Academic Program Review
at Nova Southeastern University
Revised: October 2022

The Purpose of Program Review

Academic Program Review consists of on-going, high quality peer reviews of all the NSU's academic colleges and programs on an approximately five-year cycle. Such reviews provide a sharpened focus on academic program areas in which excellence can be achieved in order to enhance national stature and assure the most efficient use of available resources. Thus, academic program review is more of an opportunity for self-examination and self-challenge, rather than an unrestrained opportunity to request additional resources.

The primary mission of Academic Review is to:

1. Assess a program's quality and reputation among peers in the discipline, including the extent to which the program is regarded as a leader in the field. National rankings, metrics of excellence in undergraduate and graduate education, and other externally validated benchmarks of academic program success will be considered.

2. Establish clear priorities, identify strategies for achieving the University's goal of academic excellence or eminence in each program, department, or school, and provide documentation of achievement of prioritized goals.

3. Assure that each academic program has a plan for achieving higher quality and enhancing its national stature in both the short (2-3 years) and the long (7 years beyond) term.

4. Identify improvements that are possible by refocusing existing program resources.

5. Identify improvements that are possible only with additional resources.

6. Stimulate the program or academic college to seek creative educational strategies and solutions.

7. Stimulate the creative use of educational technologies to enhance education and provide educational access to underserved populations.

8. Ensure that newly established programs are effectively managed and are consistent with the mission, goals, and objectives of the University. To this end, reports and recommendations provided by the New Program Review and Facilitation Committee will be used in the Academic Review process to track academic development.

Every program progresses through a six-step evaluation in order to develop a comprehensive plan for improvement over the next five years. The process is intended to assist an academic college and program in understanding its current status so that it can establish clear priorities for achieving excellence or becoming eminent in its field. The six-step evaluation process will include:

1. Academic Information Collection & The Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes at the Level of the Major (ASLO);

2. An Internal Review Committee (IRC) Evaluation and Report;
3. An External Consultant's (EC) Evaluation and Report;
4. A Summary of Evaluations and Recommendations from the Academic Review Committee (ARC);
5. Executive Review meeting with the President, Provost, Associate Provost, and Dean.
6. An action plan developed by the cognizant college and accepted by NSU's president and provost.

The action plans, once accepted, will be incorporated into each academic college's long and short term planning process. While the primary emphasis is on program improvement, the review process will also lead to identification of those academic programs that are not central to the strategic direction of the university and for which sufficient improvement appears to be unlikely. Therefore, the Preeminent AIM Academic Program Review provides each academic college with the unique opportunity to reflect on its achievements and areas of need with respect to preeminence, inspiring each respective program's faculty, and administration to work together for the improvement of the program and NSU.

Program reviews have the following characteristics:

1. Reviews incorporate expert assessments provided by reviewers from other institutions of high quality, as well as those participating in the University program.

2. Reviews are evaluative and prescriptive, not just descriptive. Plans for improvement require academic judgments about the quality of the program, students, curriculum, resources, and future directions.

3. Reviews are forward-looking. While assessment of a program's current status is important, priorities for continual future improvement are of greatest concern.

4. Reviews provide a concise, honest appraisal of an academic college's strengths and weaknesses.

5. Academic program reviews are independent of any other type of review (although they may be scheduled to accommodate and use data collected for other professional and specialized accreditation reviews). The purpose of the academic program review is to provide a plan to achieve excellence, not merely to satisfy accreditation requirements.

6. Reviews will result in an action plan with an overarching strategic agenda, which will enable the program to increase its stature or achieve eminence.

7. Action plans emphasize improvements that are possible through creative reallocation of the program's existing resources.

8. Annual updates will monitor improvements in academic quality resulting from the implementation of program action plans.

9. Reviews will emphasize faculty/scholarly accomplishments as well as the achievement of student learning objectives.

9. Assess a program's quality and reputation among peers in the discipline, including the extent to which the program is regarded as a leader in the field. National rankings, metrics of excellence in undergraduate and graduate education, and other externally validated benchmarks of academic program success will be considered.

10. Establish clear priorities, identify strategies for achieving the University's goal of academic excellence or eminence in each program, department, or school, and provide documentation of achievement of prioritized goals.

11. Assure that each academic program has a plan for achieving higher quality and enhancing its national stature in both the short (2-3 years) and the long (7 years beyond) term.

12. Identify improvements that are possible by refocusing existing program resources.

13. Identify improvements that are possible only with additional resources.

14. Stimulate the program or academic unit to seek creative educational strategies and solutions.

15. Stimulate the creative use of educational technologies to enhance education and provide educational access to underserved populations.

16. Ensure that newly established programs are effectively managed and are consistent with the mission, goals, and objectives of the University. To this end, reports and recommendations provided by the New Program Review and Facilitation Committee will be used in the Academic Review process to track academic development.

