Academic Program Review: Principles and Procedures

Southern Illinois University
Carbondale

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Introduction

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) accords primary responsibility for initiating and conducting program reviews to the universities and for the content and quality of academic programs to the faculty. Program reviews provide a means for faculty to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of academic programs, to keep programs abreast of developments in the disciplines, and to maintain consonance between programs and the University's mission.

The successful program review, according to the Council of Graduate Schools, provides answers to the following kinds of questions:

_ Is the program advancing the state of the discipline or profession?

_ Is the teaching or training of students useful and effective?

_ Does the program meet the institution's goals?

_ Does it respond to the profession's needs?

_ How is it assessed by experts in the field?[1]

At SIUC, the purpose of review is the improvement of programs by thoroughly and candidly finding the answers to the above questions and then acting on the recommendations that grow out of them. Review thus presumes that programs have clearly stated objectives and measures for assessing outcomes.   While program review addresses issues of cost, viability, and quality, the findings help to reach decisions based on academic not financial or political criteria.

The IBHE requires the in-depth review of all undergraduate and graduate programs offered by the University at least once every eight years. At SIUC, all

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[1] Council of Graduate Schools, *Academic Review of Graduate Programs*, ed. Edna M. Khalil (Washington, D.C., 1990), pp. 6-7.

units also conduct an annual self-assessment to assist in data-gathering and benchmarking. The Coordinator of all program reviews is the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (Planning). The process combines the review of graduate and undergraduate degree programs and may take relationships between them into account. The University strives to make the process efficient by minimizing the time and resources expended.

The basic elements of the in-depth review are a departmental self-study, peer review by internal and external reviewers, evaluation of the review by Graduate Council, and a memorandum of agreement on actions to be taken. The process should be participatory at the unit level and transparent to the University community. It culminates in the determination of goals for program improvement, the identification of strategies for measuring progress toward those goals, and the reconciliation of goals with University resources. Over time, the process helps the campus in long-range planning and in establishing institutional priorities.

In-Depth Reviews

To assure that the in-depth review brings results, recommendations by the teams become the basis for negotiation of a memorandum of agreement among the unit, the collegiate dean, the Graduate Dean, and the Provost, for actions that will improve all of the unit's graduate programs. Such actions will occur at the unit level, may require the support of the collegiate dean, or might involve resource allocation decisions at the college or campus level. Subsequent annual reviews will serve to monitor the unit's progress in meeting the goals of this agreement.

Outline of procedures (see Appendix I)

_ The IBHE's Program Review Schedule determines the categories of programs that must submit review reports.

_ Review teams are appointed, under the supervision of the Coordinator.

_ Units conduct, discuss, and vote upon self studies; deans comment and forward self-studies to review teams.

_ Review teams examine self-studies; may request additional information.

_ Review teams conduct site visits, prepare reports, submit reports to the collegiate and Graduate Dean, Associate Vice Chancellor, and units; units may respond.

_ The Graduate Program Review Committee (GPRC) of the Graduate Council receives team reports, may request additional information, and submits evaluation and recommendations to collegiate and Graduate Dean, the Provost, and the Graduate Council.

_ Unit heads, collegiate and graduate deans, Associate Vice Chancellor, and Provost meet, discuss reports and recommendations, and draw up memorandum of agreement on actions to be taken; copy sent to GRPC.

_ Parties to a memorandum of agreement meet one year later to discuss progress and decide whether further measures are needed to assure implementation; Coordinator reports results to the GPRC or may invite participation by a Committee representative.

The unit self-study

The self-study is a comprehensive written report prepared under the direction of the head of a unit scheduled for program review.   The chairs of committees identified in the unit's operating paper form a self-study committee to assist the chair, who has ultimate responsibility for the self-study and the review.

Ideally, the self-study should:

_ take place in an administrative context that is stable, responsive, understanding, and demanding;

_ provide a thorough and honest critical analysis of strengths and weaknesses;

_ provide transparent data on department strength relative to comparable programs;

_ examine progress with respect to prior recommendations and department goals;

_ facilitate the development of a plan for the length of the review cycle; and

_ efficiently build on annual assessment (encouraging routine reflection).

