A GUIDE TO
ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

Office of the Provost
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Preface

Academic program review is a cyclical process for evaluating and continuously enhancing the quality and currency of academic programs. The evaluation is conducted through a process of self-evaluation, followed by peer evaluation via reviewers external to the program or department, usually also external to the organization. It is a comprehensive analysis of program quality, utilizing a wide variety of data about the program. Program review operates on a nominal eight-year cycle, meaning that each program is reviewed every eight years. Academic Program Reviews are conducted through the Faculty Senate’s Curricular Affairs Committee (CAC) in partnership with the Office of the Provost.

To be effective, the system of academic program review must be straightforward, objective, and transparent. It must be carried out in a timely manner and implemented deliberately.

The result of the academic program review process is a clear picture of the program’s strengths, challenges, and opportunities. These outcomes are used to inform strategic planning and resource allocation at program, department, college, and university levels.

Purpose of an Academic Program Review

The purposes of academic program review are to:

- Ensure that academic programs are maintained at the highest possible level of quality.
- Provide a basis for continuous quality improvement of academic programs.
- Help ensure the viability of academic programs.
- Guide strategic planning and decision-making regarding academic programs.
- Ensure that academic programs serve the mission and vision of the university.
The Self-Study

At the commencement of an academic program review, all graduate and undergraduate programs prepare a self-study, a succinct report (approximately 12 pages) depending on the number of the programs being included in the review. The self-study reports are to be prepared by the responsible faculty and department chairperson or director of the program under review. There are six sections to the self-study report:

- Section One: General Information
- Section Two: Introduction/Overview
- Section Three: Standards and Criteria
  - Contribution to Mission
  - Program Quality
  - Demand
  - Societal Need
  - Quality Control Mechanisms
  - Effectiveness
- Section Four: Analysis
- Section Five: Prospective
- Section Six: Appendices

Programs will be encouraged to present their indicators and metrics in order to adapt the criteria to their particular circumstances and characteristics. In addition to addressing the criteria, the report should include a narrative (1,000 words maximum) to explain the meaning and implications of the data and to clarify any important qualitative characteristics and circumstances that may not be included in the data. Specifically, the narrative should answer the questions:

- What are the program’s strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities?
- What characteristics of the program should be maintained?
- What characteristics of the program should be modified or abandoned?
- What plans do the faculty, chairperson, and dean have for the program over the next three to five years?

Criteria definitions, format, and guidelines for self-study reports are contained in Appendix B.

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1 In Section Three, the program will demonstrate the extent to which it meets each standard and criterion using relevant data supplied by the Office of Institutional Research as well as the Graduate College.
External Review Team Site Visit

Program chairs/directors will be asked to provide a list of seven or eight names of highly qualified persons who could provide a rigorous review of the program. (See Appendix C.) The list should include faculty from distinguished universities with programs that embody key elements of the program under review as well as its aspirations for the future. The names and CVs should be provided to the Academic Program Review (APR) Coordinator, and will be ranked by the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning, Dean of the Graduate College, and the Curricular Affairs Committee (CAC) chair. Two individuals will be invited, in order of rank, to serve as external reviewers.

External reviews are carried out over two days and typically include the following:

- A welcome breakfast with the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning, the program chair/director, and the chair of the internal review subcommittee.
- Meetings with:
  — The dean of the school/college and/or associate dean
  — The Dean of the Graduate College
  — The department program chair/director
  — Faculty groups by program, rank, or specialization
  — Undergraduate majors
  — Graduates residing in the Burlington area
  — Graduate students
- Tour of relevant facilities
- Working lunch with faculty on the first and second days
- Optional program/department dinner
- An exit interview at which the external review team reports preliminary findings to the program chair/director, the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning, and the internal review subcommittee

The team will have an afternoon break on the second day to serve as private work time to prepare a preliminary report for the exit interview.

(Please see the sample schedule in Appendix D.)

