

ACADEMIC AFFAIRS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR UNIT REVIEWS

Purpose: The purpose of an academic unit review is to assess the quality and effectiveness of that unit, to potentially modify the unit because of the review, and to provide benchmarks for additional planning and assessment. As such, unit reviews are a critical element in assessment and strategic planning.

Frequency and Cycle: Generally, a unit's review will be undertaken no less than every five years. However, unit positioning within the university's review cycle will reflect both external needs, such as the timing of accreditations and reaccreditations, and internal needs, such as equalizing across the cycle, to the degree possible, the number of evaluated units within each college and the number of unit reviews carried out within a given year. The actual review may take anywhere from several weeks to a full academic year depending on the size, complexity, and on-going initiatives of the unit. The Cycle of Unit Review lists the academic year in which the self-study is to be conducted. The final report, including any external review, is to be submitted no later than the beginning of the fall term of the following academic year.

"Unit" refers to the body of the whole: a department, center, or interdisciplinary studies program that stands as a whole. "Program" refers to areas of study within a unit, such as a major or minor, area of emphasis or concentration, interdisciplinary area of study that is a part of a larger unit, and/or degree level.

Units that are wholly accredited may submit their accreditation report as their review. Units that are partially accredited may choose to review the entire unit at the time of accreditation, or they may choose to submit the accreditation report as part of the larger unit review. For example, a unit in which only the undergraduate program is accredited may review the graduate program at the same time; a program that is reviewed every two years may submit a summary of those reviews at the time of the unit's review.

Proposed Steps:

1. Determine in consultation with Dean and Provost if an external review will be part of the Unit Self Study
2. Conduct Unit Self-study and draft report
3. Review of self-study report by Dean and Provost
4. Review of self-study report by external reviewer if external review conducted
5. External Reviewer visit (but not required unless by external accrediting agency or at the request of the Provost and Dean)
6. External Reviewer report received
7. Action plan written and submitted to the Provost
8. Provost response sent to Dean and Unit head

Process and Outcome for External Review: The process begins with a *unit self-study*. The self-study is based upon a set of questions approved by the dean and the provost, and may include areas specific to a unit's accreditation process. (see Unit Evaluation Areas document) After the self-study is completed, it is sent to an approved external reviewer (see below). After the external review is completed and the report received, the unit will consider the reviewers' comments and, in consultation with the college dean, propose an *action plan* to address any issues raised. When the dean approves the plan, all materials will be sent to the provost for final consideration (i.e., approval, revision, reconsideration, etc.). When the provost approves the plan, it will be implemented and assessed annually in the unit's *annual report* to the college dean. All unit reports will become a part of the college's annual report to the provost.

Self-Study: The primary audiences for the self-study are the unit, the external reviewer(s), the college dean, and the provost. The self-study will begin with a reflective assessment by the unit in response to a series of questions about the current state of its (1) curricula and pedagogies, as well as enrichment, co-curricular, immersion, and internship/placement activities, in the provision of excellent education and promotion of student success; (2) scholarly agendas and programs, grant and contract activity; and (3) university, professional, and public service. The self-study will then define and justify a direction for future activities in teaching, research, and service as related to the university's strategic plan and/or accreditation guidelines. This may require reconsideration in whole or in part of the unit's mission and goals.

Logistics for Conducting External Reviews: Generally units will bring to campus one or two external reviewers depending upon the complexity of the unit. However, accrediting agencies will often send a team of reviewers. In either case, funds of up to \$2,000 including expenses are available in the Office of the Provost for each unit review. Because accrediting agencies may require a higher fee from the university, colleges with accredited units will need to budget additional monies for this purpose. Funds will be transferred to the colleges upon receipt of documentation, including letters of agreement with reviewers or agencies and verification of expenses. Generally, reviewers' fees will not be paid until receipt of the report.

Reviewers are chosen by the unit with the approval of the dean and the provost. Names of reviewers and their credentials should be submitted to the dean and provost for approval at the earliest possible date. Dates for the campus visits of all reviewers should be finalized as early in the academic year as possible and communicated to everyone on the interview schedule. For more information, refer to *Guidelines for the External Reviewer*.

Action Plan: Consistent with the university's strategic plan, the unit action plan will identify as specifically as possible the unit's goals in each area of teaching, research, and service to be achieved over the next five-year period. It will provide annual benchmarks against which the unit's progress will be measured in its *annual report* to the college dean. If new resources (e.g., faculty, facilities, equipment, budgets, assistantships, scholarships, etc.) are required, they will be enumerated and justified. The unit will propose reasonable plans to fund or acquire the needed resources.

Annual Reports: During the five-year implementation period, units will annually report progress toward achieving benchmarked goals to their college deans. Annual reports will be based on valid and reliable assessments of teaching, research, and service. The annual report will provide also a structural mechanism for making mid-course corrections should the goals or the assumptions about resource availability, funding, etc., prove too unrealistic to be reasonably achieved.