ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION

Academic Program Review Process

Guidelines – For Programs Without Specialized Accreditation

November 2024

Programs Without Specialized Accreditation from an External Accreditation Body

The academic program review process requires two parts: Campus Review and Evaluation of Existing Academic Programs and Internal Programmatic Reflection. Both have the same intended objectives:

- To assess the quality and effectiveness of academic programs and units
- To stimulate program planning and improvement
- To ensure that program goals are consistent with university strategic priorities

Each academic degree program will be reviewed on a predetermined seven-year cycle. When extenuating circumstances necessitate a change in the schedule, a formal request must be submitted from the college Dean to the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics who will confer with the Provost.

Campus Review and Evaluation of Existing Academic Programs

The primary purpose of the Campus Review and Evaluation process is to maintain and strengthen the quality of UNC Charlotte's academic programs by auditing the quality, rigor, and productivity of existing degree programs and developing strategies for ongoing improvement. Reviews are intended to be helpful and supportive in the following areas:

1. recognizing strengths and achievements;
2. identifying areas in need of attention; and
3. promoting goal setting and planning.

The review and evaluation should primarily provide perspectives useful to the academic units whose programs are under review and to their respective college deans. They should also give those outside the academic unit an informed overview of the strengths, challenges, and needs of academic units.

<u>Programs Under Campus Review and Evaluation</u>

The primary focus of the Campus Review and Evaluation is on majors or degree programs. However, during each review and evaluation, relevant questions may also be asked about any minors, concentrations, or certificates offered in the academic unit, and about any significant course commitments of the unit that fall outside of the programmatic review process.

<u>Evaluation Criteria</u>

The Campus Review and Evaluation shall evaluate the following:

1. Student Demand: Current and projected student demand, as measured by enrollments in the majors and degrees produced.
2. Workforce Demand: Current and projected workforce demand, as indicated by projected job growth and existing data on student employment outcomes.
3. Student Outcomes: Metrics such as persistence, graduation rates, time to degree, and post-graduation success where possible.
4. Program Costs and Productivity: Includes research, scholarship, creative activity, and student credit hours produced compared to the number and cost of faculty and staff.
5. Contribution to Critical Professions: The program's contribution to professions vital to the health, educational attainment, and quality of life of North Carolinians.
6. Additional Considerations: Any other factors identified by the Chancellor, President, or program under review.

Procedures for the Campus Review and Evaluation

1. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics will provide the following data on all undergraduate and graduate programs as required by UNC Policy 400.1 and UNC Charlotte Academic Policy: Academic Program Review:

    a. Student Demand: enrollments in the majors and degrees produced since the last review;
    b. Workforce Demand: data, where available, on post-graduation student success and projected job growth;
    c. Student Outcomes: persistence, graduation rates, time to degree, and post-graduation success since the last review; and
    d. Program Costs and Productivity: research, scholarship, creative activity, and student credit hours produced compared to the number and cost of faculty and staff.

2. The unit participating in the review and evaluation will provide a report reflecting on the measures provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics and the program's contribution to professions vital to the health, educational attainment, and quality of life of North Carolinians. The report must also include any other factors identified by the Chancellor and the UNC System President.

3. The Department Chair or School Director, in consultation with the Dean, and, for graduate programs, the Graduate Dean, will develop a response and action plan for the program to include descriptions of actions planned and actions already taken in response to the data contained in the unit report. The response and action plan should address any data trends or significant data changes over time, improvements planned, and a suggested timeline for the improvements. The response and action plan should be considered and discussed with the academic unit's faculty.

4. A completed response and action plan shall be submitted to the Dean by the Department Chair or School Director for formal review. Deans will examine the reflection

report and response and action plan and submit those items and a one-page summary to the Provost, the Graduate Dean (for graduate programs only), the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics, and the Director of Strategic Planning and Assessment.

5. At the conclusion of the Campus Review and Evaluation process, the Provost, and Chancellor will examine the review materials. The Chancellor, based on the results of the Campus Review and Evaluation materials, may take action to expand, contract, or eliminate an academic program based on the review. The Chancellor's action will include one of the following determinations:

