

# **Academic Program Review**

## **University of Oklahoma**

### **Overview**

Academic Program Review (APR) is a form of institutional self-study mandated for every degree-granting unit at the University of Oklahoma by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

Academic units are reviewed every seven years. The reviews are under the auspices of the Provost's Office and are handled by the Vice Provost for Academic Effectiveness. The reviews are characterized by several themes:

- 1) The reviews are meant to be collegial and are based on peer review.
- 2) The reviews should be forward-looking and directed toward improvement of the program.
- 3) The reviews should be scholarly, evaluative, and based on academic criteria. They should seek to define questions that will help increase the understanding of the unit.
- 4) Every attempt should be made to make the review an objective process.
- 5) The reviews are meant to be comprehensive in that they view the programs in terms of how they are connected to the university and to the intellectual discipline at large.
- 6) The reviews should be focused on how to improve the program without additional resources. The review should address if there are more efficient or economical ways to run the programs and the effectiveness of the program.
- 7) The review will address short- and long-term demand for the programs in each unit and direction of change in demand for each program.
- 8) The reviews should be dynamic and should lead to improvements in programs.

### **Objectives**

The purpose of the program review is to improve the quality of education at the University of Oklahoma. Academic programs require regular review and self-examination to improve and program review is a crucial part of this process.

The process should provide a useful academic review to the unit, Dean, and Provost. From the administrative point of view, the review can be important for long range planning by providing data on the overall health of a unit, faculty resources, student demand, facilities, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the unit. For the unit, the review can provide a mechanism for improvement and change. The faculty should participate in the process and the review is important for faculty governance.

Externally, the reviews provide the opportunity for the university to be accountable to the students, taxpayers, donors, funding agencies, accreditation organizations (e.g., Higher Learning Commission), and state government (e.g., State Regents).

Questions that are commonly addressed during program review include the following:

- Is the teaching in the unit effective and useful?
- Is the curriculum appropriate, given the numbers and qualifications of the faculty?
- Are department resources sufficient to meet the student demand?
- Are the faculty's publication record and/or other indicators of creative activity indicative of high quality?
- Does the unit encourage faculty to seek external funding for their research/creative activity?
- Is this a unit that is recognized within its professional community for the quality of its contributions?
- What is the opinion of experts from outside the university?
- Does the unit have a forward-looking strategic plan?
- Is the unit successfully meeting its' own mission as well as the mission of the university?

## **Procedures (See attached Timetable)**

The APR Process is coordinated by the Vice Provost for Academic Effectiveness (VP) in the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost. The two-year review process consists of:

- 1) During the fall prior to the review, the VP meets with the units to be reviewed to outline and discuss the APR process. The unit is asked to provide a list and contact information for eight-to-ten potential external reviewers. The external reviewers should not have connections to the unit unless approved by the Vice Provost. The VP recruits two external reviewers for each unit during the following spring/summer semester for on-site reviews during the APR.
- 2) During the spring and summer, academic units prepare a self-study document that is supplemented by university generated quantitative departmental profile information as well as results from online surveys. The self-study instructions document describes what to include in the self-study. Self-studies are submitted to the VP by September.
- 3) In the late summer/early fall of the first year, the VP forms the APR committee which consists of faculty selected by the Office of the Provost and approved by the Faculty Senate.
- 4) At an organizational meeting of the APR committee, the VP explains the APR process. Each member will be responsible for writing a draft report for one unit although the reports are consensus documents. At this meeting, the APR committee is divided into two subcommittees (A and B), and the VP serves as chair of each subcommittee. Each subcommittee will be assigned 4-6 units depending on the number of units undergoing review.
- 5) Both APR subcommittees will have meetings to discuss the self-study of each unit undergoing review (4-6 meetings depending on number of units undergoing review). During these discussions, it is assumed that each member of the committee has read the self-study document. The primary reviewer for the unit leads the discussion. These meetings generally consist of moving carefully through the self-study report to ask and answer questions that arise. The committee may find that some questions cannot be answered by the information in the self-studies. These questions are drafted and sent to the unit chair/director.
- 6) When the questions have been answered by the chair/director and returned to the appropriate subcommittee, the chair/director of the units are invited to a meeting to discuss the questions and other aspects of the review (on-site visit, external reviewer report, etc.). This meeting occurs in the late fall/early spring semester.
- 7) After meeting with the chair/director, the APR subcommittees meet with the unit deans to discuss the self-study questions.

- 8) On-site visits of the external reviewers will take place during the fall semester (or spring semester if extenuating circumstances) of the review depending on their availability and the unit's schedule. The external reviewers are given the self-study document along with institutional data provided to the units in preparation of the document. The two-day visit starts with a breakfast meeting with the VP and ends with an exit meeting with the appropriate APR subcommittee. **The units are responsible for creating an itinerary for the reviewers.** The reviewers are provided with a suggested template for their document but are not required to use it. They are given a month to complete and submit their team review report. The VP shares the external reviewer report with the unit chair/director and the APR committee.
- 9) The committee drafts a report (see guidelines) for each unit, based on their review and the review report of the external team. Some units will have as few as three drafts; some as many as five or six; it depends on the complexity of the unit report, the degree of problems (if any) in the unit, and the quality of discussions in previous meetings.
- 10) When the APR committee feels that the draft report is ready, it is sent to the unit for their review and as a check to correct any factual errors. A final meeting is scheduled with the APR committee, Provost, VP, dean, APR Subcommittee (must include lead and co-lead report writers), chair/director, and the unit faculty. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the report and generally provide a forum for the exchange of ideas.
- 11) During the meeting, possible revisions are discussed. If revisions are necessary, a final draft is prepared following the final meeting and sent to the Provost with copies to the unit and the budget dean.
- 12) During the semester after the final meeting, the dean and the unit chair/director prepare an action plan for the unit. A draft version of this action plan is shared with the academic unit at a meeting of the unit with the dean. After this meeting, a final version of the budget dean's action plan is shared with the unit and sent to the Provost.