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**Western University
Program Review Process**

(Updated 12/04/13)

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Introduction

Program review is one mechanism by which the university routinely evaluates its degree and co-curricular programs and associated services to ensure they reflect the standards for quality that are embedded in the university's mission and values. The Western University of Health Sciences program review process is an evidence-based process that brings together the faculty, administration, staff, students, and community and professional constituents of a program under review to provide feedback on the program's quality and to make recommendations based on that evidence and feedback. The program review process is intended to facilitate a number of activities and goals:

- To assist programs in developing or improving appropriate means for assessing student learning outcomes;
- To better align department, college, and institutional goals and plans;
- To assist in making curricular and other changes to improve program and student learning outcomes;
- To identify potential cross-program collaborations;
- To inform the university's overall decision-making, strategic planning, and budgeting processes.
- To integrate professional and specialized accreditation reviews with the university's oversight of and planning for its programs;
- To conform to WASC standards for accreditation and expectations for a satisfactory program review process.
- To conform to federal guidelines for institutions of higher education.

The process, as described below, is modeled after exemplars of program review as identified by WASC in the *Outcomes-Based Program Review Workshop*, conducted February 25-26, 2010 in Long Beach, CA. Principles for program review developed by the Council of Graduate Schools and published in *Assessment and Review of Graduate Programs* (2005) have also guided the development of this process.

The program review process consists of six milestones that occur in sequence.

	Milestone	Activities
1	Planning and Preparation	Kickoff meeting; establish timeline, roles and responsibilities. Program review training. Integration plan for professional accreditation. Budget allocation.
2	Research	Standard data and reports from service units. Additional research planned as needed.
3	Self-Study	Self-study report developed. Crosswalk of accreditation report with WesternU standards (if applicable). Formative feedback on draft reports. Involvement of cross-section of stakeholders.
4	External Review	Accreditation visit, external visit organized by WesternU, or Program Review Panel.
5	Internal Review	Visit results reviewed by academic committee of the faculty. Recommendations from committee forwarded to the Provost. Program develops action plan to recommendations set by review.
6	Annual Follow-Up	Joint review by program administration and Academic Affairs. Update of action plan recorded.

Parameters of the Program Review Process

Integration with Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

The program review process is intended to complement, rather than duplicate, continuous outcomes assessment activities embedded in courses, programs, and the university as a whole. Outcomes assessment is on a more rapid cycle of data collection, analysis, reflection, and planning – ranging from course-by-course assessment to annual assessment reviews at the program and institutional level. Occurring no more frequently than every five years, the complete program review process incorporates student learning outcomes assessment information gathered during multiple years. The complete review is cast in a broader frame by also taking into account the resources that support student learning, the program’s relationship to internal and external stakeholders, changes in its discipline and in societal trends, and the evaluation of external reviewers. In program review, outcomes assessment findings are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in meeting its goals over time, but the review also is the opportunity for the program to evaluate and plan improvements to its outcomes assessment plan as a whole.

Integration with Professional Accreditation

Most of the university's degree programs hold specialized accreditations as required or customary in their fields. These accreditations impose regular evaluations by external reviewers who are able to evaluate the program against quality standards that overlap significantly with the university's standards for program review. For this reason and to avoid duplication of effort, the program review process is designed to integrate seamlessly with programs' existing professional accreditation activities. The university's program review is scheduled to occur in concert with the accreditation visit. The accreditation review teams serve the purpose of providing external reviews. However, the internal review, evaluation, and planning that takes place subsequent to the external review is identical for accredited, non-accredited, and co-curricular programs .

Programs with specialized accreditation cycles longer than seven years are scheduled to prepare an interim report for the university at the halfway mark of their accreditation cycle. When possible, these reports are integrated into required interim accreditation reports.

Relationship with Strategic Planning and Regional Accreditation

The university maintains multiple planning, assessment, and feedback processes. As each serves different purposes, they have varying foci and lengths of their cycles. As Figure 1 shows, program review is a medium-range feedback and planning process, with an emphasis on academic quality (although including some operational quality elements). It can be considered a bridging review between short-cycle reviews (i.e., course evaluations, outcomes assessment) and long-cycle reviews (i.e., strategic planning, regional accreditation).

