# University of San Francisco
# Academic Program Review Guidelines

April 2024

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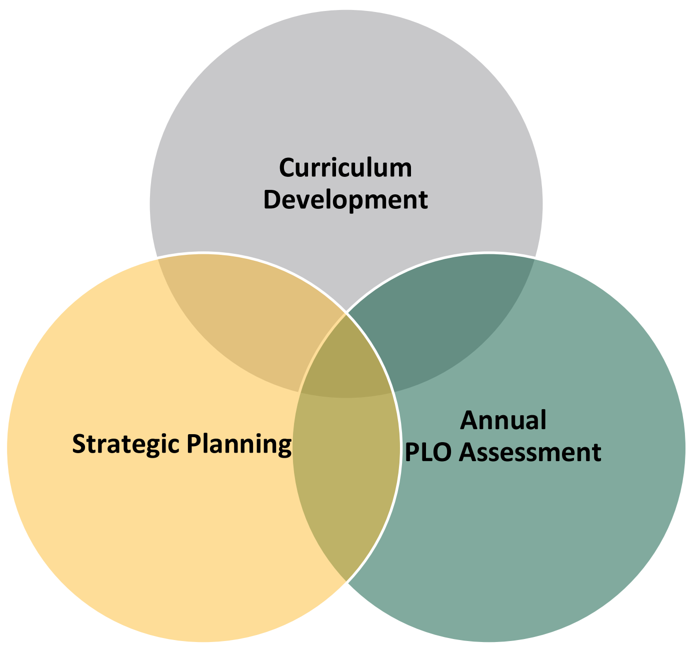
## OVERVIEW

The Academic Program Review (APR) is a process of regular, systematic review and evaluation of academic programs based on evidence and it is an integral part of the University of San Francisco's (USF's) efforts to ensure academic excellence and program effectiveness consistent with the university's mission and values. While academic program review is a requirement of accreditation by WASC Senior Colleges and Universities (WSCUC), the APR simultaneously supports the university's strategic objective of "develop[ing] a culture of responsive and evidence-based assessment that is inclusive and equitable, ensures programs of the highest quality, and improves relevant learning for all students."

The APR is a reflective process that provides programs the opportunity to identify program strengths and weaknesses, document continued improvement, and develop plans for future program improvement to enhance the quality of academic degree programs and student learning.

The APR process intersects the curriculum development/updating process, the annual program learning outcome (PLO) assessment, and strategic planning by 1) using information produced by these processes and 2) providing valuable information to inform these processes in the future.



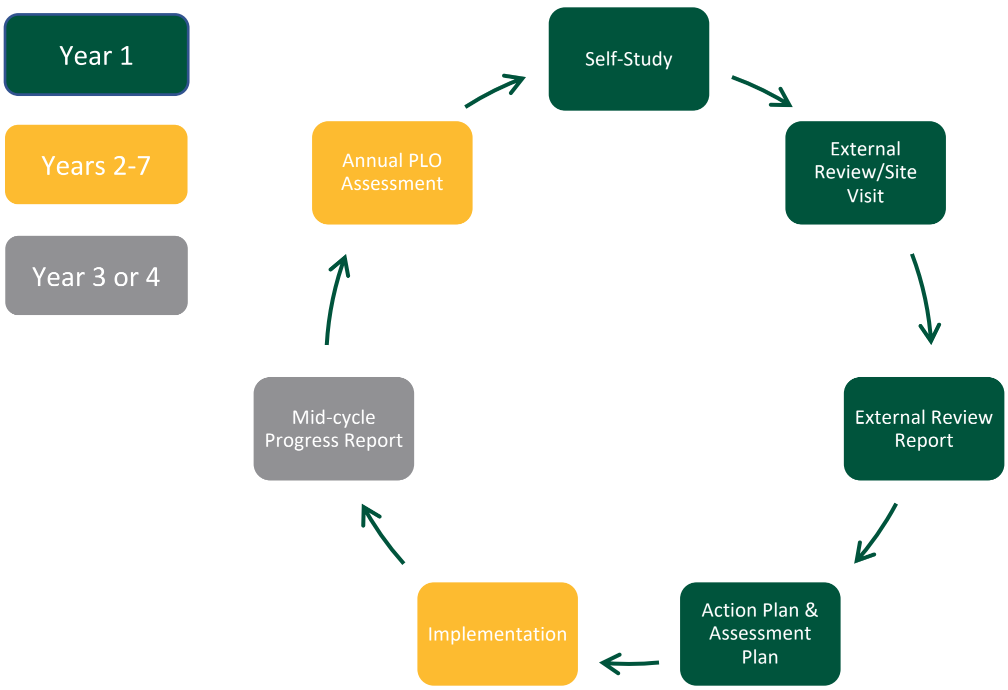

All academic programs that award at least one degree and are not professionally accredited, must undergo program review every seven years, at a minimum. In the intervening years programs must engage in annual assessment of PLOs and submit mid-cycle progress reports on the action plan created as a result of their most recent program review.

