

# ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW POLICY

## THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA GREENSBORO

(Approved by the Board of Trustees on October 31, 2024)

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### 1. Purpose

Chancellors regularly review their institution's academic programming to ensure the maintenance of a sound and balanced educational program that is consistent with the functions and mission of the institution. The purpose of the Academic Program Review (APR) is to assess the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of academic programs at UNCG as required by UNC System Policy 400.1 and such regulations that are promulgated by the President, as currently published and as periodically may be amended.<sup>1</sup> The review process is designed to promote academic excellence, support strategic planning, ensure alignment with the University's mission, and facilitate continuous improvement. UNCG is committed to shared governance in the APR process, which fully engages faculty, staff, and other stakeholders in a reflective process of thoughtful study and evaluation of program quality and alignment with the university's values, mission, and service to students, the region, and the state.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate academic programs at UNCG, including degree programs and certificates.

### 3. Definitions

- a. For this policy's purposes, **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. For this policy's purposes, **head** refers to the academic/administrative officer of an academic program/department, including the titles of head, chair, program director, and school director.

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<sup>1</sup> *Policy on Academic Program Planning* (<https://www.northcarolina.edu/apps/policy/doc.php?type=pdf&id=151>) and *Regulation when available*. To the extent that there may be a conflict between this adopted Policy (or any supporting procedures) and these UNC System policies, the UNC System policies shall control.

- c. An academic **department** is an administrative or organizational structure that houses academic programs. APR is conducted for programs, but when academic programs reside in the same department, faculty will 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. Minors are not considered academic programs because they cannot lead to a credential.

#### 4. Roles and Responsibilities

- a. The **Associate Vice Provost of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning** oversees the process for conducting academic program review at UNCG. The Associate Vice Provost will:
  - i. in consultation with the deans and Provost, establish and maintain the schedule for internal program and external accreditation reviews;
  - ii. consult with the Chancellor, Provost and deans regarding any additional data to be considered in any recommendations associated with a program review;
  - iii. maintain materials associated with program review, including process documents and the self-study template;
  - iv. orient program faculty to the process;
  - v. ensure that all reviews are conducted;
  - vi. conduct a review of all self-studies to ensure compliance;
  - vii. produce abstracts of each program review;
  - viii. maintain a repository of all internal academic program reviews and external accreditation reviews.
- b. The **Dean of Graduate Education** and the **Dean of Undergraduate Studies** provide context and recommendations to the deans and Provost.
- c. **Deans** of an academic units oversee the academic program review process in their unit. The dean will:
  - i. select and appoint external reviewers;
  - ii. coordinate the external review in collaboration with the head;
  - iii. review final and progress reports, amend action plans, and complete a memorandum of understanding with the head;
  - iv. submit final reports to the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning;
  - v. consult with the Dean of Graduate Education and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and other senior administrators as necessary;
  - vi. recommend expansion, contraction, elimination, or no action to the Provost, and share their recommendation with the head.
- d. **Heads** facilitate the review process for their academic programs. The head will:
  - i. collaborate with program faculty to develop the self-study;
  - ii. provide the dean with recommendations of external reviewers;
  - iii. work with the offices of Institutional Research & Enterprise Data Management and Finance & Administration to gather accurate data for use in

- the review;
- iv. consult with program faculty and respond to the recommendations contained in the external review;
- v. facilitate the creation and implementation of an action plan;
- vi. compile the final report, review it for accuracy and completeness, and submit it to the dean;
- vii. submit progress reports to the dean;
- viii. communicate the dean's recommendations regarding program expansion, contraction, elimination, or no action to program faculty.

e. **Program faculty**, due to their expertise, and in support of sound academic decision making, develop the self-study. In addition they:

- i. are consulted for recommendations of reviewers;
- ii. participate in writing the self-study;
- iii. participate in responding to the recommendations contained in the external review;
- iv. are involved in implementing action plans.

f. The **Faculty Senate** provides feedback to the Chancellor and Provost within four weeks of receipt of the abstracts provided by the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning.

