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**Division of Student Life
Program Review Guidelines**

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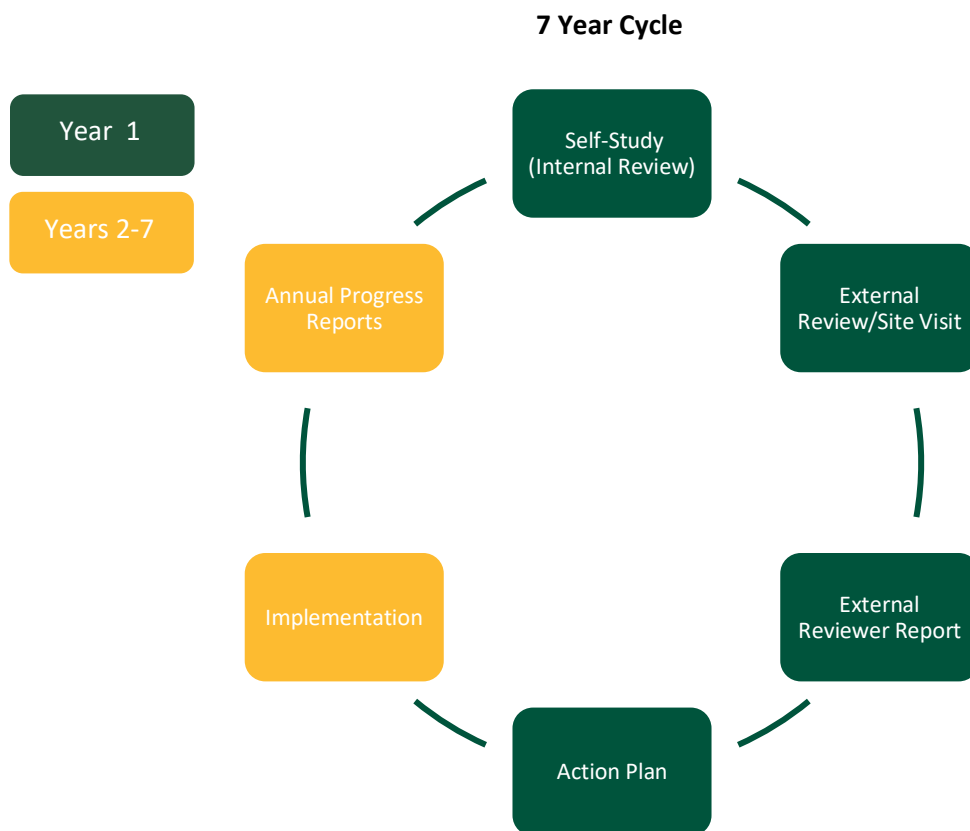
Student Life Program Reviews

I. Overview

Program reviews are an essential assessment practice of the University that are conducted to ensure that academic and co-curricular programs are operationally effective and supportive of student learning and success in ways that are aligned with the University’s mission, values, and strategic goals. The program review process takes approximately one year to complete and includes a comprehensive self-study and evaluation by an external evaluation team, with input from program stakeholders. Program strengths, areas of need, and opportunities for growth are identified through the process and incorporated in an action plan to guide continuous program improvement. Each department and center within the Student Life division completes a program review every 7 years.

II. Components of the Program Review Process

The program review cycle has six components:



Adapted from the University of San Francisco’s *Co-curricular Program Review Guidelines* (Office of Assessment and Accreditation Support, AY 2014-2015), *Principles for Review of Programs* (University Assessment Committee, 2017), and *Academic Program Review Guidelines* (University Assessment Committee 2022)

1. Administrative Self-Study; This is a comprehensive report addressing every aspect of the department/center. It should contain the department/center vision, mission and goals, and make recommendations for improvement and development based upon an overall analysis of data and other evidence. The self-study allows the department/center *to tell its own story* to the external review team and the university administration. The document is posted on the university assessment website (See Appendix 3 on page 12 for elements of the Self-Study).
2. External Review; The external review team provides an objective outsider's perspective on the quality, effectiveness, and/or productivity of the department/center. After reading the self-study and making a campus visit, the external review team will compile a report that provides an evaluation and recommendations for improvement. The vice president for Student Life or assistant/associate vice president Student Life (VP/AVP) with oversight of the department/center under review (or designee) summarizes the external reviewers' report in an executive summary. The summary is also posted on the university assessment website.
3. Action Plan; The VP/AVP works with department/center staff to create the action plan. The action plan structures the implementation of the recommendations in the self-study and the external review report according to a reasonable timetable. There is an annual progress check on the achievement of the action plan.
4. Implementation of the Action Plan; The department/center prioritizes and implements the action plan during the years leading up to its next program review.
5. Annual Progress Reports; Each year departments/centers provide a progress report on achievement of the action plan. Progress reports are shared with the Office of Assessment and Accreditation Support and the Board of Trustees.