The schools and college have the responsibility to determine how to conduct their program reviews. However, the program review must include all components found in this guide.

## ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW & ANNUAL ASSESSMENT COMPONENTS

The APR has six components: Self-Study, External Review/Site Visit, External Review Report, Action Plan, Implementation, and Mid-cycle Progress Reports (see 7-year cycle image below). In the first year of the APR cycle, in addition to an Action Plan which addresses the recommendations from the External Review Report, an updated Assessment Plan is created, which helps to inform the annual PLO assessment and directly connects the APR process to assessment.

7-Year Cycle




## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The information below is not an exhaustive list of roles and responsibilities. Rather, it is intended as an overview of responsibilities. The APR Preparation Checklist can additionally be used by the Program Chair and faculty members to assign responsibility to each task listed on the checklist.

### FACULTY & STAFF

The Program Chair, faculty members, and program staff plan and participate in the program review process in consultation with the Dean. Representatives from other departments may be included in the process depending on the needs of the program.

The Program Chair or their designee is, at a minimum, responsible for:

- Organizing the faculty members to review documents, write the self-study, and vet potential external reviewers
- Ensuring the completion of all components of the APR
- Collaborating with Dean's Office to assemble the external review team
- Planning the site visit and executing communications to internal stakeholders
- Providing the Dean with regular updates and submitting the self-study to the Dean
- Ensuring implementation of the action plan resulting from the APR

- Conducting regular action plan progress reports and submitting these to the Dean and the Office of Assessment & Accreditation Support (OAAS)

### DEAN'S OFFICE

The Dean's Office is, at a minimum, responsible for:

- Scheduling program reviews in the school or college and initiating program reviews with the program faculty members and staff
- Collaborating with Program Chair to assemble external review team
- Approving the external reviewers submitted by the program
- Acting as the liaison with the external review team, including organizing logistics of the visit and the program review schedule
- Meeting with the Program Chair to review and provide feedback on the draft self-study
- Summarizing the external review team's report
- Working with the Program Chair to create an action plan
- Reviewing the APR with the Provost's Office
- Sending the Action plan and summary of the external review team's report to the Provost's Office
- Maintaining a repository of academic program review files

### CENTER FOR INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING & EFFECTIVENESS (CIPE)

CIPE is responsible for providing the Program Chair with the APR data packet.

### OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT & ACCREDITATION SUPPORT (OAAS)

OAAS is responsible for:

- Ensuring program review schedules are posted on the OAAS website
- Providing training and guidance on how to conduct program reviews, as needed
- Creating and maintaining program review guidelines and resources on the OAAS website
- Ensuring self-studies and executive summaries of external review reports are posted on the OAAS website
- Tracking and publishing action plan progress on the OAAS website
- Following up with the Program Chair regarding action plan progress reports

## PREPARING FOR THE PROGRAM REVIEW

The APR process should begin at least 12 months prior to the external review team visit. Suggested timelines are available on the OAAS website as well as a preparation checklist which details initial steps that should be taken to begin the APR and provides a detailed overview of information needed in order to complete the self-study.

Initial planning requires the following tasks:

- Review the APR Preparation Checklist
- Meet with the assessment lead in the Dean's Office to discuss program review expectations, develop a self-study plan and schedule, and determine what resources and data are needed to complete the self-study on schedule. OAAS will attend if requested
- Identify APR lead, key faculty members, and staff representation
- Request APR Data Packet from CIPE. This can be done by submitting a data assist request
- Request APR Common Information Packet from OAAS
- Submit a list of potential external reviewers to Dean's Office. See External Review section of this guide for external reviewer requirements

- Convene Program Chair, key faculty members, and staff to discuss and plan the self-study
- Gather all information listed on the Self-Study section of the APR Preparation Checklist

## SELF-STUDY

**TIP TO CONSIDER**
Once those who will be working on the APR are identified, consider holding a retreat to discuss the program's strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement, as well as to create plan for completing the self-study.