Self-Studies and Data Collection for Program Review

Though not a self study, program review begins with the academic program undertaking a comprehensive data collection that serves as the basis for self-assessment and for identifying future directions and opportunities. The data collection, in most instances, will utilize data previously collected for institutional effectiveness, for regional accreditation, and for professional accreditation, including academic data collected in the Academic and Scholastic Program Information for Review and Evaluation database (ASPIRE). The review will include the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes at the Level of the Major collected centrally through the Office of Academic Quality, Assessment, and Accreditation (AQAA), as well as information regarding comparable programs identified by the Dean of the program under review. Using all of this information, as well as other descriptive information about the program, an Internal Review Committee generates a report for each respective program under review. This report will be evaluative and prescriptive in nature and will provide specific recommendations for program improvement.

The Internal Review Committee Report covers several areas. First, the Report identifies preeminent programs and demonstrates what qualities make those programs preeminent. Next,

the Report summarizes the information that will be presented and positions the program in relation to the University's mission statement and overall goals. The most substantive part of the report focuses on specific and in-depth analyses of the program.

The Assessment of Quality section of the IRC report covers five general areas: Faculty and Faculty Development, Students and Student Enhancement, Curriculum Development, Student Services, and the Program's Fit with the University's mission. Under each of these general headings, several areas are analyzed. For example, the Faculty Development section analyzes whether the faculty is sufficient in number, quality, and in the support systems provided them by the Academic Program. Student data includes everything from enrollment and quality to the amount of faculty-student research done in the Program. Each section provides detailed quantitative and qualitative evidence about the respective areas under scrutiny. The report closes with specific recommendations for improvement in each area.

Data for Academic Review will generally utilize data that has been collected for other University and accreditation activities. These include the descriptive data collected centrally, including but not limited to, Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes at the Level of the Major data, ASPIRE Reports generated from our Office of Academic Quality, Assessment, and Accreditation.

Internal Review Committees (IRCs)

Each Internal Review Committee is charged with conducting a comprehensive evaluation of a specific academic program and preparing a report for transmission to the ARC. Internal Review Committees decide how best to use the information that they will need to advise the President and the ARC.

The IRC Report not only analyzes the state of the program as it stands, but also the future of the program, including the likelihood that the program will achieve preeminence and how resources can best be allocated for that realization. The IRC makes specific recommendations about faculty, students, curriculum, facilities, and resource allocation, all of which are utilized by the ARC in determining final recommendations to the President.

Deans and Department Chairs will nominate six program faculty (or faculty from related program) who may serve as IRC members. Three members of the IRC will be selected from the nominees offered by the College Dean. Two members of the IRC (including the Chair) will be from a University academic discipline external to the college being reviewed. Each IRC will consist of five members, all of whom maintain NSU faculty status. IRC Chairpersons are members of the ARC and are not members of the program under review or of the college in which the program under review is situated.

External Consultant

External Consultants will be experts in the field to be reviewed and accepted as leaders in their area of expertise. For each program to be reviewed, a designated External Consultant (EC) will provide to the President and the ARC a written evaluation of the program and the IRC report.

The Dean or department chair will submit a list of six potential External Consultants

with their qualifications to ARC. These nominees will be selected from those programs that are similar to the program being reviewed and, in the Dean's judgment, reflect excellence in the field. The nominated individuals will be regarded as outstanding representatives and have provided leadership within their field. These individuals also will be sufficiently independent from the program under review and from NSU so as to provide a separate and candid assessment of the program. The President or his designees will select one External Consultant from those nominated. After the visit, the External Consultant will provide a written report/critique to the Provost, based on his/her meetings with students, key program administrators, the IRC members, and the President. In the event that an External Consultant cannot be selected from the college's original list of potential External Consultants, the Director of Academic Program Review will solicit additional nominees from the unit to be reviewed.

Subsequent to the conclusion of an External Consultant's visit, the consultant will provide a written assessment to ARC for use in completing its review and preparing its report. This report will comment on the validity and accuracy of the IRC report as well as contain the consultant's own observation and assessment of the program.

The Academic Review Committee (ARC)

The Academic Review Committee (ARC) is a permanent, standing university committee comprised of University faculty members appointed by and reporting to the President. Recommendations for membership will be solicited from a variety of sources, including academic deans, faculty, and University administrators and officially appointed by the President and Provost.

ARC's oversight of the process of academic program review includes:

- Recommending to the President appointments to each Internal Review Committee (IRC), and for each External Consultant.

- Advising the Internal Review Committees and the External Consultants (EC) in the development of their reviews and on issues pertinent to the conduct of their reviews.

- Developing Academic Review Summaries that succinctly summarize the IRC's and EC's recommendations and evaluates the program's strengths and areas of needed improvement in relationship to the goal of preeminence.

Calendar for Program Review

Each new program will go through an initial review after 1-2 after the new program officially starts. The purpose is to review the program proposal that was approved by the New Program Approval Committee and determine whether the proposal was implemented as planned. After 5-7 years of operation, the program will then begin the formal Academic Program Review process.