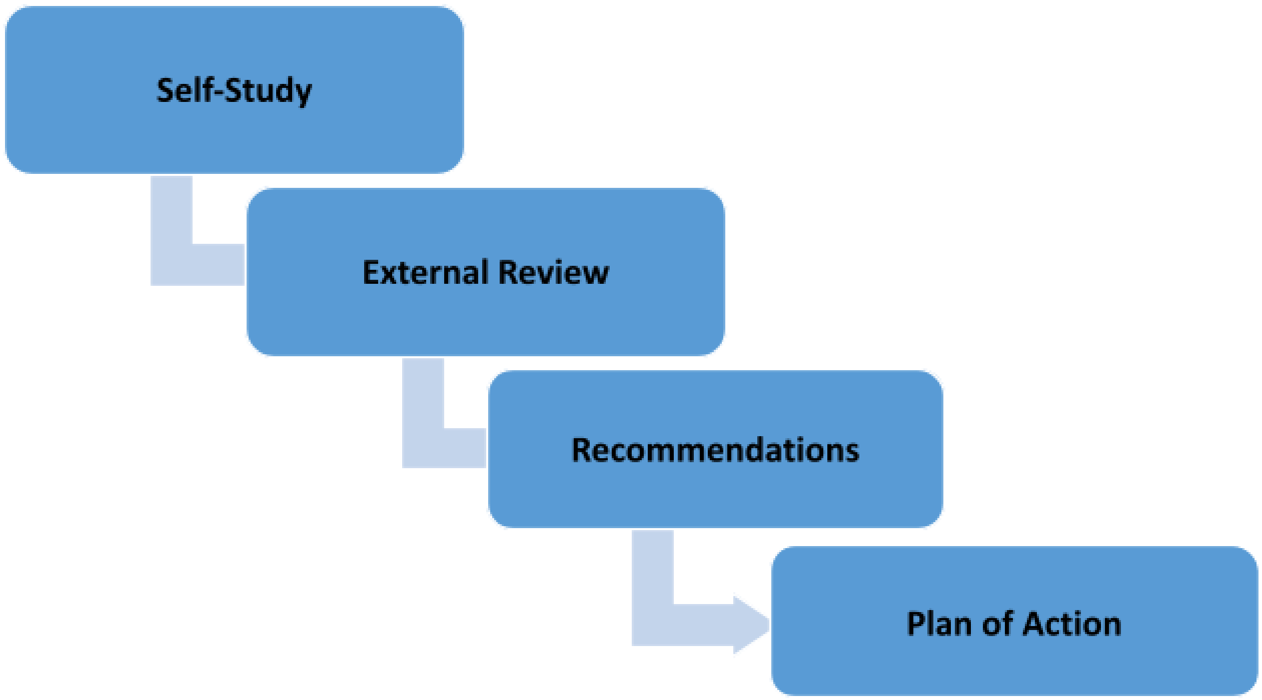
    a. Complete: No additional action required until next academic program review;
    b. Monitoring: Monitoring required for progress on areas defined; or
    c. Revisions Required: Programmatic revisions are required which may include program consolidation or discontinuation.

Internal Programmatic Reflection

At minimum, the Internal Programmatic Reflection 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 Internal Programmatic Reflection will coincide with the Campus Review and Evaluation of Existing Academic Programs.

The process comprises the phases described below.

Internal Programmatic Reflection 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. In general, the self-study will include the following broad sections:

- **Description** of how the department is organized, who its faculty and students are, what its activities are, how productive it is, and how it spends its budget;

- **Analysis** of the quality and effectiveness of its program(s);

- **Recommendations** that include specific steps for the department to take to capitalize on its strengths and minimize its weaknesses.

- **An action plan** that includes goals and priorities for the next seven years.

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***.

I. Self-Study

A. 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.

B. 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
- Resources and expenditures
    - 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

C. Student Profiles

The following data may 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

D. Curriculum

Curriculum Review

- State student learning outcome assessment results for programs for the past three years
- 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)
- Undergraduate and graduate research opportunities
- Discuss ways in which faculty teaching data (supplied by Office of Institutional Research) influences delivery of the curriculum

- Describe your use of online instruction and discuss how instructional formats influence your delivery of the curriculum.

Optional: Create a curriculum map for each program (see Curriculum Mapping Guide posted on the website for instructions, an example and a template)

E. 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

F. 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.

G. Peer and Aspirational Comparison

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

H. 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 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

II. 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 A)**. 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.

The unit must include a debrief meeting that includes the Dean or designee, Provost or designee, and the external reviewers. The external reviewers must provide a written external review report of their findings.

III. Response and Action Plan

The Internal Programmatic Reflection concludes with the development of a response and action plan. The response 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 B**) .

IV. 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 seven 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

Timeline for Campus Review and Evaluation

Summary reports for Campus Review and Evaluation and Internal Programmatic Reflection of Programs are submitted annually to the university's Board of Trustees in September.

What?	Who?	When?
1. Confirms the programs to be reviewed 2. Notifies the department and communicates the schedule 3. Identifies, assembles, provides, and reviews the data with participating programs	Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Analytics	November - January
1. Analyze data, complete reflections, and produce reports a. Campus Review and Evaluation b. Internal Programmatic Reflection 2. Complete external evaluation review	Programs participating in the review process	February - March
Develop and submit a response and action plan to the Dean	Department Chair or School Director, in consultation with the Graduate Dean for graduate programs	April-May
Debrief meeting with the external reviewer	Dean or designee/Provost or designee/External reviewer/ Department Chair or School Director	April-May
Examines and submits a response to the action plan (a one-page summary for each program) to the Provost and to the Director of Strategic Planning and Assessment (3 weeks)	Dean	June
1. Examine all materials and make a determination about each program (3 weeks) 2. Communicates decision to the Dean and Department Chair or School Director 3. Prepares summary reports 4. Communicates decision to the Board of Trustees	Chancellor and Provost Provost Associate Provost for IE & A Chancellor	July August August August
Reviews summary reports	Board of Trustees	September (last week)

Curriculum Mapping Guide

Adapted from Rochester Institute of Technology Office of Educational Effectiveness:
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

	REQUIRED COURSES

(I = Introduce; R = Reinforce; M = Mastery and A = Assessment Opportunity)	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 A - 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?

    a. 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?

    b. 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 seven 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 seven 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:
    a. The projected needs of graduates
    b. Prospects for student employment
    c. 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. Considering 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 B – Action/Strategic Plan

Program: **Department:** **Date:**

Recommendations (Goals): Describe 3-5 improvements you envision for your department over the next 7 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 2030, assuming continuing levels of state support.

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

Costs:

Person(s) Responsible:

Timeline:

Sources

Hanover Research (2012). Best Practices in Academic Program Review. Retrieved from https://www.asanet.org/wp-content/uploads/hanoverresearch_bestpractices_programreview.pdf

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

Virginia Technical College's APR Guide for Academic Unit Leaders. Retrieved from https://aie.vt.edu/institutional-effectiveness/academic-program-review.html

Additional Helpful Information

Swarthmore: Best Practices on Department Reviews

Contacts

For assistance with the academic program review process, please contact:

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