A self-study is a comprehensive internal analysis of the program based on data and evidence, and results in a report addressing an academic program's strengths, challenges, and limitations. Self-studies should be an examination of student learning and educational effectiveness in the years since the previous APR.

The process allows a program to tell its own story to the external review team and administration, helps the program reflect on what they've learned about student learning, and provides the program with an understanding of the program's accomplishments and areas for improvement.

The self-study and the subsequent report are the collective responsibility of all full-time faculty members in the program being reviewed. While the schools and the college have the responsibility to determine how to conduct their self-study, all self-studies must contain, at a minimum, all six sections and each subsequent sub-sections referred to in this guide. Self-studies should be detailed, but programs are encouraged to keep the report no more than 25 pages in length. It is, therefore, highly recommended that programs utilize the self-study template available on the OAAS website.

While each school may approach this differently, the general process for completing the self-study is as follows:

- STEP 1 • Review the self-study section of the APR Preparation Checklist
- STEP 2 • Gather all items listed in the self-study section of the APR Preparation Checklist
- STEP 3 • Review documents/data gathered
- STEP 4 • Write the self-study
- STEP 5 • Send draft of self-study to Dean's Office
- STEP 6 • Dean's Office provides feedback
- STEP 7 • Make any necessary changes and finalize document
- STEP 8 • Send final self-study to Dean's Office

The self-study itself must include the following six sections and all subsequent subsections:

**Introduction & Mission**

- Program Description
- Mission Alignment
- Program History
- Student Profile
- Community Interaction

**Evidence of Educational Quality**

- Curriculum & Pedagogy
- Assessment of Student Learning
- Core Graduation Competencies (Undergraduate programs only)
- Program Dimensions (Graduate programs only)
- Student & Alumni Success
- Student Support
- Co-Curricular Experiences
- Faculty Activity & Expertise
- Staff
- Technology, Information Resources, & Facilities

**Diversity**

**Program Demand & Sustainability**

- Program Demand
- Program Sustainability

**Reflections, Vision, & Plans for Improvement**

**Data & Appendices**

The below section of this guide provides a summary of what is expected in each section. To find more details, including prompts, see the self-study template.

## INTRODUCTION & MISSION

The purpose of this section is to provide the external reviewers with the context for the review. It includes at a minimum:

**Program Description:** A description of the program that aligns with the program description in the catalog, the degree(s) and concentrations offered, delivery modes, admission requirements, transfer policies, and the department/school/college in which the program resides. If the program takes place at one of USF's additional locations and/or any locations other than a USF campus, a description of where it takes place and how this impacts the program.

**Mission Alignment**: A description of the program's mission and purpose, the program's goals, and how these align with the university's mission.

**Program History**: A brief history of the program, including: the program start date, a description of significant and/or milestone events and influences that have affected the program over time, and an overview of the past program reviews, including the strengths, challenges and opportunities of the program identified through past program reviews. The program should also list all action items from the last program review and describe the progress made. If the program was unable to complete the action items from the previous APR, include a reflection on why this occurred.

**Student Profile:** A description of the students enrolled in the program and recruitment efforts taken by faculty members and staff. This section includes programmatic enrollment data for the program and student data such as student gender identity, race/ethnicity, age, type of previous institutions, first-generation status, transfer student enrollments, international student demographics, in-state vs. out-of-state enrollments, and employment status upon enrollment. Data can be obtained from CIPE through a data assist request.

**Community Interaction**: A description of the ways in which the program interacts with communities beyond USF.

## EVIDENCE OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

> TIP TO CONSIDER
> Be objective! Self-studies are an opportunity to celebrate the program as well as to reflect on a program's areas of improvement.

The purpose of this section is to review the curriculum and examine how well students are achieving program learning outcomes. It includes at a minimum:

**Curriculum & Pedagogy**: A discussion of the program's curriculum, pedagogy, and program learning outcomes (PLOs). This information can be found in the academic catalog.

**Assessment of Student Learning:** A discussion of how well students are achieving program learning outcomes since the last program review, the ongoing efforts to "close the loop," how the curriculum has been revised or other changes have been made as a result of assessment, how students experience the program holistically, and how assessment has impacted student learning.

**Core Graduation Competencies** (for undergraduate programs only): A discussion of how the program has integrated the core graduation competencies (written communication, oral communication, information literacy, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning) into the program and how students are achieving the core competencies.

**Graduate Program Dimensions** (for graduate programs only): A discussion of how the program PLOs align with the dimensions of academic rigor, USF's Jesuit mission and values, and professional relevance.

**Student & Alumni Success**: A discussion of what student success looks like for students in the program, any trends in student success data, post-graduate career outcomes, and alumni initiatives.

