



PA State System of Higher Education Board of Governors

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Policy 1986-04-A: *Program Review*

Adopted: July 15, 1986

Effective: July 16, 1986

Amended: October 17, 1991, October 9, 2003,
October 6, 2016, July 20, 2023, and April 11, 2024

Background: Periodic program review is a best practice in American higher education that involves stakeholders in the continuous improvement of existing academic programs and programs in support of the student experience. Such review includes evidence that the program meets quality-assurance standards and analysis of past performance and projected demand and industry direction that is used to inform decision-making. The review process must be aligned with strategic-planning and budgeting, program array management and sustainability, institutional and specialized accreditation processes, and student outcomes assessment. Criteria for the implementation of this policy can be found in the System Procedure/Standard for review of academic programs and programs in support of the student experience.

A. Definitions

1. **Academic Programs.** All academic degree programs (academic majors) and associated tracks/concentrations)-and the general education program.
2. **Programs in Support of the Student Experience.** A broad network of programs and services delivered either in-person or virtually that directly contribute to students' educational experience and foster student success. Examples include, and are not limited to, academic advising processes, library, student and residence life, tutoring, enrollment services (e.g., undergraduate admissions, graduate admissions, financial aid, bursar, and registrar), public safety, athletics, career services, disability services, wellness services, and diversity equity and inclusion (DEI).
3. **Modified Review.** Academic departments with programs subject to specialized accreditation may request to submit the most recent program accreditation report as a primary document for the five-year academic program review. Requests must be made in writing and are at the discretion of the President (or designee). Approval may be contingent upon the amount of time elapsed since the tendering of the most recent program accreditation report. The submission for modified review shall include the complete accreditation report and accreditor's recommendations/suggestions. Additional criteria and information, including centrality to university mission and contribution to university program array metrics not addressed in the accreditation

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review process, may be required at the discretion of the President (or designee) on a case-by-case basis.

B. Purposes of Program Review

1. To assure deliberate and continuous attention to enhancement of the quality and to assess mission centrality of academic programs and programs in support of the student experience within State System universities.
2. To support compliance with institutional accreditation standards related to design and delivery of the student learning experience, educational effectiveness, and supporting the student experience.
3. To analyze and employ quantitative and qualitative data in the review of individual academic programs and programs in support of the student experience with a view to continual improvement and university sustainability.
4. To provide the each university, councils of trustees, and other system stakeholders with assurance that university programs and student services are being assessed in a systematic fashion and that plans for making continuous improvement are developed, implemented, and communicated.

C. Policy

1. **Process.** Each university shall establish a local 5-year review process for review of academic programs and programs in support of the student experience.
2. **Cycle.** All university academic degree programs (and non-degree programs designated for review by the university president or designee), including general education, shall be evaluated at least once every five years; when deemed necessary, the university president (or designee) may require a shorter review interval for given programs. Programs in support of the student experience may be designated by the President (or designee) for regular five-year review or *ad hoc* review. At least once every 10 years (or more frequently at the University's discretion), each program shall include review by an appropriate external evaluator.
3. **Criteria.** Universities are expected to use standards-based criteria, developed in consultation with State System universities, for academic program review and review of programs in support of the student experience. These criteria are detailed in the System Procedure/Standard for review of academic programs and programs in support of the student experience. Universities may also develop additional standards at the discretion of the president (or designee).
4. **Data.** Universities shall include in their review process clear evidence expectations about the kinds of data and information academic programs and programs in support of the student experience must collect and analyze as part of their reflective process and to document that they meet the standards and engage in continual improvement. Individual academic program reviews and decision-making must, further, be informed by program array metrics and targets as reported in the Comprehensive Planning Process (CPP).

D. Reporting

1. Universities will use the program review to provide feedback to program faculty and staff and inform discussion with the program about its future.
2. Universities shall submit to the Office of Academic and Student Affairs in the Office of the Chancellor an annual report of academic programs and programs in support of the student experience that were reviewed that year, together with an executive summary of the review, using the template provided in the associated procedure and standard.
3. The President or designee shall keep the council of trustees apprised of program reviews and their outcomes.

E. Assessment

Every five years, Academic and Student Affairs in the Office of the Chancellor shall review the Program Review Policy and Procedure & Standard to assess the program's effectiveness in achieving its stated goals and assuring continual improvement.

F. Implementation

This policy is effective for five-year program reviews due in summer of 2025.