

Academic Program Review Guidelines

Office of Academic Affairs

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Purpose of Program Review at PSU

The Academic Program Review (APR) process at Portland State University (PSU) is designed to provide continuous improvement of academic quality within academic units through self-study and external review. APR is a requirement of PSU's regional accreditation body, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU). Furthermore, APR is directly supportive of Portland State University's 2016-2020 Strategic Plan.

The NWCCU specifically addresses course, program and degree review in standards [Two](#) (2.C.1-2), [Three](#) (3.B.1-2), and [Four](#) (4.A.2-4, 6, 4.B.1-2). These standards require clearly identified learning outcomes for courses, programs, and degrees; program goals/objectives; planning for growth or consolidation, and alignment with institutional Core Themes; and regular review and evaluation of assessment results for decision making.

APR also contributes to furthering [PSU's strategic plan](#), particularly in Goal 1 (Elevate Student Success), Goal 2 (Advance Excellence in Teaching and Research) and Goal 3 (Extend Our Leadership in Community Engagement). APR provides an important mechanism by which PSU can measure alignment with and achievement of the goals of the Strategic Plan and, vice versa, the Strategic Plan provides an institutional context and framework within which the APRs are conducted.

For the purposes of this document, "academic program review" refers to a program or department's holistic appraisal over five years of its curricular offerings (certificates, majors, minors, and graduate programs), and where applicable, its centers/institutes. Center and institute review should follow [Guidelines for Center/Institute Review at Portland State University](#). APR provides academic units the opportunity for reflection and discussion of their programs on a regular cycle, and is explicitly designed to be collaborative in nature, and inclusive of student, faculty, community, and administrative input as well as external evaluation, as determined by the dean. The overall goal of APR is to assist academic units in:

- articulating their goals and objectives in relation to the University's themes, priorities, and initiatives
- instituting a regular process of internal and external review of qualitative and quantitative information about program activities
- using outcomes for program improvement and goal-setting
- demonstrating progress toward achievement of department goals
- providing departments with direction and support during leadership change or other transitions
- informing deans with a more thorough and reflective evidence of program progress
- developing an action plan with the dean that will address items referenced in the internal and external reviews and facilitate continuous improvement

The APR process is accomplished through a recurring schedule of goal setting, data gathering and analysis, reporting, and developing an action plan. Through the college's planning process, the academic department:

- establishes its goals and objectives related to teaching, scholarship and service for its respective programs
- provides analysis of data received and/or collected to demonstrate progress toward the stated goals and objectives
- articulates department and college commitments and any changes that may be needed
- reports on its progress toward meeting its goals and objectives

Academic units should use these **Academic Program Review Guidelines** to structure both their APR processes and formal APR report submission.

Units whose programs are subject to specialized accreditation review are required to conduct Academic Program Review. Close attention should be given to determine a reasonable process of review that does not duplicate efforts.

Review Schedule

An annual timeline for program review and a master schedule of departmental rotation will be published on the OAA website. Deans, in collaboration with OAA, are responsible for setting review schedules for their units on a 7 year cycle (unless otherwise dictated by the specialized accreditation agency). Those units with specialized accreditation may incorporate many of those materials into this report but the PSU APR process and format as described here should be followed.

Procedures

Program review procedures are outlined below. In consultation with the Provost and Vice Provost for Academic and Fiscal Planning, deans and department chairs may request to modify these procedures to accommodate particular circumstances.

Preparation

By the end of Spring term each academic year, the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) sends a reminder to the dean, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning (OIRP) and to the Office of Academic Innovation (OAI) indicating the programs or departments that will be reviewed during the next academic year. OIRP and, using Cognos/DataMASTER, the School/College is able to provide the department/program being reviewed with the requisite data indicated in the Criteria for Program Review below. Reviews will begin in Fall term and must be concluded by the end of Spring term. Please note that some planning activities may occur in the Spring term prior to the APR year.

The dean meets with the program or department to develop a process for the review and to finalize any decisions about information that will be required beyond what is typically provided by OIRP.

The program or department prepares review materials according to the Program Review Criteria, and any additional materials as required by the dean. Core data elements will be pre-populated in DataMASTER by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. Those departments subject to specialized accreditation may also use these data reports, but may also have to prepare other materials as required by their accrediting agencies.

Review Process and Timeline

The following represents a chronology of steps and recommended deadlines for each step in the process. If submission of a completed APR to OAA is not possible by the final June 1st deadline, a request detailing the reasoning must be made by the appropriate dean to the provost.