III. Program Review Timelines

The completion of the self-study, external review, and action plan components will take place over the course of approximately one year. Appendix 1 provides a timeline of suggested process activities for program reviews with site visits by external reviewers during the spring semester. Appendix 2 provides an alternative timeline of suggested process activities for program reviews with site visits by external reviewers during the fall semester.

Adapted from the University of San Francisco's *Co-curricular Program Review Guidelines* (Office of Assessment and Accreditation Support, AY 2014-2015), *Principles for Review of Programs* (University Assessment Committee, 2017), and *Academic Program Review Guidelines* (University Assessment Committee 2022)

IV. Selection of External Reviewers

The external review team will normally consist of two members from other recognized and accredited colleges or universities. The department/center under review will identify and submit a list of potential external reviewers for consideration to the respective VP/AVP with oversight of the department/center. External reviewers can have *no conflicts of interest* regarding the program under review (e.g., not a former employee, co-author, dissertation advisor, relative or close friend of current department/center staff, etc.). In general, the external reviewers should:

- Hold the highest degree appropriate to the department/center under review.
- Have a record of distinguished professional experience appropriate to the department/center under review.
- Be recognized as an active member of professional associations appropriate to the department/center under review.
- Be responsive to institutional and department/center mission.

Ideally at least one reviewer should:

- Have current or prior experience at the level of department/center head or higher at an institution of comparable size and reputation to the University of San Francisco.
- Have prior experience relevant to the accreditation process, assessment, and/or co-curricular review process.
- Hold an appointment in a nationally recognized program or a program that the department/center wishes to emulate.
- If possible, hold (or have held) an appointment at a Jesuit University.
- For any department/center that is accredited by a professional accreditor (e.g., ABA, AACSB, APA, etc.) that requires, reviews and provides feedback on a program review, the professional accreditor may serve as the external reviewers.

The resumés of the proposed members of the external review team will be forwarded to the Office of Assessment and Accreditation by Student Life's director of Organization Effectiveness (or a designee) for review and final approval.

V. The Self-Study

The purpose of the self-study is to allow staff, students and administration to consider not only a department's/center's recent accomplishments and challenges, but also to engage in a forward-looking planning process.

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The self-study is a comprehensive written report prepared by the department/center undergoing a program review. A good self-study will thoroughly assess a department's/center's past efforts and current state, and will outline a realistic course of action for the future. The self-study provides the basis for the external review process so it is important that the report covers all key functions and processes of the department/center. The most useful self-study is a thorough but succinct and honest, assessment of the department/center.

The self-study must be a product of the staff members of the department/center under review. They are in the best position to raise and respond to any significant strategic and operational issues being faced by the department/center. They are also the people who will use the results of the review to strengthen performance. The directory of the department/center should ensure that there is full participation of their teams in the preparation of the self-study. A suggested resource for conducting a self-study is the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education's Self-Assessment Guides for student affairs functional areas.

Appendix 3 contains specific questions to help guide departments/centers on what should be included in the self-study. There is some redundancy because items may be covered in several places. The department/center may decide the best place to discuss particular items or issues. At minimum, the self-study should address the following areas:

- I. Introduction and Mission
- II. History
- III. Department/center Goals
- IV. Quality Assurance
- V. Assessment
- VI. Budget and Expenditures
- VII. Considerations for Future Direction
- VIII. Plans for the Future

Additional information may be required in the future in response to changes in University or accrediting policies.

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VI. External Reviewers Campus Visit

The director of Student Life Administration (or other designee) will serve as the liaison between the department/center and the external review team, providing needed information and managing all logistical arrangements for the visit (including scheduling, accommodations, and transportation).

