



# CSUN

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CALIFORNIA  
STATE UNIVERSITY  
NORTHRIDGE

## **Academic Program Review Guide**

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# ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW GUIDE

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Program review policy in the California State University originates from Board of Trustee policy as found in the Chancellor's Memorandum AP 71-32, "Program Review Policy: Review of Existing Programs." Campuses are called to establish formal "program performance review procedures for all existing undergraduate and graduate programs" (paragraph 1). The goal is to use quantitative and qualitative data to assess the viability of each program and to maintain and strengthen the quality of academic offerings. An annual resolution by the Board of Trustees states "that a formal review of existing degree curricula continue to be conducted annually by the campuses as a part of the overall academic planning process" (paragraph 1).

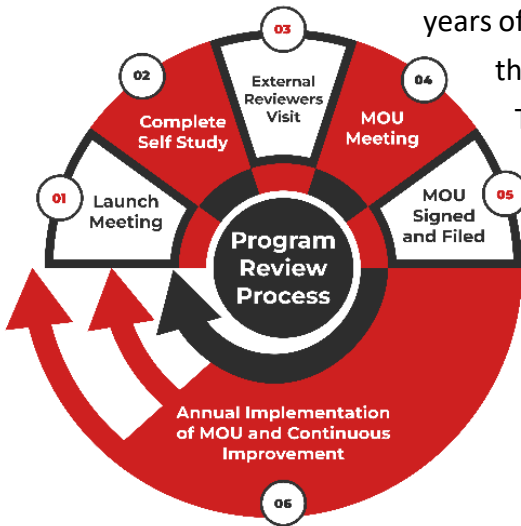
## Purpose

The major purpose of program review is to ensure the highest quality educational programs. Program review focuses on the review of each degree and the related courses in the department; thus, information for the review must be clearly described for each degree. The program review process should foster departmental self-reflection and creative problem-solving about the overall program including its students, faculty, curriculum, resources, and actions taken to "close the loop" based on assessment data. The general climate of the department and key strengths and challenges of the program should be identified in an effort to make improvements. This process should promote positive and forward-looking change in academic programs, typically on a seven-year cycle. It should utilize internal and external resources effectively and should be integrated into academic planning and assessment. The program review should also include discussion of general education courses offered by the department. If the department/program offers certificates, these need to be reviewed as part of the program review process. Note: A self-study and subsequent program review by an outside accreditation body in the discipline will be accepted as a program review if that body grants accreditation to that degree.

## Process Overview

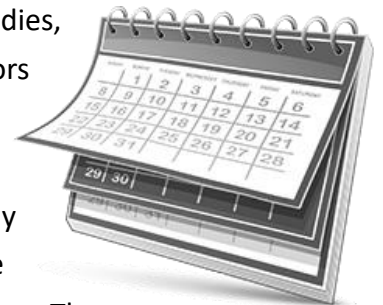
All degree programs are subject to Academic Program Review. The process must be completed within 5 years of a degree program implementation (CSU AP 17-32), and every 7 years thereafter (CSUN policy) or according to the current accreditation cycle.

The program review cycle consists of the following: a launch meeting, self-study, an external review, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) meeting, and an MOU. The MOU outlines an action plan, which is reviewed annually by the faculty to evaluate their progress in implementing the recommendations and maintaining or strengthening the areas of commendation.



## Program Review Calendar

The Vice-Provost consults with the Senior Director of Institutional Research, Associate Vice-President of Undergraduate Studies, Associate Vice President of Research and Graduate Studies, Deans, Associate Deans and the Department Chairs/Program Coordinators (hereafter "Chairs") to establish a program review calendar. The calendar will ensure that reviews, beginning with the creation of a self-study document, will occur at least every seven years and that they can be completed in a timely manner. The calendar is reviewed every November/December as part of the annual request from the Chancellor's Office for an update of the Academic Plan. The current Program Review and Accreditation Calendar is maintained on the [CSUN Academic Assessment and Program Review](#) webpage.



## Initial Steps, Launch Meeting & Orientation

In October of the academic year before the review is due, the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review will notify the chair of the academic department and the appropriate dean that a review has been scheduled. Invitations to the Spring Launch Meeting (i.e. Program Review Orientation) will be sent to the Department Chair, and the chair can forward the invitation to include all faculty associated with the program review process.

The orientation will occur in February/March and will include an overview of the process and timelines, how to access data offered by the office of Institutional Research using CSUN Dashboards, an orientation to the self-study that is self-reflective and oriented toward continuous improvement, suggest criteria for potential external reviewers, and answer any other questions program faculty may have.

## Creating the Self-Study

The self-study is a comprehensive written report that is prepared by the academic program scheduled for a review. The Associate Director in the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review monitors the process of writing the self-study and offers consultation services and any help needed to complete the self-study.

