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**Academic Program Review Process**

**Guidelines**

**May, 2019**

**Academic Program Review Process**

***UNC Charlotte’s Academic Program Review process is intended to:***

* Assess the quality and effectiveness of academic programs and units
* Stimulate program planning and improvement
* Ensure that program goals are consistent with University strategic priorities
* Promote fairness and efficiency in the allocation of academic resources
* Support planning and budgeting
* Respond to requirements for self-assessment from SACSCOC and other agencies

At minimum, the academic program review process should include: 1) an examination of the function of the program, department, or unit; 2) a self-assessment; 3) an evaluation from key stakeholders; and 4) a final report including an overview of the review process, major findings and an action plan. The cycle of review concludes two years later with a report describing the actions taken as a result of the review.

Academic program reviews should be conducted every 5-7 years and no less than every 10 years. Considerations that might lead to a delay beyond 7 years include a recent transition to a new director, recent significant organizational change, and compliance or other certification schedules. Every unit reporting to the Provost should have a plan for the academic program review for their area(s), specifying timeline, process, level of review, and participants (internal/external). The Office of Assessment and Accreditation offers consultation and support on the development of the program review.

The academic program review process will extend over two academic semesters. Some departments will begin the review process in the fall semester and complete in the spring; others will begin in the spring semester and finish the following fall semester (**see timeline in Appendix A)**. The process is the same for both start times, and comprises the phases described below. Reviews of accredited programs will be scheduled to synchronize with the accreditation reviews of their professional programs.

***Process***

***Self-study***

The self-study should provide an assessment of the quality and effectiveness of programs, with attention to improvements in meeting student learning outcomes, strategic plans, and analyses of teaching, research, and service activities. How each department approaches these analyses will vary, but the department should strive to provide a comprehensive review. The self-study should identify strengths, weaknesses, emerging opportunities, and the impact of trends and economic forces that support or impede achievement of the program’s mission, vision, goals, and objectives. Descriptions for each of the self-study components are provided on pages 4-6.

In general, the self-study will include the following broad sections:

* **Description** of the department: size, scope of teaching and learning, research, and service activities; departmental operations and resources;
* **Analysis** of: student enrollment, curriculum, instructional methods, faculty preparation and development; scholarly activities, publications, external funding, academic support services, and an assessment of quality and effectiveness demonstrated by student-learning outcomes;
* **Recommendations and an action plan** that includes specific steps for the department to take to capitalize on strengths and minimize weaknesses. The action plan should include goals and priorities for the next five years, a rationale for the recommendations; and an analysis of projected risks, benefits, and outcomes.

**Preparing the Self-Study**

An outline of the elements that are generally included in a self-study report is provided below. ***Although this is not a prescribed format, departments are strongly urged to adopt this structure or develop a similar structure***.

# **Self-Study**

## **Introduction**

The introduction should provide an overview of the self-study contents, names of external reviewers, and the timeframe over which the study was conducted. The introduction may also include information about previous reviews and the department’s responses to recommendations from the last review. If there have been significant curricular changes since the last review, those may be discussed here or in the body of the report.

## **Program Description**

Begin with a description of the department and a description of peer and aspirational institutions. Describe the department’s primary purpose, key functions, and impact. Convey a sense of the size, quality, and scope of departmental activities, including teaching, research, and service. This portion of the report will generally include:

* Mission statement
* Goals, and specific objectives relating to those goals
* Degree programs offered
* Description of peer and aspirational institutions
* Measures, metrics, or indicators used to assess progress towards goals
* Departmental structure and administration
* Resources and Needs
  + Faculty and support personnel
  + Infrastructure (e.g., annual budget, space, equipment, library holdings)
  + Expenditures and allocations
  + Discussion of extent to which resources currently meet needs

## **Student Profiles**

* The following data that are supplied by institutional research should be discussed
  + Number of enrolled students disaggregated by race and sex
  + Retention and graduation rates
* The following data should be collected by your department and discussed
  + Number of students who received honors, awards, or authored publications
  + Job placement rates, licensure rates, and outcomes of certification exams
  + Survey data assessing students’, alumni’s, and employers’ satisfaction or experience

