

PROCEDURES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

The University of Alabama Office for Academic Affairs

November 2022

Introduction

The University of Alabama requires that all academic departments engage in periodic review to evaluate the strengths, opportunities, and challenges in meeting their missions, visions, and goals. The two-step process of self-study and review invites departments to reflect on purpose and achievement of goals in relation to the college's and university's strategic plans, student success, and disciplinary standards. All academic degree programs are included in this review every eight years with annual follow-up. Academic program review is coordinated by the Office for Academic Affairs and the assigned Associate Provost for Academics with assistance from the Office for Institutional Effectiveness.

During the process of program review, departments are expected to engage all faculty, staff, students, and other constituents in evaluating the effectiveness and progress of academic degree programs, defining the direction of the programs, and identifying needs and priorities for continued growth, development, and enhancement. The review includes examination of the curriculum, teaching, student learning, activities, faculty and staff, and policies and processes. To ensure that programs reach and/or maintain the highest standards of excellence in each discipline, it is expected that the departments engage in a process that is data-driven, forward-looking, and outcomes-based. Program reviews should support long-term planning efforts of the department, college, and university, focus on areas that offer potential for innovation, distinctiveness, and student success, and assure the most efficient and effective use of resources.

The result of this review process is a strategic action plan based on inclusive, thoughtful reflection, expert assessment, and analysis of the department's strengths, opportunities, and challenges. The college dean and department chair will present the strategic action plan to the Provost and others, articulating the department's vision and goals with tasks for achievement within a four to five-year timeframe.

The following guidelines are provided to assist departments in conducting a consistent, but flexible program review.

Academic Program Review Process and Timeline

Academic Program Review (APR) is a one-year process. The Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, with support from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) and Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA), coordinates the process. More information on the process can be found at oie.ua.edu.

Generally, the process begins with a departmental self-study that includes interpretation of relevant data. The process is guided by a series of questions and responses completed by the departmental faculty and department chair. Once completed and reviewed by department faculty and staff, the APR self-study is reviewed by an internal team of representatives from the Academic Program Review Council (APRC). This team from the Council consists of three faculty – one from the college in which the programs under review are housed and two from outside of the college. A reviewer external to UA is an option that must be requested by the department chair and dean at least a year in advance of the beginning of the self-study period. The Council Academic Review Team (APRT) will meet with the department's chair, faculty, staff, and students after receiving the APR self-study.

Once review of the self-study and interview are completed, the APRT submits a report on its findings, i.e. strengths, weakness, and opportunities for improvement. The department chair, in consultation with the dean and department faculty, develop a strategic action plan that identifies its goals, targets, and actions needed to meet those goals over the next four to five years. The department chair and dean present this forward-looking and aspirational plan to the Provost to conclude the year-long review process. UA Board policy requires submission of program review to the UA System Office upon completion.

Glossary and Links

Academic Program Review (APR)
Academic Program Review Council (Council)
Council Program Review Team (APRT)
External Reviewer
Planning & Self Study (P&SS)
Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE)
Office of Institutional Research & Assessment (OIRA)

Timeline for Program Review Self-Study Beginning in the FALL Semester

June-August

- Associate Provost and/or OIE notifies Department Chairs, Deans, and appropriate Associate Deans that review of the program is upcoming and provides links to items on the OIE website.
- OIE notifies UA Libraries, OIRA, and Graduate School of upcoming program reviews and requests data from OIRA.
- Associate Provost conducts orientation with Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs and representatives from OIE and Graduate School (if applicable).

August - September

- If requested by the department chair, OIE meets with Department faculty to discuss greater details of the self-study or assistance with using Planning & Self Study.
- OIE provides training to the Academic Program Review Council (APRC), as needed for new members.
- Department Chair/OIE notifies OIRA if additional data and/or additional data collection (e.g. surveys) will be needed beyond that provided in the tables.
- Department begins organizing for self-study.

October - November

- Associate Provost assigns members of the Council to Academic Program Review Team (APRT) and identifies team leaders.

December

- OIE distributes files in a Box folder of completed self-study draft to associate college deans, Dean, Dean of Graduate School (if applicable), and Associate Provost, and OIE for review. The department chair should also share files with faculty.

