



Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies/Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies

Guidelines for Academic Program Review

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*Sections of this publication are adapted from Principles of Accreditation:
Foundations for Quality Enhancement from Commission on Colleges, SACS.*

Introduction

Academic program review seeks to improve of the quality of an academic program at Texas A&M University. Program review provides academic leaders with critical information about the quality and size of a program, establishes need for future resources, student market, strengths and weaknesses, and overall contribution to the mission of the University. The program review establishes goals and directions for the future of the program and ensures that general academic plans and budget decisions are based on solid information and priorities. Based upon evidence from outcomes-based assessment, all decisions should align closely with the goals of Texas A&M University's *Vision 2020* and meet the guidelines set forward by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

Academic program review can also provide a mechanism for change. By facilitating a structured, scheduled opportunity to examine a program, a thorough strategy for improvement can be developed. Program review is intended to provide a uniform, overarching process of assessment and evaluation of the educational processes of an academic program and complement existing accreditation procedures.

Program review serves the needs of present and future students. The reviews provide accountability to the citizens of Texas for the quality of the programs and activities at Texas A&M University. Program reviews also assist Texas A&M University in its efforts to garner financial, philosophical, and political support from various groups. The information gathered in the review process can be used to support decisions about resource allocations, enrollments, special initiatives, grants, and even private gifts. Finally, bringing reviewers to Texas A&M provides us with an external view of our program quality and allows them to gain a true impression and perspective of the quality of the academic programs at Texas A&M University.

Within Texas A&M University, the self-studies of academic programs and evaluations from review teams are available to faculty and students through the Office of Graduate Studies.

Program review at Texas A&M University is a comprehensive discipline-wide review, which includes bachelors, masters, and doctoral pro-

grams, if applicable. Assessing the entire department/program will provide faculty and administrators with information to address the concerns of external constituents and improve the quality of our graduates. Moreover, a review of the whole unit should result in data that has a meaningful effect on student learning. Recent studies by ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology), the engineering accrediting body, demonstrated that the application of outcomes based assessment improved the quality of graduates. Whereas outcomes based assessment is just one measure of effort, this activity will aid departments in achieving missions and goals. External examiners assist with program review by providing another perspective on the department/program. Achieving the greatest results requires the synergism of faculty, administrators, staff, and students all working toward common goals.

All decisions made during program review should be based on measurable, transparent evidence. Although program review is aimed at academic/degree granting departments/programs, similar reviews should be accomplished in units that support academic excellence. To assess student learning outcomes, the following questions should be asked:

- What evidence exists to show that an academic unit is measuring student learning outcomes, research strengths, and service to the university?
- What evidence exists to show that an academic unit is actually using assessment results to improve curriculum and instruction, strengthen research and service, promote diversity and globalization, and to evaluate the effectiveness of graduate and undergraduate training?
- What evidence exists to show that an academic unit is actually using assessment of teaching, research, and service (outreach/extension) to improve each activity and to make decisions about the use of technology, facilities, and hiring?
- What evidence exists to show that an academic unit at all levels (university, college, department, and program) is using objective assessment processes to decide how to allocate fiscal, physical, and human resources?

The Basics of Assessment

- Institutional effectiveness, evidence-based decision making, and outcomes based assessment are all names for the same activity. The goal of this activity is improving/showing student learning by establishing what we want students to know and designing measures to indicate that these goals have been met.
- Each college/department/program determines its own goals and measurement methods. Measures suggested by various regional accrediting agencies include:
 - Combined self-studies (with ABET and AACSB, for example)
 - Enrollment Trends
 - Rates of retention for a program
 - Faculty/student ratios
 - Department program assessments
 - Course assessments
 - Examples of student portfolios (Evidence of student learning should be kept.)
 - Rates of graduation by program
 - Percentage of students who graduate within 4/5/6 years
 - Rates of passing for licensing
 - Success/retention of transfer students
 - Student evaluations
 - Percentage of students who go on to graduate school
 - Average starting salaries/job placement statistics
 - Minority retention
 - Exit interviews with graduates
 - Employer satisfaction – questionnaires, focus groups
 - Alumni surveys
 - Externally reviewed internships

- Pre- and post-tests
- Performance on a case study/problem

Every department/program will use different tools to measure student learning and then employ these results to enhance the quality of the program and the quality of the students completing the program. Academic program review assists the process of achieving the university goal of improved student learning.

Academic program review strives to recognize the similarities and the differences in desired learning outcomes at the undergraduate and graduate levels. It helps us measure what and how well our students are learning in each distinct academic program. Each academic program is accountable for creating a comprehensive self-study assessment for program review prior to the site visit.

Accreditation and Student Learning

Principles for Good Practices

Accreditation through peer review is the principal method of quality assurance in U.S. colleges and universities. The regional commissions responsible for accrediting more than 3,500 American colleges and universities maintain public trust by upholding standards with which all member institutions must comply, while also respecting the autonomy and honoring the rich diversity of all institutions. Years ago the assessment of institutional quality was a relatively straightforward matter that focused on such tangible characteristics as fiscal solvency, library resources, and faculty credentials. Whereas these capacities continue to be important in accreditation, wide recognition exists that “capacity” is simply insufficient as evidence of Institutional Effectiveness. Having abundant resources does not guarantee effective student learning. As college costs have skyrocketed, and demands for nearly-universal student access to higher education have become more pronounced, the questions asked of colleges by consumers and lawmakers have become more strident: “What are students learning? Is it the right kind of learning? What difference are you making in their lives? What evidence do you have that you’re worth our investment?”

