

## UNC Program Review: Academic Programs

Program review at the University of Northern Colorado is intended to support, develop, and maintain high quality academic programs. It is a collaborative process involving faculty, administrators, and students that respects the diversity of disciplinary missions and cultures while also recognizing the primacy of institutional mission. The program review process involves collecting and synthesizing program information to evaluate quality, identify opportunities, and make recommendations on actions and resources necessary to realize desired levels of excellence. Program review outcomes are used by faculty and administrators to promote campus goals and objectives, support strategic planning and decision-making, and inform budget and resource allocation.

The primary process through which program review is conducted at UNC is the comprehensive self-study. The self-study provides program faculty, college administrators, and the Provost an opportunity to reflect on the role and outcomes of the program, evaluate current program strengths and weaknesses, and strategically plan for the future of the program. These guidelines are intended to provide a consistent framework for conducting the self-study and presenting the findings. While the processes through which programs conduct the self-study are left to the discretion of the program faculty working in consultation with the unit leader<sup>1</sup> and Dean, programs should address each of the topics identified within the guidelines following the report format described herein. These guidelines represent the institutional requirements for program review. Individual colleges may expand on these requirements as recommended by the college's faculty.

### *Definition of a Program*

A program is an organizational unit that is responsible for delivering an approved plan of study leading to completion of any one or more of the following: undergraduate degree, graduate degree, and/or licensure or certification. An academic unit is an organizational and budgetary unit comprised of one or more programs. For purposes of program review, faculty within each college, working collaboratively with unit leaders and the Dean, determine whether comprehensive program review will be conducted at the program or academic unit level. This collaborative process provides flexibility for faculty and college administrators to organize the review process so that it produces meaningful contributions to budget and strategic planning decisions.

### *Timeline*

The Assistant Provost for Academic Effectiveness works with unit leaders and the Dean to maintain a program review calendar. Non-accredited programs are reviewed every six (6) years. The review cycle for accredited programs is based on the accreditation timeline. Program review for accredited programs should be completed within six (6) months following the accreditation site visit.

### *Substitution of External Accreditation Report*

Programs subject to external accreditation may elect to substitute the accreditation self-study report. Programs selecting this option should review the Program Review Guidelines for Accredited Programs, available on the [Assessment website](#). Accredited programs are required to complete an action plan as outlined on page 5 of this document.

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<sup>1</sup> Unit leader refers to Department Chair or School Director

### *Program Review Committee*

Colleges may appoint a Program Review Committee comprised of faculty from across the College. The committee is responsible for reviewing the initial draft of the comprehensive review self-study and providing written feedback to the College Dean and to the program.

### *External Review*

External review of programs is required and provides objective, external evaluation of the program's curriculum, assessment practices, faculty qualifications, and research, scholarship, and creative works (RSCW). External review is conducted by disciplinary experts via an electronic document review and conference calls or virtual meetings as needed.

Programs should consult with the Dean to determine and select an appropriate reviewer based on the following criteria: (1) reviewer's qualifications, experience, and disciplinary expertise; and (2) reviewer's ability to provide an objective review of the program. It is the responsibility of all involved to avoid conflicts of interest that would prevent an objective review of the program. The program should provide the Dean a list of three to five potential reviewers. Upon approval of the list, programs should select and contract with a reviewer using the University's Independent Contractor Procedures. See the External Review Process and Payment Guidelines and the External Reviewer Scope of Work Sample for additional information.

The Office of Assessment will provide an honorarium in the amount of \$1,000 for the external reviewer. Programs who select a reviewer whose costs exceed this amount will need to cover additional expenses from their own budgets.