January

- Department completes draft of self-study by January 15.
- A final draft of the self-study is due no later than January 30.
- OIE distributes files in a Box folder of completed self-study draft to associate college deans, Dean, Dean of Graduate School (if applicable), and Associate Provost, and OIE. The department chair should also share files with faculty.
- OIE provides Box folder of self-study to APRT (and external reviewer, if applicable).

February – March

- During a period of one to two days, APRT conducts interviews with the department faculty, staff, and students, and meets to discuss recommendations based on self-study review and interviews. (Note: If an external reviewer is involved, the external reviewer will join APRT on site for the interviews and team meetings. APRT and the external reviewer will issue one report.)

April-June

- No later than April 30, APRT presents its report to the Council and the Associate Provost. The final report includes both commendations and recommendations. OIE will provide a template for the final report.
- The Associate Provost shares APRT's report with the Dean, Department Chair, and faculty for a

check of errors in fact.

- The Department Chair submits any corrections of errors in fact to the Associate Provost within five (5) business days of receipt.
- If errors are relevant to recommendations, the Associate Provost returns corrected report to the Council, who has the option to amend the final report.
- The final report from the Council must be completed and submitted to the Associate Provost and Department Chair by May 15.
- Using the final report, the Department drafts a strategic action plan. OIE will provide a template for the strategic action plan.
- The Department Chair reviews the strategic action plan draft with the Dean and discusses resources and timelines for achieving actionable goals.
- The Department Chair revises strategic action plan as necessary and presents to faculty for approval.
- The Department Chair submits the faculty-approved strategic action plan to the Associate Provost.
- The Associate Provost distributes the final report and the strategic action plan to the Provost, Graduate Dean, and OIE Director.
- The Associate Provost schedules a final meeting with the Provost before September 30.
- The Department Chair and Dean present the strategic action plan to the Provost with the Associate Provost(s), Graduate Dean, OIE Director, and others attending. OIE will provide a PowerPoint template for the final meeting with the Provost.
- The OIE Director and Graduate Dean (if applicable) comment on process, report, and/or strategic action plan.
- The Provost comments on the strategic action plan in terms of feasibility as well as its alignment with institutional priorities.

Timeline for Program Review Self-Study Beginning in the SPRING Semester

November-December

- Associate Provost and/or OIE notifies Department Chairs, Deans, and appropriate Associate Deans that review of the program is upcoming and provides links to items on the OIE website.
- OIE notifies UA Libraries, OIRA, and Graduate School of upcoming program reviews and requests data from OIRA.
- Associate Provost conducts orientation with Deans, Associate Deans, Department Chairs and representatives from OIE and Graduate School (if applicable).

January

- If requested by the department chair, OIE meets with Department faculty to discuss greater details of the self-study or assistance with using Planning & Self Study.
- OIE provides training to the Academic Program Review Council (APRC), as needed for new members.
- Department Chair/OIE notifies OIRA if additional data and/or additional data collection (e.g. surveys) will be needed beyond that provided in the tables.
- OIE uploads OIRA data and program assessment reports into Planning & Self Study (P&SS).
- Department begins organizing for self-study.

February-March-April

- Associate Provost assigns members of the Council to Academic Program Review Team (APRT) and identifies team leaders.

June-July-August

- Department completes draft of self-study by June 15
- A final draft of the self-study is due no later than June 30.
- OIE distributes files in a Box folder of completed self-study draft to associate college deans, Dean, Dean of Graduate School (if applicable), and Associate Provost, and OIE. The department chair should also share files with faculty.
- OIE provides Box folder of self-study to APRT (and external reviewer, if applicable).

September-October

- During a period of one to two days, APRT conducts interviews with the department faculty, staff, and students, and meets to discuss recommendations based on self-study review and interviews. (Note: If an external reviewer is involved, the external reviewer will join APRT on site for the interviews and team meetings. APRT and the external reviewer will issue one report.)

November-December

- No later than November 15, APRT presents its report to the Council and the Associate Provost. The final report includes both commendations and recommendations. OIE will provide a template for the final report.
- The Associate Provost shares APRT's report with the Dean, Department Chair, and faculty for a check of errors in fact.
- The Department Chair submits any corrections of errors in fact to the Associate Provost within five (5) business days of receipt.
- If errors are relevant to recommendations, the Associate Provost returns corrected report to the

Council, who has the option to amend the final report.