The focus on student learning has created challenges for regional institutional accreditation. The diversity of the colleges and universities in America provides a public access to higher education unequalled anywhere in the world. Thus, commissions have largely avoided dictating what the learning outcomes of individual institutions ought to be. Instead of insisting on blind compliance to standardized learning goals, they have promulgated quality standards which, in addition to assessing institutional capacity, also assess the congruence between an institution's mission and learning goals, its curricular offerings, and student learning outcomes. They also require institutions to use data from student learning to enhance organizational self-reflection, and to show how they have used this data to improve educational programs. In essence, they ask institutions to be clear about their mission and educational purposes, and to demonstrate how well they are accomplishing these purposes. In this way accreditation is able to focus on the quality of student learning without specifying, beyond general categories, what that learning should be — in short, to promote standards without standardization.

What an accrediting commission should reasonably expect of an institution:

1. *Role of student learning in accreditation.* Educational quality is one of the core purposes of the institution. The institution defines quality by how well it fulfills its declared learning mission.
2. *Documentation of student learning.* The institution demonstrates that student learning is appropriate for the certificate or degree awarded and is consistent with the standards of academic performance at the institution. The institution accomplishes this by:
 - a. setting clear learning goals, which speak to content and level of attainment;
 - b. collecting evidence of goal attainment using appropriate assessment tools;
 - c. applying collective judgment as to the meaning and utility of the evidence; and
 - d. using this evidence to effect improvements in its programs.
3. *Compilation of evidence.* Evidence of student learning is derived from multiple sources, such as courses, curricula, and co-curricular programming, and includes effects of intentional and

unintentional learning experiences. Evidence collected from these sources is complementary and portrays the impact on the student of the institution as a whole.

4. *Stakeholder involvement.* The collection, interpretation, and use of student learning evidence is a collective endeavor, and is not viewed as the sole responsibility of a single office or position. Those in the institution with a stake in decisions of educational quality participate in the process.
5. *Capacity building.* The institution uses broad participation in reflecting about student learning outcomes as a means of building a commitment to educational improvement.

Institutional Effectiveness Requirements

from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

The Commission on Colleges (COC) evaluates an institution and makes accreditation decisions based on compliance with the Principles of Accreditation (2004), Core Requirements, Comprehensive Standards, and Federal Requirements. Specific requirements include:

- "The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission"
- "The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results"
- "The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded (a) is approved by the faculty and the administration, and (b) establishes and evaluates program and learning outcomes"
- "The institution identifies college-level competencies with the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have

attained those competencies”

The SACS Reaffirmation Committee, following the April 2002 visit, recommended that Texas A&M University develop unit-level plans detailing outcomes (not inputs or processes) and status reports for all academic programs and administrative units. Specifically, outcomes should focus on student learning as opposed to faculty productivity and recognition or selectivity in admissions. Texas A&M University is working to strengthen its procedures and methods associated with student learning outcomes and making the assessment of student learning outcomes a criterion of focus in academic program reviews and the core curriculum.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) Requirements

In addition to SACS requirements, Texas A&M is also accountable to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is accountable to federal government for quality, and is also accountable to state government for quality. The State of Texas is accountable for cost, which includes timely progress toward degree.

Over the past couple of years, the emphasis at THECB has shifted from controlling the quality of delivery to controlling the quality via student learning outcomes. This shift in focus to outcomes facilitates informed conversation about whether the chosen outcomes are the “right” outcomes and facilitates conversations around the actual costs of instruction and learning.

By 2009, a follow-up assessment is required by the THECB for a plan to assess all the Texas A&M core curriculum courses (state mandate, from 2004).

A standing Texas A&M committee of the Faculty Senate is currently reviewing courses, and recognizes that they need to add and/or review the processes to review potential core curriculum courses.

In 1999-2000, the Texas A&M faculty began to develop student learning principles for the core curriculum. The purpose was to teach “breadth of understanding.” Faculty must outline what this “breadth of understand-

ing” looks like in each department. The concerns in outlining these student learning principles include transferability of courses, class sizes, availability, improving performance, improving diversity, subvention and tuition costs, and external/public/legislative/gubernatorial pressures.

Assessment

Program assessment is critical to ensure that students receive the best education possible from Texas A&M University. Moreover, SACS requires assessment as an integral component of accreditation. All programs are currently engaged in a university-wide assessment effort to create and report program mission statements, desired program outcomes, and measures/achievement targets for each outcome. This effort also includes doctoral programs.

Programs are offered assistance in the development of student learning outcomes and program outcomes through the Office of Institutional Assessment. This office may be reached at (979) 862-2918 or via web at <http://assessment.tamu.edu>.

The Details of Program Review

Points of Contact for Texas A&M University Academic Program Review Process

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Responsibilities

For an academic program review to be successful, all people involved in the process need to understand and carry out their respective responsibilities completely and in a timely manner. This section outlines the specific duties of the Provost, the College/Department, the Office of the Vice President for Research, the Office of Graduate Studies, the Office of Undergraduate Studies, and the individual reviewers.