**Student Support**: A discussion of how the program advises and mentors its students and provides students with academic and non-academic support; identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

**Co-Curricular Experiences**: A discussion of the co-curricular experiences that exist in the program and how they are integrated into the curriculum.

**Faculty Activity & Expertise**: A discussion of faculty member demographics, qualifications, and achievements in relation to the program mission and goals, and how the faculty member's background, expertise, research and other professional work, contribute to the quality of the program.

**Staff**: A discussion of the program staff and how they support the program.

**Technology, Information Resources, & Facilities**: A discussion of relevant library holdings, technologies available to students and faculty (including program-specific technologies), and facilities related to the program.

## DIVERSITY

A discussion of the program's contribution to the university's antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) efforts.

## PROGRAM DEMAND & SUSTAINABILITY

**Program Demand**: A discussion of the trends in applications, admits and enrollments since the last program review and what is happening in the field of study that identifies an anticipated need for this program in the future.

> **TIP TO CONSIDER**
> Focus on the data here. What do the data say? Include evidence to support assertions.

**Program Sustainability**: A description of the program's internal management, how the program's resources (*human, physical, technological, and financial)* are adequate to continue to fulfill the program's mission, purpose, and goals, and ensure student learning, as well as the extent to which the program has and will continue to have the support it needs.

## REFLECTIONS, VISION, & PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT

A summary and reflection of the program's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement based on the previous sections and the data collected and analyzed during the self-study.

> **TIP TO CONSIDER**
> Plan ahead. It may take considerable time to assemble an external review team. Submit the list of potential external reviewers to the Dean's office as one of the first tasks!

## EXTERNAL REVIEW

The purpose of the external review is to gain an external and objective perspective about the overall quality of the program. It seeks to answer whether the data and the site visit support the self-study's findings and recommendations for improvement.

External reviewers are experts in the field who are knowledgeable about issues specific to the discipline. Being external to the university, they can offer an unencumbered evaluation of the program, with a focus on identifying program strengths to build upon and recommendations for improvement. Reviewers should bring an informed and unbiased view to the assessment of the program.

External reviewers are provided the self-study for review and also visit the campus. During the two-day campus visit, the external review team should gain an understanding of the program's current state and future direction. The team will meet with a number of program constituents such as students and faculty members, Program Chair/Director, Dean, Provost, faculty members from related fields, and, where appropriate, with alumni, employers, and other external constituencies. After reviewing the self-study and visiting the campus, the external reviewers will submit an external review report.

The flow of tasks for the external review is as follows:

STEP 1 • Program Chair generates list of external reviewer candidates and sends to Dean's Office

STEP 2 • Dean's Office generates independent list of reviewers

STEP 3 • Dean selects reviewers from both lists

STEP 4 • Dean's Office notifies the APR lead, in writing, of the proposed composition of the external review team

STEP 5 • APR team reviews Dean's Office's proposed external review team

STEP 6 • Once list is finalized, Dean's Office contacts proposed external reviewers and invites them to join the review team

STEP 7 • Once reviewers confirm, Dean's Office makes all logistical arrangements for the external review team and creates the schedule for the days of the site visit

STEP 8 • External review team visits campus and conducts review

STEP 9 • External review team writes report and submits to Dean's Office

## GENERATING LIST OF EXTERNAL REVIEW CANDIDATES

The external review team should consist of two to three faculty members from recognized and accredited colleges and universities outside of USF.

The APR lead should submit to the Dean's Office a list of a minimum of six candidates to include names, affiliation, credentials, and contact information. The Program Chair or any other faculty members or administrators of the program should NOT contact any of the candidates with regard to external review. The candidates can have no conflicts of interest regarding the program under review and should be capable of carrying out a neutral review.

Conflicts of interest may occur if an individual:

- Has a close association with the program or USF (see list below)
- Has a financial or personal interest in the program or USF
- Is, for any reason, unable to provide a neutral and unbiased review of the program

A close association includes, but is not limited to:

- Former or current mentors, close personal friends, or family of program faculty members or staff
- Former or current employees of USF
- Persons who have applied for positions at USF within the last seven years
- Former consultants to USF whose relationship ended less than seven years ago
- Members of the Board of Trustees or any other USF board or foundation

- Major to donors to USF
- Coauthors or formal collaborators with program faculty members or administrators
- Dissertation advisors of any program faculty members or administrators
- Alumni or former students of USF

External reviewers should, at a minimum:

- Hold the highest degree appropriate to the department/program under review
- Have a record of distinguished scholarship and/or professional experience appropriate to the program under review
- Be recognized as an active member of scholarly and/or professional societies appropriate to the program under review
- Be currently employed at a recognized and accredited university or college at the rank of Associate Professor or higher
- Be responsive to institutional and departmental missions

At least one reviewer should:

- Have current or prior experience at the level of department chair or higher at an institution of comparable size and reputation to USF
- Have prior experience relevant to the accreditation process, assessment, and/or program review process
- Hold an appointment in a prestigious and nationally recognized program or a program that the department/program wishes to emulate
- If possible, hold an appointment at a Jesuit university

## SELECTING THE EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM

The Dean's Office will review the list of candidates provided by the Program Chair and, per the collective bargaining agreement §21.9(B)i-ii, select at least one member, but no more than two members, from the list of candidates provided the candidates satisfy the qualifications set forth in this guide; at least one member, but not more than two members, shall be selected by the Dean's Office from a list of candidates generated independently of the faculty members of the program or department.

The Dean's Office then notifies the program of the external review team in writing. Should the department or program wish to discuss the proposed review team membership with the Dean, per the collective bargaining agreement §21.9(B)iii, the department chair or program director may request such a meeting, in writing, within ten working days of having received the Dean's notification. The purpose of the meeting shall include, but will not be limited to offering an explanation of the basis on which the program or department reviewers were selected.

Once the proposed external review team is finalized, the Dean's Office contacts the proposed reviewers, inviting them to join the external review team. After the proposed reviewers have confirmed they will join the external review team, the Dean's Office notifies the department of the finalized external review team.

## COORDINATING & PREPARING FOR THE EXTERNAL REVIEW SITE VISIT

While each school and the college may coordinate the external review in their own manner, to avoid creating a conflict of interest, communication with the external review team and coordination of the external review must be managed by the Dean's Office. Generally, the Dean's Office, after solidifying the external review team, schedules the visit, coordinates travel, lodging, and meals for the reviewers, develops a schedule for the visit, and ensures the review team has all appropriate materials.

**TIP TO CONSIDER**
Using a Canvas site for the external review team is highly recommended. This will greatly ease the burden of emailing documents and make for a smoother campus visit.

A suggested process for coordinating the external review and site visit is as follows:

Prior to the site visit the Dean's Office:

- Creates a Canvas site or shared drive as a means to provide the external review team with all materials and to communicate with the review team. The Canvas site or shared drive should include, at a minimum, the self-study and all exhibits. It may also be helpful to add:
    - Link to program website
    - Link to USF Fast Facts
    - Link to USF Quick Facts
    - Link to USF Faculty & Staff Info
    - Link to USF Strategic Plan
    - Link to USF F/T Faculty CBA
    - Link to USF P/T Faculty CBA
    - Link to USF WSCUC Accreditation Info
    - Link to professional accreditation information (if applicable)
    - A downloadable copy of the External Review Report Template
    - Accommodations information
    - The schedule for the days of the site visit
- Notifies reviewers of the basic duties of the review team and the due date of the External Review Report. A Dean's Letter template can be found on the OAAS website.
- Creates the schedule for the days of the site visit. This should include meetings with the Dean, faculty members, staff, and students, as well as a tour of the facilities. A sample site visit schedule is available on the OAAS website.
- Arranges travel and accommodations for the review team.
- About one month prior to the site visit, holds a pre-APR Zoom meeting with the review team to go over the Canvas site, Self-Study, visit schedule, and logistics information.

## EXTERNAL REVIEW SITE VISIT

During the site visit the external review team typically meets with the Dean(s) overseeing the program, the program faculty members and staff, and students and alumni. The intent is to provide for open and frank discussions which help the external review team to better understand a program's practices, successes, and areas of concern.

In addition to these meetings, the site visit should include:

- Breaks to allow for informal interactions
- A tour of the instructional facilities used by the program
- Opportunities for the external review team to request additional information or data from the program that was not provided in the self-study

- Dedicated time for the review team to confer, discuss its findings and their report. During this time the external review team should agree on a report format, content of the report, and individual assignments for the various components of the External Review Report
- An exit meeting with the External Review team, Dean, and Associate Dean to discuss preliminary findings

If not previously agreed upon, before the external review team departs, the external review team and the institution should agree on a date by which the external review team will submit a final written External Review Report.

## EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT

After the site visit, the external review team writes a report addressing the team's findings, evaluation, and recommendations on strategies for improvement based on a critical analysis of the self-study and information gathered during the site visit.