The self-study examines the current status of a unit's programs and activities and assesses its achievements since the last program review. Most importantly, it is a planning document that contains proposed solutions for current problems and shows how the unit will adjust to trends in the discipline and to changes in its mission. The study should address the different levels of degree programs separately, addressing issues specific to each level, and it should weigh the impact of trends and plans in each level on the others.

The document must not become primarily a budget request, an exercise in self-defense or self-congratulation, or an attempt to mobilize external reviewers to support the unit. These practices diminish the value of the review to the unit and University, undermine the review's credibility, and display a lack of concern for the values of candor, introspection, accuracy, thoroughness, and analytical neutrality.

The self-study contains the following elements:

1. *Program mission and organization.* Introduction to the program, its purpose, mission, organization, and policies. (unit will provide)

2. *Cumulative data from annual reviews.* Data presented here are from the standardized part of the annual review. (See "Annual Self-Assessment," below). The data should cover the period since the unit's last regularly scheduled in-depth review or since annual reviewing began, whichever is less. (unit will provide)

3. *Evaluation of the cumulative data.* This narrative statement comments upon, explains, highlights, and discusses the data in 2. above. Specifically, it discusses the data in relation to (a) prior review recommendations, (b) departmental goals, (c) set-backs and obstacles, and (d) future plans. (unit will provide)

4. *Summary of teaching assessment.* This short (1-3pp) statement should describe the unit's assessment effort and what use it has made of the results. (unit will provide)

5. *New Program Request review.* Executive summary of the third-year review of new programs, if any, approved since unit's last in-depth review.

6. *Faculty short-form curriculum vitae.* Use the format of Appendix II. (unit will provide)

7. *Summary of the student questionnaire responses.* (Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs—Planning will provide)

8. *Faculty questionnaire responses.* (Office of the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs—Planning will insert)

The unit head arranges for all faculty in the unit to have an opportunity to read the draft self-study before holding a unit meeting to discuss, amend, and vote to approve or disapprove. The result of the vote is reported with the self-study

document that is forwarded to the Coordinator for distribution to the graduate and collegiate deans, the Provost, and the review teams.

Review teams and reports

Internal and external review teams separately visit the unit being reviewed and write separate reports.

a. internal teams: composition and selection

Internal review teams are composed of SIUC faculty members, selected by the Provost from a list of five or six nominees identified by the program to be reviewed. Effort should be made to identify individuals who, though outside the unit being reviewed, have some familiarity with its mission and character. For programs that offer only undergraduate degrees, internal review teams have two members; for programs that offer graduate degrees, the number of members is three. The Provost's selections are subject to approval by the Faculty Senate; the Graduate Council (specifically, the GRPC) in consultation with the Associate Dean of the Graduate School) selects the third member from the Council membership for teams reviewing programs offering graduate degrees.

Internal teams make their own arrangements to meet with the faculty, students, chair, deans, and Provost *before* and *independently of* the external reviewers' visit. They may select one of their members as chair to schedule these meetings.

b. external teams: composition and selection

External teams are composed of two academic experts in the field or discipline of the program being reviewed. They are selected by the Provost from a list of five to six nominees identified by the unit. Recommended individuals must be active, respected members of their disciplines, and the unit may include individuals appropriate to the unit's specialties (e.g., professional/disciplinary, basic/clinical). Additionally, and subject to approval by the Provost, units may invite participation by one Illinois resident (e.g. a member of the BOT, recent graduate of the unit, or a professional) who is familiar with the discipline or the University.

Units provide sufficient information on nominees to enable the Provost to select effective candidates, subject to the following guidelines respecting the two academic experts:

_ Nominees should be from the same discipline and from programs that offer the same degrees as the program being reviewed.

_ Nominees should be from Carnegie I or II institutions.

_ Nominees should hold tenured positions at the rank of Associate or Full Professor.

_ Nominees should have research specialties in the main fields taught by the program and be prominent researchers in these fields.

_ Persons with conflicts of interest, e.g. former/current mentors or friends of unit faculty members or who previously taught at SIUC, are to be avoided.

The Coordinator provides an outline schedule to the units to complete for the teams' visits and ensures that the teams meet with the unit's undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, chair, deans, and Provost. External teams also meet with their corresponding internal teams during their visit, and they meet separately with the collegiate and graduate deans for an exit interview

  c. duties

All members of both the internal and external teams are provided copies of the unit self-study before they begin their visit and may request additional materials. They are to present their findings in reports of ten or fewer pages and send one copy to the Coordinator for distribution to the Provost, Graduate Dean, collegiate dean, chair, and unit faculty. The report of the internal team is also provided to the external team before the latter's arrival on campus.

