ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW PLAN

PURPOSE & RATIONALE

Academic Program Review (APR) is an integral part of Idaho State University’s ongoing efforts to ensure that our educational mission is being met through the delivery of programs that are effective in meeting their goals through curricula that are current and relevant. APR provides faculty and academic units the opportunity to reflect upon the content of their programs and delivery of curriculum, assessing its effectiveness and planning for actions to maintain or improve the quality of teaching and scholarship at the institution, and alignment with core themes.

APR is both linked to and driven by the accreditation cycle and the state-mandated responsibility to conduct regular review of all academic programs. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) specifically addresses course, program, 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). NWCCU requires clearly identified learning outcomes for courses, programs, and degrees; program goals/objectives; planning for growth or consolidation, and alignment with institutional Core Themes; regular review and evaluation of assessment results for decision making. Higher education institutions in Idaho are also formally charged by the State Board of Education to “establish and maintain policies and procedures . . . for evaluating existing programs” (SBOE Governing Policies and Procedures, Sec. III, H). The APR formalizes the review process at ISU and ensures our compliance with SBOE policy.

APR is also linked to the institutional strategic plan through Goal 1 (Learning and Discovery) and Goal 6 (Stewardship of Institutional Resources). APR provides an important mechanism by which the institution can measure alignment with and achievement of the goals of the ISU Strategic Plan and, vice versa, the Strategic Plan provides an institutional context and framework within which the APRs are conducted.

The review process is scheduled on a seven year cycle, and takes 18-24 months to complete the series of stages, which are: 1) Planning and data collection; 2) Unit self-study; 3) Site visit by the review team; 4) Reports to College Executive Committee (CEC) and college leadership; and 5) Development of an Action Plan.

The guiding principles of an effective APR are that such critical self-study and analysis ensures linkage to the long-term institutional mission and priorities, and all relevant plans and policies. It is essential that the self-study is driven by faculty in order that the reflection, and subsequent responses and plans, are authentic. The academic units – comprised of faculty – are in a position to determine their own goals, identified student learning outcomes, and measures within the context of the institution mission and core themes, and are expected to describe their programs with respect to both regional and national peers and norms. The descriptions and recommendations that emerge from unit self-studies are expected to be outcome-based in order to ensure the measurability of goals and quality of academic programming. Fiscal responsibility
is also a necessary component of the review, connected to institutional budget processes. Library resources are also a necessary component of each unit’s reflection, and the self-study will make use of the knowledge and expertise of library faculty in describing and assessing the holdings and databases relevant to the program’s needs.¹

A review cycle is initiated by the CEC who will have established, in consultation with the college dean, a program review schedule for all units within the college. Further, the CEC will develop this schedule in consultation with the Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness in order to maximize the impact of each APR and ensure sound linkage between program review and accreditation needs.

CRITERIA FOR PROGRAM SELECTION & SCHEDULE

The CEC will establish a schedule that strives to ensure a balanced distribution of annual reviews among college units. Careful consideration will be given to the composition of the CEC, such that the interests of affected units are represented and given a voice in the process.

Factors that may influence program selection criteria:

- Sudden change in enrollment
- Planned program changes
- Timing of NWCCU accreditation reviews
- Relationship of program with concurrently reviewed programs
- Time since last major review of the program²

REVIEW TEAMS

The review team will be composed of at least three reviewers, one internal and two external to the university. The external reviewers will be from similar programs at other regional peer or aspirational institutions. The review team will include an ISU faculty member from a department or program other than the one under review. Selection of review team members is made by the dean from a list of candidates submitted by the department chair.

The review team should meet with departmental constituents during the site visit (e.g., staff, students, alumni, and industry or the profession) to provide a sufficiently broad perspective necessary for an effective review. The review team is responsible for the submission of a report to the dean and CEC within 30 days following the site visit by the members of the team.

FULL vs. MODIFIED REVIEWS

A full review is conducted for programs that are not accredited by a specialized accrediting body. A modified review will be conducted for programs that are subject to external specialized

¹ adapted from Illinois State U.
² adapted from U of Nebraska.
accreditation to ensure that program review guidelines related to course, program, degree goals and learning outcomes are addressed.

