

USD Guidelines for Academic Program Review

Purpose

The University of San Diego's academic program review provides a systematic and continuous means of assuring academic excellence in student learning. It is designed to encourage accountability and dialogue among members within the department under review as a self-reflective, continuous process within the broader institutional and discipline-based contexts. The process is meant to assist programs in understanding their distinctive and collaborative roles within the University community and with relevant external constituents. It provides the foundation for assessing student learning and for making evidence-based plans and decisions to foster improvements at all levels of the institution. Program reviews are integral to planning, resource allocation, and other decision-making within the university.

Overview of the four-stage process:

1. Department self-study
2. Program review team report
3. Recommendations of the Academic Review Committee
4. Construction of a multi-year action plan and administrative memorandum of understanding based on recommendations and discussion with the provost, dean, and program administrator.

I. Stage 1: Self-Study

A. Key Characteristics (refer to template in **Appendix 1):**

1. Articulation of program mission/goals, and alignment between these and the university's and college's/school's mission and goals.
2. Articulation of program learning outcomes, evidence of effectiveness through outcomes assessment, and alignment with the university's undergraduate goals and outcomes.
3. Description and analysis of data or evidence, including information about the curriculum, the learning environment, students, and faculty.
4. Articulation of the program's promotion of scholarly work, creative productivity, curricular and instructional innovations, and linkages among scholarship, teaching, student learning, and service.
5. Identification of and comparison with benchmark/aspiration programs.
6. Description of service in support of the program's academic mission.
7. Identification of support for student development.
8. Investment in faculty and staff.
9. Evaluation of facilities and equipment.
10. Five-year plan for improvement.

B. Program Review Timeline

C. Self-Study Preparation:

1. Initiation of process
 - Program chair and dean meet to initiate process of program review.
 - Program chair and department faculty meet to appoint self-study coordinator(s).
2. Resources
 - Self-study coordinators and departmental representatives will be provided guidelines and a template with embedded key characteristics for assistance in formatting the report.
 - Self-study teams will receive training to assist them in the process of program review.
 - The department will receive a standard stipend for program review to be distributed to the self-study coordinator(s) as the department deems appropriate. Self-study teams will receive a set of program-based data tables from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning.

D. Conducting Self-Study Inquiry:

- The template(**in Appendix I**) assists departments by providing a series of questions in an organized format to ensure fully addressing the key characteristics identified in point I.A. above.
- Excluding appendices, the self-study report should not exceed 20 pages.
- Pending permission, programs will receive samples of other program review self-studies and can consult with program self-study teams that have completed the full cycle successfully.
- Programs will complete a final self-study report to be issued to program review team of reviewers external to the department, the dean, Academic Review Committee, and the provost.

II. Stage 2: External Program Review

A. Key Characteristics:

1. The external review provides honest and objective advice to the program, the dean and the provost, about the program's (a) strengths and areas of needed improvement (b) assessment activities, and (c) opportunities and plan for improvement.
2. The external review is completed by a Program Review Team (PRT), composed of two faculty members from external peer programs, and a USD faculty member from another USD program.
3. The external review is based on the program's self-study, a site visit, the dean's response to the self-study, and other materials requested by the PRT itself.

B. Choosing Reviewers:

1. The USD faculty member is appointed by the dean's office in consultation with the program faculty.
2. The external reviewers are determined by the dean's office in consultation with the associate provost and program administrator(s). The program administrator(s) sends the vitae of external reviewers to the dean's office. The external reviewers should have the terminal degree, years of experience, and level of teaching appropriate to review the program. It is preferred that at least one of the PRT members has program review experience, knowledge of student learning outcomes assessment, and be familiar with the WASC reaccrediting process.
3. External reviewers are ineligible if they graduated from USD, worked at USD in the last five years, were a prospective candidate at USD, are related to a USD employee, or have other conflicts of interest. External reviewers must disclose their relationships with USD employees. A member of the Academic Review Committee (ARC) cannot serve on the PRT.

C. Timeline:

1. Candidates for the PRT are reviewed approximately two-to-four months before the self-study is completed. Once selected, the external reviewers must sign the Letter of Agreement (refer to **Appendix II**) and fax or return it to the associate provost.
2. The dean's office will send the Self-Study to the PRT a month before the site visit. The dean's office will also send to the PRT in a timely manner:
 - a. The USD Academic Program Review Guidelines and Appendices.
 - b. Information on travel and lodging arrangements (**Appendix V**).
 - c. The itinerary, local contact information, and the contact information of the external review team member(s) (**Appendix III**).
 - d. The Letter of Agreement form (**Appendix II**).
 - e. The PRT Evaluation guidelines (**Appendix IV**).
 - f. Other relevant documentation.
3. The PRT report should be submitted to the Dean and program within 21 days of the site visit.

