Program Review: Procedures and Timeline

Timing and Scope of Review

- Academic programs with a graduate degree component are reviewed at least once within a seven year period. The term “academic program” may refer to a single program or cluster of degree programs, or may span the offerings of an entire department, school or college. This allows for the range of organizational hierarchy, which may differ across the various colleges at Kent State University.
- The Office of Accreditation, Assessment and Learning (AAL) determines the schedule of reviews and coordinates the program review process in consultation with deans, department chairs, school directors, and program directors/coordinators.
- In general, the review process begins when the academic program receives notification of an impending review from the Office of AAL. This takes place approximately nine months prior to the anticipated campus visit.

Self-study

- After notifying an academic program of an upcoming review, the Office of AAL schedules an orientation meeting with the dean of the college in which the program resides, the department chair or school director, and the program director/coordinator(s).
- The purpose of this initial meeting is to discuss the review process and to establish mutually agreed upon deadlines for the submission of the completed self-study and preliminary list of potential external reviewers along with an internal reviewer (see “Review Team Selection” below, for additional details).
- Prior to the academic program review site visit, each department/school/program will develop a self-study report. The self-study is a candid assessment of the program’s strengths and areas of growth, and addresses twelve key areas of questions as outlined in the self-study report template found on the Program Review: Procedures, Timelines, Templates and Guidelines page of the AAL website.
- Some of the data needed to complete the self-study may be obtained from the Office of Institutional Research (IR) and the Office of Institutional Advancement. As part of the program review orientation meeting, AAL staff will advise the program under review of the particulars with regard to obtaining these data.
Review Team Selection

- The review team consists of both internal and external (non-KSU) faculty members. Including internal and external reviewers in the review process provides a valuable opportunity for the department/program to receive feedback from a variety of perspectives.

- The internal reviewer will be a full professor not affiliated with the program under review. The internal reviewer is included to provide institutional and college context, and thus should be a faculty member from within the same college as the program under review, but should not be from the same department/school as that of the program under review. The exception to this is when all programs across an entire college are reviewed collectively (such as the College of Nursing or the College of Public Health). In that case, the internal reviewer must be selected from a different college. The dean of the college housing the program under review is asked to recommend potential internal reviewer(s).

- The external review team consists of two to four members. As a rule of thumb, the program under review prepares a list of ten or more potential external reviewers. This list includes faculty who have attained the rank of full professor and have expertise in relevant fields within the discipline at highly regarded peer and/or aspirant programs/institutions. The staff of AAL will supplement the list of potential external reviewers provided by the program with additional suitable candidates. Additionally, AAL will vet the potential external reviewer candidates for any potential conflicts of interest that could influence their judgment (e.g., formal collaborations with current program faculty, former employees or students of the university).

- The complete list of potential reviewers is discussed with the academic program, and the final selection of the review team is the responsibility of the Office of Accreditation, Assessment and Learning.

The Abbreviated Program Review Process

- Departments/programs that possess external accreditation and have been in good standing with the accrediting agency since the last academic program review was conducted may be eligible to participate in an abbreviated academic program review process. This process permits the use of the accreditation self-study as a component of the self-study constructed for the academic program review. In addition to the accreditation self-study, a number of additional areas of program evaluation are included in the abbreviated academic program review self-study. External review by discipline-specific experts is a component of the academic program review, regardless of any external accreditation. In order to serve as a coordinated, forward-thinking “checkpoint” of program evaluation and improvement which incorporates feedback from the external accrediting agency, the abbreviated academic program review process is timed to occur approximately three years after an external accreditation site visit/reaffirmation of accreditation.

- The self-study template for the abbreviated process will be shared on an individual basis with those programs qualifying for the abbreviated review process.
Site Visit Procedure

- The staff of AAL will send to the confirmed review team a packet of information that includes the self-study and other related materials.
- Travel and lodging arrangements for the external team will be coordinated by AAL staff. Arrangements for individual meetings during the site visit will be coordinated by the dean, chair/director and program director(s) with assistance from AAL. A sample itinerary will be shared with the program for use as a guide in developing a full schedule of events that best meets the needs of the particular program under review. Meetings during the site visit should include faculty, students and staff, as appropriate.
- The on-site visit typically extends over a two and a half day period. An opening dinner including the dean of the college, representative(s) of the Office of the Provost and the visiting external team will occur the evening before the start of the review. Subsequent to this initial evening opening dinner, the itinerary for the review will extend over a full day and a portion of the concluding day.
- Meetings of the external reviewers, internal reviewer, dean, chair/director, program director(s) and academic leadership will occur at the beginning and end of the site visit.
- The unit under review is responsible for costs associated with the review process (including travel, lodging, meals and honorarium for each external reviewer).

Reporting and Outcomes

- The review team will generate a report within four weeks of the site visit. The report will be shared with key stakeholders (e.g., Provost, Senior Associate Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, staff of Accreditation, Assessment and Learning, dean, department chair/school director). The format of the report should follow the “Review Committee Report Guidelines,” found on the Program Review: Procedure, Guidelines, Timetable, and Templates page of the AAL website.
- The dean and chair/director/program director will conduct a fact-check on the review team report within a week of its receipt. If necessary, they may ask for corrections of errors of fact.
- Once the external reviewer report and department/program response have been received, the AAL staff will schedule a post-review meeting with the dean and department/program representatives. The purpose of this meeting is to consider the external reviewers’ recommendations and establish mutually agreed upon timelines for the submission of a written action plan that includes actionable items for program improvement, based on reviewer feedback. The action plan template will be provided and reviewed at this meeting.
- Once the action plan template has been submitted to AAL by the department/program, the Senior Associate Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies, AAL staff, dean and department/program representatives will meet to discuss the department/program’s action plan.
- Within 18 months of the review, the department/program will provide to AAL an action plan update regarding progress made toward improvements outlined in the action plan.