## **Curriculum and Student Support**

* Curriculum Review
  + State expected student learning outcomes for each program
  + Describe assessment plans for each learning outcome
  + Create a curriculum map for each program (see Appendix B for instructions, an example and a template)
  + Describe opportunities students have to experience high impact practices (ePortfolios, learning communities, diversity/global learning, service learning, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments, and community based learning)
  + The Chancellor’s Diversity Plan indicates that, “departments and programs should… actively pursue efforts to design and deliver curricula that will equip students with skills and knowledge for informed citizenship and to provide students exposure to and consideration of diverse perspectives.” Programs of study are also encouraged to develop a student learning outcome related to diversity. Discuss ways in which students are exposed to and consider diverse perspectives in your area.
  + Undergraduate and graduate research opportunities
  + Discuss ways in which faculty teaching data (supplied by institutional research) influences delivery of the curriculum
  + Describe your use of online instruction and discuss how instructional formats influence your delivery of the curriculum.
* Approach to advising
  + Percentage of faculty participating in mentoring or collaborative efforts with colleagues

## **Faculty**

* Current research and scholarship accomplishments of the faculty (patents, publications, honors, presentations, and scholarly work)
* External funding (applied & awarded, gifts and donations)
* Interdisciplinary research projects
* Mentorship and support of junior faculty
* Service to department and University (partnership/sponsorship)
* Service to profession (new teaching methods, curriculum design, curriculum review)
* Other external service

## **Stakeholder Feedback**

Departments are encouraged to elicit participation from a wide range of stakeholders Information collected from faculty, staff, graduate students, undergraduate majors, alumni and employers of alumni will contribute to a rich description of the department.

## **Peer and Aspirational Comparison**

Provide a concluding analysis of how your department compares to peer and aspirational institutions in key areas of functioning including curriculum, student success, and scholarly productivity.

**Recommendations**

## The self-study should conclude with clear and specific recommendations for actions the department could take to capitalize on its strengths and minimize its weaknesses. This section provides an opportunity for the department to use the information gathered and the analyses conducted in the self-study process to think strategically about its goals and the specific steps needed to reach those goals. The recommendations should encompass the [short-term, (one year), the intermediate-term, (5 years), and the long-term, (10 years)] and include:

## Actions which need to occur in terms of the program, students, faculty, facilities, and resources (financial and personnel)

## Benchmarks that can be used to gauge departmental performance, effectiveness, and efficiency

## Identifying recommendations within the control of the program and those that require action from Dean, Provost or higher levels. Each recommendation should be made in two possible scenarios:

## With existing resources, including the possibility of reallocating resources within the department

## With one time funding resources

# ***External Review (outside of the department/college)***

As part of the self-study process, departments should solicit feedback from external reviewers. The external reviewers should be outside constituencies including faculty, staff, students, and where appropriate alumni and community members who the department believes would contribute significant feedback (**see External Reviewer’s guiding questions in Appendix C)**. The final selection is the responsibility of the department head/Dean, who will contact the external reviewers. The external review report will include (1) program strengths, (2) areas for improvement, and (3) recommendations.

# ***Action/Strategic Plan***

The academic program review process concludes with the development of an action plan. The action plan will include: (1) goals and objectives, (2) specific actions for the department to take to achieve the goals, (3) metrics or performance measures that will be used to measure the extent the goals have been met, (4) cost, (5) and a timeline for implementation (**See Appendix C**) . An update on program improvement will be requested two years after the program review.

# ***Supporting Documentation***

To conduct a thorough self-study, the department will need to obtain data from the University’s data systems, the Office of Institutional Research, and other departmental records or files. Not all of the data relied upon during the process of the self-study will need to be included in the self-study report, but it is expected that certain data elements will be appended to the report. The data collected should be the last five years. (e.g. Undergraduate and graduate student headcounts, undergraduate and graduate student profile, faculty rank, graduate student persistence rates, retention and graduation rates, licensure rates, certification exams, job placement rates, number of degrees awarded, and results of any surveys assessing student satisfaction, student experience, alumni, and employers).

A final copy of the following documents should be submitted to the Provost and the Office of Assessment and Accreditation:

* self-study
* external review feedback
* action plan
* 2-year follow-up report to the action plan

**Appendix A** - **Timeline for Academic Program Review**

The academic program review process will extend over two academic semesters. Some departments will begin the review process in the fall semester and complete the process in the spring; other departments will begin in the spring semester and finish the following fall semester.

