

Literature Review on Academic Program Reviews

Barak, R. (2007) Thirty Years of Academic Review and Approval by State Postsecondary Coordinating and Governing Boards. State Higher Education Executive officers. Available: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/recordDetail?accno=ED502182>

A survey of the academic program review and approval activity of state-wide postsecondary coordinating and governing boards was concluded in 2006. This study is the latest in a series of survey/studies of state level program review and approval begun roughly thirty years ago by this author and colleagues.

This report provides a summary of the various state boards' responses to this survey as well as a comparison with previous studies of state-level program review and approval. One factor that did not change over the 30 years covered by this study was the wide variations in scope of authority, policies, procedures, organization, structure and environment of the various state entities responsible for postsecondary education.

Western Association of Schools and Colleges. (2009) WASC Resource Guide for 'Good Practices' in Academic Program Review. Available: http://www.wascsenior.org/findit/files/forms/WASC_Program_Review_Resource_Guide_Sept_2009.pdf

This good-practice guide is designed to assist colleges and universities with meeting the new program review expectations within WASC's revised accreditation standards. While it is useful for meeting the revised standards, the guide is framed in terms of 'good practices' for academic program review processes rather than accreditation compliance.

Highlighted throughout this guide are three features of program review processes which are expected under the revised WASC standards:

- outcomes-based assessment of student learning and development
- evidence-based claims and decision-making, and
- use of program review results to inform planning and budgeting.

A program review is a cyclical process for evaluating and continuously enhancing the quality and currency of programs. The evaluation is conducted through a combination of self-evaluation, followed by peer-evaluation by reviewers external to the program or department and, usually, also external to the organization. It is a comprehensive analysis of program quality, analyzing a wide variety of data about the program. The results of this evaluation process are then used to inform follow-up planning and budgeting processes at various levels in the institution—program, department, college, university—and incorporated into the institution's overall quality assurance system. An institution's program review process typically occurs on a regular cycle of five to eight years, meaning that each program/department is reviewed every five-eight years.

Components of Self-Study Report

1. Context
2. Analysis of evidence about program quality and viability and sustainability
3. Reflections
4. Plans for improvement

The external review typically occurs a month or two after a self-study is completed.

Pitter, G. (2007) Program Review: A Tool for Continuous Improvement of Academic Programs. Association for Institutional Research. Available: <http://airweb3.org/airpubs/105.pdf>

Program reviews became widely used as quality assurance activities in the United States beginning in the 1970s. Since then, they have evolved as an essential component in demonstrating institutional effectiveness to accrediting bodies. The paper discusses various approaches to reviews with a focus on a recently reengineered institutional program review process adopted by Florida A&M University (FAMU), which has conducted program reviews since the 1970s.. The new process incorporates the traditional features of academic quality assurance as well as more recent accountability and assessment issues. An important feature of the reengineered program review is an increased emphasis on follow-up to ensure outcomes from the review that are designed to improve the academic programs. Appended are: (1) Sample Format for Self-Studies; (2) Consultant's Report Sample Format and Coverage; and (3) FAMU's Academic Program Review Cycle.

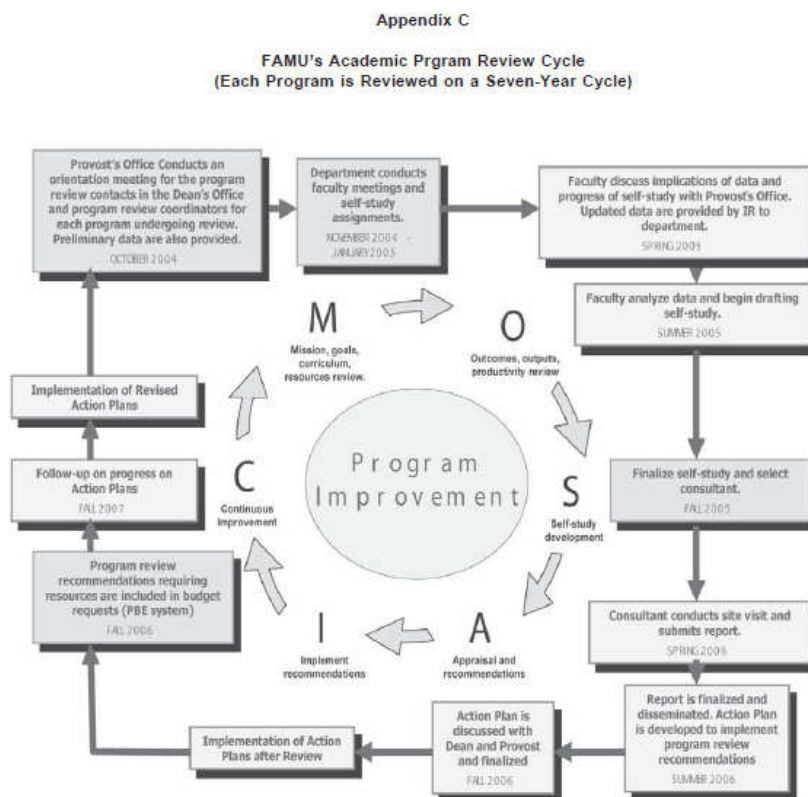
Programs may be selected for review by several different methods, such as:

1. The screening method: All programs undergo an annual review of a handful of basic metrics. Those that fall below a given threshold on critical measures are then selected for further review.
2. Cyclical review: All academic programs are reviewed on a cyclical basis (usually five or seven years, occasionally 10 years).
3. Divisional model: the institution selects entire divisions rather than pre-selecting a number or percentage of programs to review each year.
4. Faculty-led: usually organized by the faculty senate or faculty committees.
5. Administration-led: housed in the Office of Institutional Research, if more quantitative, or the Office of the Provost, for more qualitatively-oriented reviews

Phases of APR

1. Planning and orientation
2. Selecting evaluators
3. Site visits
4. Self-study
5. Action plans and follow-ups

The success of program reviews hinges on carefully planning and implementing all of the phases outlined in the previous section. In addition, there are some critical elements that can make the difference between a review that results in meaningful positive outcomes and one that is an exercise of little consequence.



Henry, T. (2007) Assessing and Improving Institutional Performance. New Directions for Higher Education. DOI: 10.1002/he

This chapter describes application of a program review model that guides a college in allocation of resources within an institution wide management system, thus ensuring the core health of the institution.

The Efficiency and Effectiveness Program Review Model, or EEPRM (copyright © 2003, Thomas C. Henry) is a Bellwether Award-winning (2007) approach to program review. The primary institutional outcomes sought in application of the model are to:

- Increase student access to credit course work
- Ensure that students enrolling in courses perform at an acceptable level
- Increase student retention
- Ensure that investments in personnel and material are justifiable
- Ensure that the decision-making processes and use of the business management model are transferred to all areas of institutional management
- Ensure that the institution is delivering instruction in the most efficient and effective manner possible
- Examine all revenues expended in support of instructional delivery to determine resource allocations that will sustain demand programs, and build reserves to create and deliver new programs

The EEPRM measures produce information in a matrix:

- High completion and loss. In this scenario student academic achievement is high; however, program costs are a serious concern to the institution.
- High completion and profit. This is the best-case scenario. Ideally the college would like all programs to fall into this quadrant.

Comstock, J & Booker, K (2009). Self-Study Leveraging: The QPC Model for Comprehensive Academic Program Review. A Collection of Papers on Self-Study and Institutional Improvement, Volume 1: Accountability and Organizational Leadership, 70-72; Chicago: North Central Association Higher Learning Commission. Available: http://digitalcommons.butler.edu/provost_papers/5/

The QPC (Quality, Potential, Cost) model for comprehensive program review provides a transferable template for assessing academic programs and outlines a process that nests program review within the scheduled self-study process, which makes the idea of program review less threatening. The QPC procedure leverages the self-study process and takes program assessment to the next level by making it comprehensive and aimed at quality improvement. This approach makes the QPC Model much less threatening and divisive than initiatives launched to reallocate academic resources-which has become code language for cutting programs and faculty tines.

Table 1. Elements of the QPC Model Analysis

Quality	Potential	Cost
External validation	National and local demand	Total student credit hours produced per major
Faculty and student inputs	Internal impact	Discount rate
Student outputs	Essentiality to mission	Cost per student credit hour
Curricula and program factors	Other justification, future opportunities	Contribution margin (net tuition revenue minus direct costs per program)

Table 2. Example of QPC Matrix

Potential	Low Quality			Moderate Quality			High Quality		
	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
High Cost				Physics Philosophy				Finance	Nursing Accounting
Moderate Cost	Art BA Art Rx		Comm.	Directing Art Man. Music Perf.		Chemistry Political Science		Music Ed. Music Instrument	Management
Low Cost	Sociology	Org. Lead. Spanish Fitness and Sport		Psych. Applied Math English Lit.	PE AT Eng. Ed.				Human Services

Other references

Assessment and Evaluation for Real World Learning. *Full Proceedings of the Australian Technology Network Evaluation and Assessment Conference 2007*. ISBN: 1 74107 135 6

Hollowell, D., Middaugh, M. & Sibolski, E. (2006) *Integrating Higher Education Planning and Assessment: A Practical Guide*. Society for College and University Planning: Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Kornuta, H. & Neilson, L. (2007) "Shaping the Future through Program Reviews" Paper presented at the 2007 *Association of Institutional Research Annual Forum*, Kansas City, MO, June 2007.

St. Amant, K. and Nahrwold, C. (2007) Acknowledging Complexity: Rethinking Program Review and Assessment in Technical Communication. *Communication*. 54:4.