- The final report from the Council must be completed and submitted to the Associate Provost and Department Chair by November 30.
- Using the final report, the Department drafts a strategic action plan. OIE will provide a template for the strategic action plan.
- The Department Chair reviews the strategic action plan draft with the Dean and discusses resources and timelines for achieving actionable goals.
- The Department Chair revises strategic action plan as necessary and presents to faculty for approval.
- The Department Chair submits the faculty-approved strategic action plan to the Associate Provost.
- The Associate Provost distributes the final report and the strategic action plan to the Provost, Graduate Dean, and OIE Director.
- The Associate Provost schedules a final meeting with the Provost before February 28.
- The Department Chair and Dean present the strategic action plan to the Provost with the Associate Provost(s), Graduate Dean, OIE Director, and others attending. OIE will provide a PowerPoint template for the final meeting with the Provost.
- The OIE Director and Graduate Dean (if applicable) comment on process, report, and/or strategic action plan.
- The Provost comments on the strategic action plan in terms of feasibility as well as its alignment with institutional priorities.

External Reviewer Selection

In some instances, the department chair and dean may believe that the addition of a disciplinary expert from outside of UA will help guide a department to the next level. In those cases, the department chair should consult with the dean, who will request that an external reviewer be included in the process. Selection of the external reviewer will be handled by the college dean and department and approved by the Provost. *(For more information on hosting an external reviewer, please contact OIE.)*

External reviewers should come from aspirational programs, preferably from a similar-sized institution with a similar mission, i.e. public research university. External reviewers should be at arm's length from the department they are reviewing, able to offer frank and unbiased assessment of the department and its programs. Generally, they should not be close friends, current or recent collaborators, former supervisors, advisors or advisees, or former colleagues of the department chair or faculty.

External reviewers should have recognized and respected accomplishments in the discipline as well as a reputation for fairness and integrity. It is also helpful if they have had some academic administrative experience (chair, associate chair, associate dean, undergraduate or graduate director, etc.)

External reviewers should not come from a close competitor. While you want reviewers from aspirant peers, a close competitor may see information that the department doesn't necessarily want to share with a department with whom they regularly compete for students and faculty.

External reviewers should have expertise in key areas of the department. This might be the research strength(s). It might be the educational niche of your undergraduate or graduate program. Or it might be areas of concern in the curriculum, such as major requirements.

Peers at other institutions and professional organizations are sources for recommendations for reviewers. Some professional organizations maintain databases of possible reviewers.

Best Practices: Preparing the Self-Study

The Self-Study forms the core of the academic program review process. This is a time to evaluate what the department has accomplished and where the department sees future potential. A strong self-study provides a thoughtful evaluation of the strengths and challenges of an academic program and will have an impact on future strategic and operational planning.

Create a system to manage your documents before you begin and keep your digital files in this one place. Use UABox (or a similar system) for file storage, sharing, and collaboration. Set up the folders based on the elements for the final report.

Involve all stakeholders in the academic review process – not only faculty but students, alumni, the community, etc. Think about ways to assess your impact on each group, and potentially ways to incorporate their input into the self-study. Involve all faculty in the department – tenured, tenure track, NTRC, and instructors - so that all feel that their perspectives have been thoughtfully considered. Input from the whole is important. Allow time for faculty to read and comment on the draft(s).

Have individuals or small teams handle sections of the self-study, such as compiling information, analyzing the data, and writing the narrative.

Think about the right balance between documentation of achievements in the past five years and assessment of challenges for the coming five years. Be bold but also realistic in your vision of how the department can move forward. Comparisons to both peer and aspirational-peer institutions can help to highlight both your accomplishments and the areas for future focus or investment.

Assessment is an important dimension of the self-study. In each of the sections, how do you define success, and how do you know when you are moving closer to your goals? Think about qualitative assessments as well as quantitative ones.

Respond to each element of the review using the key questions as your guide. Your narrative should be clear, complete, and concise. You may use bullet points.

Assign someone to serve as the final editor to be sure that the final document has a single voice.