The External Review is not intended to be a summary of the self-study. Rather, it should take into consideration all areas discussed in the self-study and site visit. It should be focused on synthesizing this information into recommendations that are focused on the student experience and student learning.

An External Review Report template is provided to assist the Review Team in writing the report, though Review Teams are not required to use the template. The report will generally include:

- **Title Page**
- **Table of Contents**
- **Executive Summary/Context**
- **Findings:** Includes facts, evidence and observations that the team finds significant with respect to the evaluation and recommendations
- **Evaluation:** Based on the findings, the team should make an evaluation of the program taking into consideration: mission alignment, curriculum and pedagogy, assessment of student learning, student success, student support, faculty, diversity, resources, program demand and sustainability, and future the direction of the program. The evaluation should be measured against the generally accepted standards in the discipline, programs at the reviewers' own institutions, and benchmark top-tier programs around the U.S. The evaluation should recognize program strengths and challenges
- **Recommendations:** The report should make recommendations of potential remedies or improvements to address any challenges identified during the evaluation. The goal is to make recommendations for improvements that support student learning and the student experience
- **Commendations:** In addition to providing recommendations, the report should also include what the program is doing well
- **Appendices** (if needed): Any relevant appendices

Once the Dean's Office receives the External Review Report, the report will be shared with the program faculty and staff for review. Should the program find any discrepancies, errors, or other items they wish to respond to, they may provide written feedback to the Dean's Office. The Dean's Office will then review the feedback, determine if any changes to the External Review Report are warranted, and liaise with external review team to ensure any necessary changes are made.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT

Once the External Review Report is finalized, the Dean's Office reviews the report and drafts an Executive Summary of the external review team's findings and recommendations.

The Executive Summary may include:

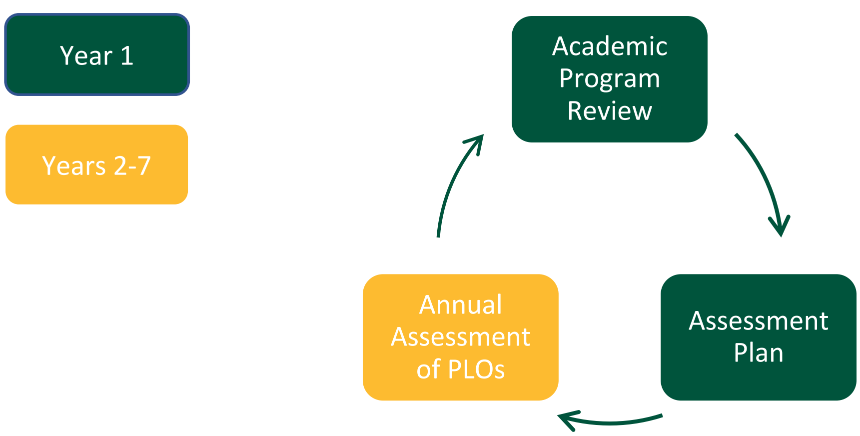
- How the program compares with benchmark top-tier programs nationally
- The most important issues that emerged from the external review process as well as notable successes
- If the external review team found that the program is aligned with the university's mission and/or the university's strategic goals and initiatives, and if so, how
- The external review team's specific recommendations for improving the program's effectiveness and commendations
- The timetable for the response to the external review committee's recommendations for program improvement

The Dean's Office will provide the program with a draft of the Executive Summary for review. If the program requires any edits, these may be made in writing to the Dean's Office. Once the Executive Summary is finalized it will be posted publicly on the OAAS website.

## ACTION PLAN & ASSESSMENT PLAN

The Self-study and the External Review Report are the foundation for the Action Plan and also help to inform the Assessment Plan. Both are crucial components of the program review and annual assessment processes. The purpose of the action plan is to use the findings of the self-study and external review report recommendations to establish plans for program revision and improvement that support student learning. The purpose of the Assessment Plan is to provide a framework to guide annual PLO assessment. It articulates the process and timeline for conducting program assessment activities and for collecting, analyzing, and using program assessment data.

Program Review and Annual Assessment of PLOs are intrinsically linked. Including the assessment plan as part of the program review process is detailed in the [Annual Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes and Student Achievement Policy.] The program review includes an evaluation of the program's assessment of student learning. This evaluation guides the program's development of the Assessment Plan. The Assessment Plan sets forth the annual assessments to take place. These assessments, while reported upon annually, are then reviewed in the subsequent program review.



