



Winona State University

## Academic Program Review

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### 1. Purpose:

It is important to ensure that the University promotes excellence in teaching, learning, and scholarly activity; that its undergraduate and graduate programs are of the highest quality; and that the long tradition of service to society is continually affirmed. The purpose of conducting reviews of academic programs, therefore, is to ensure that each unit's activities contribute to these goals and are consistent with the University's mission. The Minnesota State Colleges & Universities requires periodic review of all academic programs, and various accrediting agencies, including the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, expect that campuses will use the information gained through reviews to support ongoing quality enhancement.

### 2. Definitions:

Program: As used in this regulation, a "program" is an organizational unit approved by A2C2 of WSU through which a body of the curriculum is offered to students. Generally, a "program" is synonymous with a "department" but may also be a subunit within a department or a cross-disciplinary unit that involves several departments, or portions of departments.

Assessment: Evaluation of performance is essential for a program's case that it is distinctive and effective. Therefore, a distinctive program documents in ways that are understandable and credible to internal and external constituents, how it achieves the goals embedded in its mission. It is those ways that are referred to in this regulation as *assessment*. The purpose of assessment may be *formative*, meaning that it aims to provide information to guide decisions about the future of the program, or it may be *summative*, meaning that it aims to measure the effects of past decisions. In the context of this regulation, the primary purpose of assessment is formative and the secondary purpose is summative.

Student learning outcomes: A program needs to be clear about what it intends students to know and to do and to find ways of learning whether, as a result of the education provided, students actually know and can do them. The emphasis in this regulation is on the overall expectations that the program has for student learning, rather than expectations at the level of a single course or faculty/staff member.

### 3. Objectives of Program Review:

The objectives of program review fall into three categories:

#### A. Internal to the Program

- encourage civil interaction among faculty, staff, and students;
- promote excellence in teaching;

- improve the quality of the learning experience;
- promote excellence in research and scholarship;
- promote excellence in professional growth and development;
- promote excellence in the support of student growth;
- promote excellence in service to society;
- provide internal accountability;

### **B. Internal to the University**

- provide internal accountability;
- assist University decision making and planning;
- inform students about program quality;
- align program goals with institutional goals<sup>1</sup>

### **C. External to the University**

- inform prospective students;
- benchmark performance measures and standards in all areas of academic activity against appropriate external bodies;
- provide external accountability to accrediting bodies, the Minnesota State Colleges & Universities, and the State of Minnesota.

## **4. Elements of Program Review:**

WSU believes that all academic programs need periodic reviews that assess the effectiveness of programs. This level of academic program review takes the form of a quality audit that assumes a pattern of ongoing consultation and periodic progress updates between the program and administration and that consists of the following elements:

- a performance portfolio;
- a program self-study report;
- an external reviewer site visit and report;
- a quality improvement plan; and
- a cross-disciplinary conversation about the review process and its outcomes.

The format and specific expectations for program review may differ by discipline. In particular, programs that are officially accredited by national program accrediting agencies (e.g., CCNE, CSWE, ABET, AACSB, NCATE, NAST, NASM, CACREP) are expected to meet the requirements of those agencies in addition to meeting WSU expectations. At a minimum, any program review must include the five elements listed above, and must address the criteria in section 4(b), which are the basis for the university's accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission.

- a) **The Performance Portfolio:** The department/program with the assistance of the WSU Office of Institutional Research prepares a portfolio of standard information for any program undergoing review. That information describes:
- the demographic profile of the program's faculty, staff, and students;
  - key performance indicators;
  - resources available to the program;

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<sup>1</sup> WSU Institutional Goals can be found on the President's Home Page in the University Workplan

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- faculty/staff vitae; and
  - other areas of particular interest to the program or administration, as appropriate.
- b) **The Program Self-Study Report:** The self-study report is brief and well focused, normally no more than 20 single-spaced pages in length plus an appendix consisting of a short history of the program and any limited supplementary materials necessary to illustrate or substantiate specific issues. It includes information and analysis sufficient to address each of the following five criteria. The program, in consultation with the dean, determines the appropriate degree of emphasis each criterion should be given.