Upon selecting a reviewer, the program should complete the following steps:

1. Prepare and complete a signed agreement specifying the scope of work, confidentiality of the review process, work product to be delivered, and timelines. A sample scope of work agreement is available from the Office of Assessment.
2. Compile an electronic file of the following documents:
  - a. Current curriculum, course descriptions and syllabi, and courses offered over the review period;
  - b. Assessment plan, curriculum map, and assessment results;
  - c. De-identified samples of senior-level papers for undergraduate students and theses, capstone projects, or dissertations for graduate students;
  - d. Faculty CVs downloaded from Digital Measures; and
  - e. Any other materials requested by the reviewer and/or determined by the program as beneficial for completing the evaluation.
3. Provide the electronic file to the reviewer at least two months before the reviewer's report is due.

Reviewers should provide the program with a written evaluation that describes strengths and recommendations for improvement of the program's (1) curriculum, (2) assessment practices, and (3) faculty qualifications and contributions in the areas of teaching, RSCW, and service. Payment of the honorarium will be issued upon receipt of the written report from the reviewer.

### **Comprehensive Program Review Documentation**

The final Comprehensive Program Review self-study consists of a narrative report and supporting documentation. The narrative report should be 25-30 pages and is comprised of the following sections:

1. Program description (mission, degree programs offered, number and rank of faculty, unique program features, significant changes since the last program review)

2. Outcomes for the goals/action plan identified in the last program review
3. Program's strengths and areas for improvement based on the following criteria:
  - a. Extent to which the program's mission is current, serves as the foundation for the program's curriculum, and is broadly understood by faculty and students;
  - b. Currency, rigor, and integrity of the curriculum in providing equitable opportunities for student learning and achieving the program's mission;
  - c. Qualifications and contributions of the faculty and staff (including teaching, RSCW, and service)
  - d. Personnel and operating resources (including the adequacy of resources and the efficient use of resources)
  - e. Student experience: (1) data trends (enrollment, persistence, completion, equity gaps, satisfaction, alumni placement); (2) student learning outcomes; (3) participation in co-curricular activities sponsored by the program (clubs and organizations, student research, community service); and (4) awards and recognition.
4. Additional indicators of quality for graduate programs – programs offering graduate degrees should include a section that explicitly addresses the following questions:
  - a. What aspects of the graduate program make it unique when compared to similar programs at other institutions?
  - b. How do the graduate program's required coursework, experiential activities, and mentorship support students on their career paths?
  - c. What steps are being taken to evaluate and maintain or improve the quality of the graduate program?
  - d. How do graduate students demonstrate professionalism through participation in professional activities and/or professional organizations/societies?
5. An action plan for next review cycle that addresses the following:
  - a. Future actions the program will pursue within the resource structure at UNC and external funding opportunities;
  - b. Strategies for supporting [Rowing, Not Drifting 2030](#), specifically in the areas of new and transfer student enrollment, retention, completion, and closing equity gaps;
  - c. Curriculum revisions/enhancements and pedagogical strategies to improve learning and student success; and
  - d. Goals for ongoing faculty and staff professional development and scholarly activity.

In addition to the narrative report, programs should provide the following supporting documents:

1. Faculty evaluation criteria<sup>1</sup>
2. External reviewer report
3. College's Program Review Committee recommendations (if applicable)
4. Dean's recommendations and those of School Director for programs housed within a School
5. Graduate Council's and Graduate Dean's recommendations (for graduate programs only)
6. Program's assessment plan, curriculum map, and assessment results from the review period (assessment plan and curriculum map templates available from the Office of Assessment)

#### *Program Review Data*

Institutional data for program review are provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE). Programs should review and analyze data trends for the previous five years. UNC has developed a program review report in Insight that is updated annually. Programs may access the report on their college-view tab. The report includes data that is useful for understanding enrollment, retention, and completion trends,

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<sup>1</sup> See Board Policy 2-3-801 (3)(a)

student demographics, contributions to student credit hour generation, and other information. UNC also provides a variety of reports and dashboards online at [www.unco.edu/data](http://www.unco.edu/data). Anyone having issues accessing the dashboards can contact the Technical Support Center for assistance.

The Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness administers a variety of institutional surveys, including a first destination survey and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Contact OIRE for additional information about survey data that may be available for your program.

Other sources of data the program may consider include the following:

- DFW course rates
- Use of waivers, course substitutions, and non-scheduled courses over the review period
- Courses offered over the review period and frequency of required courses
- Number of community engaged course designations and/or faculty incorporating community engaged learning in their courses
- Use of high impact teaching practices by faculty
- Program assessment results and student artifacts
- Licensure/certification requirements and pass rates
- Number of course releases over the review period
- Number of faculty teaching course overloads over the review period
- Research, scholarship, creative works, and external grant activity
- Service activity of faculty
- Faculty awards and recognition
- Faculty participation in professional development (internal and external)
- Teaching evaluations
- Hiring outcomes
- Equipment inventory and replacement schedule
- Instructional and/or research laboratories and facilities
- Technology and instructional resources
- Use of program and course fees
- Advising data
- Internship/practica supervisor evaluations
- Student migration to and from the major
- Student participation in co-curricular activities sponsored by the program

### Comprehensive Program Review Process

The comprehensive review process involves review by the following individuals and bodies: (1) School Director (for programs housed within a school); (2) External Reviewer; (3) College Dean; (4) College Program Review Committee; (5) Director of Assessment; (6) Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies and/or AVP for Research and Dean of the Graduate School; and (7) Provost. Graduate programs are also reviewed by the Graduate Council.

The steps for completing the comprehensive review process are as follows:

Step 1. Initial meeting with program faculty, unit leader, College Dean, and Assistant Provost for Academic Effectiveness. The purpose of this meeting is to clarify the process and establish a schedule for completing the remaining activities associated with the comprehensive review.

Step 2. Select and contract with the external reviewer(s). The external review should be completed no later than spring semester after the start of the comprehensive review period.

Step 3. Complete first draft of the self-study document. The unit leader is responsible for electronically distributing the self-study draft to the following individuals: the College Dean, the chair of the College's Program Review Committee (if applicable), and, for graduate programs, the AVP for Research and Dean of the Graduate School.

Step 4. Review of the self-study document. The self-study document will be reviewed by the School Director for programs housed in a school (unless the Director is the author), the College's Program Review Committee (if applicable), and the College Dean. The Graduate Council and Graduate Dean will also review the self-study document for graduate programs. Reviewers will provide written feedback to the program with recommendations for improvement and commendations for program strengths.

Step 5. Meeting with program faculty, unit leader, Program Review Committee Chair, and Dean. Prior to completing the final comprehensive program review report, program faculty and the unit leader will meet with the Program Review Committee Chair and Dean to discuss the recommendations from the reviewers. The Dean will provide written feedback to the program no later than two weeks following this meeting.

Step 6. Meeting with program faculty, unit leader, and Graduate Dean. (Graduate programs only) Prior to completing the final comprehensive program review report, program faculty and the unit leader will meet with the Graduate Dean to discuss the program's self-study. The Graduate Dean will provide written feedback to the program no later than two weeks following this meeting.

Step 7. Submission of comprehensive program review report to the Assistant Provost for Academic Effectiveness. Programs should submit an electronic copy of the comprehensive program review self-study and all supporting documents no later than February 28.

Step 8: Meeting with the Provost. The Assistant Provost, Associate Provost and/or AVP for Research and Dean of the Graduate School, and Provost will review the comprehensive program review report and meet with the College Dean, and the program's unit leader and faculty to discuss the comprehensive review. Following the meeting, the Assistant Provost will prepare a memorandum that documents the outcomes of this meeting. This meeting will occur by June 30 or as soon as possible.

Step 9. Using the results. Deans, unit leaders, and program faculty are expected to implement the action plan developed through the program review self-study process and report on results at the end of the next review cycle.

Approved March 25, 2009  
Revised September 21, 2022