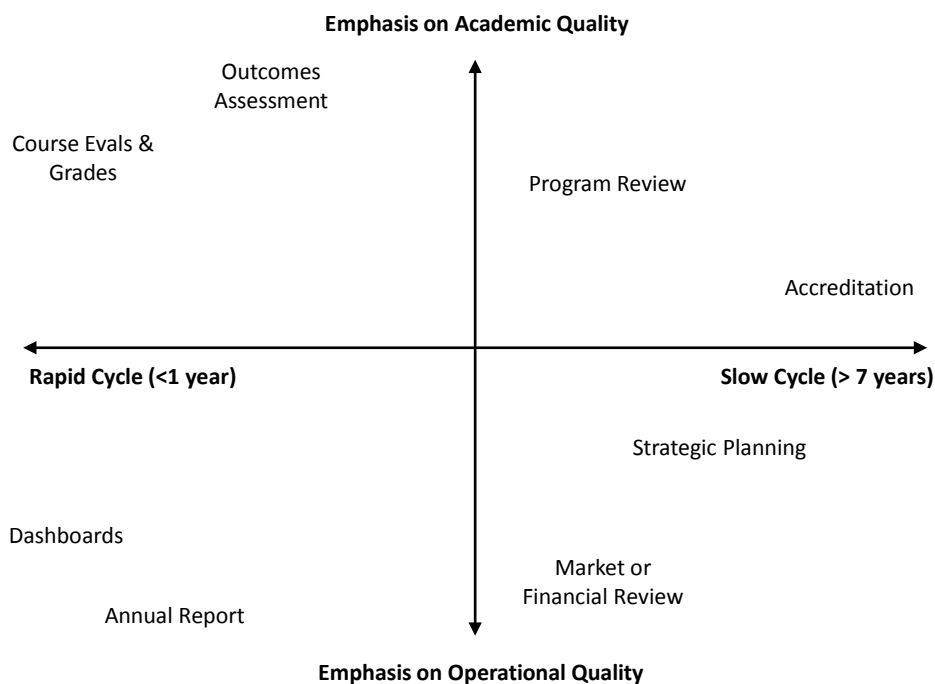


Figure 1. Feedback and planning processes mapped against time of cycle and quality focus.

Scope of Review

Consistent with the university's goal to provide top-quality, learner-centered educational programs, the review is primarily focused on the achievement and appropriateness of student learning outcomes, and the processes and resources that support those outcomes. As suggested by the guidelines for the self-study document, this includes consideration of the program's mission and history, student learning outcomes data, curricular offerings, faculty, student body, physical facilities, staff, support services and resources, and the disciplinary and societal context of the program. In addition, program review will serve as a checkpoint for evaluating guidelines set forth by external agents such as regional accreditors and state and federal governments. As such, program review is an opportunity to assess the currency of the program in the context of external standards, professional benchmarks, and community needs.

The program may choose to focus on particular questions of interest to the program's future or include additional areas affecting student learning. Nevertheless, the academic program and co-curricular review is intended to take a holistic view of the students' educational experience and consider all relevant factors.

Excluded from the review are university policies, processes, and services, in and of themselves, except as such policies, processes, and services directly impact the experience of students in the program. Also excluded are factors that focus exclusively on business or operational aspects of program management, such as program pricing, revenue generation, and market share, although some elements of operational aspects may be included where they impact student learning or the program's goals. However, this is not the analytic lens expected for an academic/co-curricular program review. Finally, programs are discouraged from devoting extensive attention to academic questions within a field, although these may be touched upon if the relevant trends suggest recommendations for curricula or research.

Special Reviews

Should a degree program undergo significant, unplanned changes, the Provost may, in consultation with the dean of the program's college, call for a special review outside of the normal review schedule. This special review would entail a focused self-study to address specific questions raised by the changes and would follow an abbreviated review process and schedule, to be determined as appropriate for the program and its circumstances.

Unit of Review

Although each degree program in every college will undergo academic program review, the specific groupings and timing of programs for each review will be determined by

mutual consent of the college dean and the provost for academic development and effectiveness. In general, the expectation is that each degree program will undergo a separate program review; however, in some circumstances, it may be preferable to group programs in a single college together for review or to separate out an individual program into specializations or tracks for individual reviews.

Co-curricular programs or units and academic service departments are also units of review. Specifically, reviews will be conducted within Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and the Library. The particular programs or departments to be reviewed are determined by the relevant administrators in consultation with the provost..

Roles and Responsibilities of Individuals and Departments

Several departments, faculty, staff, and students have key roles in the success of the program review process.

Program Review Committee

This administratively-appointed committee is responsible for overseeing and evaluating the program review process and ensuring that it is integrated effectively with professional and regional accreditation standards. Representatives from each college are designated to the committee by the dean of that college. The committee is chaired by the university Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness.

Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness

Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (IRE)

The director serves as the coordinator of the program review process, ensuring that the schedule of reviews is maintained and followed, serving as a consultant to programs in their review process, and providing training on program review for faculty and staff.

IRE also manages a number of the university's data and analysis resources, including support for accreditation activities. IRE is responsible for contributing data and reports during Milestones 2-4, to contribute to the self-study report and any additional materials needed for the site visit.

Provost

The Provost is the WASC accreditation liaison officer and is responsible for ensuring that WesternU's program review process is aligned with WASC standards. The Provost is also the designee to oversee the Milestone 5 and 6 activities, particularly the internal review and generation of the action plan following the site visit.

Self-Study Chair

For academic programs, the self-study chair is typically a member of the faculty or program administration, selected by the program chair in consultation with the college dean, to coordinate and conduct the program review process for the department. In some cases, the program chair may also be the self-study chair. For co-curricular programs, the self study chair will be appointed by the head of the division being reviewed.

Primary responsibilities for the chair include editing the final self-study document, organizing and hosting the site visit, and serving as liaison to both the university's program review committee and the program's faculty and/or administration throughout the review process. The chair may lead a self-study committee or team, or even multiple teams, depending on the size of the program.

Students, Faculty, Administrators, Staff, Alumni, and Other Constituents

The program review process is intended to be inclusive, representing the voices of all constituents of the program. It is expected that the self-study and site visit will incorporate the inputs of representatives of all of these constituents.

Elements of the Review

The program review process consists of three basic components:

Self-Study

Self-study is the process in which descriptive and evaluative data are gathered and interpreted for each program being reviewed. The process begins by articulating the questions to be asked, the data that are needed, and the processes by which the data will be gathered and interpreted. A self-study document is generated for each program under review. All statements made in the self-study document must be supported with data. It is expected that an effective self-study will balance description with analysis, documenting not only *what* the program has done but *how effective* it has been at achieving its goals.

External Review

An external review team judges the quality and effectiveness of the program under review by preparing an evaluative report following a site visit. The team recommends actions that should be taken to address any deficiencies or to further move the program toward achieving its goals. The qualifications of the reviewers are established either by their selection by an impartial professional organization (i.e., the accrediting body) or by following standards set in WesternU's program review process for selecting reviewers.

Review of Findings and Response

Key to the success of program review is internal communication and reflection on the findings, thoughtful planning for program improvement, and a commitment through the university's planning and budgeting processes to support these goals. This final review process is led by the university's academic leadership, taking into consideration the self-study, external review report, and any subsequent response from the program. This review process culminates in the development of an action plan or memo of understanding between the university and the program and annual review incorporated into the regular planning process. This stage of reflection, planning, and action is essential to assure the efficacy of program review.

Review Process: Six Milestones

The stages that comprise program review are described as six milestones that occur sequentially.

Milestone 1: Planning and Preparation

The process is initiated with a kickoff meeting to discuss the program review process and the timeline. Participants in this meeting include representatives from Academic Affairs and the college/university division and program under review. The basic parameters of the process are discussed and agreed upon, and the budget for the program review is allocated. By the end of this milestone, a self-study chair should be appointed by the program chair and dean (academic programs) or appropriate university division head (co-curricular programs).

For academic programs, the self-study chair should be a faculty member from the program under review or administrator with faculty appointment in the program. In some programs, the program chair will also serve as self-study chair. For larger programs, a self-study team should also be appointed. The self-study team should be as broadly representative as possible, including faculty, administrators, staff, and students. If possible, external constituents (such as alumni, community leaders, government representatives, or community leaders) should be invited to participate.

To reconcile the program review process with professional accreditation (if applicable), it is expected that the primary self-study document for a program undergoing accreditation review will be its accreditation self-study document. During this milestone, a crosswalk of professional accreditation standards and WesternU program review standards will be performed. Any areas in the WesternU program review standards not explicitly covered by the professional accreditor's guidelines will be addressed in a supplementary report prepared concurrently with the self-study.

When: No later than 12 months before Milestone 4 (the site visit).

Who:

- Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (calls the meeting, provides program review training)
- Provost
- College Dean or University Division Head
- Program Chair (academic programs)
- Self-Study Chair

Outcomes:

- Program review process formally initiated.
- Self-study chair (and team, optional) appointed.
- Key players are introduced to each other.