For purposes of simplification, the following responsibilities may reference the APR (Academic Program Review) Administrative Team, comprised of a small group of administrative leaders at Texas A&M University involved with each program review in order to provide leadership, continuity and consistency throughout all campus reviews. This group includes the Provost, the Executive Associate Vice President for Research, the Dean of Graduate Studies, the Dean of Undergraduate Programs, and the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies.

Office of the Provost

- Provides input on programs to be reviewed as necessary
- Approves college and department review team nominations
- Facilitates entry and exit interviews during on-site reviews
- Attends post-review meetings
- Helps facilitate implementation of the review team recommendations
- Provides funding for academic program reviews
- Communicates results of reviews to Texas A&M University President as appropriate
- Contributes to post-review summary documents as appropriate
- Responds to post-review documents as desired

Role of the College/Department

The leadership role of the Dean in this process includes coordinating with OGS to approve programs to be reviewed, approving the department's nomination of peer reviewers, meeting as appropriate with

the reviewers during the site visit, attending meetings with the reviewers and the Provost at the exit meeting, meeting with the Provost at the post-review meeting, providing input on any follow-up correspondence from the department, and supporting efforts of program review within the college.

The bulk of the effort and responsibility resides in the department. A department is strongly encouraged to communicate and coordinate with their Dean for continual input on all aspects of the academic program review. Departmental responsibilities are listed below.

- **Nominate potential members of the peer review team (eight months before review)**

Forward list of 8-10 potential reviewers to OGS in accordance with specific selection guidelines outlined on page 24 of this guide.

- **Organize and conduct self-study (eight months before review)**

Department arranges printing of self-study document. The department should order one copy for each relevant party within the department and Dean's office, and six copies for the Dean of Graduate Studies, who will distribute them to the APR Administrative Team. Access should be given to departmental faculty for review of, or input on, this document.

Up to \$800 will be provided for printing the self-study; the department will be responsible for additional costs including any overnight delivery service to deliver the document to the external review team. Reviewers should receive the self-study one month prior to the on-site visit.

Self-study format suggestions can be found on page 25. The Program Coordinator has self-study document examples available in hard copy as well as on the OGS website.

- **Choose dates and plan itinerary for review (six months before review)**

Work with Program Coordinator to select review dates. (Refer to University and Chamber of Commerce calendars to select dates that do not overlap with important University or community dates,

during which hotel and/or meeting rooms may not be available.)

Plan for a Sunday arrival and Wednesday departure for the review team. This suggestion is based on recurring availability of the Provost and others for entry and exit meetings on Monday and Wednesday mornings. If the Sunday-to-Wednesday review schedule is not possible, confirm the availability of the APR Administrative Team and your Dean. Send an electronic copy of the final itinerary to the Program Coordinator on Wednesday prior to the reviewers' site visit. Additionally, fax a copy of the final itinerary to the review team members one week before their arrival.

A generic sample itinerary is on page 34; specific itinerary samples are available from the Program Coordinator for Academic Program Reviews.

- **Provide background information for charge letter to review team to Program Coordinator (six months before review)**

A sample charge letter is on page 33.

- **Communicate with the review team (six months before review)**

Department Head should communicate with the review team, especially the chair, about department-specific issues.

- **Reserve meeting rooms**

Reserve meeting space as appropriate for all meetings other than the entry and exit meetings with the Provost.

- **Arrange transportation to and from College Station and other necessary transportation for review team (two-three months before review)**

For airfares, use nonrefundable coach fares. For fares costing over \$600.00, the Dean of Graduate Studies must approve the expense. Departments are responsible for unapproved airfare costs exceeding \$600.00. Schedule the arrival in time for reviewers to attend a welcome dinner with the Department Head on Sunday evening. Use the Office of Graduate Studies' Contract Billing Account (CBA) to pay for airfare. Provide a copy of the

invoice and itinerary to the Program Coordinator as soon as the ticket is booked.

Some reviewers may prefer a rental vehicle for travel to and from College Station (those residing within a two to three hour radius of College Station). Use state-approved contract carriers. The Office of Graduate Studies will reimburse the department for the cost of the rental vehicle.

A departmental faculty member should pick up reviewers who arrive at Easterwood Airport and escort them to the chosen hotel. The Department Head or a departmental faculty member will pick up reviewers at the hotel Sunday evening and escort them to the welcome dinner.

The Department Head or faculty/staff member should transport reviewers between meetings as needed. A departmental faculty/staff member should also escort reviewers to any other destinations during their stay.

A departmental faculty member should transport reviewers to Easterwood Airport for departure from College Station, and return rental vehicle, if applicable.

- **Arrange tours of department and facilities as appropriate (four weeks before review)**

Schedule tours of departmental facilities (laboratories, centers, institutes, academies, clinics, schools, offices, programs) or other facilities associated with the department.

- **Arrange meals and reception for review team visit (four to six weeks before review)**

Plan welcome dinner in town with Department Head, Associate Department Head, other relevant people and reviewers

- If alcohol is served at welcome dinner, the cost will be covered by the department, using non-state funds.
- Cost of meals will be reimbursed by the Office of Graduate Studies.
- Meal costs should not be extravagant, in support of fiscal responsibility. Some restaurant restrictions exist. Contact the Program Coordinator for specific details.