**Criterion One: Mission and Integrity.** *The program operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the administration, faculty, staff, and students.*

- 1a. The program's mission documents are clear, articulate publicly the program's commitments, and are consistent with the missions of the college and university.
- 1b. In its mission documents, the program recognizes the diversity of its learners, other constituencies, and the greater society it serves.
- 1c. Understanding of and support for the mission pervade the program.
- 1d. The program's structures and processes for governance and coordination promote effective leadership and support collaborative processes that enable the program to fulfill its mission.
- 1e. The program upholds appropriate ethical standards and is unwilling to sacrifice them in pursuit of its mission and objectives.

**Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future.** *The program's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.*

- 2a. The program realistically prepares for a future shaped by multiple societal and economic trends.
- 2b. The program's resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future.
- 2c. The program's ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of its effectiveness and clearly inform strategies for continuous improvement.
- 2d. All levels of planning align with the program's mission, thereby enhancing its capacity to fulfill that mission.

**Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching.** *The program provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.*

- 3a. The program's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated and make effective assessment possible.
- 3b. The program values and supports effective teaching.
- 3c. The program creates learning environments and opportunities that make it possible for students effectively to attain stated learning outcomes.
- 3d. The program's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.

**Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge.** *The program promotes a life of learning for its faculty, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.*

- 4a. The program demonstrates, through the actions of its students, faculty, and staff, that it values a life of learning.

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- 4b. The program demonstrates that acquisition of a breadth of knowledge and skills and the exercise of intellectual inquiry are integral to its operation.
- 4c. The program assesses the usefulness of its curricula to students who will live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society.
- 4d. The program provides support to ensure that faculty, students, and staff acquire, discover, and apply knowledge responsibly.

**Criterion Five: Engagement and Service.** *As called for by its mission, the program identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways that contribute to value for all.*

- 5a. The program learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.
- 5b. The program has the capacity and the commitment to engage with its identified constituencies and communities.
- 5c. The program demonstrates its responsiveness to those constituencies that depend on it for service.
- 5d. Internal and external constituencies value the services the program provides.

### **c) The External Reviewer Site Visit and Report:**

One or more consultants who are not WSU employees are engaged as auditors whose main responsibility is to assess the quality of the program. The consultant review is expected to provide written recommendations to improve the quality of the program, in the context of the criteria described in Section 4(b). Issues to be addressed include but are not limited to the following:

- 1. changes since the previous 5-year review;
- 2. adequacy of the program's assessment plan and appropriateness of the program's stated student learning outcomes;
- 3. overall progress toward attaining stated program outcomes for student learning and in achieving goals for retention and successful program completion;
- 4. strengths and weaknesses of the program's research/scholarly activity;
- 5. strengths and weaknesses of the program's service and outreach activity;
- 6. student satisfaction with the program;
- 7. staff and workload issues;
- 8. adequacy of supporting services;
- 9. climate for civil interaction among faculty, staff, and students;
- 10. the relation of the program with other units and with external stakeholders;
- 11. effectiveness of the program in meeting college and University mission and goals;
- 12. opportunities for improving the program within existing resources;
- 13. commentary on the program's proposed plans for the future, including any need to reallocate or augment resources available to the program;
- 14. other issues for consideration specific to the program, as identified by the program.

The consultant(s) submit(s) the report to the program/department which distributes copies to: (1) each of the program's faculty and staff, (2) the dean, (3) the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs (P/VPAA), and (4) the President.

### **d) The Strategic Plan**

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Once the program has received the external consultant report, it begins to develop a Strategic Plan, in consultation with the dean. The program may wish to include a detailed response to the consultant report in its plan, and should include information that reflects any changes that have occurred since its self-study was completed. The program is expected to submit its plan to the P/VPAA in preparation for meetings with the Program Review Advisory Team and the dean and P/VPAA. The final goal of this process is to arrive at a strategic plan that is mutually acceptable to the program and administration and can guide program development until the next review. The plan is also a significant contribution to ongoing revision of strategic plans for the college and university.

### **e) The Program Review Advisory Team:**

Each year, the P/VPAA convenes a team consisting of a representative from the Office of Institutional Research and faculty/staff representatives from each program that is currently near the beginning or the end of the review process. The purpose of the team is to:

- advise programs that are early in the review timetable about the expectations of program review and to address questions or concerns about the process;
- allow program representatives to learn from the experiences of those programs nearing the end of the review timetable; and
- advise the P/VPAA and deans about ways to help make the review process more effective.