- Unit of review, timeline, and integration with professional accreditation are determined.
- Budget for program review allocated and funding sources determined.
- Training workshop held for program faculty and/or staff (optional).

Documentation:

- Program Review Plan Agreement (identifies outcomes from Milestone 1, signed by key players).
- Program review budget.

Milestone 2: Research

Institutional Research and Effectiveness and other university and college service units provide a standard package of reports and data to be used in the development of the self-study. During this phase, the self-study team becomes familiar with the resources available to them on campus and may request additional or ongoing data or reports.

The set of standard reports will be determined by the Program Review Committee. It is likely to include reports on student characteristics, enrollment and graduation rates, faculty characteristics and workload, learning outcomes assessment data, survey results, library usage, competitor analyses, etc.

When: Starting at 10 months prior to Milestone 4 and continuing through Milestone 5 (internal review).

Who:

- Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (coordinates the preparation and delivery of reports, leads meetings between self-study team and service units)
- Self-Study Chair
- Self-Study Team (if appointed)
- Directors of other university service units (e.g., Registrar, Business Office, Library)

Outcomes:

- Standard package of reports delivered to self-study chair on schedule.
- Additional reports or research requests planned and delivered, as needed for self-study, external review, or final internal review.
- Reports and data used by self-study team to prepare their reports and documentation.

Documentation:

- Standard reports.
- Research Plan Agreement (documents any additional reporting needs required, the responsible parties, and due dates)

- Additional reports.

Milestone 3: Self-Study

The self-study team produces a self-study document during this period. If this document is being developed for an accreditation visit, it may go by a different name and may follow the guidelines or template required by that accreditor. For other programs, it is expected that they will generally follow the template provided for WesternU self-studies. An effective self-study should engage the program's constituents during its development, including faculty, staff, administrators, and students, and possibly external constituents. The self-study should be based on available data, and provide the program's evaluation of its effectiveness in achieving its objectives, particularly as they relate to student learning. As the self-study is developed, the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness provides ongoing consulting and formative feedback.

When: Starting no later than eight months before Milestone 4. Concludes at the start of Milestone 4.

Who:

- Self-Study Chair
- Self-Study Team (if appointed)
- Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (provides feedback on self-study process)
- Program faculty, staff, students, administrators, alumni, and other constituents

Outcomes:

- Self-study drafts, culminating in a final self-study document/accreditation report

Documentation:

- Self-study document/accreditation report.

Milestone 4: External Review

The external review of the program is conducted during this milestone. This milestone begins with the completed self-study document (and any other required reports or documentation) submitted to the external reviewers, continues with the preparation for and hosting of the external reviewers, and concludes with the receipt of the final report of the reviewers. The final report is a consensus document that identifies strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for change for the program under review.

Depending on the nature of the program being reviewed, different review tracks are followed.

If the program is being reviewed by an accreditor, the external review incorporates the normal review process (e.g., site visit or documentation review) followed by the accreditor.

If the program is a Doctoral or Master's level program that is not being reviewed by an accreditor, the external review consists of a WesternU-appointed external review team. WesternU will solicit an appropriate review team, including impartial external reviewers and an internal member as liaison to the team.

If the program is Co-curricular, there will be no external review. An internal review will occur and if necessary, external reviewers will be consulted.

The site visit processes, detailed in an appendix to be created, includes the procedure for establishing selection criteria for external reviewers, choosing dates for visits, guidelines for visit schedules and resource rooms, and draft templates and rubrics for the final report. This appendix also specifies the roles of the program, self-study chair, and Academic Affairs staff in preparing for and hosting the visit.

When: Varies, depending on the processes of professional accreditors. Typically, the final self-study report is due 30-60 days before the external review, and the final team report is received 30-60 days after the external review. There may be subsequent delays before an accreditation action is communicated, but that is not part of the program review process. Program Review Reader's Panel Report delivered to Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness within six weeks of initiating their review.

Who:

- Self-Study Chair
- Program faculty and/or staff (to prepare for and host the visit)
- External Reviewers
- Program faculty, staff, students, administrators, alumni, and other constituents, as scheduled to participate in the visit

Outcomes:

- Draft team report(s) and response(s), culminating in a final team consensus report

Documentation:

- External review team assignments
- Visit agenda
- Resource room index
- Final team report
- Program responses to draft team reports

Milestone 5: Internal Review

The self-study, final team report, and program's final response (if one is submitted) are reviewed by the Academic Standards and Policy Committee. This committee will represent the interest of the University by evaluating the results of the review to identify important institutional implications. The committee will summarize important findings of the review and provide insight to help align findings to the University's strategic plan. This report is submitted to the Provost and the program under review. The University Provost will consult with the program and college to develop a plan detailing the actions the program will take in response to the self-study and reviews.