The Self-Study Guidelines (Appendix A) provides a detailed outline of what should be included in the self-study. The report should be concise and not exceed 25 pages excluding the cover page, introduction, table of contents, and appendices. The College Dean must review and sign the cover page (Appendix B), and the self-study should be submitted to the Associate Director in the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review, [Jennifer.Little@csun.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Little@csun.edu), by December 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Faculty Participation

The Department Chair collaborates with the appropriate faculty to prepare the self-study. Tenured and tenure-track faculty are expected to be given an active role in the development of the self-study. A draft of the self-study should be distributed to faculty for department approval. Upon department-level approval, the self-study is forwarded to the College for approval from the Dean.

*(Note: In recognition of the fact that the proper preparation of the self-study requires extensive use of faculty and/or Chair time it is strongly recommended that the College provide reassigned time to the program for this purpose.)*

## Data from Institutional Research

Once the self-study commences, data from the Institutional Research (IR) needs to be incorporated. Data can be found at CSUN Counts and CSU Student Success Dashboard through the IR website. Please see the guidelines for Accessing IR Data (Appendix C) for further assistance.

## College-Level Review

It is the function of the college review committee to evaluate the departmental self-study in accordance with the established guidelines and to determine whether the department has adequately conducted its self-study. The college committee may require clarification or additional information in the self-study. The college review committee and Dean should ensure that the program self-study is comprehensive and accurate before submission to the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review. If in their opinion the self-study is deficient, the Dean will require the self-study to be revised or rewritten.

Each college has its own separate process in how they will review the self-study (e.g. within the curriculum committee, academic council, assessment committee, etc.). Please consult with the Dean and/or Associate Dean as to when and how the self-study should be submitted to the college.

## External Review Site Visit

Internal review processes provide a valuable perspective that is essential for program quality. In addition, an external consultant's perspective plays an important role in the evaluation process.

The external review site visit is conducted by one consultant who is an expert in the discipline under review. The Department faculty and Chairperson decide on a ranked list of at least six potential, suitable external reviewers including contact information. The potential reviewers should represent a CSU campus, however other suitable non-CSU candidates may often times be an appropriate choice. The Dean must approve the list prior to sending it to the Associate Director in the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review. The Associate Director invites the reviewers to campus based upon ranking, expenses, and their availability.

In conducting the review process, the external reviewer will respond to the self-study, consult with the program, college, administrators, and others in the university, evaluate the program, and submit commendations and recommendations. (See Appendix D: [Guidelines for External Reviewers' Campus Visit.](#))

Proposed qualifications for an external consultant include:

- highest degree in the relevant discipline
- rank of associate professor or professor
- experience in conducting academic program reviews
- distinguished record in related teaching, research and scholarly activity, and service
- rank in the same or similar programs on his/her respective campuses

- no conflict of interest – should not be affiliated with the program under review nor should they have past connections such as graduates or former faculty
- ability to complete a site visit and submission of report within the prescribed timeline.

## Coordination of the External Reviewer's Visit

The Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review together with the department/program coordinates the virtual or the on-campus visit of the reviewer. The department/program will develop a schedule of face-to-face meetings, other than those meetings fixed by the University. The schedule of meetings for the external reviewer will include the Senior Director of Institutional Research, Associate Vice-President of Undergraduate Studies (if applicable), Associate Vice-President of Research and Graduate Studies (if applicable), Dean, Associate Dean, Chair, EPC representative, and GSC representative (if applicable), students, faculty, staff, and the exit meeting. Please see a sample site visit agendas Appendix E and F.

If the department/program decides on a virtual visit, all meetings will take place in one day via zoom starting at 8:30am and concluding with an exit meeting at 4:00pm.

If the department/program decides on an on-campus visit, the department will arrange for the external reviewer's travel arrangement excluding mileage, food, and incidentals. On-campus meetings usually occur over 1 and ½ days.

## Participation and Responsibilities of EPC and GSC Representatives

The Educational Policies Committee (EPC) and the Graduate Studies Committee (GSC) (if the program being reviewed includes a graduate program) will each appoint a present or former member as a representative to participate in the program review process. In the event that a program being reviewed is solely a graduate program without undergraduate course offerings, only the GSC will appoint a representative to participate in the process.

Normally these representatives will be selected from programs outside of the college of the program being reviewed. These representatives will be provided with a copy of the program's self-study. They will also be invited to attend the exit meeting to hear initial thoughts and recommendations provided by the external reviewer. EPC and GSC representatives will receive copies of the reviewers' final report and will be invited to attend the final memorandum of understanding (MOU) meeting convened by the Vice

Provost to discuss this final report. The review process is completed with the circulation of the Final MOU. At this time the EPC and GSC representatives will share the relevant curriculum recommendations with their respective committees.