Both the internal and external teams assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program and suggest remediation for the weaknesses found. But the two teams have different missions, reflecting the difference in their composition. Internal teams focus on matters of local not disciplinary concern. These matters may include the unit's role within the University, the fit between its resources and mission, appropriateness of goals relative to University plans, cost, viability, and quality from a campus perspective, and other issues of local concern that may arise in the course of its work. The primary duties of the internal members are to identify strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations from the viewpoint of University faculty who are not members of the program being reviewed with due regard for the interests of the University as well as the unit.

Internal team members read and discuss the self-study with the unit head, faculty, students, and the collegiate and graduate deans before the arrival of the external members. They may request additional information or meetings as needed to inform themselves fully about the unit and its programs. The team as

a whole meets at the beginning and end of the external members' site visit to exchange findings and views.

The primary duties of the external team are to identify strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations for the purpose of assisting the unit to improve its quality and standing in the discipline. External team members should approach their task from both a disciplinary perspective and make comparisons with other programs where appropriate.

> d. review team reports

The reports of both teams should address the different levels of programs separately, giving undergraduate and graduate components equal or at least adequate attention. They should address the major issues facing the unit, comment on the compatibility of the unit's purpose, achievements, plans, and goals with those of the University and college mission and planning documents, and suggest strategies for achieving unit and University goals.

The reports of both teams may comment on any aspect of the unit that they think is important to program quality and future development. However, keeping the difference between them in mind, the teams give highest priority in their reports to the areas of their primary responsibility and avoid areas that lie outside their expertise. Items that are most appropriately the responsibility of the internal team are marked with an asterisk (*), and of the external team with a check (_). Unmarked items are subjects for comment by both teams.

<u>Undergraduate instruction</u>

_   Is the unit properly staffed to fulfill its undergraduate teaching responsibilities?

_   Are class sizes appropriate, given the unit's discipline, goals, and mission?

_   Is the unit fulfilling its responsibilities to non-majors with regard to distribution requirements, multicultural courses, the Core Curriculum, and prerequisites?

_   Do students receive adequate advisement from the unit?

_   What is the impact of faculty research on undergraduate instruction?

_   Is it making a conscious, planned effort to prepare students for appropriate employment, professional public service opportunities, or further study?

<u>Graduate instruction</u>

- Is the curriculum sound, current, and rigorous? _

- Are areas of emphasis within the program appropriate in view of available resources, and do these areas address community, regional, or national needs? _

- How successful are the unit's graduate programs nationally and regionally in attracting quality graduate students and placing graduate degree holders in suitable employment?

- Do students receive mentoring from faculty and/or other graduate students?

- How effective are the unit's measures to enhance its graduation rate and minimize the time to degree?

- How well does the research agenda of the faculty contribute to the training of the students? _

- Does the University provide adequate library, laboratory, computing, and other resources to support the graduate program?

Student demographics and outcomes

- How successful has the unit been in recruiting and retaining culturally diverse students?

- Is the proportion of international students in the unit's majors justifiable?

- Does the unit clearly articulate what students are expected to know and be able to do upon graduation?

- How has the unit measured student success and how effectively has it used the results?

Research, scholarship, service

- How does the level of research, scholarly and creative activities, and funding for such activities compare with peer institutions nationally?

- What changes are needed—and feasible within the current budget—for the program to show progress in these areas over the next eight years?

- Is the unit performing a satisfactory amount of public service research and assistance?

Faculty/staff resources

_ Is the unit successfully hiring and promoting minority and women faculty?

_ Are faculty and staff workloads appropriate to the unit's missions?

_ Is the unit attracting and retaining new faculty of sufficient quality to assure the achievement of its goals?

_ Are senior faculty contributing to the advancement of their profession, discipline, or specialty? _

Plans, goals, outcomes

_ How well is the unit contributing to the University's goals, plans, and priorities? *

_ Has the unit made progress in pursuing recommendations made in previous reviews?