This stage begins with the program submitting its self-study and the final report of the external review team to the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. If the program prepares a response to the final report, that is also submitted at this time. These documents are received by the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, who circulates them to an Academic Standards and Policy Committee.

Academic Standards and Policy Committee. The Academic Standards and Policy Committee is responsible for evaluating and processing the results of the program review. No member may serve on a review panel for any program in that member's college or university division.

The members of the Academic Standards and Policy Committee submit findings and recommendations to the Provost, using a template developed for this purpose. These recommendations are due to the Provost within 30 days.

The program chair and dean (or university division head) are responsible for crafting an action plan, using the assigned template, to describe the steps to be taken in addressing the recommendations set forth by the external review team and the Academic Standards and Policy Committee. The Provost works with the program to finalize the action plan.

When: Begins upon receipt of the final report from the external review team; concludes 60 days later.

Who:

- Provost
- Internal Review Panel (from Program Review Committee)
- College Dean or Division Head
- Program Chair (if applicable)
- Self-Study Chair

Outcomes:

- Action plan detailing resolution of program review.

Documentation:

- Self-study, external review (from previous milestones).

- Program's response to external review (optional)
- Review panel's recommendations and rubric.
- Memorandum of Understanding between university and program.
- Action plan.

Milestone 6: Annual Follow-Up

The program's progress toward the goals of the action plan is reviewed and assessed annually. The college dean and program chair (or university division head) submit an update to the action plan to the Provost during the third quarter Board of Trustees reporting process. Based on the progress to date, the action plan may be updated or modified. This review occurs each year until the program is next scheduled for program review.

When: Approximately one calendar year from Milestone 5. The specific timing may be adjusted to conform to other reporting, budgeting, or planning cycles.

Who:

- Provost
- College Dean or University Division Head
- Program Chair (if applicable)
- Other academic leaders, if Milestone 6 is integrated into other planning and budgeting processes

Outcomes:

- Documented feedback on progress.
- Updated Action Plan.

Documentation:

- Action plan.
- Supporting evidence and documentation.
- Minutes from review meeting.

Appendix A. Version Control

The Program Review Process is intended to be an accurate up-to-date document describing the current state of the process as it is revised and updated. This appendix describes changes made to the plan from the most recent back to the earliest draft.

- 10.02.13 Updated Provost title
- 06.13.13 Updated language to clarify timelines and roles.
- 03.19.12 Added language to incorporate review of course credit hour assignments. Replaced director of Outcomes Assessment with Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness
- 05.19.11 Added language throughout document to better incorporate review of co-curricular
- 03.31.11 Added language to Milestone 4: External Review to clarify that the final report of the committee or readers panel is a consensus document.
- 10.07.10 Added section on Special Reviews. Changed language throughout (particularly in Milestone 4) to use a readers panel for accredited programs and master's programs.
- 07.29.10 Made changes based on Program Review Committee feedback. Modified wording of program review goals to focus on student learning outcomes. Clarified that program chair can be self-study chair. Clarified review in milestone 6. Fixed typos and unclear language.
- 06.03.10 First draft completed; distributed internally. Document includes description of the process and notes on the supporting templates and rubrics.

Appendix B. Templates and Rubrics

A number of templates, rubrics, and other supporting documents are required to help facilitate this process. These documents will be developed over the summer and circulated for feedback as part of a subsequent draft of the program review process. The current list of required supporting documents is:

1. Updated program review calendar, aligned with professional accreditation calendar, and including co-curricular programs and academic service departments
2. Crosswalk of program review standards with professional accreditor standards
3. Self-evaluation of program review process against WASC program review rubric
4. Membership list and minutes from Academic Program Review Committee
5. Charter for self-study team
6. Program Review Plan Agreement (documents unit of review, timeline, and budget)
7. Index of standard package of reports
8. Templates for standard reports
9. Research Plan Agreement (documents additional requested reports or data)
10. Self-Study Template (for non-accredited programs)
11. External reviewer selection process and criteria
12. Contract for external reviewers
13. Reimbursement and stipend policy for external reviewers
14. Template for Resource Room Index
15. Template for visit agenda
16. Rubric for external reviewers
17. Template for external review team final report
18. Rubric and template for internal review panel
19. Template for Action Plan