## DEVELOPING THE ACTION PLAN

> **TIP TO CONSIDER**
> Be planful in writing the action plan and determining timelines. Making meaningful improvements can take time.

The Action Plan is the key document that will guide program change and improvements in the time between program reviews. Therefore, the Action Plan should be reflective of the needs of the program, but also be realistic. Programs should be mindful not to take on too much, too fast.

The full-time program faculty members are responsible for the development of the Action Plan. Programs may be asked by the Dean's Office to meet with the Dean and Associate Dean prior to the development of an Action Plan to discuss findings and recommendations from the Self-Study and External Review Report and agree on expectations of the Action Plan.

While the process used to determine the appropriate actions and strategies for implementation is at the discretion of the program, engaging faculty members, staff, and others in this process helps to build knowledge of the APR results and create buy-in from those who will be involved in the implementation of the Action Plan. It can be helpful to collectively think about where the program wants to be by the next program review and what the program can do, even with limited resources to get there. Each action within the Action Plan should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART), it may also be helpful to use this framework when developing the action plan.

While the following tasks are not required, these steps may help assist programs in the development of the plan.

Task 1
- **Compile Information:** Compile the recommendations from the self-study, the External Review Report and any additional relevant information collected throughout the APR process

Task 2
- **Identify Program Strengths, Recommendations, and Opportunities for Improvement:** Create a list of the program strengths, recommendations, and opportunities for improvement using findings of the self-study, the recommendations from the External Review Report, and any other items that indicate potential program improvements that should be considered

Task 3
- **Outline Actions & Strategies for Implementation**: Using the information gathered and considering the strengths, recommendations, and opportunities for improvement, begin outlining goals and strategies for implementation. This outline should clearly articulate the actions needed to achieve improvements to the program based on the self-study and external review report, include the tasks need achieve these improvements and who is responsible for implementation of each task

Task 4
- **Determine Priorities:** Once the program has an outline of the actions needed for improvement and the strategies to be employed to achieve these actions, begin prioritizing these. What are high, medium, and low priorities?

Task 5
- **Identify Resources:** Identify the resources needed to achieve each action. Clearly differentiate between what can be accomplished by redistributing existing resources and what requires new resources

Task 6
- **Outline Timeframes for Implementation:** Outline a timeline for implementation of each action item. Include target start dates and end dates for each task

Task 7
- **Determine Milestones & Measurements:** Identify key milestones for each task and how you will measure whether the task was successful

Programs are not required to move forward with all recommendations in the External Review Report; however, the program should have a rationale for any recommendations not included in the action plan.

**TIP TO CONSIDER**
Holding formal goal setting sessions with faculty and staff can help foster discussion and build buy-in.

When developing the Action Plan keep in mind that it should:

- Focus on improvements to student learning
- Reflect the findings of the self-study, external review report, and the executive summary of the external review report
- Recognize any limitations on resources, but strive to make necessary program improvements in consideration of current and future resources
- Be a collaborative document that is reflective of the expectations of the faculty members, Program Chair, and Dean
- Contribute to the USF mission and align with the USF Strategic Plan
- Be regularly monitored and reported on by the program
- Remain in effect until all actions have either been achieved, officially deferred by the Dean, or until the next program review is initiated
- Include actions that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART)

As a means of standardizing the way in which the university monitors the progress of the APR action plans, programs should use the Action Plan & Progress Report Template, though it is understood that the schools, the college and different programs may have additional items they choose to include. The Action Plan, includes, at a minimum, the following sections for each area of the Self-Study:

- **Priority Level:** Include whether the recommendation is top priority, a priority but not urgent, if it is for future consideration, or if the program has chosen not to address the recommendation
- **Recommendation:** Include each recommendation from the External Review Report
- **Actions:** Clearly define the improvements to be made. This should be grounded in evidence which will help contextualize the rationale for the action (i.e. it should be directly connected to the recommendations in the External Review Report)
- **Tasks:** Include the tasks necessary to achieve the actions listed. Each step should be a measurable task where data/documentation can be collected to provide evidence of completion
- **Timeline for Implementation/Completion:** Include a target start date and end date to complete each task
- **Individuals/Groups Responsible:** Include the people or group responsible for completion of each task
- **Milestones or Measurements:** Outline criteria by which the program can monitor whether the action or task was successful. Include what evidence will be collected to demonstrate completion of the task.
- **Resources:** Include whether the task can be completed with current resources. If not, include the resources needed for completion and identify next steps, if appropriate.

Once a draft of the Action Plan is complete it should be submitted, along with the Assessment Plan, to the Dean's Office for review and approval.