- D. Site Visit
 1. The typical site visit lasts 1-1/2 to 2 days and 1-2 nights.
 2. The external reviewers should arrive before the site visit and meet with the USD PRT team member. This meeting is an opportunity to get acquainted and deal with organizational issues.
 3. The PRT should meet with the dean, associate dean, program administrator, and self-study coordinator on the first visit day. These meetings provide opportunities to welcome the PRT, give an overview of the program, and answer questions that the PRT may have.
 4. Time should be allocated during the site visit for the PRT to meet by itself for discussion.
 5. At the end of the site visit, there is an exit meeting with the dean and the associate provost. The external reviewers should end the site visit in consultation with each other regarding the PRT report
- E. External Review Report
 1. The PRT Report should be based on/include the PRT Evaluation Guidelines (refer to **Appendix IV**).
 2. The PRT will determine its members' roles in writing the report.
 3. The PRT Report is sent to the dean's office, program chair, and the associate provost.
 4. The dean and program (including individual faculty) will respond to the PRT report that will be forwarded to the Academic Review Committee (see point III. below).
 5. The dean's office ensures that the self-study, the PRT report, and responses to the PRT report are sent to the associate provost as chair of the Academic Review Committee. .
- F. Reimbursement and Honoraria Procedures (refer to **Appendix V**).
 1. The external reviewers should mail their airline ticket receipts and receipts for other incidental expenses for travel reimbursement to the Associate Provost.
 2. Upon receipt of the PRT report, a (honorarium) check is mailed to each of the external reviewers.

III. Stage 3: Academic Review Committee Recommendations (from policy document):

- A. The dean's office will forward the dean's individual response, the self-study, the PRT report, and program administrator and/or faculty's responses (if provided) to the ARC. The dean may also distribute these materials to appropriate internal governing bodies, such as faculty planning committees.
- B. The ARC will review the self-study, the final PRT report, and any responses to the PRT report. The ARC will take into account current structures in the program under review, program-specific goals, and the educational mission of the academic unit to which the program is assigned.
- C. The ARC will prepare a report informed by the materials provided in which it comments on the program and makes recommendations by which to achieve program goals. ARC discussions center on identifying areas of agreement or disagreement as found in the self-study, the peer review team report, the dean's response, and the department's response. ARC recommendations then encourage either action in areas where there is agreement or further serious discussions in areas where there is disagreement.
- D. The ARC will make its recommendations to the Provost with copies to the dean(s) and program administrator(s). Deans may supplement ARC recommendations with their own recommendations to the Provost.

IV. Stage 4: Administrative Response and Plan (from policy document): The value of academic program review rests on its process, its outcomes, and its usefulness. Because the process and outcomes are developed for purposes of improving educational opportunities, curriculum quality, and program relevance, it is essential that the university make appropriate use of the results. In this section, we will provide a foundation for evidence-based plans and decisions to promote effective change and improvements at all levels of the institution.

- A. Following the ARC's report, the provost, dean(s), and program administrator(s) will meet to discuss the self-study, PRT report, dean's response and the ARC recommendations.
- B. The program will review the recommendations from the PRT report, the dean's response, and the ARC review. Together with the dean's office, the program administrator and faculty will redraft a more complete 5-year plan based on those sets of recommendations. Departmental redraft of 5-year plan should include:
 - a. Providing a plan for improvement over the next five years (student learning, curricular development, facilities, faculty recruitment and development, diversity goals, and so forth) based on compilation of feedback generated by the department faculty in the self-study, the external reviewers, the dean, and the ARC.
 - b. Identifying and outlining suggested strategies for responding to each recommendation.
 - c. Prioritizing the recommendations.
 - d. Identifying and listing needed resources to respond to each recommendation, clearly differentiating between those that can be satisfied with existing resources and those needing new resources.
 - e. Outlining a time-line for completion and implementation of each item
- C. Documenting all actions and providing written reports of progress as scheduled; departments will report on program review process as part of their annual assessment reports to the dean's office. The dean and provost will issue a memorandum of understanding, acknowledging program's action plan with commitments from the dean and provost to provide identified resources to the department during the stipulated timeline. The final goal of academic program review is an action plan that not only records program accomplishments but also acts as a guide for continuous department/program revision and improvement.