Finally, remember that the self-study should focus on self-evaluation and analysis rather than merely reporting sets of data.

Best Practices: Developing the Self-Study Narrative

Writing a self-study report can be a frenzied paper chase for a handful of faculty and administrators, or it can be an opportunity to devote time for wider reflection and self-assessment about a program or institution. While an honest and credible self-study report is the final product, the steps used to create this report determine the extent to which the perspectives, findings, and recommendations in the report are embedded in the academic culture. Therefore, the self-study efforts need to be planned and organized both from the top down and from the bottom up.

M. Racine, "Writing a Self-Study Report," (http://www.pcrest.com/research/fgb/1_5_1.pdf)

With the above principle in mind, the following guidance may be helpful in planning and writing your Self-Study Narrative:

- The narrative should be as concise as possible. Plan to spend more time in analysis and planning than in the writing of the analysis/plan. Use bullet points rather than paragraph-style narrative. The final length of the narrative may vary, but suggested length is equivalent to 10-20 pages, single-spaced.
- Each section of the narrative should address the questions outlined in P&SS. For information about P&SS and/or training, contact OIE (oe@ua.edu).
- The University Strategic Plan (<https://www.ua.edu/strategicplan/>) should be an explicit reference point in creating and prioritizing the various recommendations. The narrative should also demonstrate alignment with departmental and/or college mission statements. Explicit reference to the prior self-study or external review may also be helpful. Also, discussions of strengths and challenges should include reference to the national state of the discipline and the program's position relative to peer and aspirational-peer institutions.
- Writing the self-study should be a collaborative process. Department chairs are encouraged to ensure inclusion of multiple perspectives, and to share the workload, by assigning different sections of the narrative to faculty or staff that are involved in the administration of, or who have expertise in, each specific area. The narrative should be read by multiple individuals to ensure that the narrative incorporates a broad spectrum of perspectives.
- The Department Chair might appoint a steering committee to review each section of the narrative, to ensure that the recommendations are evidence-based and that the relevant questions outlined in the Program Review documents have been addressed. The final narrative should be more than a collection of individual reports; it should have a consistent voice and style. Also, the narrative should be reviewed for accuracy, inclusion, continuity, and readability.
- Significant observations should be based on, and include explicit reference to, the data gathered by OIRA and/or the department. To keep the narrative as concise as possible, the department may create data appendices (supporting documents), and/or summarize data in attached charts and tables rather than in narrative form. The narrative should focus on the conclusions that the self-study committee has drawn from the data.
- Adequate resources (staffing, facilities, funding) are necessary for accomplishing goals.

However, budget estimates do not need to be included in the narrative. These conversations will take place later, with the dean's office, based on the recommendations and data provided in the self-study as well as the input from the APRT.

- The audience for the narrative is not only the college and university administration, but also the Council and APRT. Do not assume that the readers know how your unit is organized; include a brief and clear description of the unit's organizational structure in the narrative. A brief history of the program may provide context to reviewers.
- After completing the narrative, write an Executive Summary (1-3 pp.), giving an overview of the self-study process, major changes since the last self-study, and proposed recommendations informed by the self-study process.

Self-Study Questions for Department

Mission and Introduction

Introduction and Mission

- Provide an overview of the department, including the department's mission.
- Organization and Structure of Department
- Describe the hierarchical structure of the department. Please attach a department organizational chart.

Alignment to Institution Mission

- How does the mission of the department align with UA's mission?

Significant Changes

- Describe any significant changes in the department or programs since the previous review.

Major accomplishments

- Provide a description of major accomplishments of the department since last review. Include faculty, staff, and student recognitions.

Top Priorities

- Describe the department's priorities for continuous improvement of its academic programs.

Faculty Qualifications, Activities and Scholarship

Faculty Qualifications

- Based on UA's Policy on Teaching Credentials for UA Instructors of Record (<https://secure2.compliancebridge.com/uat/public/getdocUA.php?file=116>), what processes are in place to ensure that all faculty have the qualifications to teach in the department's academic programs?

Scholarship and Research

- Summarize and analyze findings of department's total sponsored research over the previous five years and how this impacts your strategic vision for the next five years.
- Summarize and analyze department's standing with national peers on the measures of faculty research (i.e., publications and citations, creative activities, research funding, honors and awards, editorships, etc.) Include comparison of department's strengths and weaknesses with aspirants.