## **5. Process & Procedures for Program Review:**

Program review involves participation by

- faculty and staff associated with the program;
- the dean(s) with administrative responsibility for the program;
- one or more external consultants;
- a university-level Program Review Advisory Team; and
- the P/VPAA.

### **a) Schedule of reviews:**

Academic Affairs schedules program reviews on a five-year cycle. The deans and the P/VPAA develop a five-year review schedule that projects a review for all academic programs. That schedule is updated annually and distributed to all academic programs and the Faculty Senate.

A program review normally takes place on the following timetable:

<b>March of year preceding review</b>	P/VPAA notifies programs of the forthcoming review.
<b>April –</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• P/VPAA convenes initial meeting of the Program Review Advisory Team.</li><li>• Program begins preparation of the self study.</li></ul>
<b>April through December</b>	Dean engages in regular informal conversations with the program to support creation of the self study.
<b>September –</b>	P/VPAA convenes second meeting of the Program

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	Review Advisory Team.
<b>November</b>	Program and administration arrange for external consultant visit.
<b>December</b>	First draft of program self study report due to dean from the program.
<b>January –</b>	Program faculty/staff review the dean's comments and edits of the self study draft.
<b>February</b>	Final self study report and performance portfolio submitted to the dean(s) by the program and provided to external consultant(s).
<b>March</b>	External consultant(s) site visit.
<b>April</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• External consultant final report due to dean(s) and P/VPAA.</li><li>• P/VPAA includes program representatives as (s)he convenes the Program Review Advisory Team to start the next year's review process.</li></ul>
<b>September following review year</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategic Plan due to dean(s) and P/VPAA.</li><li>• Final meeting of program representatives with the Program Review Advisory Team.</li><li>• Dean and P/VPAA meet with program faculty/staff.</li></ul>

### b) **Selecting and Scheduling one or more External Consultants:**

The number of external program review consultants to be invited to campus is determined by the P/VPAA, in consultation with the program and dean. The program is responsible for identifying and forwarding a list of 2-3 potential consultants to the dean. The dean, in consultation with the department, recommends potential consultants to the P/VPAA for approval. Once approved, the consultant visit and the terms of compensation for the consultant(s) are coordinated by the dean in cooperation with the department. Every effort should be made to schedule a site visit over a period of two days.

### c) **Preparing for the Consultant Site Visit:**

The program is responsible for providing the external consultant(s) with a copy of this regulation and its Self-study Report and Performance Portfolio at least two weeks prior to the site visit. The program is also responsible for assembling documentation in support of its self-study report, to be made available to the consultant and others during the visit. Materials such as course syllabi, texts, laboratory manuals, and other course-related items should be available in a central location for review. In addition, examples of student work such as tests, projects, assignments and research should be available to the consultant(s). This is similar to "patterns of evidence" required by the Higher Learning Commission. The primary emphasis should be on materials that offer perspectives on the five criteria described in Section 4 (above), and that illustrate how the program's faculty address the criteria of Article 22, Sect. B of the IFO/MnSCU Master Agreement.

### d) **Site Visit Interviews:**

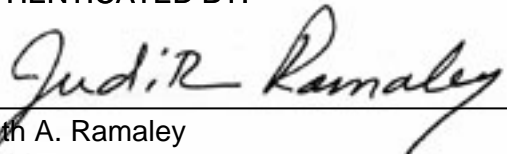
The consultant(s) should conduct interviews with the following individuals or groups, as appropriate:

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1. department chair/program director;
2. faculty members of the program;
3. present and former undergraduate and graduate students of the program (if appropriate);
4. dean of the college;
5. members of the program's advisory board (if applicable) and representatives of community organizations that interact with the program (where appropriate);
6. staff in the program;
7. others from the University community who have some association with the program;
8. P/VPAA;
9. President.

This WSU Regulation supersedes WSU Policy 3-26, dated August 19, 1997.

AUTHENTICATED BY:

  
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Judith A. Ramaley  
President

August 6, 2007  
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Date of Adoption

Authoritative Reference:

[MnSCU Policy 3.36, Academic Programs](#)

[MnSCU Procedure 3.36.1, Academic Programs](#)

President

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