

# PROCEDURES FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

## THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA GREENSBORO

(Approved by the Provost on May 12, 2025)

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This document provides the process that departments follow to conduct an Academic Program Review (APR) in compliance with UNC System policy 400.1 and the UNC Greensboro Academic Program Review Policy.

The academic program review is a process intended to lead to continuous improvement for each program. The process allows faculty to document achievements, identify opportunities, reflect on strengths and weaknesses, and develop specific actions intended to strengthen the quality, resiliency, and sustainability of programs. Ultimately, this process is also an opportunity to evaluate and situate the program within the larger landscape of the discipline, the institution, and higher education.

As a reminder, the policy defined terms that are regularly used in this process:

- a. **Academic unit** refers to colleges and schools headed by a dean (excludes the schools within an academic unit, such as in the College of Visual and Performing Arts).
- b. **Head** refers to the academic/administrative officer of an academic program/department, including the titles of head, chair, program director, and school director.
- c. An academic **department** is an administrative or organizational structure that houses academic programs. For this process, Schools in the College of Visual and Performing Arts are “departments,” as are multiple programs under one director, such as the subset of programs under Liberal and Interdisciplinary Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences. APR is conducted for programs, but when academic programs reside in the same department, faculty will generally review all programs in a single written department report that addresses each academic program distinctly.
- d. An academic **program** is a curriculum that leads to a credential. Majors, concentrations, and certificates are all academic programs. At the graduate level, majors are often referred to as “degree programs.” Minors are not considered academic programs because they cannot lead to a credential.

## 1. Timeline

The review cycle begins in January of Year Aero and ends in Year Seven with a second action plan, if necessary.

### Year Zero

- The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning (OAAAPP) notifies departments in August that their review cycle is beginning. Faculty are reminded to collect data about graduate employment.
- OAAAPP offers orientation to departments in September.
- Institutional Research and Enterprise Data Management (IREDM) and Finance & Administration make data available on an ongoing basis through dashboard created for these reviews.
- Departments select their self-study team, which is reviewed and approved by the dean. Typically, the department head serves on the team so that work can continue when faculty are off contract. The team begins preparing the document during the entire academic year.

### Year One

- Departments continue to develop the self-study.
- The department submits a list of external review candidates to the dean by August 31.
- The dean selects the external reviewers and communicates with them to secure their participation in the review process by November 15. The dates for the external review interviews are identified. External reviews, including all interviews, must be completed by March 1.
- The department submits the self-study to the dean by November 15 (or the Monday immediately after if it falls on a weekend).
- The dean reviews the self-study for accuracy and completeness, and returns comments to the department, by December 10 (or the Monday immediately after if it falls on a weekend). Revisions are due by January 10.
- The dean sends the self-study to the external reviewer(s) by January 15.
- External reviewers prepare for and conduct the review.
- The external review is conducted.
- The external review team submits the report to the dean and department by April 1.
- The head and program faculty respond to the external review in writing, addressing each recommendation. “Head” refers to the academic/administrative officer of an academic program/department, including the titles of head, chair, program director, and school director.
- The department produces an action plan that addresses the evaluation criteria for program review and other issues and opportunities identified during the review process. The response and action plan are due by May 1.
- The dean endorses, modifies, or rejects the action plan. If modified or rejected, the dean works with the head to review the plan by May 31.
- The head compiles the final report and submits it to the dean and OAAAPP. OAAAPP shares the final report with the Provost, Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Dean of Graduate Education. OAAAPP archives final reports.

- The dean recommends expansion, contraction, elimination, or no action for each program in the review to the Provost. The dean shares these recommendations with the head.
- The Dean of Undergraduate Studies and the Dean of Graduate Education provide context and recommendations to the Provost.
- The Provost reviews, evaluates, and presents the final reports to the Chancellor.

#### Year Two

- OAAAPP produces abstracts of each review and submits them to Faculty Senate by August 1.
- Faculty Senate provides feedback to the Chancellor and Provost within four weeks of receipt.
- The Chancellor reviews the final reports to make decisions regarding academic program changes.
- When the Chancellor is considering the contraction or elimination of an academic program, the Chancellor will notify the Provost, Faculty Senate, and affected deans, heads, and program faculty, explaining the decision criteria used.
- Upon notification of contraction or elimination of an academic program, the Provost, Faculty Senate, and affected deans, heads, and program faculty provide feedback within four weeks before the Chancellor makes a final decision.
- The Chancellor submits a report summarizing the academic program review to the System Office and to the Board of Trustees by January 1.