Faculty Sufficiency

- Discuss the sufficiency of faculty (by rank, status, tenure, student/faculty ratios, etc.) to ensure curriculum and program quality, integrity, and review. If applicable, describe needs and/or plans to improve faculty sufficiency.

Teaching Support and Monitoring Teaching Quality

- How is performance of all faculty and professional staff evaluated and rewarded, including contract and part-time?
- Describe the department's tenure and promotion guidelines.
- Describe how teaching effectiveness across all modalities of instruction is assessed and improvement supported, e.g. orientation, faculty development, mentors.
- Describe faculty participation in department, college, and/or university initiatives to improve teaching effectiveness and student success.

Faculty and Staff Demographics

- Describe the diversity of department faculty and staff and efforts to recruit more diverse faculty and staff. What are the department's diversity goals? How successful are recruitment efforts?
- Describe efforts to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for faculty and staff.

Service and Outreach

- Identify activities in which the department's faculty, staff, and/or students participate, manage, or lead that serve constituents external to your department, the college, and institution. Describe how outreach, community engagement and/or service activities, policies, and/or relationships support the department's mission and the University's strategic plan.
- Describe how the impact of outreach, collaborative, and service projects is evaluated.

Department Data: Student Experience

Department Enrollment and Recruitment

- Discuss trends with enrollment overall in the department's programs. Compare with institutional enrollment trends.
Discuss goals for and efforts to recruit, enroll, retain, and graduate diverse students. Include discussion of how the department monitors and assesses progress in meeting these goals. Describe efforts to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for students. Include descriptions of initiatives to improve student learning and/or achievement/success among diverse groups within the program (underrepresented minorities, low income, first generation, etc.)

Program Completions/Viability

- Discuss the five-year trend in program completions, the viability of the degree programs, and any plans to improve completions in the next three years.

Department and Program Analysis

Strategic Plan

- Describe strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the department.
- Attach strategic plan.

Campus Facility and Resources (optional)

- What facilities and information technology support the academic, research, and service and outreach programs of the unit?
- Are the facilities adequate for the unit's goals in each area? If not, what are the unit's priorities for improvement? How do these priorities support student learning/success?

Centers (C), Institutes (I), and Other Programs (P) (Include if applicable)

- What is the primary mission of the C/I/P?
- How does the C/I/P enhance the unit's academic, research, or outreach programs?
- How is the C/I/P organized (including budgetary, physical, and human resources) to achieve this mission?
- What metrics are the best measures of productivity and excellence in achieving the mission?
- According to those metrics, how well does the C/I/P achieve its mission?
- Should the C/I/P be continued?
- If so, what changes using existing resources would enhance the C/I/P's effectiveness?
- If so, what are the unit's priorities for additional resources to enhance its effectiveness?

Future Trends

Analysis of the Discipline

- Describe the current outlook for the discipline(s) in terms of growth, recruitment, job placement, research expectations, and perceived value. Identify any broad changes or challenges anticipated in your field.

Comparison to Similar Disciplines at Peer Institutions

- Identify and discuss how similar programs compare to the department's programs in terms of size, curriculum, and other relevant attributes.

Recommendations from Previous Program Reviews

- Summarize recommendations from previous program reviews and describe how those recommendations were applied throughout the most recent five-year cycle.

Summary of Proposed Actions

- Summarize proposed action plans the department has for the next five years to improve the department and its degree programs.

Accreditation and Agreements

Cooperative Academic Agreements (if applicable)

- Identify academic arrangements with other institutions involving academic degree programs in the department, e.g. joint awards, articulations agreements. Identify date of last review of any agreements and date of review of the arrangement. Reviews must be conducted during this program review period if a separate review has not been conducted within the last five years. Please attach copies of agreements and final review documents.

Accreditation

- Identify accrediting agencies and degree programs with the department that are accredited. Please attach any correspondence with accrediting agencies regarding accreditation status.

Delivery of Instruction

- Identify modes of instructional delivery for each program and the majority of courses in each program. For programs delivered on main campus with courses that are delivered online, describe how teaching effectiveness and equity in student achievement is assured.