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2 The Faculty Senate Curricular Affairs Committee appoints two members to serve as an internal review subcommittee. (See Appendix A for additional information.)
# Timeline and Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Time Frame</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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| 12 months prior to external review team site visit | — Provost’s Office sends notification letter to program chair/director.  
— Associate Provost for Teaching & Learning, APR Coordinator, Office of Institutional Research (OIR) Director, program chair/director meet to discuss the review.  
— APR Coordinator creates Sharepoint site for program. |
| 11 months prior to site visit | — Program provides names and CVs of 7 to 8 individuals from peer and aspirant programs to serve as potential reviewers.  
— Provost’s Office extends invitations and requests potential site visit dates.  
— Program chair/director meets with OIR Director to discuss data for the self-study.  
  The chair/director organizes and initiates the self-study. |
| 3 months prior to site visit | — In consultation with external reviewers and program chair/director, APR Coordinator finalizes site visit dates and coordinates travel arrangements. |
| 2 months prior to site visit | — APR Coordinator and program chair/director draft itinerary and schedule meetings. |
| 1 month prior to site visit | — Program chair/director posts final self-study report to program APR Sharepoint site.  
  APR Coordinator notifies external reviewers and internal reviewers the self-study is available for review. |
| 1 week prior to site visit | — APR Coordinator sends final itinerary to external and internal reviewers, and dean(s), and posts to Sharepoint site.  
— When required, the Graduate Executive Committee provides a written assessment to the graduate program(s). |

## External Review Team Site Visit

| Within 6 weeks of site visit | — The external review team sends their report to the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning.  
— APR Coordinator distributes external reviewers report to program chair/director, relevant dean(s), and Internal Review Subcommittee (IRS) for factual corrections.  
— IRS prepares report, and submits to full Curricular Affairs Committee (CAC) for vote. |
| Within 6 months after CAC vote | — Provost, Associate Provost, relevant dean(s), program chair/director, CAC Chair, internal review subcommittee, and APR Coordinator meet to discuss external and internal reviewers reports and develop a summary memo. |
| Within 1 month of summary meeting | — APR Coordinator drafts the APR Summary Memo for review and signature by Provost, Associate Provost, and CAC chair. APR Coordinator distributes signed report. |
| Two years following summary meeting | — Provost, Associate Provost, relevant dean(s), program chair/director, CAC Chair, and APR Coordinator meet to review findings and recommendations in the APR Summary Memo. |
| Within 1 month of 2-Yr Follow-Up Meeting | — APR Coordinator drafts two-year follow-up report for review and signature by Provost, Associate Provost, and CAC Chair. APR Coordinator distributes signed memo to meeting participants. |
APPENDIX A: Primary Roles: Provost’s Office, Faculty Senate, and Program

Provost’s Office
- Establish and maintain a long-term schedule of program reviews
- Manage the academic program review budget
- Establish and maintain a Sharepoint site for each program review
- Invite external reviewers
- Work with external review team to arrange travel and secure accommodations
- Collaborate with the program chair/director to establish a detailed site visit itinerary
- Serve as the primary point of contact for correspondence with team members
  — Set up guest accounts for Sharepoint and WiFi
  — Notify team members when self-study is available for review on Sharepoint
  — Send final schedule
  — Follow-up with team members for external reviewers’ final report
  — Process honorarium and reimbursement for travel expenses
- Move reports through the final stages of the process
- Oversee summary meeting and report process
- Oversee two-year follow-up review

Faculty Senate Curricular Affairs Committee (CAC)
- Assign committee members to serve on internal review subcommittee
  — Read and thoroughly understand the Program’s self-study
  — Participate in site visit
  — Receive the report of the external reviewers
  — Prepare written report summarizing the external reviewers’ recommendations and present to full CAC
- Receive the report from the internal review subcommittee
- Vote to accept or reject the report of the internal review subcommittee
- Participate in the summary and two-year follow-up meetings
- Provide an annual report on APR activities

Program Chair/Director
- Prepare self-study and related materials according to the Guidelines. See Appendix B.
- Suggest qualified persons to serve as external reviewers. See Appendix C.
- Organize and participate in program-specific site visit activities