_ If the unit has applied or is applying for a new degree program, what is the potential for this to be a high-quality program? Are faculty who will participate in the program already active in appropriate research and creative activities? Are financial resources, prospects of attracting high-quality graduate students, and physical facilities adequate to support the proposed program? _

_ If the unit has an accredited program that does not presently meet accreditation standards, or if it faces credible risk of losing accreditation, what is needed to bring it into conformity with the accreditation standards? _

_ Does the unit have adequate processes in place for evaluating the effectiveness of its programs (i.e. outcomes measures)? Has the unit set reasonable benchmarks by which to measure its progress?

University support and resource allocation

_ What are the major factors constraining the growth and improvement of the unit?

_ What, if any, of the unit's requests for additional resources deserve support, and why?

　 How might the unit's own resources be redistributed to realize its goals and those of the University?

　 Should the unit distribute its efforts and resources differently between undergraduate and graduate programs and between teaching, research, and service?

When completed, the reports are forwarded to the Coordinator for distribution to the unit head, graduate and collegiate deans, the Provost, and the Graduate Council.

Graduate Program Review Committee

Transparency being essential to fairness, credibility, and legitimacy, the Graduate Program Review Committee (GPRC) of the Graduate Council receives and evaluates the reports of the review teams, discusses the findings with the unit chair if it deems this necessary, and may assist in resolving conflicts about the validity and interpretation of the data. The Committee submits its findings to the unit, the collegiate and Graduate Dean, the Associate Vice Chancellor (Planning), the Provost, and the Graduate Council. The GPRC may report to the Council and make recommendations at any stage of the review process to help assure that procedures described herein are followed and actionable agreements (see next section) are implemented.

Implementation

The unit head prepares a written response to the internal, external, and GPRC reports identifying, interpreting, and responding to the major strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities discussed in the reports. With respect to specific issues needing discussion, the report 1) proposes an action and expected outcome; 2) estimates the cost/resource implications; 3) identifies a source of funds or resources; 4) and identifies benchmark(s) and a timetable for solution. The unit head should consult with the academic dean to obtain agreement on major issues, submits the response to the collegiate and Graduate Dean, Coordinator, and Provost, and meets with these administrators to draw up a memorandum of agreement about the specific actions to be taken, by whom, and by what deadlines. Where the recommendations of the review teams or GPRC are not accepted or the institution is not able to implement them, the reasons for those decisions are stated in an attachment to the memorandum and a copy provided to the GPRC.

The collegiate and graduate deans will be available to attend a meeting of the unit faculty, if the unit wishes, to discuss the review process, the recommendations, and the memorandum of agreement.

Approximately one year after the memorandum is signed, the parties responsible for each portion of the implementation will meet and report on what has been accomplished. If the task has not been completed, the responsible parties and administrators will agree on additional action to be taken and on a timetable for completion. The Coordinator reports the results of this meeting to the GPRC or may invite participation by a Committee representative. The GPRC may report on these proceedings to the Council and make its own recommendations if it deems this necessary to encourage implementation. The process is repeated until implementation is complete, with evaluation occurring at the next scheduled program review.

Annual Self-Assessment

The purpose of annual reviews is to encourage continuous self-assessment to discern the extent to which units are meeting their goals and to accumulate information that may be used for in-depth reviews. To be useful for longitudinal as well as cross-program comparisons, it is essential that indicators remain fixed between in-depth reviews.

Each unit assembles its own annual review report, combining the data it collects with data provided by the Graduate School and other campus sources. The unit may provide a brief narrative statement interpreting the data and giving other information relevant to the annual review. The table with indicators and profiles of scholarship/creative activity and courses are attached as Appendix IIIa-c.

The annual review reports are submitted to the Coordinator and to the collegiate and graduate deans, any one of whom may call a meeting of parties to a memorandum of agreement to discuss a report.

      a. benchmarking

In the first year of a unit's review cycle, the unit identifies indicators by which to measure whether its objectives are being achieved and specifies a benchmark for each indicator. Benchmarking is a process of comparing and measuring a unit's operations or internal processes against those of a selected pool which the unit has identified as useful for measuring its own improvement. Indicators are variables on which data are gathered, such as those listed in the appended Annual Review form; benchmarks are fixed reference points for those indicators

which have been demonstrated as having relevance to goals the unit and University are striving to achieve.