Questions for Each Academic Degree Program

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment and Curriculum

Program Student Learning Outcomes

- Describe how the academic degree program's student learning outcomes pertain to the department's mission. Have any changes been made to these outcomes over the course of this cycle? Why or why not?
- Describe efforts to assess and to improve student success/academic achievement (e.g. student learning outcomes, core competencies, nationally competitive awards, degree completion, licensure/certification) and the impact of these efforts, especially with student subgroups.

Curriculum Map

- Describe the plan of study students take to achieve this program. Review the courses in the curriculum and update the curriculum map to demonstrate how the courses support the student learning outcomes.
- Describe changes made in the program and/or curriculum since the last program review, the motivation for making these changes (e.g. review of curriculum relevancy, assessment of student learning), and any impacts these changes made to program goals and student learning outcomes.
- Describe opportunities for students in this academic program to participate in high impact educational practices, i.e. research, work-based learning (e.g. internships, clinicals, etc.),

intercultural studies and experiences with diverse others, community-engaged experiences (e.g. service learning), capstone courses/projects, and collaborative assignments/projects.

Measures and Results

- Discuss the tools or instruments you've selected or developed to measure the program's student learning outcomes, e.g. rubrics, comprehensive exams, culminating project. Why were these chosen? Were any assessment instruments changed over the course of this cycle? Why or why not? Will different instruments be chosen the next time this outcome is assessed?
- Summarize and discuss the results of the program's assessment measures over the course of this review cycle. Have the results demonstrated improvement or mastery of student learning outcomes? Why or why not? What actions for improvement did interpretation of the results suggest?

Participation in Assessment

- How do program faculty participate in assessment? What is the process? Have any changes been made to encourage participation over the course of this cycle?

Action Items and Use of Results

- Summarize or highlight action items taken as a result of the program's assessment results. How have the results driven improvement over the course of this cycle?

General Education

- What courses in your undergraduate program are tied to general education requirements at the institution? Describe the impact of service courses/contributions to Core Curriculum on your undergraduate program.

Student trends and student quality indicators (if applicable)

- For graduate programs, describe application trends and selectivity (percent of applicants who are accepted) as well as yield (percent of accepted students who enroll), as well as student quality indicators (incoming GPA/GRE/etc.) in your program. Discuss competitiveness with peers and aspirants in terms of quality, funding, reputation, and size.
- For undergraduate programs, describe student quality indicators (incoming GPA/SAT/ACT, etc.) in your program. Discuss competitiveness with peers and aspirants in terms of quality, funding, reputation, and size.
- What were some positive and negative feedback received from graduating students and alumni? Highlight any trends or insights that came from alumni feedback over the course of the cycle and how the department used this information for improvement.

Course Retention and Student Success

- Describe enrollment trends in the courses within the program.
- Describe efforts to improve student success, especially in courses with high DFW rates?
- Compare student performance and success in academic degree programs delivered on main campus, online, and/or at off-campus instructional sites (e.g. Gadsden).

Hosting APRT

Effective and efficient hosting of APRT and optional External Reviewers is important to maximize the benefits of the busy, but brief “visit” to your department.

- Designate a dedicated staff member to coordinate the logistics of the “visit.”
- If an external reviewer is involved request travel information from external reviewers as soon as travel arrangements have been confirmed.
- Reserve meeting/interview rooms, schedule APRT interviews, and confirm interview locations with APRT leader.
- Schedule meetings with Provost (with external reviewer) and Dean as soon as dates of visit are confirmed. Task a designated staff driver/runner with ushering interviewees to and from interview site punctually.
- Coordinate APRT transportation schedule (if external reviewer included) for the duration of the “on-site visit.” The schedule must include transportation to and from the airport and off-site dinner(s), if necessary, for APRT to meet. Please note that taxis, Uber, and shuttle services are not permissible. Appoint a dedicated staff member to function as an on-call driver. Transportation must be punctual and readily available for the duration of the on-site visit. Contact Fleet Services to reserve UA approved vehicles at www.fleet.ua.edu.
- Reserve hotel guest room for external reviewer as soon as dates of visit are confirmed.
- Provide a secure workroom near meeting/interview space for APRT to meet and work. Snacks and beverages are a nice touch.
- Plan APRT meals during the one to two-day “on-site visit.” Follow UA policy regarding meal and alcohol expenses. See <http://accountspayable.ua.edu/travel-policy/>
- Consult with Associate Provost and/or OIE as needed to provide a smooth, beneficial “on-site visit” with APRT.