College/School Dean(s)
- Participate in site visit activities
- Participate in summary and two-year follow-up meetings
APPENDIX B: Guidelines for Preparation of a Self-Study Report
For Program Review

Introduction:

This document is a companion to the document System for Academic Program Review at The University of Vermont. The latter document describes the policies and procedures for a review of an academic program as well as the standards and criteria for review. The document can be reviewed in its entirety at the Provost’s Office website http://www.uvm.edu/~provost/

Purpose of the Self-Study Report:

The self-study report of an academic program describes an academic program using a common set of institutionally determined standards and criteria. It is a systematic approach to data collection that provides a basis for identifying the strengths of the program, describing difficulties in the program, and making decisions about the direction for needed improvement and opportunities for growth. The report is based upon the stated criteria and agreed-upon unit-specific indicators. Evidence that clearly indicates how these criteria are being met is the basis for the written report. The self-study report, along with the report of the external reviewers, will be the basis for the program review; the review is carried out by the Faculty Senate’s Curricular Affairs Committee and a team of external reviewers with disciplinary expertise in comparable academic programs.

A program review establishes a baseline understanding of opportunities and challenges in academic programs. All academic programs will engage in the UVM review process to ensure that programs are maintained at the highest level of quality possible; the review will contribute to an institutional perspective for planning and budgetary decision-making.

Guidelines for Writing the Self-Study Report

The self-study report is prepared by the responsible faculty and department chairperson or director of the program under review. The self-study addresses the process used to develop the report and describes what constituencies participated in its formulation. The self-study report includes relevant data supplied by the Office of Institutional Studies (enrollments, FTE ratios, performance of graduates, etc.). The report addresses a review of such data and is used to explain the status of the program with respect to the standards and criteria included in these guidelines. Evaluation data from existing reviews of the program such as accreditation reports should be incorporated into this self-study report wherever appropriate. The body of the report is to be approximately twelve pages in length; appropriate appendices should be attached.

The self-study report concludes with a narrative, integrative summary and a prospective that addresses the meaning and implications of the evidence presented and describes the manner in which the program meets each criterion. The narrative should specifically identify the program’s strengths and challenges as well as directions for needed improvement, opportunities, and other plans.
There are six sections to the self-study report:

- Section One: General Information
- Section Two: Introduction/Overview
- Section Three: Standards and Criteria
- Section Four: Analysis
- Section Five: Prospective
- Section Six: Appendices

**Section One: General Information**

General information provides factual data about the program, including name of the program, program type, college or school in which the program is located, name of the chairperson/director of the program, name of the dean of the academic unit, names of faculty writing the report, and date of the report.

**Section Two: Introduction/Overview**

The Introduction/Overview establishes the background and context for the review. It should include a brief history of the program, a brief description of its present status, the goals and mission of its graduate and undergraduate programs, unique and distinguishing characteristics, and links with other units such as joint faculty appointments, cross-listed courses, shared undergraduate and graduate service courses, and research collaborations.

**Section Three: Standards and Criteria**

In this section the self-study demonstrates the extent to which the program meets each standard and criterion. The standards are contribution to mission, program quality, demand, societal need, quality control mechanisms, and efficiency. The narrative should be supported by evidence from the data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and/or other credible sources.

**Section Four: Analysis**

This section should present a brief summary of the teaching, research, and scholarly enterprise and review how the program meets each criterion. The meaning and implications of the evidence presented should be explained. The narrative should specifically identify the program’s progress since its last review, its strengths, difficulties, directions for needed improvement, and opportunities.

**Section Five: Prospective**

The prospectus should present a vision for the Program grounded in the Program’s strategic goals and a balanced assessment of opportunities and available resources. It should include a discussion of new
scholarly directions, research plans, curricular or degree program changes, and plans for maintaining and enhancing excellence and diversity of faculty and students over the next eight years. Given the persistence of budgetary constraints, the discussion should include ways in which the unit can be strengthened without receiving additional resources.

Section Six: Appendices

Supporting data and materials may be appended to the main body of the report.
Standards and Criteria.

