

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN  
STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of the General Counsel

**POLICY SUMMARY FORM**

**Policy Name:** Academic Program Review

**Policy Number:** 5.1

**Is this policy new, being reviewed/revised, or deleted?** Review/Revise

**Date of last revision, if applicable:** 7/29/2014

**Unit(s) Responsible for Policy Implementation:** Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Purpose of Policy (what does it do):** Describes process for systematic review of programs both for discipline-specific and SACS accreditation.

**Reason for the addition, revision, or deletion (check all that apply):**

- Scheduled Review       Change in law       Response to audit finding  
 Internal Review       Other, please explain:

*Please complete the appropriate section:*

**Specific rationale for new policy:**

**Specific rationale for each substantive revision:** Tried to polish wording, remove unnecessary information, punctuation, etc.

**Specific rationale for deletion of policy:**

*Additional Comments:*

Reviewers:

Academic Affairs Policy Committee  
Dean's Council  
Steve Bullard, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Damon Derrick, General Counsel

## Academic Program Review

**Original Implementation:** April 28, 2005

**Last Revision:** ~~July 29, 2014~~ July 25, 2017

Academic Program Review (APR) *is driven by the university's mission statement and strategic plan and* enhances the quality of all academic programs and ensures the ongoing support necessary for continuation, modification, and development of programs. All undergraduate and graduate degree programs fall within this policy. APR encourages self-study and planning within programs and aligns the strategic plans of the program, the college, and the university. APR provides information for curricular and budgetary planning decisions at each administrative level. In turn, the resources needed for growth, continuation, or modification of programs can be included in planning processes.

The normal cycle for APR is every seven years. *A timeline for program review may be found on the website for the provost and vice president for academic affairs.* All ~~academic~~ programs including certificates and minors, in addition to degree programs, in an academic unit should be reviewed at the same time, ~~making APR a unit as well as degree self-study.~~ If one program in an academic unit is governed by a *discipline-specific* accrediting agency, all programs in the academic unit will be reviewed concurrently and in the same cycle as the accredited review. If accreditation is on a cycle of less than 10 years, that cycle will be followed. If the cycle is 10 years or more, a program review will be required in the interim. Academic units with multiple accrediting agencies should follow the cycle of the accrediting agency most appropriate to the unit. *Notwithstanding accreditation requirements, at a minimum all master's and doctoral degree programs will be reviewed at least once every seven years.*

The APR template guides the development of the self-study report (see APR Handbook). The provost and vice president for academic affairs must approve in advance a deviation from the template. Accreditation reports will substitute for the program review report required by this policy. However, any information required by the APR appendices but not included in the accreditation review must be added.

The following definitions are relevant to the APR process:

- An **academic program** is a structured grouping of course work designed to meet educational objectives leading to a baccalaureate degree, graduate degree, certificate, or teaching credential.
- An **academic unit** (e.g., department, division, school) manages one or more academic programs.
- **Unit Outcomes** are the measureable benefits of the services provided by an academic unit.
- **Program Learning Outcomes** (PLOs) are the knowledge, skills, and abilities students are expected to demonstrate upon completion of an academic program/major.
- **Student Learning Outcomes** (SLOs) define the knowledge, skills and abilities students are expected to demonstrate upon completion of a particular course.

- **Core Objectives (COs)**, as prescribed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), are critical thinking skills, communication skills, empirical and quantitative skills, teamwork, personal responsibility and social responsibility.

## PROCESS

The APR process adheres to the standards of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the THECB. Academic units are required to evaluate their effectiveness in achieving unit outcomes and learning outcomes to accomplish college and university goals (i.e., mission statements and strategic plans). The APR consists of an Internal Program Review or self-study (including assessment of unit outcomes), an External Program Review, and a Program Improvement Plan. All master's and doctoral program reviews are submitted to THECB according to its established schedule. Master's and doctoral programs in the same discipline are reviewed simultaneously using the same self-study materials and reviewers.

~~The university's mission statement and strategic plan drive APR.~~ Academic units must be engaged in the ongoing assessment of their unit outcomes and program learning outcomes. Academic units with core curriculum courses must conduct an assessment of COs.

The provost and vice president for academic affairs establishes a schedule of programs to be reviewed along with deadlines for completing each task. The self-study is developed by a committee composed of faculty within the academic unit appointed by the academic unit head. The report must adhere to the APR template (see APR Handbook).

The self-study includes the following: (1) program overview and unit effectiveness (~~unit outcomes~~); (2) curriculum and student learning (PLOs and COs); (3) faculty characteristics and qualifications; and (4) summary conclusions. All required data must be completed even if an accrediting report is submitted in lieu of the APR report.

All programs are subject to external review. Reviewers must have subject-matter expertise, employment at an institution of higher education outside Texas and faculty status in a program nationally recognized for excellence in the discipline. ~~Additionally,~~ external reviewers cannot have a conflict of interest that could influence their judgment (e.g., SFA alumni, former students or employees of the university, *or* formal collaborators with faculty in the unit under review) or employment at institutions within Texas. Faculty members of the academic unit nominate three individuals from comparable institutions of higher education to serve as possible external reviewers. The dean of the college selects at least one person from the three nominated. Preference is given to nominees from colleges and universities accredited by SACSCOC. Doctoral programs must have at least two external reviewers who conduct an on-site visit (see APR Handbook to obtain guidelines for external reviewers). Upon completion of the external review, the faculty members of the academic unit consider the recommendations. A final report is prepared that includes the self-study (Internal Program Review), the External Program Review and the Program Improvement Plan that describes the actions taken or to be taken to improve the performance of the academic unit. All documentation is sent to the dean for comment. The dean forwards all materials to the provost and vice president for academic affairs for review and feedback.

| **Cross Reference:** 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 5.52; Schedule of Formal Academic Program *Reviews*

**Reviews Responsible for Implementation:** Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Contact for Revision:** Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Forms:** APR Handbook

**Board Committee Assignment:** Academic and Student Affairs