APPENDIX I: SELF STUDY REPORT TEMPLATE

- I. Introduction and Context:** This section describes central features of the program. Information in this section typically include answers to the following:
- A. Describe the program's mission, goals, and outcomes. Describe briefly how the program contributes to the discipline.
 - B. How are these related to the mission and goals of the school/college and institution?
 - C. In what school or college does the program reside?
 - D. What degrees does it grant and what concentrations are available?
 - E. In what year did the program start?
 - F. What major changes have taken place since the start of the program?
 - G. Identify any special issues or concerns the program will address in this self-study, perhaps as a response to a previous self-study or recognition of unique needs or concerns.
 - H. Identify and briefly describe how the program responds to the needs of the communities of interest (these might include students of the school/college in general, students enrolled in the program, program non-university affiliates and sponsors, interested groups in San Diego County, and members of the discipline).
- II. Evidence of Excellence and Program Accountability:** This section provides profiles of the central elements (curriculum, learning environment, students, and faculty), and evidence of student learning effectiveness. This section identifies what the program provides or contributes to the intellectual community. The program profile is based on program planning, curricular assessment using direct and indirect evidence, and data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning.
- A. **Curriculum and Learning Environment:** How current is the program curriculum? Does it offer sufficient breadth and depth of learning for this particular degree? How well does it align with learning outcomes? Are the courses sequenced and reliably available in sequence? Have external stakeholders, such as practitioners in the field, or compared with similar other programs reviewed the program? Identify benchmark and aspirational programs for comparison and contrast to this program in form and quality. Data for this category might include curricular maps or flow charts to show how curriculum addresses outcomes, a comparison of the program's curriculum with curricula at selected other institutions and with disciplinary/ professional standards, measures of teaching quality and effectiveness (e.g., peer observations and evaluations, faculty self-evaluations, students' course evaluations, faculty scholarship on teaching and learning, and formative discussions of pedagogy among faculty and through faculty development), a description of other learning experiences that are relevant to the program goals (e.g., internships, research experiences, study abroad or other international experiences, community-service learning, etc.) as well as how many students participate in those experiences.
 - B. **Student Learning and Effectiveness:** Are the students achieving the desired learning outcomes for the program? Are they achieving those outcomes at the expected levels of learning, and how is the expected level determined? Are they being retained and graduating in a timely fashion? Are they prepared for advanced study of the world of work? Data for this section might include annual results of direct and indirect assessments of student learning in the program (qualitative and/or quantitative), including the degree to which students achieve the program's desired standards, ongoing efforts by the department to "close the loop" in responding to assessment results, student retention and graduation rates (disaggregated by demographics), placement of grads in graduate or professional schools, job placements, graduating senior surveys, employer

critiques of student performance or employer satisfaction surveys, and alumni achievements.

- C. **Students:** What is the profile of our students and how does it relate to or enhance the mission and goals of the program? Data might include students' gender, ethnicity, average GPAs, standardized test scores (general and discipline-specific), membership in honors' societies, retention and graduation rates, post-graduation placement of students. For graduate programs, descriptions could include the various means used to recruit students.
- D. **Faculty:** What are the qualifications and achievements of the faculty in the program in relation to program mission and goals? How do faculty members' background, expertise, and professional work contribute to the academic excellence of the program? Data might include the proportion of faculty with terminal degrees, institutions from which faculty earned terminal degrees, list of faculty specialties within discipline (and how these align with the program curriculum), distribution of faculty across ranks (and years at institution), diversity of faculty, awards and recognition. During the initial review cycle, data might include a comprehensive record of scholarship and creative activity, external funding, record of professional practice, service to the department, university, and discipline. In subsequent reviews, the emphasis should highlight faculty accomplishments in the previous five-six years.

III. **Program Sustainability and Support:** This section identifies student demand for the program and the degree to which resources are allocated appropriately and are sufficient in amount to maintain program quality. In the "dialogue," this section identifies what the program needs to be sustained.