Monday luncheon

- Some options include graduate/undergraduate student brown bag or pizza luncheon, reviewers eat unaccompanied, or reviewers dine with former department heads, or current department heads within the college.

Monday evening faculty reception may be held at Forsyth or Stark Gallery on campus (each holds up to 100 guests), or at other department/college facilities, or off campus at a local restaurant or facility. Receptions normally last one to one-and-one-half hours.

- Reserve a gallery four months in advance; use Food Services for hors d'oeuvres. Reception costs which exceed \$400 should be approved by the Office of Graduate Studies in advance.
- Notify faculty of the event through either e-mail or letter invitation.

Monday evening dinner for reviewers may consist of food catered to the hotel workroom, or reviewers may eat out in town with departmental representatives. Often the reviewers desire to eat alone after the faculty reception, to discuss review issues and work on the draft of the final report.

For Tuesday morning breakfast, reviewers may use the hotel continental breakfast provided.

Tuesday luncheon for Department Head, reviewers, and other faculty may be held either in departmental spaces, catered by Food Services or at a local restaurant.

The Tuesday evening meal should be catered to reviewers' hotel workroom so they may eat and prepare the draft final report.

The Department Head may take the review team to lunch on Wednesday before the team leaves College Station.

- **Prepare departmental response to reviewers' final report**

Review team chair forwards final report to the Office of Graduate Studies 30 days after the site visit. The Program Coordinator forwards the report to the department and other relevant parties. The department has 30 days to return a response to the Dean of Graduate Studies through the College Dean. The Program Coordinator will distribute the response to members of the APR Administrative Team.

- **Dean transmits the department's response to the final report and adds any college response to the Dean of Graduate Studies**

Once the Dean of Graduate Studies receives the department's response to findings, the Program Coordinator schedules a post review meeting. The post review meeting is attended by the APR Administrative Team, the College Dean, and the Department Head. The Department Head may invite other department or college personnel as desired. The post review meeting provides the Department Head, with assistance from the Dean, the opportunity to discuss the department's proposed actions in response to the review. The APR Administrative Team, College Dean and Department Head will subsequently reach consensus on what actions are to be taken, by whom, and in what timeframe. The outcomes will be outlined in a post review summary memo from the Dean of Graduate Studies to the Dean and Department Head, with copy to the remainder of the APR Administrative Team.

- **Provide each faculty member of the department/program access to the final report, the response to findings in the final report, and the post review summary memo**

Role of the Office of Graduate Studies

- **With input from College Deans and Provost, selects programs to be reviewed each academic year and maintains a calendar of scheduled reviews**
- **Publish and distribute list of programs to be reviewed each upcoming academic year**
- **Contact, schedule, meet with deans and department heads at beginning of review process**
- **Assist department in selection of a three-day window for the site visit**
- **Provide background materials to deans and department heads including:**

Draft charge to peer review team

Sample program review itinerary

Sample final reports; responses to final reports as requested

Budget guidelines for program review

- **Schedule additional meetings as needed**

Set additional meeting between Program Coordinator and department staff to discuss logistics of the review process.

- **Forward potential reviewer recommendations to Provost for approval**

- **Extend invitations to potential reviewers; follow up in writing with introductory letters to review team members; to include:**

Charge to review team

Information on professional service fee/reimbursement of expenses

Roster of fellow reviewers

Contact numbers

Guidelines for the Academic Program Review

- **Schedule Entry and Exit Interviews for Review Team and Administrators**

The entry interview will include the APR Administrative Team and reviewers.

The exit interview will include the APR Administrative Team, reviewers, and College Dean.

Verify the Provost's availability for entry and exit interviews as soon as the dates for the review are finalized. Additionally, confirm the Provost's conference room for entry and exit meetings, if necessary.

A breakfast for entry and exit interviews is arranged with Food Services or meeting facility.

The College Dean should have an entry interview with the review team immediately following the Provost's entry interview and is present at the exit interview with the Provost. The department is responsible for scheduling the Dean for both meetings.

- Write welcome letter with review/itinerary information/gift and place packet in reviewers' hotel rooms on day of arrival
- Send thank you letters to review team Friday after site visit
- Track arrival of final report from review team (due 30 days after site visit)
- Distribute copies of final report to Department Head, Dean, and the APR Administrative Team
- Request submission of response to findings from Department Head
- Schedule post-review meeting with the APR Administrative Team, Dean, and Department Head within one month following the completion of the departmental response
- Assist in other ways including:

Pay for reviewers' travel, professional service fee, and miscellaneous expenses.

Arrange/pay for reviewers' lodging and food.

Pay for certain meals with reviewers and designated departmental representatives.

Pay for vehicle and parking for department to chauffeur review team, if needed.

Reimburse department for welcome dinner with reviewers.

Pay up to \$800.00 for printing the self-study document.

Provide, set up, and break down computer, printer, software, and supplies in reviewers' hotel workroom.