Spring term prior to APR year:

- OAA alerts deans of the pending reviews scheduled for the next academic year
- Deans confirm the programs that are to be reviewed

- OAI will reach out to programs about to have their APR and request that they submit their assessment plan to be reviewed by the Institutional Assessment Council (IAC). The IAC will provide developmental feedback on the assessment plan by using a rubric based on the NWCCU accreditation standards.

Fall term

- Review process begins
- The responsible dean meets with the units scheduled for review to develop the process for the reviews and to finalize any decisions affecting the information that will be required beyond what is provided by OIRP.
- Department/program begins drafting its self-study

Winter term

- Department/program completes self-study using the established standards/criteria listed below.
- March 15th Self-study and list of potential external reviewers submitted to the dean for review and comment
- April 1st Reviewers approved and confirmed

Spring term

- April 23rd Self-study and dean's response submitted to external reviewers
- May 7th External reviewers brought to campus to conduct review (other arrangements may be made at the discretion of the dean, i.e., virtual reviews are possible)
- May 15th External reviewers prepare a report and submit it to the dean
- May 23rd The dean prepares a final report for the department/program based on the self-study and the external reviewers' report
- May 23rd The department/program prepares a response to the reports of the external reviewers and the dean
- Departments/programs with institutes and centers will simultaneously initiate a review of those centers and institutes following the "Guidelines for Center/Institute Review at Portland State University"
- June 1st The complete review packet (self-study, dean's response, external review report, dean's report, department/program response, and the dean's action plan) are submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs

Follow up

- One year after the Action Plan is signed; the provost will meet with the dean to discuss the progress on meeting the goals of the Action Plan.
- Three years after the Action Plan is signed, the provost will meet with the dean again to discuss the progress on meeting the goals of the Action Plan.

Use of External Reviewers

Academic programs undergoing program review are expected to include 2-3 external reviewers in the process. Programs identified for review need to submit names of potential reviewers to their deans, who may add additional names to the list. The external reviewers should receive and review the self-assessment report written by the department, as well as the dean's response to the report in advance of their visit to campus. Deans may determine whether one or more reviewers are required to make a site visit, or whether meetings via skype or other means are adequate for the review. Deans are expected to cover expenses related to these site visits.

Please review the [PSU External Review Guidelines](#) for more detailed information.

Committee Considerations

As part of the department/program review, the department/program review committee should consider consultation with, as appropriate, the following:

Students (program majors), staff, associated faculty, community partners, disciplinary librarian(s), as well as representatives from OIT, Facilities, Office of Academic Innovation, and Advising and Career Services.

Data Sources for Academic Program Review

The **PSU Fact Book** folder in [DataMASTER](#) contains the following reports in either the **PSU Fact Book** folder or the **Program Review** folder contained within the **PSU Fact Book** folder.

- [Enrollment by Declared Major/Program and Student Level - Table 3.8.1](#)
- [Student Credit Hours by School/College & Department by Student Level - Table 3.3.4](#) or [Term SCH by Unit and Course Level](#)
- [Degrees Granted](#)
- Faculty Teaching Load using the [Faculty Course Listing by Department - S0042](#)
- Student Mix from the [Fact Book - Student Profile Dashboard](#) reports
- Classes with high DFW rates from the [Course Grade and Withdrawal Rates](#) report

The **Office of Institutional Research and Planning** (OIRP) will provide a report of faculty characteristics.

The **Office of Research and Strategic Partnerships** (RSP) will provide yearly research expenditures.

The **Campus Planning Office (CPO)** will provide a current assessment of departmental space and a breakdown by usage.

The **PSU Revenue and Cost Attribution Tool** (RCAT data available from FY 2013 onwards) can be accessed by contacting the Budget Office to provide an aggregate and a departmental breakdown of the revenue generation that is attributed to the department, the department's direct costs (yearly Education and General Fund budget) and the department's attributed indirect costs. This information is usually available in January.

The **Office of Academic Innovation (OAI)** can offer guidance on assessment practices and how to give an accurate representation of student and program level learning outcomes. The **Institutional Assessment Council (IAC)** is responsible for evaluating and providing developmental feedback to the programs on the assessment plan. The goal is for continuous improvement to the assessment plan.

Please keep in mind that the data provided by different offices across campus will need to be examined closely by the program to verify its validity. There may be nuances in the way that the program is structured that prevents the raw data from presenting an accurate picture.

Guidelines for Academic Program Review

Section I. Centrality to the PSU mission

A. Program/Department

- Clearly articulate the goals and objectives of your program/department.
- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of your program/department.