Standard I: The program has a clear and publicly stated purpose that contributes to the mission of the University.

Criterion 1: The program contributes to the mission of the University, the College/School, and department by:

a) Having an active strategic plan that is aligned with the vision, mission, and strategic plan of the University.

b) Supporting research and creative activities that generate new knowledge and understanding and enrich the intellectual environment for students, staff, and faculty.

c) Engaging in relevant application of new knowledge to contemporary problems through teaching, scholarship, creative activities, and service and outreach.

d) Preparing students for productive, responsible, and creative lives.

e) Encouraging students to use their knowledge and skills for the benefit of society.

f) Promoting global perspective and appreciation of cultural and intellectual diversity.

g) Fostering an enduring commitment to learning.

h) Fostering the qualities of integrity, accountability, and leadership.

i) Additional unit-specific indicators.

Standard II: The program is of high quality

Criterion 2: The program quality is evidenced by:

a) Faculty – The Program faculty are qualified to teach the curriculum, as indicated by earned academic degrees and professional certifications. The program invests in the professional and scholarly development of its faculty, including the mentoring and guidance of junior faculty members through the RPT process.

b) Resources – The program has adequate faculty, support staff, library resources, equipment, and facilities to accomplish its purpose.

c) Reputation – The program is well regarded, as evidenced by external rankings and assessments by external reviewers of students, faculty, resources, and productivity. The program attracts and retains excellent students as evidenced by admission qualifications, performance on standardized examinations, etc.
d) Faculty performance – Faculty demonstrate effectiveness in teaching and student advising, scholarship, and service, as evidenced by evaluations, awards, honors, grants, research contributions, publications, citations, and service endeavors.

e) Student performance – Students demonstrate mastery of knowledge by means of formative and summative assessments, performance in the field, professional achievements, and performance on professional licensure exams. Program graduates succeed in finding jobs and progress well in their chosen careers; alumni are satisfied with the program. Undergraduate and graduate students produce creative works, publications, and receive grant awards. Graduate students are awarded post-doctoral fellowships.

f) Benchmarks – The program reflects “best practices” and compares well to relevant performance standards from comparable institutions and/or accrediting agencies and/or other authoritative sources. The program demonstrates leadership in its performances relative to appropriate external benchmarks.

g) Advising – Program faculty provide excellent academic advising, per student evaluations and other appropriate indicators.

h) Extramural Funding (for programs where such funding is critical) – Success in attracting extramural funding that contributes to the Program’s long-term stability.

Standard III: There is demand for the program.

Criterion 3. There is demand for the program as evidenced by:

   a) external demand based on local, regional, national, and global trends and forecasts for persons with particular types and levels of education.

   b) internal demand as reflected by both student enrollment in the program and the scope of service teaching for students from other programs.

Standard IV: The program provides graduates who contribute to social institutions.

Criterion 4: Societal need for the program is reflected by:

   a) evidence for private, public and/or not-for-profit sector needs for persons with particular knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values required to make social institutions work.

   b) evidence of the need at national, state, and local levels for persons who can be informed and responsible citizens.

Standard V: The program uses an identified plan for systematic evaluation and assessment of goals and purposes.

Criterion 5: The program has quality control processes that are used:
a) to evaluate how well the program is achieving its strategic goals.

b) to monitor on an ongoing basis the design and delivery of the curriculum/curricula as informed by student outcomes.

c) for ongoing evaluation of student outcomes. This includes but is not limited to formative and summative assessments of student learning. As appropriate, other outcomes should include academic or professional achievements; job placement and career progression; alumni satisfaction with the program; employer satisfaction with program graduates' performance; graduates' performance on professional licensure exams; post-doctoral placement of graduate students; publications, grant awards, and creative works of undergraduate and graduate students, etc.

d) to monitor the quality of student advising.

e) to determine needed changes in tactics, policies, curriculum, and course contents.

f) to implement the self-determined changes in a timely manner.