Pay up to \$400.00 for faculty reception

Role of the Office of Undergraduate Studies

- Review nominations for review team
- Attend entry and exit meeting
- Attend post-review meeting
- Helps facilitate the implementation of review team recommendations
- Review program documents as required

The Reviewers

- Ensure integrity of the academic program review; provide valid feedback on status of program
- Chair of review panel should contact other members of the review team before arrival at Texas A&M University campus to discuss roles and responsibilities
- Conduct on-site visit
- Chair may submit draft report of findings to Dean of Graduate Studies before departure from College Station
- Participate in exit interview with the APR Administrative Team and College Dean
- Conduct separate exit briefing for Department Head and faculty, including staff and students
- Upon return home each reviewer, in self-addressed stamped envelope provided, will return:

Original itemized food receipts (not just credit card stubs)

Signed Individual Reimbursement Form

Signed W-9 Form

Round trip airline ticket stubs

Other itemized receipts for expenses related to site visit

- ²² Within 30 days of site visit, chair of review team will send

the signed final report of findings to the Office of Graduate Studies

Post Review

Follow-Up Actions

- The chair of review team mails the original final report to the Dean of Graduate Studies, who forwards copies to the APR Administrative Team, College Dean, Department Head, and other relevant individuals. The Department Head provides each faculty member access to the reviewers' final report.
- The Department or interdisciplinary program then prepares a response to findings for the Dean of Graduate Studies within 30 days of receipt of the final report. The Department Head provides each faculty member access to the departmental response to findings.
- The Program Coordinator will schedule and host a post-review meeting to include: APR Administrative Team, College Dean, Department Head, and other individuals deemed necessary by the college/department. During this meeting, the Department Head, with consultation from his or her Dean, leads much of the meeting discussion. This discussion generally includes:
 - What actions could be taken?
 - By whom?
 - Target dates for proposed actions?
- During the post review meeting, the APR Administrative Team, and College Dean reach consensus on the actions to be taken, by whom, and target dates for proposed actions. These agreements shall be the basis of the post review summary memo, written by the Dean of Graduate Studies, and distributed to the Dean and Department Head, for dissemination to the faculty members of the department/program.
- The post review summary memo includes a statement concerning the resources necessary for implementation of the plan, including those portions to be provided by the Provost, the Dean of

Undergraduate Studies, the College Dean, and the program itself.

- Approximately one year after the site visit, the Dean of Graduate Studies sends a follow-up letter to reviewers, based on department feedback, outlining actions to date and proposed actions for the future.
- Approximately four years after the site visit, the Department will send a status report regarding progress in implementing the agreed-upon plan to the Provost through the Dean, the Dean of Undergraduate Programs and the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Reviewer Selection Process and Procedures

Nominating Potential Reviewers

An important task for the department is to develop a list of eight to ten potential reviewers. We strive to select top-notch individuals for the review process. The peer reviewers are usually from academia, but also can be drawn from business or government. Nominees are usually nationally recognized in their field.

The Department should initially contact potential reviewers to ascertain availability and interest before forwarding the nomination list to the Provost through the College Dean, the Dean of Undergraduate Programs and the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Dean of Graduate Studies will invite the reviewers approved by the Provost. From the list of potential reviewers, the review team will be selected according to the following criteria:

- Four reviewers per team, or three if no undergrad component
- No more than one reviewer on a team from a private university
- Review team should include a diverse group of individuals
- Reviewers should be independent with no significant relationship with the department or program; that is, no former (within 10 years) students or longtime collaborators at Texas A&M University

The memorandum forwarding the list of potential reviewers will contain the following information:

- Ranking of potential reviewers
- Complete job title/rank, and name of a reviewer's department
- Nominee's principal area of scholarly activity (related to department being reviewed)
- Name of university or organization
- Full mailing address
- E-mail address
- Fax number
- Telephone number
- Brief, one to two sentence description of a nominee's academic and professional qualifications serving as justification for selection
- Preference for chair of review team (list first and second choices)

Ideally, the team will be composed of a diverse group of individuals with majority representation from schools identified in Texas A&M's Vision 2020 document. Specific guidance will be provided to the Department Head by the Program Coordinator regarding the Provost's wishes for each review team.

The Self-Study

Self-Study Template

The department faculty prepares a descriptive and evaluative self-study prior to review. This study provides basic information about the program and includes the faculty's assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the program. It should also illustrate that each educational program, for which academic credit is awarded, establishes and evaluates program and learning outcomes and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results. Specifically, each department needs to show unit level plans detailing outcomes (not inputs or processes) and status reports for academic programs. A program self-study is the faculty's opportunity to scrutinize itself. The standard time-frame of the data included in the self-study is the past five years. The Office of Graduate Studies needs six hard copies of the report, plus one electronic copy. These will be disseminated to the APR Administrative Team.

The emphasis for the department and reviewers should be on the future. Departments should be encouraged to commit themselves to specific, long-range planning in the self-study. The program review is forward-looking, directed toward improvement of the program, as well as assessment of the current status.

The following outline is a suggested organizational format for the self-study. This outline is not exhaustive, and individual programs may vary the format and/or include additional information. Course listings and catalogues contain appropriate information for inclusion in the self-study.

Suggested Self-Study Outline

- **Introduction**

Charge to review committee (electronic copy may be requested from Program Coordinator).

