Why is a policy on Academic Program Review necessary?

In the fall of 2012 the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) performed a Year Three Resources and Capacity Evaluation at PSU and found that PSU was out of compliance with NWCCU’s accreditation standards on academic program review. The evaluating committee submitted the following recommendation:

“The committee found that, while under development, Portland State University does not have a fully-functioning program review cycle that includes all academic programs. It is recommended that the University act to implement an effective system for the review of academic programs to make certain that the expected program learning outcomes for all programs are communicated, that undergraduate programs demonstrate a coherent design with appropriate breadth, depth, and sequencing and that graduate programs demonstrate greater depth of study and increased demands (2.C.2; 2.C.4, 2.C.12).”

The proposed policy on Academic Program Review is PSU’s endeavor to bring PSU into compliance with NWCCU’s accreditation standards on academic program review.

Program review is a platform for exploring ways to maintain and enhance the academic quality of a range of academic activities.

What does the policy do?

The Academic Program Review (APR) policy is a statement of intent and lists the steps that must be taken by all applicable academic units within the institution to fulfill the requirements of the academic program review. The policy instructs units on how to prepare for the review, spells out the review process, how it is implemented and how the follow-up process will work, explains the use of external reviewers (and gives guidelines on how external reviewers are selected), and explains how specialized accreditation is coordinated with the PSU academic program review process.

What do the Guidelines do?

The creation of the APR Guidelines was a cooperative effort of an ad hoc committee consisting of 5 faculty members and 4 administrators in 2012. The Guidelines are not policy. The APR guidelines are offered as a format for an academic unit to follow in creating its self-study. Questions within each section of the guidelines are qualitative prompts to guide the direction of the unit’s self-study. The common data elements in each section are tools that can be used to support the findings of the qualitative data. The guidelines were designed for some standardization but with enough flexibility for the unit to individualize the final self-study to meet its own unique circumstances.