**Standard VI: The program accomplishes effectively its educational and related purposes**

Criterion 6: The *effectiveness* of the program is reflected by:

a) improvements in the design and delivery of the curriculum based on assessments of new knowledge in the discipline, student outcomes, societal need, and demand for the program.

b) measures to maintain or improve high quality student advising.

c) programmatic features that foster an appreciation of cultural and intellectual diversity.

d) linkages with other programs, including articulation agreements, co-sponsored academic majors, minors, or concentrations, joint appointments of faculty members, cross-listed courses, student internships, practica, or field-based projects with organizations outside the University, resources shared with other academic units, dual degrees, and 3-2, 4-1, or other undergraduate + graduate degree arrangements.
APPENDIX C: Request for External Reviewer Nominations

MEMORANDUM

TO: __________________, Chair, Department of __________________

FROM: __________________, Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning

DATE:

SUBJ: Request for (Program) APR External Reviewer Nominations

The University of Vermont Faculty Senate, in cooperation with the Provost’s Office, has developed procedures to identify and contact external persons for periodic reviews of academic programs at UVM. I request your assistance in implementing these procedures.

As an initial step, please provide me with the following information:

(1) The names of seven or eight individuals and their CVs from which I could identify highly qualified persons who could provide a rigorous review of your program. The list should include faculty from distinguished universities with programs in your discipline that embody key elements of your program and its aspirations for the future.

(2) Suggestions regarding any special areas of expertise that would be important for the review of your programs.

(3) Preferred dates for the site visit which shall occur between _________ and _____________. Generally, the reviews begin with a working breakfast and conclude with an exit interview on the second day. (Please refer to the attached sample site visit itinerary.) The site visit should not conflict with national professional meetings or previous program commitments.

Please submit this information at your earliest convenience but no later than ______________, so that the Academic Program Review team can select potential external reviewers. I will then forward the names of those individuals to you for your approval. Please contact me if you have any questions.

cc: __________________, Chair, Faculty Senate Curricular Affairs Committee
    __________________, Dean of the Graduate College (if grad program)

Attachment: Sample Site Visit Itinerary
APPENDIX D: *Sample* Site Visit Itinerary

**AGENDA**

*Degree Program Names*
Program Review Site Visit
*Dates of Site Visit*

**Day One**

External review team arrives

Evening  
*Optional* Working Dinner Meeting at Hotel

External Reviewers only

**Day Two**

8:00 a.m.  Welcome Breakfest Meeting at Hotel

External Reviewers
Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning
Program Chair/Director
Faculty Senate Curricular Affairs Internal Review Subcommittee

9:30 a.m.  Meeting with Program Chair/Director

10:30 a.m. – 12 noon  Meeting Groups (45 – 60 minute slots arranged in advance by department/program[s])

Office of the Dean of Graduate College
School/College Dean and/or Associate Dean
Undergraduate and/or Graduate Committees
Faculty Groups by program, rank, or specialization
Undergraduate Majors
Graduates residing in the Burlington area
Graduate Students
Graduate Assistants
Tour of relevant facilities
Representatives from related programs

12:15 – 1:30 p.m.  Working Lunch with Faculty
*(Waterman Manor Restaurant)*

External Reviewers with up to 8 Faculty

1:45 – 5:30 p.m.  Meeting Groups Continued (see 8:30 a.m.)
6:00 p.m.  *Optional* Dinner at area restaurant

   External Reviewers hosted by Program/Department

   ~or~

   Working Dinner at Hotel

   External Reviewers only

**Day Three**

8:00 a.m.  External Reviewers picked up at hotel

8:30 a.m. – 12 noon  Meeting Groups Continued (See Day Two)

12:00 – 1:15 p.m.  Working Lunch  
*(Waterman Manor Restaurant)*

   External Reviewers
   Faculty

1:30 p.m.  External Reviewers Escorted to Private Work Space

1:30 – 3:00 p.m.  External Reviewers Private Work Time

3:00 – 4:00 p.m.  Exit Interview/Preliminary Report

   External Reviewers
   Internal Review Subcommittee
   Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning
   Program Representative(s)

4:00 p.m.  External Reviewers Transported to Hotel/Airport
Frequently Asked Questions:

What is an appropriate length for a self-study report?
It depends on the number of programs being included in the review. Generally, the report should be approximately 12 pages. Appendices may be attached to the report or submitted separately.