#### Year Five (First mid-cycle progress report, three years after the Action Plan is developed)

- The head submits a progress report to the dean, detailing implementation of the action plan. They provide updates on other developments in the department.
- If necessary, the dean and head develop a new action plan to address ongoing or new issues.
- The dean provides a written update to the Provost, which includes a recommendation of expansion, contraction, elimination or not action.

#### Year Seven (Second mid-cycle progress report, two years after a second Action Plan is developed)

- In instances where a second mid-cycle report is required, the head submits a progress report to the dean, detailing implementation of the action plan. They provide updates on other developments in the department. (See below.)
- The dean provides a written update to the Provost, which includes a recommendation of expansion, contraction, elimination or not action.

## 2. Schedule

The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning maintains and publishes the academic program review schedule.

- The schedule is developed on a 7-year cycle for non-accredited programs and on the timeline mandated by professional bodies for accredited programs.
- The schedule indicates in which academic year the self-study is completed.
- The schedule is developed by the Chancellor, Provost, and dean, with input from the head.
- Changes to the schedule require permission from the dean and Provost or Provost's designee. Changes to the schedule are exceptional.

## 3. Orientation

The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning orients departments to the process. Department heads are notified about their scheduled APR in August, more than one year before the self-study is due. Orientation is conducted in September of that same year.

Orientation includes:

- Overall APR process, UNC and UNC Greensboro policies
- Timeline, effort, logistics, and impact on faculty workload
- Documents and templates (self-study, external review, action plan) and expectations for responses.
- Data, how to access it, and how to analyze it for the self-study
- Context and narratives
- External reviewer selection and expectations
- Examples of completed reviews

## 4. Self-Study

The faculty in the department produce a self-study. A self-study is an **in-depth evaluation of each academic program** that asks faculty to reflect on a variety of aspects, including the curriculum, enrollment, retention and graduation, post-graduation placement in the workforce and graduate programs, and faculty creative and research productivity. The review is a single document. When two or more programs reside in a single academic department, all programs are reviewed together and presented in separate sections of the self-study. All academic programs (degrees, majors, concentrations) must be included, except for certificates, which may be included at the discretion of the department with approval from the dean; minors are not academic programs and are not included.

The self-study is intended to be a collaborative endeavor, that at minimum engages the department head, director of undergraduate studies, and graduate program director. The modalities of this collaboration are the choice of the department. In small departments, all program faculty are typically involved; larger departments typically form a committee. Full-time and part-time faculty

can both be involved. Ideally, all faculty that contribute to a program are engaged.

The self-study is a public document. The primary audiences are the offices of the Dean, Provost, and Chancellor. The self-study is reviewed by external reviewers and may be shared with others inside and outside of the institution. Summaries are provided to the UNC System Office.

The self-study is a comprehensive analysis of programs. Departments provide a narrative that describes, analyzes, and contextualizes the data, including program objectives, curricula, student learning outcomes, student success, faculty workload, research and creative activity performance, and resource allocation. The *APR Self-Study Template* must be used to structure the self-study; it identifies specific data elements and areas that must be addressed, including:

UNC System-mandated data:

1. Current and projected student demand, as measured by enrollments in the majors and degrees produced;
2. Growth and existing data on student employment outcomes;
3. Student outcomes, including persistence, graduation, time to degree, and, where possible, post-graduation success;
4. Program costs and productivity, including research, scholarship, and creative activity and student credit hours produced compared to the number and cost of faculty and staff;
5. The contribution of the program to professions that are critical to the health, educational attainment, and quality of life of North Carolinians;
6. Any other considerations identified by the Chancellor or by the President.

UNCG-identified elements:

1. Assessment of student learning outcomes by the UNCG Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning;
2. Additional financial considerations vary from one type of program to another and commonly include:
  - a. State appropriations and tuition revenue generated by program coursework;
  - b. Other non-state revenue sources such as private gifts, indirect costs (F&A), trust funding generated via entrepreneurial activities, direct costs of grants, and other revenue-generating activities;
  - c. Program costs, including personnel and operational expenses;
  - d. How program costs and expenses compare to those of peer programs.
3. Relationship to unit, UNCG, and UNC System strategic plans;
4. Other considerations identified by the Chancellor, which will be provided at the initiation of the program review cycle, and/or in the mid-cycle progress report.

