typically due no later than December 15th. The self-study and supporting documents should be submitted digitally in one of the two ways:

1) Two pdfs consisting of the self-study and all supporting appendices (except CVs) in one file and all faculty CVs in the other file, or
2) A Box folder consisting of separate files for the self-study (base document), mission and strategic plan, assessment plans and reports for each degree program, academic department indicators summary sheet, and faculty CVs. All files should be clearly labeled.

An abbreviated self-study may be completed by programs that are going (or have recently gone) through external accreditation. Such programs can point to sections of the accreditation self-study (or copy/paste those sections) in the self-study that will be submitted to APC, and only include information “in full” for sections not addressed in the accreditation self-study.

**Site Visit and Review Team**
The review team is selected by Academic Affairs and consists of internal members and at least one external member. Units are asked to provide a rank-ordered list to Academic Affairs by September 15th of 3-4 potential external reviewers including contact information, a CV (or link to the CV), and a brief biographical sketch or information 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 and are located in metropolitan areas and/or who are from institutions that have similar programmatic offerings in the unit being reviewed, can often bring useful insights to the review process.
The external reviewer is selected by the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs responsible for academic program review, in consultation with the program leadership. The external reviewer is a critical member of the review team and is paid a stipend by Academic Affairs. Travel and accommodation arrangements for the external reviewer are made by Academic Affairs. External reviewers should not have any conflict of interest with unit faculty, and thus, should generally not be individuals considered to be friends or who have a close working relationship with unit faculty. Other members of the review team are internal faculty volunteers who sit on the Academic Planning Council, represent groups such as Graduate Council, and/or are past review team members, as determined appropriate by Academic Affairs. An internal faculty volunteer, who sits on the APC, is typically appointed as Review Team Facilitator.

The site visit typically takes place on campus over two days late in the fall semester or early in the spring semester. The itinerary for the site visit is developed by program leadership in consultation with Academic Affairs and the Review Team Facilitator. During the site visit, the review team should have the opportunity to meet with a variety of stakeholders and constituents, such as program faculty (i.e., full-time, part-time, tenure track, tenured), staff, current students and alums, community partners, and representatives of the Dean’s Office and Academic Affairs. Additional information on the site visit itinerary is available toward the end of this document.

**Review Team Report and Response**

Following the site visit, 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 geared toward improving the overall quality and relevance of the academic program. Recommendations should generally be prioritized and distinguish between short- and long-term goals.
- A rating of the program on each of the Higher Learning Commission components as well a comments geared toward improving on components where expectations are not being met.

The report is due 30 days following the site visit. A template is available for the report 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. In advance of this meeting, the program is expected to prepare a brief written response to the review team’s report.

**Follow-Up Meeting**

The follow up meeting is typically attended by the Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the Dean of the College, the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, the Department Chair or School Director, and selected members of the APC review team. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the review, associated issues, and to determine what informed decisions and actions would appropriately follow.
Self-study Guidelines

The self-study prepared by the program is a narrative document consisting of the elements below that 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. Both quantitative and qualitative indicators and referencing documentation as appropriate. Programs are encouraged to incorporate tables and/or graphs that illustrate accomplishments since the last program review.

I. 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.

II. Review of Program Criteria
Please provide evidence that supports each of the following statements. These criteria are aligned with the Core Components in the Criteria for Accreditation set forth by the Higher Learning Commission. Note: The attached guidelines that require the Program Review Team use a performance rating of “Met”, “Met with Concerns”, or “Not Met” to assess these standards.

A. Educational Offerings
1. 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)

2. 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)

3. The program contributes appropriately to the general education program of the University. (HLC 3.B.1)

4. The program’s educational offerings recognize the human and cultural diversity in which students live and work. (HLC 3.B.4)

5. 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)

6. Co-curricular programs or community engagement opportunities are offered that contribute to the educational experience of the program’s students. (HLC 3.E.1)

B. Students
1. The program’s students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate. (HLC 3.B.5)

2. The program ensures that its instructors are accessible for student inquiry. (HLC 3.C.5)

3. The program provides academic advising suited to its programs and the needs of its students. (HLC 3.D.3)

C. Faculty and Staff
1. The program faculty members contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate. (HLC 3.B.5)

2. The program’s instructors are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures. (HLC 3.C.3)

3. 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)

4. The program ensures that all of its staff members are appropriately qualified, trained, and supported in their professional development. (HLC 3.C.6)