B. Institutional Alignment

- Provide a narrative statement that articulates the connection between program/departmental goals and objectives and the university's mission statement and strategic plan.
- Identify these connections to the strategic plan, by identifying the Strategic Goal, Objective, Initiative and Sub-Initiative that they relate to by number. Not all program/departmental goals and objectives will contribute to all the university goals & sub-initiatives with the same intensity. Within the narrative, identify and describe opportunities to further enhance this connection and how you intend to take advantage of those opportunities.

Section II. Quality of Instruction and Curriculum

A. Faculty

- Describe the qualifications, mix and sufficiency of your program's/department's faculty and how these characteristics of your faculty support your program's objectives.
- Articulate how your program/department supports institutional commitments to Diversity and Internationalization related to the recruitment, evaluation and retention of faculty. (Please refer to the [PSU Strategic Plan](#), including as relevant for Diversity – Goal 1, Initiatives 1.3, 3.2; Goal 2, Initiative 2.3; Goal 4, Initiatives 1.1, 2.1, 3.1 and 3.2 and for Internationalization – Goal 1, Initiatives 7.1 – 7.5.)
- Highlight the particular area or areas of strength of your program's/department's faculty.

B. Curriculum

- Describe the strengths of the curriculum and its quality and rigor.
- Identify the emerging trends in your field and how your program and faculty are poised to address the trends.
- Explain the role and function of online and hybrid learning in your programs.
- Articulate how your program/department supports institutional commitments to Diversity and Internationalization in the curriculum.

Section II Supporting Data	
<i>Common data elements (required):</i>	<i>Potential data elements:</i>
• Faculty Teaching Load	• Number and percentage of faculty by

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty Characteristics • Faculty Service • Number and percentage of diverse faculty • 	<p>tenure status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty by full-time/part-time status • Number of faculty with terminal degrees • Number and type of graduate assistants • Degree programs offered • Online and hybrid programs and courses offered • Number of Community Based Learning (CBL), Capstone, or other community-based courses offered
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Section III. Quality of Scholarly and Creative Work

A. Scholarship and Faculty

- Identify and briefly describe your department/program’s current areas of scholarly strength in terms of quality and rigor.
- Explain the emerging scholarly trends in your field and the extent to which your program/department is poised to address those trends.
- Articulate how the department’s/program’s scholarly activity advances its curricula.
- Describe how the particular faculty mix supports the program’s/department’s research objectives.

B. Scholarship and Engagement

- Explain the extent to which and how undergraduate and/or graduate students are involved in scholarly activities in your program/department. Link this information to the strategic plan and its sub-initiatives as appropriate.
- Describe the extent to which and how your program/department engages in scholarship through community engagement and service. Link this information to the strategic plan and its sub-initiatives as appropriate.

Section III Supporting Data	
<i>Common data elements (required):</i>	<i>Potential data elements:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (if relevant) Yearly research expenditures (contact RSP) • Publications, presentations, and/or creative works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of proposals and awards for sponsored research grants and contracts • Proportion of faculty involved in research (whether funded or not) • Citations of published works • Faculty Enhancement Grant awards, number and award amounts • External faculty honors and awards

Section IV. Student Success

A. Student Advising

- Explain your program's/department's approach to advising, including the degree to which it advises on general education requirements and major, certificate and minor requirements and degree completion pathways. Also, provide an explanation of how your department works within the overall advising structure and services at PSU.
- Describe how you evaluate the effectiveness of your advising plan, including its impacts on retention and degree completion.

B. Persistence and Completion

- Identify and describe any barriers to student persistence and degree completion in your program/department (for example bottleneck courses or courses with significant D, W, F rates), and what efforts are being undertaken by the program/department to alleviate those barriers.
- Specifically address how students are being supported and how that will lead to improved rates of persistence and degree completion. Are there any supports that specifically address the needs of students from diverse backgrounds? Please describe.

Section IV Supporting Data	
<i>Common data elements (required):</i>	<i>Potential data elements:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Degrees Granted Classes with high DFW rates• Advising plans• Degree maps• Time to Completion• Retention and persistence rate of undergraduate students• Retention and persistence rate of underrepresented minorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enrollment by major• Number of undergraduate degrees awarded, include minors and certificates• Number of graduate degrees awarded, include graduate certificates• Number/proportion of diverse students• Support available to graduate students• Gainful employment information (certificates)

Section V. Assessment of Student Achievement

The Institutional Assessment Council (IAC) has developed a rubric aligned with NWCCU standards to provide guidance to programs on the assessment process and developing an assessment plan. The Office of Academic Innovation (OAI) can assist programs in development of an assessment plan.