Schedule of review/itinerary.

Administrative structure of the department/program.

- **Brief History of the Program**

Founding of department.

Founding and development of related centers.

Date of last program review, and changes that have occurred since then, or in past five years.

Bylaws (if appropriate).

- **Vision and Goals**

Strategic plan.

Connection of the vision, goals, mission, and objectives for the program to the University's strategic plan, *Vision 2020*.

Current policies and practices which encourage and recognize good teaching.

Benchmarks used by the graduate faculty in the department to determine whether goals are being met.

Outline of intended changes in scope and/or direction of graduate

education (new degrees, new curricula, shifts in organization, or staffing and new areas of specialization).

Joint programs and collaborative research projects with other units.

Areas of outstanding performance such as teaching, research, or public service.

Summary of recognition, awards, indicators of successful teaching.

Documentation of student learning. The institution demonstrates that student learning is appropriate for the certificate or degree awarded and is consistent with the institution's own standards of academic performance. The institution accomplishes this by:

- setting clear learning goals, which address both content and level of attainment;
- collecting evidence of goal attainment using appropriate assessment tools;
- applying collective judgment to the meaning and utility of the evidence; and
- using this evidence to effect improvements in its programs.

Compilation of evidence. Evidence of student learning is derived from multiple sources, such as courses, curricula, and co-curricular programming, and includes effects of intentional and unintentional learning experiences. Evidence collected from these sources is complementary and portrays the impact on the student of the institution as a whole.

Stakeholder involvement. The collection, interpretation, and use of evidence of student learning is a collective endeavor, and is not viewed as the sole responsibility of a single office or position.

Those in the institution with a stake in decisions of educational quality participate in the process.

This systematic, continuous academic assessment accomplishes many goals:

- Fosters institutional improvement when faculty scrutinize their teaching methods

- Improves teaching and student learning
- Allows Texas A&M to serve as a model for other research universities.
- Helps to understand and quantify progress toward Vision 2020
- Complies with requirements of SACS, THECB, using tenets of Texas A&M's assessment
- Assists Texas A&M to demonstrate its effectiveness to the public and to the legislature (**Forty-six states currently require some form of student assessment**)

Numerous sources of academic assessment already exist at Texas A&M University. *Vision 2020's* 12 imperatives, the *Texas A&M Strategic Plan*, the *Institutional Effectiveness Program*, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's "*Closing the Gaps*" Program, Governor Perry's *Special Commission*, and the *NASULGC Kellogg Commission* are a few. For example, in the Vision 2020 document, five of its goals can be directly related to the SACS, THECB, QEP, and EBDM assessment goals:

- Elevate our faculty, their teaching, research & scholarship
- Strengthen our graduate programs
- Enhance the undergraduate academic experience
- Diversify and globalize the Texas A&M community
- Increase access to knowledge resources.

When departments or programs define their specific plan for student learning outcomes, keep in mind Texas A&M University's Basic Land-Grant Covenant: student learning is enhanced through research, diversity, internationalization, and technology. Each self-study document must address specifically that the program is assessing their progress toward achievement of strengthening graduate programs, enhancing the undergraduate academic experience, diversifying and globalizing the Texas A&M community, and increasing access to knowledge resources

(research and technology). SACS, THECB, and Texas A&M mandate that the assessment developed by the program address these areas by developing key indicators, which objectively point the way toward improvement, i.e.,

- 1) how effective is our program in linking our research to our students' learning?
- 2) how effective are our efforts to diversify our student learning community?
- 3) how effective are our efforts to ensure that our students have the technological expertise they need?
- 4) how effective are we in helping our students understand the reality of globalization?

The self-study document should also address the following specific learning outcomes:

- Clearly define the knowledge, skills, or attitudes that a student should have by graduation for each degree
- Establish internal assessment processes to ensure that students are meeting these expectations
- Determine outcome measurements that provide evidence. For example, surveys of employers and students, and national exam scores
- Develop a collegial faculty process that allows all interested faculty to participate
- Be able to show documentation to determine the progress of the department toward the SACS/THECB/Texas A&M goals
- Use the results collected to improve teaching and students' performance
- Program organization, statistical summaries of department
- Department academic profile (faculty, students, and organization)

- Student profile
 - Masters
 - Doctoral
 - Student demographics at entry into program (both for the geographic area and within the program)
 - Number of admissions
 - Methods of financial support/levels of financial support to graduate students
- Faculty profile
 - Tenure or nontenure, regular and research/clinical, and full or part time
 - Results of tenure reviews (number reviewed, number satisfactory, and number not satisfactory)
 - Post-tenure review results
 - Teaching load
 - Faculty participation in professional associations, review panels, committees, and other organizations
 - Faculty hired and retired during past five years
 - Average age of current full-time faculty (range and distribution)
 - Gender and minority representation
 - Individual faculty curriculum vitae (suggested limit of two pages per faculty member)
- Program components
- Courses offered, course demand
 - Which courses are offered on a regular basis?
 - Is there a need for new courses?
 - How much graduate course work is required within department? How much, if any, outside the department?
- GRE scores and GPR of students
- Active involvement of students in their learning, i.e., internships, practica, teaching assistantships
- Graduate student body composition
- Graduate alumni information
- Recruitment information