**Phase I - Self Study**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Step/Process** | **\*Fall Start** | **\*Spring Start** | **Person(s) responsible** | **Comments/Specific Tasks** |
| 1. Confirm departments to be reviewed | Ongoing | Ongoing | Director of Program Review | Director of Program Review will send notification by email |
| 1. Notify department and establish schedule | September | February | Director of Program Review Department/Dean | Dean and department agree on plan and schedule for review |
| 1. Initial departmental meeting | September | February | Director of Program Review/ Departmental Self-Study Team / Institutional Research | Discuss process, review self-study guidelines, survey resources and tools, and identify specific needs |
| 1. Department gathers information | September- October | February-March | Department |  |
| 1. Follow-up departmental meeting | October | March | Director of Program Review/ Departmental Self-Study Team | Review departmental data Discuss additional data the department may collect |
| 1. Conduct the self-study | October-January | March-April | Department | Director of Program Review meets periodically with self-study team to answer questions |

**Phase III – 2-year Follow Up**

**Phase II - External Review /Quality Improvement Action Plan**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Step/Process** | **Fall Start** | **Spring Start** | **Person(s) responsible** | **Comments/Specific Tasks** |
| 1. Feedback from External reviewers | February | October | Dean/Department head | Collect feedback from external reviewers |
| 1. Priorities and recommendations meeting | February | October | Dean/Department head | Depends on report contents and recommendations: may involve a series of individual or group conversations among members of the unit and administration |
| 1. Development of action plan 2. Submit completed self-study, external evaluation, recommendations and action plan to the Provost and the Director of Academic Planning in the Office of Assessment and Accreditation | One month after the priorities and recommendations meeting | | Dean/Department head | The action plan includes:  (1) goals  (2) specific actions for the unit to take to achieve goals  (3) metrics/performance measures to ascertain goals have been met  (4) timeline for implementation |
| 1. Complete 2-year follow up report and submit plan to the Provost and the Director of Academic Planning in the Office of Assessment and Accreditation | Two years after completion of program review | | Dean/Department head | Revisit action plan and assess the progress that has been made |

**Appendix B: Curriculum Mapping Guide**

**Adapted from Rochester Institute of Technology Office of Educational Effectiveness:** [**https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/outcomes/curriculum-mapping**](https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/outcomes/curriculum-mapping)

**What does a curriculum map look like?**

It's a table with one column for each learning outcome and one row for each course or required event/experience (or vice versa: each row contains a course and each column lists a learning outcome). The following is an excerpt from hypothetical biology program curriculum map.

Key: "I"=Introduced; "R"=reinforced and opportunity to practice; "M"=mastery at the senior or exit level; "A"=assessment evidence collected

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Courses and Experiences** | **Program Learning Outcomes** | | | |
| **Apply the scientific method** | **Develop laboratory techniques** | **Diagram and explain cellular processes** | **Awareness of careers and job opportunities** |
| BIOL 101 | I | I |  | I |
| BIOL 202 | R | R | I |  |
| BIOL 303 | R | M, A | R |  |
| BIOL 404 | M, A |  | M, A | R |
| Exit interview |  |  |  | A |

**How is a curriculum map created?**

**Step 1:** Faculty members begin with:

* the program's intended student learning outcomes
* recommended and required courses
* other required events/experiences (e.g., internships, research, co-op)

**Step 2:** Create the "map" in the form of a table (see option provided).

**Step 3:** Enter the student learning outcomes and courses and events/experiences into the map that currently address those outcomes.

**Step 4:** Enter an indicator of level for each learning outcomes and course/experience

* "I" indicates students are **introduced** to the outcome
* "R" indicates the outcome is **reinforced** and students have opportunities to practice
* "M" indicates students have had sufficient practice and now demonstrate **mastery**
* "A" indicates where evidence might be collected and evaluated for program-level assessment (collection might occur at the beginning and end of the program if comparisons across years are desired).

**Step 5:** Faculty members analyze the curriculum map. They discuss and revise so that each outcome is introduced, reinforced/practiced, and then mastered. In addition, each outcome should have at least one "A" to indicate that evidence can be collected for program-level assessment. Not every outcome is assessed every semester, the timeline for collection will be indicated on the assessment plan.

**What are some curriculum mapping best practices?**

* Build in practice and multiple learning trials for students: introduce, reinforce, master. Students perform best if they are introduced to the learning outcome early in the curriculum and then given sufficient practice and reinforcement before evaluation of their level of mastery takes place.
* Use the curriculum map to identify the learning opportunities (e.g., assignments, activities) that produce the program's outcomes.
* Allow faculty members to teach to their strengths (each person need not cover all outcomes in a single course). "Hand off" particular outcomes to those best suited for the task.
* Ask if the program is trying to do too much. Eliminate outcomes that are not highly-valued and then focus on highly-valued outcomes by including them in multiple courses. (The eliminated outcomes can still be course-level outcomes)
* Set priorities. Everyone working together toward common outcomes can increase the likelihood that students will meet or exceed expectations.
* Communicate: Publish the curriculum map and distribute to students and faculty. Each faculty member can make explicit connections across courses for students. For example, at the beginning of the course or unit, a faculty member can remind students what they were introduced to in another course and explain how the current course will have them practice or expand their knowledge. Students do not always make those connections by themselves.