## Initial Response to External Reviewer's Report

Upon receiving the External Reviewers' Report (See Appendix G: External Reviewer Report Template), the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review forwards this report to the Senior Director of Institutional Research and the Chair. The Associate Director in the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review, in consultation with the Senior Director of Institutional Research and the Vice Provost, writes a draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) based on the external reviewers' report and forwards it to the Chair. The Chair circulates the report and the draft MOU to the faculty and arranges time for discussion and evaluation by the faculty. If deemed necessary by the faculty, a written response and preliminary plan of action reflecting any diversity of opinion that may exist within the program can be formally approved by the faculty. If a written response to the draft MOU is compiled by the faculty, it can be forwarded to the Associate Director and/or brought to the final MOU meeting. The Associate Director schedules the final MOU meeting and distributes copies of the external reviewer's CV, external reviewer's report, and the draft MOU to the Senior Director of Institutional Research, Vice-Provost, VP of Undergraduate and/or Graduate studies, Dean, Chair, GSC/EPC representative(s), Director of Academic Assessment, and all other individuals who are invited to participate in the final MOU meeting.

## Final MOU Meeting

The draft MOU and any response from the program are thoroughly discussed at a meeting facilitated by the Vice-Provost in order to achieve consensus on a final plan of action. The following people are invited: the Senior Director of Institutional Research, the Associate Vice-President of Undergraduate Studies, the Associate Vice President of Research and Graduate Studies (if the program under review has a graduate program); the Chair; the Dean; the Associate Dean; the Director of Assessment, all members of the program faculty, especially those faculty with added responsibilities for programs and curriculum; and the EPC and GSC representatives. The Associate Director of Academic Assessment and Program Review will be responsible to take notes in order to finalize the MOU.

The draft MOU document will be reviewed at the meeting until consensus on the final MOU is reached. The final MOU typically contains commendations and recommendations. The final MOU will be sent to all parties attending the meeting by the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review. All parties will be given 3 weeks to respond to any final editing needed in the MOU. At this time, a copy of the final



MOU is sent to the Provost and President and held in the files in the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review.

## Report to Chancellor's Office

A synopsis of completed program reviews is submitted to the Chancellor's office annually, typically in January. Academic Master Plans can be found at [Academic Master Plan | CSU \(calstate.edu\)](https://www.calstate.edu/academicmasterplan/).

## Follow-up

An annual "continuous improvement plan" will be submitted to the Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review. The assessment report includes a section that asks the department to describe the progress the program is making toward fulfilling the recommendations contained in the Program Review MOU. These annual assessment reports should be maintained by the department to be used in the next program review cycle.

## Calendar for the 7-year cycle

### Year 6 Fall Semester

- Programs are notified about Upcoming Program Review

### Year 6 Spring Semester

- Chair decides on faculty member(s) to help write self-study. Chair converses with Dean about possible release time for the faculty member(s).
- Program Review Launch Meeting – Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review invites faculty in programs whose self-study is due in Year 7. The Department Chair is officially sent an outlook invitation to attend. The Chair is welcome to share the invitation to all faculty who will be involved with the program review process.
- Chair/Coordinator assembles faculty and assigns review tasks for compiling information for the Self-Study during summer and Year 7, fall semester.

### Year 7 Fall Semester

- Program begins self-study in consultation with program faculty, Chair/Coordinator and input from Associate Dean. (See Self-Study Guidelines.)
- Finalize the self-study.
- The self-study submitted to Dean for approval. College Academic Council receives the self-study.
- The self-study is approved.

- The Dean-approved, self-study is electronically submitted to [Jennifer.Little@csun.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Little@csun.edu). It must be signed by the Chair (or program coordinator) and the Dean in order to commence with the scheduling of the External Review Visit.
- Chair compiles a list of six potential external reviewers and forwards to Dean's office for approval.
- The Dean-approved, external reviewer list is send to [Jennifer.Little@csun.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Little@csun.edu) who contacts potential external reviewer(s) and schedules dates for review.

### Year 7 Spring Semester

- External Reviewer visit occurs.
- Three weeks later, the external reviewers' report is submitted to Office of Academic Assessment and Program Review.
- MOU is drafted by the Associate Director of Program Review and Senior Director of Institutional Research and sent to all parties.
- MOU draft is discussed in a meeting with faculty.
- Chair and Dean meet at final MOU meeting, facilitated by Vice-Provost with other parties in attendance.
- Final MOU is received by department/program and given 3 weeks to make final edits.
- Final MOU is sent to the Vice-Provost and all parties involved.

**\*Upon completion of the process, programs have 7 years to implement recommendations contained in the MOU before beginning the cycle once again**