g. The office of **Institutional Research and Enterprise Data Management** provides the official academic, enrollment and other non-financial data used for the academic program review. The division of **Finance and Administration** provides the official financial information for APR related to program costs and revenues and other relevant financial data. They produce data based on the *Procedures for Academic Program Review*, which includes data defined in UNC Policy 400.1 and the procedures document as necessary for APR at UNCG. Data shall be available prior to development of the self-study, and updates are made to the data during the review process as necessary.

h. The **Provost** reviews and evaluates the reports and recommendations and advises the Chancellor. The Provost will:

- i. review final reports and progress reports;
- ii. review the dean's recommendations;
- iii. review feedback from the Faculty Senate;
- iv. consult with the Dean of Graduate Education and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and other senior administrators as necessary;
- v. recommend expansion, contraction, elimination, or no action to the Chancellor, and share their recommendation with the dean.

i. As the Chief Executive Officer of the University, the **Chancellor** is ultimately responsible for the maintenance of a sound and balanced educational program that is consistent with the functions and responsibilities of UNCG, including APR and related actions and decisions. Accordingly, the Chancellor will:

- i. ensure that both policy and process exist and are in compliance, and that the process is executed based on the defined schedule;
- ii. review and evaluate the reports and recommendations;

- iii. decide what action – expand, contract, eliminate or no action – to take for each program;
- iv. submit to the Board of Trustees and to the President of the UNC System an annual summary of all academic program reviews conducted at UNCG.

## 5. Policy

- a. **Timing.** Academic programs will undergo a comprehensive review every seven years. Newly established programs will be reviewed within five years of their inception.
  - i. Program reviews should be staggered so that no more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the academic degree programs are being reviewed each year.
  - ii. The dean, Provost, or Chancellor, may alter a program review cycle at any time if deemed necessary. In this case, the review process starts again, and follows the procedure and schedule outlined in this policy.
- b. **Special Schedules.** Programs accredited by external bodies may align their review schedules with their accreditation cycle, provided the review meets the standards in this policy. For programs reviewed on a longer than 7-year cycle by another entity including programmatic accreditors or professional licensing boards, the UNC System President may adjust the review timeline for the program upon request by the Provost.
- c. **Data.** Five years of required data shall be provided. The Office of Institutional Research and Enterprise Data Management provides the official academic, enrollment and other non-financial data used for APR, including persistence, graduation, time to degree, and student credit hours. The division of Finance and Administration provides the official financial information for APR related to program costs and revenues and other relevant financial data. A wide breadth of additional qualitative and quantitative sources is expected.
- d. **Evaluation criteria** must include the data items listed in UNC System Policy 400.1:
  - i. Current and projected student demand, as measured by enrollments in the majors and degrees produced;
  - ii. Growth and existing data on student employment outcomes;
  - iii. Student outcomes, including persistence, graduation, time to degree, and, where possible, post-graduation success;
  - iv. 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;
  - v. The contribution of the program to professions that are critical to the health, educational attainment, and quality of life of North Carolinians;
  - vi. Any other considerations identified by the Chancellor or by the President.

UNCG has identified other considerations to include:

- vii. Assessment of student learning outcomes by the UNCG Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning;
- viii. Financial considerations;

- ix. Relationship to unit, UNCG, and UNC System strategic plans;
- x. 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.

e. **Components.** The academic program review includes multiple components: a self-study, an external review, an action plan, and progress reports. All of these components are together taken into consideration when evaluations, recommendations, and decisions are made.

f. **Action considerations.** The variety of criteria enumerated in 5.d must be considered at every recommendation and decision-making step.

g. **Self-Study**

- i. When two or more programs reside in a single academic department or entity, a single self-study document, with a section for each undergraduate and graduate program, should be submitted.
- ii. The academic program is responsible for preparing a narrative that addresses the required standards as outlined in 5.d. Externally accredited programs may submit their accreditation review in lieu of the academic program review, provided that such review is supplemented to address all standards required in UNC System Policy 400.1.
- iii. The self-study is a comprehensive analysis of the program and should include an overview of program objectives, curriculum, student learning outcomes and student success, faculty workload, research and creative activity performance, and resource allocation.
- iv. The self-study should be data-informed using sources as described in section 5.c.
- v. The dean and head should check the self-study for accuracy and completeness.