- A. **Demand for the Program:** What are the trends in numbers of student major declarations reflected over a 3 to 5 year period? What is happening within the profession, local community, or society generally that identifies an anticipated need for this program in the future? With whom does the program compete for students? What are the unique elements (from benchmarking) that make the program attractive to future students? Data in this section might emphasize how the unique elements identified in I. and II. Contribute to the program's effectiveness.
- B. **Allocation of Resources:**
 1. **Faculty:** Are there sufficient numbers of faculty to maintain program quality? Do program faculty have the support they need to do their work? Data in this section might include number of full-time faculty (ratio of FT to PT faculty), student-faculty ratio, faculty workload, faculty review and evaluation processes, mentoring processes/programs, professional development opportunities/resources (including travel funds), release time for course development, research, etc.
 2. **Student support:** Are there sufficient mechanisms in place to assist students with achieving their academic goals? Data in this section might include listing academic programs and resources, tutoring and supplemental instruction, basic skills remediation, support for connecting general learning requirements to discipline requirements, orientation and transition programs, financial support, support for engagement across the community, support for non-cognitive variables of success (including emotional, psychological, and physical interventions if necessary).
 3. **Information and technology services:** What IT resources are currently used by the program? Are there adequate IT resources for adequately sustaining the program? Data in this section might include library print and electronic holdings in the teaching and research areas of the program, information literacy outcomes for graduates, technology resources available to support pedagogy and research in the program, technology resources available to support students' program needs.

4. **Facilities:** What facilities and unique space or equipment (e.g., labs) are used by the program? Are the facilities adequate for sustaining the quality of the program? Data in this section might include classroom space, instructional laboratories, research laboratories, office space, student study spaces, access to classrooms suited for IT purposes, and access to classrooms designed for alternative learning styles/universal design.
 5. **Financial resources:** What do the operational budget trends (revenues and expenditures) show over a 3 to 5 year period? Evidence in this category might include increasing or decreasing revenues in areas directly related to sustainability issues (e.g., no increases or replacements in tenure lines with rising numbers of students, or little funding available for necessary equipment to keep students current in the practice of their fields).
- IV. **Strengths and Opportunities for Improvement:** This section of the report is a general analysis or interpretation of the evidence for program excellence and effectiveness, and support for sustainability. Its purpose is to provide an overview of the program's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. Here are a few general examples of questions that might be addressed in this section: Are the curriculum, practices, processes, and resources properly aligned with the goals of the program? Are the department/ program goals aligned with the goals of the constituents that the program serves? Are program goals being achieved? Are student learning outcomes being achieved at the expected level?
- V. **Program Plan for Improvement:** In this section, we return to one of the listed purposes of program review—providing a foundation for evidence-based plans and decisions to promote effective change and improvements at all levels of the institution. This section also provides the essential transition to the next review cycle. Answers to questions would include: What is the program's plan for improvement over the next five years (student learning, curricular development, facilities, faculty recruitment and development, diversity goals, etc.)? If the program has been reviewed under the current guidelines within the last 5 years, it should indicate how the current program plan is integrated with the department's existing action plan and review recommendations. What are the core objectives and priorities and what is the projected action to be taken for each item? What opportunities exist to extend and build on present strengths and what are the major obstacles that impede the department/program's progress? What improvements are possible through reallocating existing resources and what improvements will require additional resources? How will the department/program position itself given the changes likely to take place within the discipline over the next five to ten years? Departments should note that they will produce a redraft of the five-year plan as part of the process in Stage 4.

**APPENDIX II: LETTER OF AGREEMENT
PERTAINING TO EXTERNAL REVIEW PARTICIPATION**

Thank you for serving on the Program Review Team (PRT) for the University of San Diego. For your participation you receive an honorarium (negotiated by the dean) and reimbursement for travel to and from USD.

As a member of the PRT, your responsibilities would include reviewing the self-study and any additional relevant materials delivered to you a month prior to your site visit. You will also be invited to participate in a PRT briefing (dinner or breakfast) at the onset of the visit. On the site visit, you will meet with faculty, students, staff, and senior administrators. From the conclusion of the site visit, you have 21 days to produce your report.

Every program review requires the utmost care in preserving confidentiality. The Peer Review Team will secure all documents and refrain from discussing issues with anyone other than the Peer Review Team or USD faculty and staff. We would also expect that any personal and/or professional ties you may have with the department faculty would not affect your ability to serve with complete candor.

Occasionally, the PRT may hear allegations of misconduct (e.g., harassment, falsification) during the site visit. It is not the PRT's responsibility to handle these allegations. They should be reported to the USD PRT member, who will discuss them with the appropriate USD official.

If you agree with these terms, please sign and date, then fax back to the Office of the Executive Vice-President and Provost, c/o Andrew Allen, Associate Provost at (619) 260-2210.

Print Name/Signature

Date

Associate Provost

Date

APPENDIX III:

Sample Visit Schedule and Contact Information

The site visit begins with a team briefing dinner or breakfast for the PRT the night before or morning of the two-day visit. This meeting is an opportunity to get acquainted and review the itinerary. The PRT will meet with the dean, the dean's office coordinator (associate dean, etc.), and program administration on the first day of the visit. Meetings with various faculty groups are scheduled throughout the visit. Time is allotted for the PRT to meet by itself, particularly during the first evening and for several periods on the second day.