Data related to student enrollment, retention, faculty productivity, and tuition, fees, and state appropriations are provided in dashboards created by the Office of Institutional Research and Enterprise Data Management. Heads and program coordinators (Directors of Undergraduate Studies, Directors of Graduate Studies, etc.) should review the program data regularly for accuracy and completeness.

Statement on accuracy of data from IREDM: *We strive to ensure data accuracy by reviewing our data extraction code and the resulting reports and dashboards. We are actively working to establish a robust data quality program, sharing results with functional units to enhance data quality at the source. To maintain transparency, we are committed to sharing our code for open review and validation. However, data accuracy is a collective responsibility, extending beyond developers and code checkers to include stakeholders and end-users. The 6-TECH ticketing system*

*is in place for report users to submit concerns.*

Data must be analyzed by program faculty to provide context. All items in the Self-Study template must be addressed. Five years of data must be analyzed whenever possible.

Deans should check the self-study for accuracy. The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning will review the document for completeness.

## **5. External Review**

*Note: This does not apply to accredited programs, which have their own external review process.*

An external review will be conducted for each self-study. By virtue of their outsider status, external reviewers are able to provide an objective perspective about the performance of the programs. In reading the self-study, conducting interviews with the faculty, head, dean, Provost, and other relevant university constituents, and collecting information about the programs, the external reviewers provide feedback on the faculty's evaluation of the programs and recommendations about opportunities for continuous improvement.

1. The department faculty make recommendations for two external reviewers, selected based on their expertise in the relevant academic discipline. With their dean's approval, the department may engage additional reviewers. When possible one external reviewer should be a faculty member from UNCG's official [peer institutions](#). The head submits 3-5 recommendations for reviewers to the dean's office by August 31.
2. External reviewers should have no conflict of interest with the department or institution. Conflict of Interest (COI) relates to situations in which objectivity may be compromised or appear to be compromised. Upon appointment they will sign a statement indicating there is no COI.
3. The dean selects two external reviewers and secures their participation in the review process by November 15. The dean, head, and external reviewers work together to select the dates for the external review interviews, which must be completed by March 1.
4. Normally, the external review is completed virtually. There are programs that have physical resources that necessitate an in-person visit, and those should be accommodated, if deemed necessary by the Dean and Provost. Any unit can decide to fund in-person visits with their own budget.
5. The external review team provides a written report evaluating the department's strengths, challenges, and recommendations for improvement, following UNCG's external review template.
6. The head and program faculty respond to the external review report in writing, addressing each recommendation. This is submitted to the dean.

## Action Plan

An Action Plan is developed following the self-study and external review report and demonstrates commitment to continuous improvement. The Action Plan identifies specific steps that faculty will take to improve certain areas or objectives in a program within three years of completing the external review.

1. The head and program faculty discuss and produce an action plan, paying particular attention to opportunities for improvement related to the UNC System and UNCG mandated data element. The plan responds to identified needs or recommendations from the self-study and external review. The action plan should include specific goals with targets for achievement, timelines, available resources, and responsible parties.
2. The head completes the *Action Plan template* and submits it to the dean.
3. The dean endorses, modifies, or rejects the action plan, in consultation with the Provost.
4. If rejected, the dean works with the head to construct an acceptable action plan.

## 6. Final Report

The Final Report is the set of official documents related to the APR, and it is the basis for the dean's recommendation to the Provost about expansion, contraction, elimination or no action for each program. Final Report archives are managed by the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning.

1. The head compiles a final report that includes the self-study, external review report, response to the review, and action plan, and submits it to the dean.
2. The dean recommends expansion, contraction, elimination, or no action for each program to the Provost. The dean shares these recommendations with the head. The dean's recommendations shall be based on a variety of criteria, including all required criteria for the UNC System and UNCG.
3. This final report is submitted to the Provost, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and/or the Dean of Graduate Studies as appropriate, and the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning.
4. The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning develops an abstract of each review and shares it with the Dean, head, and Provost. The abstract includes the dean's recommendation about expansion, contraction, elimination, or no action for each program. The dean, head, and Provost provide edits and feedback and approve the final version of the abstract.
5. The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning submits abstracts to Faculty Senate. Faculty Senate provides feedback about program expansion, contraction, elimination, and no action to the Chancellor and Provost within 4 weeks of receipt. Faculty Senate feedback becomes part of the archived Final Report maintained by the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning.

## **7. Executive Review**

The Provost and Chancellor determine the actions to be taken for each program with their Executive Review. The outcome of the Executive Review is the report submitted to the UNC System Office and the Board of Trustees.