**Curriculum Map Template (add rows or columns as needed)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **LEARNING OUTCOMES**  (I = Introduce; R = Reinforce; M = Mastery and A = Assessment Opportunity) | **REQUIRED COURSES and EXPERIENCES** | | | | | | | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| SLO1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| SLO2 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| SLO3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| SLO4 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| SLO5 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Sample Curriculum Map**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **LEARNING OUTCOMES**  (I = Introduce; R = Reinforce; M = Mastery and A = Assessment Opportunity) | **REQUIRED COURSES** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 101 | 102 | 201 | 220 | 250 | 301 | 302 | 303 | 401 | 402 | 435 | 490 |
| Demonstrate communication skills appropriate to field. | I |  |  |  | I | M |  |  | R |  | M | M, A |
| Demonstrate knowledge of historic and global contexts. | I | I | R |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | R,A |  |
| Demonstrate knowledge of biological bases of behavior. |  | I |  |  | R | R | M, A |  |  |  |  |  |
| Outline major ideas behind X perspective. | I | I | R |  | R,A |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Distinguish between major tests and choose appropriate tests for specific situations. | I | A |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | R |  | M |
| Develop original research question that builds on an existing body of knowledge. | I | R |  | R |  |  | R |  |  |  |  | M, A |
| Select methodology appropriate to a research question. |  |  |  |  |  | I |  |  | R, A |  |  | M |
| Document references and cite in correct style. |  |  |  |  |  | I | I | I | R |  | M | M, A |
| Demonstrate understanding of ethical principles. | I |  |  | R, A |  |  |  |  | R |  |  | M |
| Evaluate real world examples by applying critical thinking skills. | I | I | R | R | R | R | R | R | M | R, A |  | M |

**Appendix C - External Reviewer’s Guiding Questions**

The following questions are provided to help external reviewers address the key components of a program review. Select and answer the questions that you feel are appropriate.

**Questions to guide analysis of the department’s overview**

1. How does the department define its mission? (What is its scholarly focus? Who does the department serve, and who benefits from the department’s activities?)
2. Does the department mission statement reflect the department’s purpose, primary activities, and stakeholders?
   1. What are the current, relevant critical issues and approaches in the field, and how are they reflected or addressed in the department’s mission statement?
   2. How do the department’s short and long-term goals support the department’s mission?
3. How does the department evaluate its progress in meeting its short and long-term goals? What measures does the department use? How is the progress communicated or recorded?
4. How does the department contribute to the mission of the college and University?
5. How are the department’s mission and goals communicated to faculty, staff, and students?

**Questions to guide the analysis of department resources**

1. Is the equipment available to the department adequate? Is there sufficient operating support (maintenance contracts, technical staff, etc.)?
2. Is the space currently available to the department appropriately allocated?
3. Is faculty and staff support now available to the department appropriate?
4. What are the department’s current hiring plans for the next five years?
5. What efforts have been made to diversity faculty and staff?
6. How does the department support and mentor junior faculty? How is the review of junior faculty conducted?
7. How does the department evaluate senior faculty members?
8. How are department resources (equipment, space, staff support) allocated? Should they be reallocated?

**Questions to guide the analysis of programs**

1. Is the curriculum for majors coherent and well-articulated from the introductory through advanced levels? How does it stand up by comparison to the norms in high quality programs around the country, including the breadth of curricular offerings and the size of courses?
2. Is the use of lecturers well-conceived and managed?
3. Is the use of graduate teaching assistants well-conceived and managed?
4. How does the department assess student learning outcomes for its majors and minors? Assessment of student learning involves: a) making the department’s expectations explicit; b) setting appropriate criteria by which to rate achievement of expectations; c) gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence to determine how well student performance matches expectations; and, d) using the resulting information to document and improve the department’s programs.
5. How are student learning outcomes communicated to faculty, staff, and students?
6. On the basis of available data measuring student satisfaction and student learning outcomes, what does the department judge to be the main successes and shortcomings of its undergraduate and graduate programs?
7. How does the department integrate diversity and inclusion in the curriculum?
8. What does the department do to increase its visibility?
9. What changes have been made in the undergraduate and graduate curriculum in the past five years? Why did the department make these changes—on the basis of what evidence? (student, alumni, and employer survey results)
10. To what extent does the curriculum address:
    1. The projected needs of graduates
    2. Prospects for student employment
    3. The need for instruction in this subject in other parts of the university
11. What strengths, weaknesses, problems, and opportunities for improvement do you see in the existing curricula?