Because benchmarks vary by discipline, those which relate specifically to the unit's mission or goals must be established by the units themselves, but in all cases the benchmarks chosen must truly represent enhanced quality. The indicators chosen for benchmarking may be taken from, but are not limited to, those contained in the appended Annual Review form. It is the responsibility of units to identify appropriate indicators and fix their own benchmarks, with the understanding that the purpose is to reveal the unit's progress relative to criteria that are meaningful to it and the discipline or profession. Units will provide a rationale for the benchmarks in a brief statement to the collegiate and graduate deans, the Coordinator, and the GPRC.

Units also participate in benchmarking according to Graduate School guidelines as these are developed and approved by the Graduate Council.

Appendix I: Calendar of Program Review		
2 years prior to summary report submission date	July 1	University receives IBHE analysis of statewide trends and issues in programs to be reviewed, and Coordinator distributes to the units.
Academic year prior to review	March 1-15	Coordinator meets with chairs and deans of programs to be reviewed to discuss procedures, request names of potential external and internal reviewers, and distribute cost data, graduation data, grants data etc. to be used in unit self-studies.
	March 15-31	Coordinator contacts potential exernal reviewers.
	April-May	Provost selects external reviewers.
1 year prior to summary report submission date	July 1	University receives IBHE analysis of statewide trends and issues in programs to be reviewed, and Coordinator distributes to the units.
Prior to site visit of internal team	September	Graduate Council selects 3rd member of internal teams reviewing programs that offer graduate degrees.
	September	Provost selects internal reviewers approved by Faculty Senate.
	September 15	Units meet and approve their self-studies.
	September 16-30	Coordinator sends self-study, dean's comment, and college mission and strategic planning documents to internal and external reviewers.
	October 1-15	Internal team reviews self-study, may request additional material as needed, contacts chair to arrange site visit.
Prior to visit of external team	October 16-31	Internal team meets with students, faculty, and chair of the unit, and with the academic dean, Graduate Dean, and Provost.
	November 15	Internal team submits report to Coordinator for distribution to external reviewers, chair, academic and Graduate Deans, and GPRC.
Site visit of external team	December 1-15	External team meets with the internal team, students, faculty, and chair of the unit, and with the academic dean, Graduate Dean, and Provost,

(typically 2 days)		meeting the Provost last.
After site visit of external team	January 15	External team submits report to Coordinator for distribution to chair, academic and Graduate Deans, Provost, and GPRC.
After external team submits report	January 16 - February 30	GPRC evaluates internal and external reviews and submits findings to deans, Provost, and Council.
After GPRC submits evaluation	March - April	Unit chair submits written response to internal and external reports and GPRC evaluation and meets with academic and Graduate deans, the Coordinator and Provost to draw up a memorandum of agreement on actions to be taken; copy of this memorandum is sent to the GPRC.
After memorandum is agreed	June - July 15	Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs prepares actionable items for RAMP and outcomes for Results Report; both reports are acted upon by BOT and sent to BHE by Vice President for Academic Affairs
1 year after memorandum signed		Unit chair, academic dean, Graduate dean, the Coordinator and Provost meet to discuss progress and decide whether further measures are needed to assure implementation; Coordinator reports results of this meeting to the GPRC or invites participation in this meeting by a Council representative.

Appendix II: Short Form Curriculum Vitae

Name _____

Rank/Title _____ of _____
(Dept.)

Date of appointment to the University: Month _____ Year _____

Date achieved present rank: Month _____ Year _____

Academic degrees (degrees, institutions, years)

Professional experience (university, teaching, or administrative experience, w/ dates)

Teaching load (course no./title/credit hours, last two years)

<u>Fall</u>   <u>Spring</u>

Year 1:

Year 2:

Administrative and university service load (positions held, last two years)

Department:

College:

University:

Theses and dissertations supervised (number, last eight years)

MA:

PhD:

Current professional and academic association memberships (and offices held in)

Grants and research fellowships received (last eight years, with amounts)

Current research projects

Publications (last eight years)

Appendix IIIc: Course Profile - enrollments (report grad & undergrad separately, add sheets as needed)

Course title	No.	year 1			year 2			year 3			year 4			year 5			year 6			year 7			year 8			F/Sp mean
		Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	
TOTAL																										