## DEVELOPING THE ASSESSMENT PLAN

Assessment plans set out the scope, scale, and timeline for annual PLO assessment, indicate who is responsible for assessment within the program, and assure documentation of how well the program is doing in ensuring that students met the program learning outcomes. Through the self-study, the program reviews efforts to assess student learning during the past seven years, and as a result, the program likely identifies assessment challenges and opportunities. The program should use the findings in the self-study and the External Review Report to inform the development of the assessment plan. The Assessment Plan should be a seven-year plan for the assessment of PLOs that includes:

- The timeline for assessing each PLO (at least one PLO should be assessed annually)
- How each PLO will be assessed (e.g. direct or indirect measures)
- For direct assessment, what student artifacts will be assessed (e.g. capstone projects, papers, presentations) and when the artifacts will be collected
- If indirect assessment will be conducted, what will be used to conduct the assessment (e.g. survey asking students to self-report what they have learned)
- How the faculty will participate in the assessment

There may be times when the program review revealed a need for updating the PLOs, if this is the case it may not be possible to submit an assessment plan until after the PLOs are updated. Updating the PLOs and creating an assessment plan should then be included in the Action Plan.

## APPROVAL OF THE ACTION PLAN & ASSESSMENT PLAN

Once the Action Plan and the Assessment Plan have been submitted to the Dean's Office the Action Plan must be reviewed and approved. This process may be different for each school and the college, but generally should include a formal discussion with the Dean, Associate Dean, Program Chair, any person responsible for assessment within the school or the college (e.g. Director of Assessment) and program faculty members. It may also include a written review of the plan by the Dean and/or Associate Dean.

Revisions to the Action Plan may occur as a result of the review. Ultimately, all parties should agree upon all aspects of the plan before it is approved.

## IMPLEMENTATION

> **TIP TO CONSIDER**
> Don't wait until it is time to submit an Action Plan Progress Report to document what has been completed or not completed. Regularly refer to the plan and document progress.

Once the Action Plan is complete the work of implementing the actions can begin. The Action Plan is a tool to guide program changes that will positively impact student learning and the student experience. It should be seen as living document that is referred to when making curricular or other changes within the program. The Action Plan and implementation is an iterative process. As the program begins work towards completing the actions within the plan, they may find that circumstances have changed and that the Action Plan may need to be revised, which is often a part of the APR process and is reflected in the Mid-cycle Progress Reports.

## CREATING BUY-IN

Action Plans are most effective when there is buy-in by all stakeholders. It may be helpful to schedule meetings with stakeholders to review the findings of the program review and the resulting Action Plan. While the Program Chair is responsible for the implementation of the Action Plan the work needed to implement the plan will likely be done by the faculty and staff of the program. Sharing the plan with those who will be involved in the implementation, or affected by the outcomes of the plan, will be helpful in seeing the actions through to completion ("closing the loop") and creating improvements to the program that will positively impact student learning.

## DOCUMENTATION

As the program works towards implementation of the Action Plan, maintaining documentation and evidence of how the tasks were completed and the outcome of each is paramount to demonstrating that the program is closing-the-loop and using the program review process to implement positive change that impacts student learning. This documentation will also help when completing the Mid-cycle Progress Report. Additionally, it will be useful when writing the self-study for the next program review and it will help provide continuity in the event of changes in program faculty and/or leadership.

## MID-CYCLE PROGRESS REPORTS

Reporting mid-cycle on the progress made in the implementation of the Action Plan helps to make explicit the intersection of the curricular change process, the annual program learning outcome assessment, and strategic planning. It provides timely, meaningful data and evidence to help inform curricular change and university decision-making, and supports strategic initiatives by closing-the-loop.

The Mid-cycle Progress Report template is included in the Action Plan Template in order to assist programs in tracking the implementation of the Action Plan. The program will submit an updated progress report to the Dean's Office and OAAS in year three or four following the program review.

Included in the Mid-cycle Progress Report are:

- The recommendations listed in the Action Plan
- The priority level assigned to each recommendation
- The action items listed in the Action Plan
- A summary of progress made year-to-date, and if no progress was made, an explanation as to why
- The current status of the action (in progress, complete, deferred, no longer applicable)
- If the status of an action is complete, what evidence exists to document the completion
- A summary of the plan for each action item in the coming years (for those actions that are in-progress)

Once the Mid-cycle Progress Report is complete it should be submitted to the Dean's Office. The Dean's Office will review and provide feedback, if necessary.

## RESOURCES

[WSCUC Program Review Resource Guide]