Best Practices for the Academic Program Review Team (APRT)

The program review helps in long-range planning and in setting both university and program priorities. It informs the department faculty and staff as well as administrators about the size and stability of a program, its future personnel needs and student market, its equipment and space needs, its strengths and weaknesses, and its contribution to the mission of the institution. If requested by the department, external reviewers on the APRT may play an essential role in the program review process because of their expertise in the discipline, objectivity, and ability to place the program in a larger disciplinary context both nationally and internationally. The UA faculty representatives on the APRT contribute knowledge of the university's mission, policies and practices and provide context for the department's current standing.

Reviewing the Self-Study

Members of the APRT will receive access to the self-study files in a Box folder. The APRT will review and analyze the self-study and supporting documents and begin preparing its report or an outline based on the expectations identified below. During this review, APRT members may note and share information that will contribute to the overall evaluation of the department based on areas of expertise or responsibility as assigned by the APRT chair. APRT members should refrain from contacting members of the department under review. However, please do contact the Associate Provost and/or OIE if additional materials or information is needed.

Conducting On-Site Interviews

It is also during the review of the self-study that the APRT should begin identifying specific questions to be asked during the two-day departmental visit and a list of personnel to be interviewed during this visit. Please have this list to the Associate Provost and department chair two weeks prior to the scheduled departmental visit. Routine meetings will be scheduled with the Dean, the Department Chair, Faculty, Staff, and Students. In addition, APRT will meet with the Dean of Graduate School, Director of OIE, and Associate Provost for Academic Affairs. The APRT should identify the format in which they would like to interview Faculty, Staff and Students, e.g. junior faculty in one group and senior faculty in another. A suggested timetable for interviews during the two-day visit will be provided in a separate file. These will be arranged by the department and the Associate Provost.

In planning and conducting individual or group interviews, you should:

- Determine in advance the specific information you wish to obtain in the interview.
- Identify key individuals/groups that are likely to be able to give you the information you need. Keep in mind that there is a time limit on the number of individuals/groups you will be able to interview.

- Submit to the APRT Chair requests for interviews prior to the beginning of the on-site visit. The APRT Chair will submit the list to the Associate Provost and department chair. The list of individuals or groups you submit may need to be altered as the visit proceeds, and the APRT Chair may adjust interview schedules for a more efficient use of time.
- Write out questions designed to elicit the information you need.
- Take notes on the responses you get during the interview for possible later use in composing the final report.
- Be collegial and professional in asking questions so as not to invite defensiveness.
- Keep the discussion focused on the issues/opportunities related to the visit.
- Do not discuss the business of the committee or the progress of the review of the institution with those whom you are interviewing or with anyone else outside of the committee.
- Avoid dominating the discussion or allowing one or more of those whom you are interviewing to dominate it.
- After a question has been adequately answered, you will need to be courteous but firm in moving on to your next question.
- Keep track of the time so that you can bring closure to the interview and get to other scheduled interviews or committee meetings on time.

Expectations for Final Report

The final report of about 10-15 pages should cover program strengths, challenges/weaknesses, opportunities and recommendations for change. It should be evaluative rather than descriptive, and should be forward-looking, not simply an assessment of the program's current status.

The APRT should focus its evaluation and recommendations on the core criteria as outlined in the self-study and any questions provided by the Dean. The committee's recommendations should focus on changes that might be made using resources that are currently available to the program. If recommendations are made for changes that would require additional resources, the need and priority for additional resources should be clearly specified.

The APRT should plan to present a brief summary of its major findings and recommendations during the exit interviews with the department chair and dean (if available). Within two to four weeks following the visit, the committee's report should be provided electronically to the Associate Provost, who, in turn, will distribute the report to the department. If factual errors occur, the committee will be asked to correct and revise the report accordingly. A final electronic report should be provided to the Associate Provost by the review committee within six to eight weeks of the visit.