Prior to the visit the review team will be provided with essential information needed for them to conduct the review (see Appendix 4). Additionally, they will be provided with the following charge for program reviews at the University of San Francisco.

General Charge to the External Reviewers:

1. Assess whether the department/center is doing what it says it is doing.
2. Assess whether it is meeting accreditation standards, professional or otherwise.
3. Provide feedback about the goals, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and make recommendations for improvements.

The external review team will also be requested to provide a written report structured as follows:

- **Overall Rating and Performance;** How does the external review committee rate the overall quality of the department/center; excellent, very good, good, adequate, or poor? How does the department/center compare with well-established/recognized programs nationally? Please provide a brief rationale for the external review committee's assessment.
- **Advancement of Initiatives, Goals, and Commitments;** In the opinion of the external review committee is the department/center advancing university and division strategic initiatives, goals and commitments?
- **Learning Outcomes;** Has the department/center identified appropriate student learning outcomes and implemented assessment strategies to measure and improve student learning?
- **Standards and Best Practices;** Is the department/center in compliance with professionally accepted standards? What best practices have been adopted and implemented?
- **Resources;** Does the department/center have adequate space, personnel and budget to carry out its programs and services?
- **Key Issues to Consider;** What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process?
- **Recommendations;** What are specific recommendations for improving the department's/center's quality and/or performance?

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Prior to the campus visit, it is expected that the reviewers will have become familiar with the institution and the department/center based on materials sent to them. They will have carefully read the self-study and they will have developed some preliminary questions about the department based upon these materials.

The site visit normally lasts 2 days. During the visit, the external reviewers will meet with department/center staff, student representatives, collaborative partners within the institution, and appropriate administrators. They will also inspect facilities and examine procedures, read on-campus documents and websites, and potentially observe activities (if desired by reviewers).

At the conclusion of the site visit, the external review team will share their preliminary findings with the VP/AVP with oversight of the department/center (or designee) during an exit interview. Within two months, the external reviewers submit a report based upon the department's/center's self-study and the findings and observations made by the external review team during their site visit. The report will assess the department's/center's strengths and weaknesses and make recommendations for improvements. An executive summary of the report will be written and provided to the Office of Assessment and Accreditation Support and any other campus constituencies deemed appropriate by the department/center and the Vice President for Student Life.

VII. Action Plan

Once the external reviewers submit their report, it will be distributed to the VP/AVP with oversight of the department/center. The VP/AVP will ensure it is also shared with the director of the department/center and staff members. The department/center will have the opportunity to respond to the report's findings in writing if desired. They will then begin formulating an action plan for the future.

The action plan is designed to respond to the findings of *both* the self-study and the external review report. The action plan indicates how the department/center plans to address the issues and recommendations raised during the review process. The most important elements in the formulation of the action plan are:

- Compiling recommendations resulting from the self-study and external reviewers report.
- Identifying and outlining suggested strategies and ideas for responding to department/center goals and reviewer recommendation.
- Prioritizing goals and recommendations.

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- Identifying and listing needed resources to support the action plan, clearly differentiating between what can be accomplished by redistributing existing resources and what requires new resources.
- Outlining a timeline for completion and implementation of each item.
- Documenting all actions and providing written reports of progress as scheduled.

The final goal of the program review is an action plan that not only records accomplishments but also serves as a guide for any opportunities or needs for department/center improvement.

Appendix 1

Suggested Timeline for External Reviewer Site Visit During the Spring Semester (See Appendix 2 for Fall Semester Site Visits)

March-May: (of academic year prior to reviewer site visit)

- The A/VP and director with oversight of the department/center meet to discuss the program review procedures, timelines, and expectations.
- Department/center begins updating webpage to reflect current staffing, services, and other information, if necessary. This will aid external reviewers with research efforts.
- Department/center begins the selection of a list of potential external reviewers to be submitted to the VP/AVP for review.

June-August:

- Department/center plans and holds meeting(s) and/or retreat(s) to discuss and plan the self-study (A suggested resource for conducting the self-study is the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education's Self-Assessment Guides for student affairs functional areas.).

September:

- Department/center submits a final list of considerations for the external review team to the director for Organization Effectiveness if a review team has not already been finalized.

October-November:

- Department/center submits a draft of their self-study document to their respective VP/AVP for review and feedback.