D. Ethical and Professional Practice
1. The program operates with integrity, and establishes and follows fair and ethical policies and procedures. (HLC 2.A)

2. The program has established policies with respect to academic honesty and integrity. (HLC 2.E.3)

3. The program offers support to ensure the integrity of research and scholarly practice conducted by the program’s students. (HLC 2.E.1)

4. The program offers its students guidance in both the ethical and effective use of information resources. (HLC 2.E.2 and 3.D.5)
E. Performance Measures
1. The program has identified the available external accreditation options for its degrees and maintains such accreditation wherever applicable. (HLC 4.A.5)

2. 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)

3. 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)

4. The program employs effective procedures to improve its own performance. (HLC 5.D)

5. The program addresses its role in a multicultural society. Its processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves. (HLC 1.C.1 and 1.C.2)

6. 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)

F. Resources
1. 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)

2. The program employs its resources efficiently and strategically. (HLC 3.D)

3. 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)

III. Response to Previous Program Review Recommendations
Describe how the program addressed or responded to recommendations from the previous program review.

IV. 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?
V. Required Attachments
Include the following as appendices to the self-study:

A. 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)

B. Appendix B: Assessment Plan/Report
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)

C. Appendix C: Academic Department Indicators
This data is available on Digital Commons or from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

D. Appendix D: Faculty Curriculum Vitae
CVs for all full-time faculty are required. Summary form is acceptable. (HLC 3.B.5 and 3.C.2)

VI. 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.
Site Visit Itinerary

The purpose of the site visit is for the Academic Program Review Team to meet with the unit’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 Program Review process. It is the unit’s responsibility to organize the rest of the itinerary for the site visit including all local transportation for the external reviewer, the identification and organization of relevant stakeholders, and arranging for meals, snacks, and beverages.

A list of typical stakeholder groups is below, and they are typically scheduled for 30-60 minute site visit meetings with the review team. However, it is up to the academic unit to identify the appropriate groups for the meetings given knowledge of the unit’s culture, structure, and interests. The goal is to have as many different perspectives represented as possible and full participation.

- Department chair or school director
- Students (undergraduate, graduate, online, dual enrollment)
- Faculty (pre-tenure, post-tenure, instructors, adjuncts)
- Staff
- External constituents (advisory board, off campus partners)
- Alums (recent graduates, alums from a 5-10 years back)
- Research centers or institutes (if relevant)

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 site visit meetings.
- Working lunches on campus are recommended.
- Provide refreshments for the team on both days including beverage service and light snacks. OASA will cover the cost of refreshments.
- 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 and Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs should be scheduled near the end of the visit to give the team an opportunity to discuss generally with the Chair/Director their impressions and findings during the visit.
- Time should be reserved on the last day for the team to meet on their own to coordinate the major report findings. Consult with team to determine if they think it would be useful to have other times built into the schedule for team meetings.
[Unit Name] – Program Review Site Visit
[Dates of Visit]

Contact information for reviewer and team chair:
Academic Program Review Team:
- External Reviewer: Name, Affiliation
- Academic Planning Council and Team Facilitator: Name, Unit
- Academic Planning Council: Name, Unit
- Graduate Program Council Representative: Name, Unit (if applicable)
- Previous APR Team Member: Name, Unit

**DAY 1**

4:53 PM  Pick up External Reviewer from airport – Flight details
          Hotel check in: Hotel details including hotel name and confirmation number

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

**DAY 2**

08:00 AM  Pick up external reviewer at hotel by ______________

08:30-09:00  Welcome and APR Team meeting

09:00-09:45  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 oftentimes a good time for meeting with students.

01:00-05:00 Team meetings with stakeholders

6:00-8:00   APR Team dinner and return to hotel
DAY 3

08:00 AM   Pick up external reviewer at hotel by ________________

09:00-10:00 APR Team meeting with Dr. Deborah Smith-Howell, Dean for Graduate Studies

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

12:00-01:00 Lunch for team and possibly Chair/Director, recommend plated lunch in MBSC and to use time to talk to Chair/Director and Assistant Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs about 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; exit meeting with APR Team, C/D, and Assistant Vice Chancellor – preliminary findings

3:30 p.m.   Depart for airport

5:40 p.m.   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:

University of Nebraska at Omaha
Office of Academic and Student Affairs
6001 Dodge Street, EAB 202
Omaha, NE 68182-0001
402.554.2262