- Graduate program rankings (national)
- Program retention rates
- Efforts to sustain collegiality and professionalism by department
- Budget information*
- Faculty salaries by rank*
- Operating funds*
- Grants and contracts
- Library support
- Equipment
- Teaching assistant, non-teaching assistant, and research assistantship stipends
- Support staff salary and turnover rates*
- Strengths and weaknesses of the program
- Recommendations of department to improve program
- Student input in the review
- Role of the graduate student in department decision making

**Some items may be given to the review team as handouts rather than including sensitive material in the self-study which will be posted to the web.*

Final Report

Final Report Template

Once the review team completes the on-site review, the team has 30 days from their return home to transmit the final report to the Dean of Graduate Studies. The following format has proven effective in previous

reviews; however, reviewers are not constricted to this format.

- Preamble
- Status of the Department
- Relationship of this Department to others in the College
- Strengths of the Department
- Weaknesses of the Department
- Evaluation of Program's Outcomes-Based Assessment Plan
- Recommendations
 - Overall – programmatic
 - Resources
 - Structure

The program review should provide answers to the following queries:

- Is the program advancing the state of discipline/profession?
- Is the student learning effective based upon evidence provided?
- Does the program meet the goals of Texas A&M University?
- Does the program respond to the needs of the profession?
- How is the program viewed by experts in the field?

Academic Program Review Document Samples

Sample Charge Letter to Program Reviewer

Date

This letter provides you with background on the _____ Program at Texas A&M University, and explains the expectations for the external review. _____ research and training has been recognized as a distinct program at Texas A & M since _____. The University received approval to offer bachelors and masters programs in _____; has offered a bachelor of sciences degree since _____; and received notice of approval to offer the doctoral program in _____.

I request that the review team examine the academic programs within the Department of _____ using the materials that will be provided, along with any additional information that you might request. While evaluating the existing program, please consider the allocation of resources, (i.e., human and fiscal) within the department, the absolute level of support the Department receives from the University, and comment as appropriate on current and potential leveraging of these resources.

Also, please address the issue of learning based outcomes:

1. Does the department have ongoing and integrated planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of its program(s) and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the department is effectively accomplishing its mission?
2. Has the department identified expected outcomes for its educational program(s): does it assess whether it achieves these outcomes; and does it provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results?
3. Does the department demonstrate that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded (a) is approved by the faculty and the administration, and (b) establishes and evaluates program(s) and learning outcomes?

In addition, I ask that you address the impact of the Faculty Reinvestment Program, started by Texas A&M University in 2003. The reinvestment program has resulted in the hiring of almost 500 new faculty members dispersed throughout the University. The goal is to improve the quality of education for Texas A&M students by having more faculty available for mentoring and advising. Through this review we plan to track and measure real increases and improvements in the quality of the graduate and undergraduate experiences across all dimensions. We ask that you assess the success of the department in moving their teaching and research agendas forward with these hires.

I look forward to meeting with you and the entire committee in _____. If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me.

Sincerely,
Dean of Graduate Studies

pc: Provost
Dean of Undergraduate Studies
Dean
Department Head
Program Coordinator

Sample Itinerary for Review Team Visit:

Travel/Welcome (Sunday)

2:00-5:00 p.m.	Review team arrives in College Station
6:00-8:00 p.m.	Department Head hosts welcome dinner for team at local restaurant (orientation/background of department provided at this time)

Day 1 (Monday)

7:30-8:30 a.m.	Entry interview with Provost, Executive Associate Vice President for Research, Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies. Breakfast served. Provost provides charge to reviewers and provides institutional perspective
9:00-10:30 a.m.	Meet with College Dean
10:00 –11:30 a.m.	Meet with Department Head or Program Chair
11:30-1:30 p.m.	Lunch with selected graduate/undergraduate Students
1:30-3:30 p.m.	Tour departmental facilities
3:30-4:30 p.m.	Meet with faculty in subdiscipline areas
5:00-6:30 p.m.	Faculty reception
6:30 p.m.	Dinner and work session for review team

Day 2 (Tuesday)

7:30-8:30 a.m.	Reviewers eat breakfast on their own at hotel
8:30-10:30 a.m.	Meet with faculty committees
10:30-11:30 a.m.	Meet with students
11:30-1:00 p.m.	Lunch with department section heads
1:00-2:00 p.m.	Meet with department heads within same college
2:00-3:00 p.m.	Meet with graduate students
3:00-5:00 p.m.	Open time for department-specific tours, meetings, or for team to work on their report
5:00-6:00 p.m.	Dinner catered to reviewers' hotel workroom
6:00-9:00 p.m.	Reviewers' work session, preparation of draft report for exit interview, faculty debriefing

Day 3 (Wednesday)

7:30-9:00 a.m.	Exit interview with Provost, College Dean, Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies, and reviewers. Reviewers present summary of their on-site review
9:00-10:00 a.m.	Reviewers debrief Department Head
10:00-11:00 a.m.	Reviewers make final changes to draft report, as necessary
11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.	Reviewers brief faculty, staff, and students on final report
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch with Department Head
1:00-3:00 p.m.	Reviewers depart College Station

Sample Post Review Meeting Agenda

***Post Review Meeting
Agenda***
date

- Greeting & Introduction — Executive Vice President and Provost.
- Review Process — Dean of Graduate Studies/Dean of Undergraduate Studies.
- Self-Study Issues, Findings – Department Head.
- Faculty Responses to Date – Department Head.
- Departmental Focus Issues – Department Head.
- Post-Review Follow-up — Provost, Dean of Graduate Studies, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and College Dean.