h. **External Review**

- i. Two external reviewers are selected based on their expertise in the relevant academic discipline. When possible one external reviewer should be a faculty member from UNCG's official [peer institutions](#).
- ii. The dean solicits recommendations from the head and program faculty for individuals to serve as external reviewers.
- iii. The dean selects two external reviewers in consultation with the head.
- iv. External reviewers conduct a virtual visit, which includes meetings with the Provost, dean, head, and program faculty. Additional meetings may include program students and other relevant university constituents.
- v. In rare and exceptional cases, an on-site rather than virtual visit will be conducted, if deemed necessary by the dean and Provost.
- vi. External reviewers provide a written report evaluating the department's strengths, challenges, and recommendations for improvement according to the process outlined in the *Procedures for Academic Program Review*.
- vii. The head and program faculty respond to the external review report, addressing each recommendation.

**i. Action Plan**

- i. The head and program faculty discuss and produce an action plan that addresses the criteria outlined in 5.d and other issues and opportunities identified during the review process. They respond to recommendations from the self-study and external review.
- ii. The action plan should include specific goals, timelines, available resources, and responsible parties.
- iii. The dean endorses, modifies, or rejects the action plan.

**j. Final Report**

- i. The head compiles a final report that includes the self-study, external review report, department response, and action plan, and submits it to the dean.
- ii. 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 criteria outlined in section 5.d.
- iii. This final report is submitted to the Provost, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Dean of Graduate Education, and the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning.
- iv. The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning develops an abstract of each review and submits these abstracts to Faculty Senate. Faculty Senate provides feedback to the Chancellor and Provost within 4 weeks of receipt.

**k. Executive Review**

- i. The Provost reviews, evaluates, and presents the final reports to the Chancellor. The Provost recommends expansion, contraction, elimination, or no action for each program to the Chancellor.
- ii. The Chancellor reviews the final reports to make decisions regarding academic program changes.
- iii. 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.
- iv. Criteria for consideration for expanding, contracting, or eliminating programs include all criteria outlined in section 5.d.
- v. 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. Upon notification, the Provost, Faculty Senate, and affected deans, department heads, and program faculty have 4 weeks to provide feedback, before the Chancellor makes a final decision.
- vi. The Chancellor submits a report summarizing the academic program reviews to the System Office and to the Board of Trustees.

**l. Mid-Cycle Progress Reports**

- i. The head submits a progress report to the dean three years after the review,

detailing the implementation of the action plan and any further developments.

- ii. The Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning reviews the report and provides additional guidance if necessary.
- iii. 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.
- iv. 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.
- v. A summary of progress reports is made available to the Faculty Senate by the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning. 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.

**m. Integration with Strategic Planning.** The findings from the academic program review are integrated into the university's broader strategic planning efforts, ensuring that program development aligns with institutional priorities.

**n. Confidentiality and Transparency.** Sensitive information related to personnel or confidential student data should be handled in accordance with university policies and legal requirements. Abstracts are shared with Faculty Senate and full reports are maintained in the Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning.

**o. Periodic Review of Policy.** The APR process shall be periodically reviewed and updated to reflect best practices in higher education and feedback from academic units. This policy will be reviewed every 5 years. Policy review is central to maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of the review process.

## 6. Additional Information

- a. **Supporting Documents.** UNCG *Procedures for Academic Program Review* [forthcoming]
- b. **Related Policies.** UNC System 400.1 [\*Policy on Academic Program Planning\*](#) [forthcoming Regulation will be added here]
- c. **Resources.** [Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning](#)
- d. **Approval Authority.** Chancellor and Board of Trustees.

## 7. Contacts for Additional Information and Reporting

[Office of the Chancellor](#)

[Office of the Provost](#)

[Office of Assessment, Accreditation, and Academic Program Planning](#)