What is the process for gathering data?
Contact the Director of Office of Institutional Research (see page 19) for assistance. Refer to the Guidelines for Preparation of a Self-Study Report for suggested data to be included.

What do I do with the self-study report when it’s completed?
The report and accompanying documents are to be uploaded to the program’s Sharepoint site by either the program or the APR Coordinator. In either case, the APR Coordinator (see page 19) should be notified when the self-study report is completed.

What is the process for selecting external reviewers?
The program will be notified to submit names and CVs of suggested reviewers (see page 14). This list will then be ranked by the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning, the Dean of the Graduate College, and the Chair of the Faculty Senate Curricular Affairs Committee. The APR Coordinator will contact the ranked reviewers to determine availability. The program will be notified when two individuals have accepted our invitation to serve as external reviewers.

What is the process for selecting internal reviewers?
The Internal Review Subcommittee consists of two committee members appointed by the Chair of the Curricular Affairs Committee. For reviews that include a significant number of programs and/or require a member of the graduate faculty, a third member may be appointed.

What is the department/program responsible for?
The department/program is responsible for preparing the self-study report, providing a list of suggested external reviewers, working with the APR Coordinator in developing the site visit itinerary, hosting the external reviewers, and participating in the summary and two-year follow-up meetings.

Who pays for what?
The Provost’s Office covers all hotel and meal expenses for the external reviewers except the optional* dinner on the second day and the lunch with faculty on the third day.
How are the external reviewers paid?
The Provost’s Office handles all budget matters concerning the external reviewers.

Who makes the lunch reservations?
Either the APR Coordinator or the program may make reservations.

Who attends the dinner on the first evening?
An optional working dinner at the hotel is built into the schedule to allow time for the external reviewers to meet before the official start of the site visit. UVM program and administrative officials do not attend.

What happens after the external reviewers’ site visit?
The external reviewers are given up to six weeks to submit their report. This report is distributed to the program and the dean(s) for factual corrections. After receiving the program’s input, the internal review subcommittee will draft a report and present their findings and recommendation to the full Curricular Affairs Committee (CAC). Following the vote of the CAC, the APR Coordinator schedules a summary meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to review and discuss the key findings of the program review. A summary memo is then drafted to document the main findings of the meeting, and to set expectations for follow-up in two years.

What happens with the APR Summary Memo?
The APR Summary Memo is signed by the Provost, the Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning, and the Chair of the Curricular Affairs Committee. Signed copies are distributed to the summary meeting participants, and uploaded to the program’s Sharepoint site.

What is the purpose of the two-year follow-up meeting?
A follow-up meeting will be scheduled two years from the summary meeting. The purpose of the two-year follow-up meeting is to review the findings and recommendations in the APR Summary Memo and to discuss the current status of the program and progress on identified goals and objectives. A second report will be drafted, signed and distributed. Upon completion and distribution of the second report, the APR will be considered closed with the next review to occur in approximately six years (eight-year cycle).

*Dinner on the second day, hosted by the program under review at its own expense, is optional. However, programs typically choose to host this dinner.*
Contacts

For matters of policy and procedure:
Brian Reed
Associate Provost for Teaching and Learning
352 Waterman Bldg.
Phone: 656-2232
Brian.reed@uvm.edu

For questions about metrics and data:
Alex Yin
Director, Office of Institutional Research
440 College Street
Phone: 656-4418
Alexander.yin@uvm.edu

For logistical/coordination matters:
Catherine Symans
Academic Program Review Coordinator
348 Waterman Bldg.
Phone: 656-0903
Catherine.symans@uvm.edu

For Faculty Senate curricular affairs matters:
Laura Almstead
Chair, Curricular Affairs Committee
Department of Plant Biology
307 Jeffords Hall
Phone: 656-2919
Laura Almstead

Academic Program Review Web site:
http://www.uvm.edu/~provost/?Page=academicprogramreview.html