In compiling the report, consider the following:

Mission

- Achievement of program mission and use of mission to inform decisions

- The relationship of the department's mission to UA's mission and support of UA's strategic plan

Program Quality

- Quality of the undergraduate and graduate degree programs, including achievement of intended student learning outcomes and national standing
- Quality, range, and focus of research, scholarship, or artistic activities of the department
- Quality and appropriateness of extension/outreach programs and activities
- Fiscal and physical resources
- Recruitment and retention of faculty, staff and students from underrepresented ethnic or minority groups and women
- Academic and administrative organization, and
- Inter- or cross-disciplinary cooperation with other units.

Planning

- The unit's strategic planning for future development
- The unit's effectiveness in planning and improving programs, as well as the unit's effectiveness in incorporating information about student learning into the planning process

Recommendations

- Strategic actions to improve program quality

These suggestions are not exhaustive. The APRT is encouraged to be responsive to other strengths and opportunities for improvement that come to the fore in the course of the review. It is expected that the APRT will make specific recommendations for improvement of the quality of the program, as well as identify those aspects of the program(s) that are exemplary.

Sample Departmental Visit Itinerary

Date	
9:00 AM – 9:30 AM	Department Chair
9:45 AM – 10:30 AM	Dean and Senior Associate Dean
10:45 – 11:45	Graduate Program
Noon	Lunch with Graduate Students
1:15 – 2:00 PM	Undergraduate Program
2:00 – 2:45 PM	Faculty and staff interviews
3:00 – 4:00 PM	Faculty and staff interviews, cont'd
4:00 – 4:30 PM	APRT work on report (as needed)
Date	
9:00 – 9:30 AM	Graduate School Dean
9:45 – 10:15 AM	OIE Director
10:15 – Noon	More interviews (if needed)
Noon	Lunch with Undergraduate Students
1:00 – 1:45 PM	Dean and Senior Associate Dean
2:00 – 2:30 PM	Senior Associate Provost
2:45 – 3:15 PM	Department Chair
	Work Session (if needed)

List of Peer and Aspirant Institutions

(Individual departments might have other aspirants/peers)

SEC Institutions

University of Arkansas
Auburn University
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Kentucky
Louisiana State University
University of Mississippi
Mississippi State University
University of Missouri
University of South Carolina
University of Tennessee
Texas A&M University
Vanderbilt University
University of Missouri
University of South Carolina
University of Tennessee
Texas A&M University
Vanderbilt University

Southern University Group (SUG)

Arizona State University
Auburn University
Clemson University
Florida State University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Georgia State University
Louisiana State University
Mississippi State University
North Carolina State University / Raleigh
Oklahoma State University
Texas A & M University
Texas Tech University
University of Alabama at Birmingham
University of Arkansas
University of Delaware
University of Florida
University of Georgia
University of Houston
University of Kentucky
University of Maryland / College Park
University of Mississippi
University of North Carolina / Chapel Hill
University of Oklahoma

University of South Carolina
University of Southern Mississippi
University of Tennessee / Knoxville
University of Texas / Austin
University of Virginia
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
West Virginia University

Department Strategic Plan Template

Department Mission & Vision

Summary of Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities (based on self-study and final report by APRT)

Strategic Goals

- Goal 1
 - Measurable outcomes that indicate degree to which goal is achieved
 - Strategic actions to improve outcomes and achieve goal
 - Timeline for action implementation (responsible personnel) and goal achievement
 - Anticipated cost for actions
- Goal 2
 - Measurable outcomes that indicate degree to which goal is achieved
 - Strategic actions to improve outcomes and achieve goal
 - Timeline for action implementation (responsible personnel) and goal achievement
 - Anticipated cost for actions
- Goal 3
 - Measurable outcomes that indicate degree to which goal is achieved
 - Strategic actions to improve outcomes and achieve goal
 - Timeline for action implementation (responsible personnel) and goal achievement
 - Anticipated cost for actions
- Goals 4
 - Measurable outcomes that indicate degree to which goal is achieved
 - Strategic actions to improve outcomes and achieve goal
 - Timeline for action implementation (responsible personnel) and goal achievement
 - Anticipated cost for actions