A. Evidence of Student Learning

- List and number the expected student learning outcomes for your program. Outcomes should explicitly describe what students know, understand, or are able to do. For undergraduate programs, draw connections between these program level learning outcomes and the PSU [Campus Wide Learning Outcomes](#).

- Describe the kinds of experiences that you expect students to have inside and outside of the classroom to meet these learning outcomes.

B. Evaluation of Student Academic Performance

- Define meaningful curricular goals and present defensible standards for evaluating whether students are achieving those goals.
- Specify what direct measures you are using to assess student learning. Direct assessment includes students’ demonstration of knowledge, skills, and abilities.

C. Analysis of the Results of Assessing Student Academic Performance

- Report and discuss the findings from each learning outcome assessment activity.
- Review Assessment Plan to see if any changes or modifications will create a more meaningful process.

D. Post-graduate Outcomes for the Program

- Articulate how you prepare students for successful careers, meaningful lives, and where appropriate, further education.
- Collect and provide data about whether you are meeting these goals.

E. Incorporate changes Based on Assessment Evidence of Student Learning Outcomes

- Describe how the assessment findings are used to improve student learning and classroom instruction. How the assessment findings are used to assist in strategic program planning?
- Provide examples that show how the program has closed the feedback loop and used assessment findings to review, evaluate, and modify the curriculum.

Section V Supporting Data	
<i>Common elements (required):</i>	<i>Potential elements:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program level learning outcomes • Assessment plan • Measures and indicators used to assess student learning • Number of students assessed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning outcomes alignment with workforce or post-graduate goals • Metrics used to determine long-term outcomes of student’s experiences • Baseline and trend information of student learning and progress • Alignment of program level learning outcomes with campus wide learning outcomes

VI. Cost Effectiveness, Program Productivity, and Level of Institutional Support

A. Discuss Budgetary Trends/Productivity Over the Last Five Years

Section VI Supporting Data	
<i>Common data elements (required):</i>	<i>Potential budgetary data elements:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment of departmental space and a breakdown by usage (contact CPO).• RCAT breakdown (contact dean's office)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proportion of budget from grants and contracts.• External funding generated.• Number and identity of funding sources, i.e., number of public, private, internal and external sources.• Proportion of budget from E&G, (fees, tuition, state appropriations).• Ratio of revenues to expenditures.

VII. Summary Narrative

Programs and departments should include a summary narrative that addresses issues that have emerged from the previous six sections.

In particular, discuss where the program/department:

- has excelled in providing quality education and what were the key contributors to the department's/program's achievement.
- has identified challenges and what might alleviate those barriers to academic quality.

Criteria for Graduate Program Review

Graduate programs may use these criteria in addition to the common criteria for program reviews.

Section VIII. In Relation to Educational Objectives:

A. Student application and process through a program:

- Number of applications.
- Number of admissions.
- Number of students matriculating.
- Number of students continuing from previous year.
- Number of graduates (Masters and Doctoral level separate) per year since last program review.

B. Curriculum design and delivery:

- Percentage of total credit hours required for a program that must be from courses that are graduate only (e.g., not 400/500 level).
- Typical ratio of graduate versus undergraduate enrollment in mixed U/G courses.
- What percentage of core courses and regularly offered electives are taught by tenure track faculty?
- For programs with both a thesis and non-thesis option, what proportion of graduates utilizes each option, what proportion switch from thesis to non-thesis?
- What proportion of student credits are taught in approved versus experimental courses (510, 610, etc.)?
- Does the program have formally documented processes and associated criteria for admission and graduation, aside from the general University standards?
- Does the program have a Graduate Program Handbook or other written materials that clearly define student and faculty responsibilities, expected rate of progress, conditions and procedures for removal from the program, etc.?

C. Information that would provide perspective on mentoring and the ability of the faculty to foster immersion into the field

- Ratio of graduate-level SCH generated to the number of faculty (FTE).
- Number of students actively preparing theses or dissertations, compared to total number of students and to faculty FTE.

Section IX. In Relation to Research:

- Comment on the availability of potential national and/or local research funding sources.
- What trends or emphases are evident and to what extent does the program align with those trends?

Section X. In Relation to Scale:

- What number of tenured positions and fixed term FTE are utilized in the delivery of the graduate program?
- What number of 'strands' or areas of emphasis are offered in the program? How many faculty members are associated with each?

Section XI. In Relation to Resources:

- Does the program have necessary amounts and quality of space (labs, offices for GAs, studio space, library, student meeting areas, etc.)?
- Does the program have (or have access to) the necessary equipment and related materials (e.g., computer hardware and software, scientific equipment, etc.)?
- Does the program have (or access to) community engagement, service and community support?