PROCESS & PROCEDURES:
The program review process begins with the charge from the dean to the CEC to identify several appropriate programs for review. The CEC identifies programs scheduled for review in the given year and communicates the initiation of the process to the appropriate associate deans and department chairs. Upon receiving direction to initiate the APR process, the chair selects suitable faculty members to begin the data collection for the unit self-study.3

UNIT SELF-STUDY
The self-study provides an opportunity for a unit to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of its recent performance, to describe and analyze its culture within the context of the institution, to ensure that linkages between unit and institutional mission and core themes, to evaluate future directions, and to gather feedback from key stakeholders. A deeper, critical assessment of specific areas of the program may be seen as a necessary component of a complete review.

Specifically, the self-study should include description and assessment of the following:
- Goals and mission of undergraduate, graduate, distance and/or on-line programs
- The program’s relationship to college and institution Strategic and 5-Year program plans
- Research, creative, and scholarly activity within the context of the institution
- Facilities and equipment, and maintenance needs
- Library resources:
  - Holdings appropriately aligned with curricula needs
  - Role of library resources in teaching and research
- Budget planning and processes, and fiscal priorities and decision-making
- Program curriculum and learning outcomes
- Student demographics and enrollment
- Role of general education courses (if any) to General Education program goals and outcomes
- Faculty demographics, rank distribution, research expertise, and teaching loads
- Plans for new courses/minors/majors, future directions, structural changes, etc.

Where appropriate and/or possible, the unit shall utilize the Program Viability data available through the Office of Institutional Research in order to provide quantitative support for the self-study narrative. Such data may include information regarding faculty (FTE’s, payroll, demographics, T & P, workloads, etc.), departmental resources (financial and physical), research and external funding activities, undergraduate programs (enrollment, demographics, average

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3 Illinois St. U has guidelines for self-study process and content.
time-to-degree, degrees granted, etc.), graduate education (same as undergrad, plus graduate placement data, completion rates, faculty activity in dissertation direction, etc.), and curriculum.

An outline for the unit self-study should be comprised of the following sections, at a minimum:

- Section I: Description of Self-study Process
- Section II: Description and Analyses of Program
- Section III: Response to Previous Program Review Recommendations
- Section IV: Program Goals and Planning Processes
- Section V: Recommendations for Program Improvement
- Section VI: Executive Summary (2-3 pages)
- Section VII: Appendices

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

Early in the planning phase of the APR, the department chair, in consultation with the associate dean, will compile a ranked list of faculty from regional peer and/or aspirational institutions as candidates for external reviewers. Criteria to be considered when making external reviewer selections are: national or international recognition, connection with comparable institutions/departments, representation of the major subfields of the discipline, and reflection of the ethnic and gender diversity within the field. Selecting individuals who have any recent connections with the program currently under review should be avoided if at all possible; if this is not possible, full disclosure of potential conflicts of interest should be identified.

From the list of candidates submitted by the chair and associate dean, two external reviewers will be selected. A site visit for reviewers follows upon submission of the unit self-study report to the CEC and dean. Reviewers then prepare a report in response to the self-study and their visit, which, along with the self-study is submitted to the chair, CEC, dean, AVP for Institutional Effectiveness, and Provost.

REPORTING: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The self-study and site visit report are submitted to the CEC for review and approval. The CEC writes a summative report of the program, including recommendations, which is submitted to the chair, director, or appropriate dean, AVP for Institutional Effectiveness, and Provost for review and comment.

ACTION PLAN

Upon completion of the self-study and reporting process, departments will develop an action plan for the years until their next program review. This action plan integrates the recommendations of the review team in the final report with the departmental and institutional strategic plans and missions, describes how each action item will be addressed using current resources, and identifies individuals who will be responsible for actions item and timeline for completion. The chair is responsible for drafting the action plan, in consultation with the associate dean, and is also responsible for keeping the associate dean updated as each action item is addressed.
APPENDIX A: ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW FLOWCHART

CEC identifies programs for review, notifies appropriate Chairs, Associate Deans, Dean and AVP for Institutional Effectiveness.

Chairs and Associate Dean select faculty for unit self-study data collection. Program self-study data compiled, report submitted to Dean and CEC for review.

External Reviewers site visit and report. CEC writes summative report with recommendations.

Program action plan submitted to CEC.

Dean approves reports and action plan. Copies sent to AVP for Institutional Effectiveness and Provost.