December-January:

- Final draft of the self-study is completed and submitted to the director of Administration for Student Life (or designee), for forwarding to external reviewers (ideally two months prior to visit).

March-April:

- The external review team visits campus (usually for two days.).

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May-June:

- The external reviewers' report is received by Student Life administration and shared with the AVP responsible for the department, the VP for Student Life, and the director of the department/center.
- The VP/AVP writes and executive summary of the report.
- The self-study, external reviewers' report, and the executive summary are sent to the Office of Assessment and Accreditation Support by the director of Organization Effectiveness (or designee). The self-study and executive summary are then posted on the University Assessment website.

July-September:

- Department/center meets with their respective VP/AVP to discuss the report's recommendations and development of an action plan and timelines for implementation.
- The Department/center may submit a separate response to the external reviewers' comments as part of the action plan.
- The vice president for Student Life (or designee) discusses the program review with members of the university leadership team. The director of organization effectiveness for Student Life (or designee) provides a copy of the self-study and executive summary of the external reviewer's report to the Office of Assessment and Accreditation Support (OAAS) and provides an annual progress report on the action plan to the OAAS each fall.

Appendix 2

Suggested Timeline for External Reviewer Site Visit During the Fall Semester (See Appendix 1 for Spring Semester Site Visits)

October-December (of academic year prior to reviewer site visit)

- The VP/AVP and director meet to discuss the program review procedures, timelines, and expectations.
- Department/center begins updating webpage to reflect current staffing, services, and other information, if necessary. This will aid external reviewers with research efforts.
- Department/center begins the selection of a list of potential external reviewers to be submitted to their respective VP/AVP for review.

January-March:

- Department/center plans and holds meeting(s) and/or retreat(s) to discuss and plan the self-study (A suggested resource for conducting the self-study is the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education's Self-Assessment Guides for student affairs functional areas.).

April:

- Department/center submits a final list of considerations for the external review team to the director for Organization Effectiveness if a review team has not already been finalized.

May-June:

- Department/center submits a draft of their self-study document to their respective VP/AVP for review and feedback.

July-August:

- Final draft of the self-study is completed and submitted to the director of Administration for Student Life (or designee), for forwarding to external reviewers (ideally two months prior to visit).

October-November:

- The external review team visits campus (usually for two days.).

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December-February:

- The external reviewers' report is received by Student Life administration and shared with the AVP responsible for the department, the VP for Student Life, and the director of the department/center.
- The VP/AVP writes and executive summary of the report.
- The self-study, external reviewers' report, and the executive summary are sent to the Office of Assessment and Accreditation Support by the director of Organization Effectiveness (or designee). The self-study and executive summary are then posted on the University Assessment website.

March-May:

- Department/center meets with their respective VP/AVP to discuss the report's recommendations and development of an action plan and timelines for implementation.
- The Department/center may submit a separate response to the external reviewers' comments as part of the action plan.
- The vice president for Student Life (or designee) discusses the program review with members of the university leadership team. The director of organization effectiveness for Student Life (or designee) provides a copy of the self-study and executive summary of the external reviewer's report to the Office of Assessment and Accreditation Support (OAAS) and provides an annual progress report on the action plan to the OAAS each fall.

Appendix 3

Elements of the Self-Study

I. INTRODUCTION AND MISSION

1. Write an introductory paragraph describing the department/center and services provided. What is the department/center trying to accomplish?
2. What is the department's/center's mission? Please provide the department's/center's mission statement.
3. Describe how the department/center is aligned with and supports the University of San Francisco's Mission and strategic goals. Include how the department/center specifically supports the university's commitment to antiracism, diversity, equity and inclusion (considering environment, programs, policies, and practices).

II. HISTORY

1. What is the recent history of the department/center and what are the most noteworthy issues faced and changes made over the last seven years?
2. Does the department/center form collaborative partnerships with other units within the University (e.g., academic, co-curricular/non-academic, administrative, etc.)? If so, what are the collaborations and how is the work coordinated within and across the various units?
3. What were the main recommendations of the previous program review? How did the department/center and institutional administration respond to the findings and recommendations of the last program review? What has changed after the last program review?
4. If this is the first program review, discuss the origins of the department/center. Why was the department/center created?