At the end of the site visit, the PRT should have an exit meeting with the dean, program administration and program faculty. Arrangements need to be made for breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the PRT for the duration of the visit. Below is a typical schedule:

Dinner
Day 1:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with the dean, dean's office coordinator, the program administrator, and various faculty groups, students, the entire department together (lunch includes one of these)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review departmental materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dinner for external reviewers only
Day 2:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with various faculty groups, students (lunch includes one of these)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observational summaries and report preparation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit meetings with department chair and dean; meeting with associate provost
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final PRT meeting

The PRT should also be given important contact numbers:

Peer Review Team USD member:

Peer Review Team external member:

Peer Review Team external member:

Program Chair or program review coordinator:

Dean: Associate Provost: Andy Allen phone: (619) 260-4553 email: andrewt@sandiego.edu

Hotel (if required): Hacienda Hotel: (619) 298-4707

APPENDIX IV: PRT EVALUATION REPORT GUIDELINES

The external review provides honest and objective advice to the program, the dean and the provost, about the program's mission and relation to University and/or community with attention to (a) assessment of student learning and the curricular environment, (b) strengths and areas of needed improvement, and (c) opportunities and plan for improvement. As each of these areas is addressed in the report, the PRT is encouraged to note any convergence or discrepancies between the self-study and the site visit observations. It would also be important to review any issues or concerns raised by the dean or program administrator in their discussions with the PRT.

When considering assessment of student learning and the curricular environment you might consider using the following illustrative questions as a guide: Do you recommend any changes in the program's student learning outcomes? In what ways could the program improve its assessment processes? In what ways could the program improve its discussions around observed student learning? Do you recommend any changes to improve student experiences and learning environment? How are assessment results used in the program's planning processes?

When considering a program's strengths and areas of needed improvement, you might use the following questions as a guide: How well do the faculty areas of expertise support the program's curriculum? In what ways does the system for evaluating teaching practices facilitate continuous improvement? In what ways are the faculty supported and encouraged to pursue professional development to stay current in their disciplines? Are resources allocated to the program adequate? This might include financial resources like faculty lines or budgets and physical resources such as facilities, equipment and technology. Do you recommend any changes to strengthen the program's current administration, support, and resources (including possible reallocations of resources from current program operations to fund new budgetary needs)?

When considering opportunities and plan for improvement you might consider using the following illustrative questions as a guide: What is your evaluation of the program's plan for improvement? How realistic are these plans? What improvements are possible with existing resources (through reallocation)? What improvements can only be addressed through additional resources? What suggestions do you have to improve program quality?

APPENDIX V: EXPENSES

Department Expenses

Expenses such as copying, drinks and snacks, should be determined in consultation with the appropriate Dean.

Peer Review Team Expenses

Check requests, petty cash forms or expense reports should be sent to the Associate Provost for approval. Forms are available online from the Accounting Office's web site found at:

<http://www.sandiego.edu/administration/businessadmin/procurement/forms.php>

Please follow all Account Payable policies (such as including original invoices and taping small receipts to sheets of paper).

Travel

The external reviewer should make his or her own plane reservations and be reimbursed (please remind them to submit original passenger receipt, baggage claim tickets or boarding passes, not just the e-ticket print out from the web site). The University will reimburse round-trip, coach airfare.

Lodging

The Hospitality Suite on campus is free of charge. It must be the first lodging choice for an external reviewer before departments/areas seek other lodging accommodations. Complete the Hospitality Suite Reservation form (found at:

<http://www.sandiego.edu/administration/academicaffairs/policies/>

and e-mail to provost@sandiego.edu.

If there are two external reviewers who need lodging, or the Hospitality Suite is booked, the reviewers may make reservations at the Hacienda Hotel (619-298-4707) in Old Town (Corporate Acct. L244). Please identify the sponsoring USD department when calling to make reservations. The Hacienda offers a free breakfast and a dinner voucher Monday-Friday. Or reviewers may use the Holiday Inn Express in Old Town by calling (619-299-7400, extension 402, and asking for USD Direct Bill reservations. An e-mail should be sent to the associate provost at gough@sandiego.edu with reviewers' names and reservation dates.

Food and Other Expenses

The Provost's Office will provide program faculty coordinators with an Advantage card for meals on campus, and will reimburse the external reviewers for meal and local travel expenses associated with the visit. Meal expenses should be held within the \$64/day per diem rate for San Diego (or the current per diem rate is as published on the US General Services' web site).