**Questions to guide the analysis of teaching, advising, and mentoring**

1. What is the standard teaching load of faculty by rank and status, and what is the basis on which reductions occur?
2. How have student course evaluations been used to improve teaching? What specific improvements have been made on the basis of course evaluations?
3. What effort is made to stay apprised of pedagogical best practices in the discipline or field?
4. What are the goals of the department’s advising of its majors?
5. How is advising organized? How are advising responsibilities distributed among the faculty?
6. How are faculty advisors trained? How is the effectiveness of faculty advising evaluated and rewarded?
7. Has the department conducted studies of undergraduate students’ satisfaction with departmental advisement? Graduate students’ satisfaction?

**Questions to guide the analysis of research and scholarship**

1. What provisions are made to support faculty to engage in scholarship/research?
2. What external level of support (to the department/program) exists to assist faculty in scholarship/research? Does the department have plans to try to increase this level of support? If so, describe how.
3. What are the research strengths of the department? How does departmental research activities compare to peer institutions?
4. Do members of the department engage in interdisciplinary research projects?

**Questions to guide the analysis of faculty service**

1. In light of the data presented on faculty service, are the faculty sufficiently engaged in the work of the department? Is the work evenly spread among faculty?
2. Are the faculty sufficiently represented on College and University committees and task forces?
3. Do the faculty demonstrate a commitment to the community outside the university?
4. Do the faculty adequately serve, and lead, their professional organizations?

**Appendix D – Action/Strategic Plan**

**Program: Department: Date:**

**Recommendations (Goals):** Describe 3-5 improvements you envision for your department over the next 5 years

**Strategic Actions (Objectives):** For each goal, describe one or more objectives that can be completed to achieve the goal

**Measures:** Describe the data that will be used to determine the extent to which each objective was achieved.

**Performance outcomes:** Identify who is expected to demonstrate the objective achievement, to what degree of completion, when, and under what conditions. Example: The department is expected to raise 80% of the funds in 2016, assuming continuing levels of state support.

**Resources needed (c=current, r= reallocation, or n=new):**

**Costs:**

**Person(s) Responsible:**

**Timeline:**

**Impact on Program Improvements (This section will be completed two years after the program review is conducted):**

**Appendix E – Mid-Cycle Report to Strategic Plan Template**

**Department: Unit: Date:**

**Goals:** Restate the 3-5 recommendations you proposed in your action/strategic plan.

**Objectives:** Restate the strategic actions proposed in your action/strategic plan.

**Measures:** Describe the data used to determine the extent to which each strategic actions was achieved.

**Performance outcomes:** Restate who was expected to demonstrate each achievement, to what degree of completion, when, and under what conditions. Example: The unit was expected to raise 80% of the funds in 2016, assuming continuing levels of state support.

**Assessment Findings and Results** – For each objective state findings and explain the extent to which performance outcomes have been met.

**Communicating Findings -** Describe how your findings will be shared with stakeholders.

**Costs -** List fiscal, human, or other resources needed to meet remaining goals.

**Person(s) Responsible:**

**Timeline:** Describe the steps that will be taken over the next two years to complete the improvements you proposed.

**Sources**

Hanover Research (2012). Best Practices in Academic Program Review. Retrieved from

<http://www.asa.mnscu.edu/academicprograms/program_planning/Hanover%20Research%20Best%20Practices%20in%20Academic%20Program%20Review%202012.pdf>

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Indian Polytechnic Institute.

Rochester Institute of Technology Office of Educational Effectiveness: Curriculum Mapping Guide Retrieved from:<https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/outcomes/curriculum-mapping>

Virginia Technical College (2016). Academic Program Review Self-Study Report. Retrieved from

<http://assessment.vt.edu/Academic_Program_Review.html>

**Additional Helpful Information**

<https://www.swarthmore.edu/assessment/department-reviews>

**Contacts**

**For assistance with the academic program review contact:**

Karen Singer-Freeman, Director of Academic Planning and Assessment

Office of Assessment and Accreditation

Fretwell, 314

704.687.6174

[ksingerf@uncc.edu](mailto:ksingerf@uncc.edu)

**For program data request contact:**

Office of Institutional Research

Colvard South 1028

704.687.1294

<http://ir.uncc.edu/directory>