III. DEPARTMENT/CENTER GOALS

1. What are the current goals of the department/center?

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2. For each goal list measurable performance objectives and/or student learning outcomes (What students should know, value, and be able to do as a result of engaging in department/center programs or utilizing department/center services.).
3. How do these goals facilitate the department's/center's overarching mission as it relates to supporting student learning, development and/or academic success?

IV. QUALITY ASSURANCE

1. What programs and/or services does the department/center provide? Whom (specifically) do they serve?
2. How does the department/center learn about the needs of those served and obtain feedback regarding programs or services delivered?
3. How does the department/center know it is meeting the stakeholder's needs?
4. What are the department's/center's planning, decision-making, and evaluation processes?
5. How do stakeholders learn about and access the programs and/or services provided by the department/center?
6. How does the department/center compare with peer institutions in terms of structure, responsibilities, size and budget? Specify the criteria by which these institutions were selected for comparison.

V. ASSESSMENT

1. Provide a summary of how critical administrative processes and programs and/or services are assessed or evaluated by the department/center, and the results of those evaluations.
2. List the number of students served during the most recent academic year, and the department's/center's role in tracking their success upon completion of programs and/or services.
3. Discuss how the department/center assesses student learning, whether or not students are achieving your intended learning outcomes based on results of your

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assessment, and how you have used the results of learning outcomes assessment to improve student learning outcomes.

4. To what degree have you achieved department/center goals and outcomes?
 - a. Describe how data gained from meaningful assessments have helped the department/center improve critical processes, key functions, stakeholder needs, delivery of programs and/or services and identification of best practices (continuous improvement).
 - b. Describe how data collected are used to inform and support other units (academic and/or non-academic/co-curricular) in the Institution.
 - c. Describe how staff/administrators of the department/center analyzes trends of department/center productivity (e.g., students serviced, student needs, student success, etc.)
 - d. Describe changes made to the department/center using evaluation/assessment data.
5. What factors have facilitated or impeded the department's/center's ability to meet its goals and outcomes?
6. How do staff roles support the department's/center's delivery of programs and/or services? How do staff roles bridge gaps in programs and/or services?
7. What are identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the department/center?

VI. BUDGET AND EXPENDITURES

1. Provide a budget allocation and expenditure summary for the past three fiscal years.
2. To what extent does the allocation of resources allow the department/center to meet its goals and objectives? Is there a close alignment between the costs of running the department/center and budgeted resources?
3. What changes could be made to produce greater efficiencies or economies of scale (e.g., reduction, modification, elimination of paperwork, reorganization, etc.)? What constraints must the department/center address to achieve these?

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4. What improvements are possible through reallocating existing resources?
5. What improvements can only be addressed through additional resources?

VII. CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE DIRECTION

1. What are the department's/center's strengths? What examples of long-term excellence, recent accomplishment, or improvement characterize the department's/center's recent history? In what ways could the department/center be considered a leader in its field?
2. What are the department's/center's weaknesses? Where could the department/center improve most? What challenges or obstacles make it difficult to overcome these weaknesses? What further challenges does the department/center foresee in the coming years?
3. What changes have occurred in administrative processes and/or services provided over the past seven years that have influenced the department's/center's view of its role in the University and the field?

VIII. PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

1. Describe where the staff would like the department/center to go in terms of services, performance standards, collaboration with other departments/centers, synergies, etc.
2. Describe where the field is going based on the literature, professional association meetings, etc. and how the department/center is ready to address those challenges and improvements.

Appendix 4

Information Provided to External Reviewers

The following information should be provided to external reviewers (either electronically or in a binder).

University Information

- USF Vision, Mission, and Values
- University strategic plan and/or strategic goals
- USF Facts and Information URLs:
 - USF Stats; <https://www.usfca.edu/about-usf/what-you-need-to-know/facts-statistics>
 - Student success outcomes; <https://www.usfca.edu/about-usf/what-you-need-to-know/outcomes>
- Campus Map

Department/Center Information

- Self-Study
- Department/Center Website
- Organization Chart
- Staff Resumes or Curriculum Vitae
- Budget (Summary of last three years)
- Relevant Program Data
- Relevant Student Data

Logistics

The following will be provided and/or coordinated by the director of Student Life Administration, or designee:

- Welcome letter
- Contract agreement and compensation
- Contact Information
- Charge and questions for the review (See Section VI. External Reviewers Campus Visit)
- Agenda for site visit
- Travel accommodations

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