1. The Provost and Chancellor review and evaluate the final reports.
2. The Provost and Chancellor review and evaluate mid-cycle progress report summaries with new recommendations for expansion, contraction, elimination or no action by the deans.
3. Decision making is a holistic process, and no single criterion, metric, measure, or evaluation outcome is determinative. Recommendations offered by the Provost and decisions made by the Chancellor will reflect multiple criteria and assessments of how the various factors interact collectively to impact the welfare of the institution.
4. Criteria for consideration for expanding, contracting, or eliminating programs include all criteria outlined in section 5.d of the UNC System policy.
5. When the Chancellor is considering the contraction or elimination of an academic program, the Chancellor will notify the Provost, Faculty Senate, and affected deans, department heads, and program faculty, explaining the decision including the criteria used.
6. Upon notification of the Chancellor's decision, the Provost, Faculty Senate, and affected deans, heads, and program faculty have 4 weeks to provide feedback, before the Chancellor makes a final decision.
7. The Chancellor makes the final decision on all program actions.
8. The Chancellor submits a report summarizing the academic program reviews and actions to be taken to the System Office and to the Board of Trustees.

## **8. Mid-Cycle Progress Reports**

Mid-cycle progress reports are prepared by program faculty to provide updates about the action plans. The progress reports explain how action plans have been implemented and whether the actions have resulted in the expected outcomes. Programs may have one mid-cycle report if the outcomes are met, submitted three years after the self-study. They may have a second mid-cycle report, submitted five years after the self-study, if additional actions are needed to bring about expected outcomes.

1. The head submits the Mid-Cycle Progress Report template to the dean three years after the review, detailing the implementation of the action plan(s) and any further developments.
2. If necessary, the dean and head develop a new action plan to address ongoing or new issues. The head reports back within two years of the progress report.
3. After each progress report, the dean recommends expansion, contraction, elimination, or no action for each program to the Provost. The dean shares these recommendations with the head, who shares the recommendations with faculty. New recommendations become part of the Executive Review of the Provost and Chancellor.

4. Decision making is a holistic process, and no single criterion, metric, measure, or evaluation outcome is determinative. Recommendations offered by the Provost and decisions made by the Chancellor will reflect multiple criteria and assessments of how the various factors interact collectively to impact the welfare of the institution.
5. A summary of progress reports is submitted to the Faculty Senate by the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning. Summaries become part of the archived Final Report maintained by the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning.
6. For programs with a new recommendation for contraction or elimination, Faculty Senate provides feedback to the Provost about the reports within 4 weeks of receipt. Faculty Senate feedback becomes part of the archived Final Report maintained by the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning.

## **9. Accredited Programs**

Per UNC policy 400.1, academic programs that are accredited by an external agency may substitute their external reviews in place of the institutional procedures. However, if that review partially satisfies the review requirements and criteria in the UNC System and UNCG policies, the institution should require the program to supplement the review with the missing parts so that it satisfies them.

The process for addenda to accredited programs is as follows:

1. Faculty associated with accredited programs will evaluate the standards and requirements for their external accreditation and identify the missing requirements and criteria from the policy. They submit to their dean and the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning a Self-Study for Externally Accredited Programs. This self-study provides responses to each of the required items above (noted with an asterisk on the Self-Study Template), either by extracting appropriate responses from their external accreditation submission, edited as needed to respond to the item, or drafting a response.
2. They submit the Self-Study for Externally Accredited Programs to the dean when they submit their accreditation documents to their accreditor.
3. The dean and head then follow the process identified above for Action Plan, Final Report, and Mid-Cycle Reviews, using the accreditation documents and the Self-Study for Externally Accredited Programs to establish actions for continuous improvement. Action plans may be developed based on feedback from the accreditation reviewers, or from the UNCG Self-Study, or a combination of the two.
4. As with non-accredited programs, the full procedures described in this procedure documents are followed related to:
  - a. The dean recommends expansion, contraction, elimination, or no action for each program to the Provost, as detailed in Section 7 above.

- b. The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning develops an abstract of final Report and shares it with the dean, head and Provost, as detailed in Section 7 above.
- c. The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning submits abstracts to Faculty Senate, as detailed in Section 7 above.
- d. The Executive Review is conducted by the Provost and Chancellor, and final decisions about expansion, contraction, elimination, or no action are made by them, as detailed in Section 8 above.