References

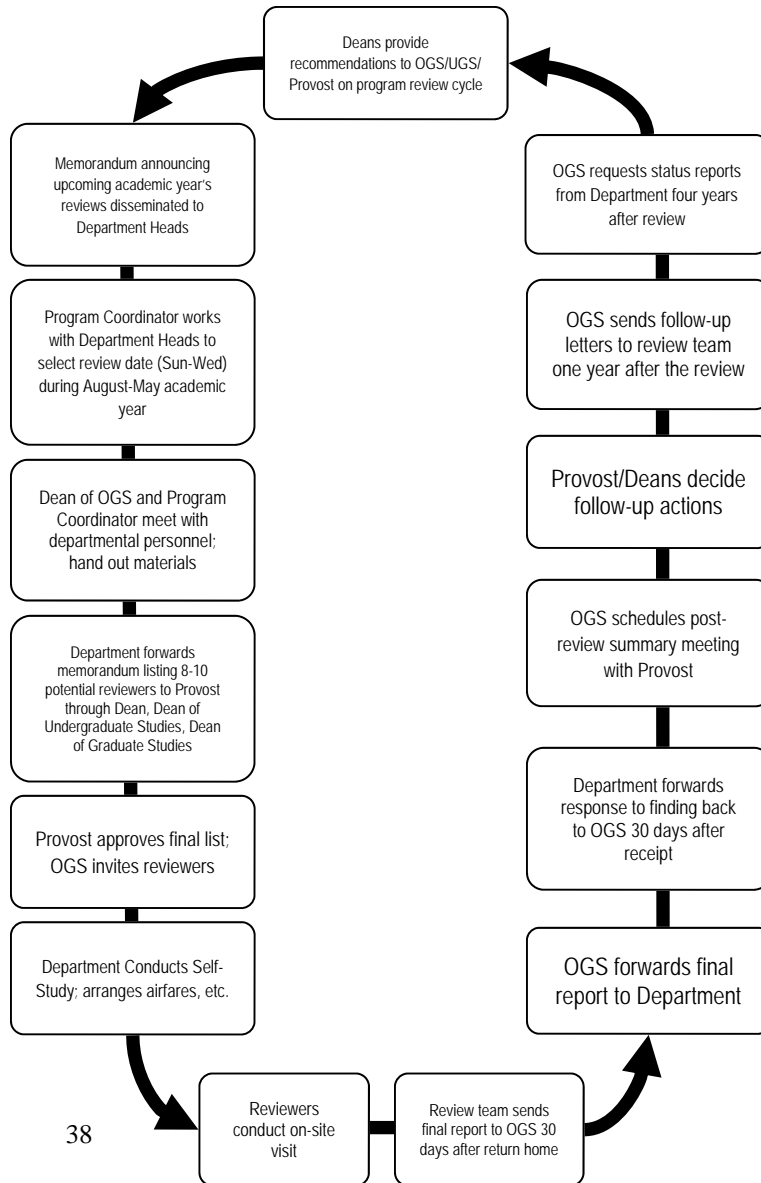
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- Making the Implicit Explicit: Creating Performance Expectations for the Dissertation (Stylus, 2007). Barbara Lovitts
- The Assessment of Doctoral Education: Emerging Criteria and New Models for Improving Outcomes (Stylus, 2006). Peggy L. Maki and Nancy A. Borkowski

Appendix I

Texas A&M University

Academic Program Review

Eight Year Cycle



Appendix II

Academic Program Review Matrix
Eight Year Cycle

Acad Year # Reviews	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
BUAD								ACCT FINC INFO MGMT MKTG
BUSH	MPIA					COSC		
CARC		ARCH LAUP						
CEHD		TLAC HLKN		EPSY		EHR (w/HRD) (w/TCM)		
CLSC		MATH			CHEM		STAT	BIOL PHYS
CLVM	VBS (w/STJR) VTPP	VTPB (w/LAMD)	BIMS	VSCS	VLCS			
COALS	SCSC (w/PLBR) (w/PLSC)	ALEC (w/ADEV)	AGCH*	ANSC (w/ANBR)	HRSC	BCBP	BAEN ENTO (w/PPRO)	ESSM (w/RENR)
COFD		BIOT FSTC NUTR	ENSM	WMHS MSEN	NFSC RPTS	MEPS AGBU	GENE TOXI	
ENGR	ECEN	CHEN (w/SENG) CVEN	*ABET YR	AERO CPSC	MEEN	ISEN PETE	NUEN BMEN	
GEOS	ATMO	GEPL	GEOG (w/SPAT)	COG		COMM		OCNG
LBAR	PHUM	PSYC HISP ECON	HIST	ANTH	SOCI EURO PERF	INTS	POLS AMST	ENGL

Note: Programs w/o corresponding doctoral programs highlighted in green

*Program may be discontinued