

Guidelines for
(Non-Instructional)

“THE FIVE-YEAR REVIEW”

Academic Five Year Unit/Program
Review and Accreditation

Mississippi State University
Planning Document

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ACADEMIC FIVE YEAR UNIT/PROGRAM REVIEW AND ACCREDITATION

Introduction

Academic unit/program review is an essential component of the University's continuing efforts to maintain and improve the quality of its academic offerings. Proper application of the review process assists the University as it strives to achieve academic excellence.

All academic units and programs at Mississippi State University undergo a cyclical review. The major purpose of this review is to achieve academic excellence consistent with the University mission. As a consequence, the results of academic reviews are incorporated into the University planning process. The academic review process will allow the units under review to

- define the unit's mission in the University;
- evaluate the effectiveness of the unit in terms of satisfying the University's mission;
- establish goals and objectives for the unit;
- establish strategies for attaining goals and objectives;
- develop means to measure learning outcomes;
- evaluate unit effectiveness based on measured outcomes;
- incorporate changes in the academic unit responding to measured outcomes as well as State and national needs.

The academic structure of the unit under review will become stronger as a result of the review. The process may, in rare cases, lead to a recommendation for a reduction, to the elimination, or to a consolidation of programs. All recommendations for such actions are generated by the review and are based, along with other input, on the strength, need for, demand for, and/or the significance of the program to advance the University mission.

Administrative Structure of the Review Process

All academic reviews are coordinated by the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President with the Associate Provost being administratively responsible for the process. Final recommendations are made to the Provost and Executive Vice President. All academic units and programs within the University are subject to review. Academic support units such as the libraries are included in the review process. When the academic unit under review is a department, all of the academic programs within the department are simultaneously reviewed.

For example, if a department offers the baccalaureate, the master's, and the doctoral degree, all three of the academic programs are reviewed at once.

Programs are reviewed approximately every five years from the date of the submission of the final report. This time period allows a reasonable number of programs to be reviewed each year. It is anticipated that the review process should not exceed 18 months.

Academic units subject to external accreditation are not reviewed internally unless some of the academic programs are not included in the accreditation process, (i.g., graduate programs in engineering are not included in ABET). In such cases, an internal review will be completed on these programs at this time. The external accreditation process serves as the program review. In those situations where the external accreditation cycle does not radically differ from the five-year period, the accreditation cycle is used.

A program review cycle will be initiated five years after a new department has been formed or an existing department has been restructured or merged.

Procedure

The academic unit/program review process will normally consist of four components or steps. These are:

1. Program self-study,
2. Internal review,
3. External review, and
4. Final report and recommendations.

1. Program Self Study

Early in the fall semester, the Associate Provost will meet with the Dean of the College (or the chief administrator of the area in which the unit that will be reviewed resides). At this meeting the Associate Provost will describe the review process and discuss the review questionnaire. This questionnaire is a set of general questions that every unit under review is asked to answer (see attached).

The review questionnaire asks the unit to provide, among other things, a mission statement and answers to questions regarding the faculty, the curriculum, teaching, assessment of learning, research, service, resources, students, and promotion and tenure criteria. The Dean of the College (or appropriate administrator) and the Associate Provost may, if

necessary, establish additional questions appropriate for the unit under review.

The Dean of the College meets with the Department Head in order to provide the unit with the review questionnaire. The Dean asks the Department Head to designate a committee from the unit to serve as the Self-Study Committee. The Dean and Department mutually agree on the Committee composition. The composition and chair of the Committee are forwarded to the Associate Provost.

The Self-Study Committee prepares a written report that responds to the review questionnaire and any additional questions that may have been presented. This report is forwarded to the Dean of the College and the Associate Provost early in the spring semester.

For those units undergoing a review for accreditation, the self-study developed to comply with the accreditation process, satisfies the internal self-study portion of the review and may follow the schedule set by that accrediting agency. Additional information may be requested by the College Dean or the Associate Provost.

The unit under review may use the results of the Institutional Effectiveness Report for the self-study; however, it should be understood that there is still the need for long-term planning and assessment. The annual assessments are an integral part of the long-term planning and assessment process. The five-year review will assess both the short- and long-term goals and outcomes of the program.

2. Internal Review

The Internal Review Committee (IRC) consists of at least three faculty members from academic units other than the one under review. The faculty members should be (but not necessary all) from academic disciplines allied to the one under review. The Dean of the College, in conjunction with the unit under review, generates a list of faculty to serve on the Committee. The Associate Provost may generate a similar list. The names of the Internal Review Committee are selected from these two lists. A chair is designated by the Associate Provost.

The IRC will review the Self-Study Report. The IRC will use this report as well as other material, such as departmental visits or interviews, to prepare a separate report of its own. This report identifies strengths and weaknesses of the unit under review, and provides an objective assessment of the recommendations contained in the self-study.

The IRC report is submitted to the Associate Provost, the Dean of the College, and the unit early in the spring semester. The reviewed unit may respond to this report. A written response from the reviewed unit should be provided to the Dean of the College within one month of receiving the IRC report.

3. External Review

All programs will undergo an external review. This review will be conducted by an accreditation team of the professional association for programs subject to accreditation or an off-campus consultant in the disciplines for which accreditation is not available. An external review will be conducted for each discipline degree program in the unit under review.

In the case of disciplines not subject to professional accreditation, the external consultant will be selected from lists submitted by the unit and next level of administrative review. The final selection is made by the Associate Provost in consultation with the College Dean, or equivalent administrator. The external consultant should be from outside the University, be known and respected for his or her scholarly and academic work in the area under review, and have some administrative experience. The latter preference relates to the fact that many of the problems facing an academic unit require an appreciation for administrative solutions. It would seem desirable that the individual be from an institution that is comparable to Mississippi State University.

The Self-Study and IRC Report are provided to the external team or consultant. The schedule for the accreditation team is set by that agency and the unit under review. For disciplines without accreditation, the external consultant will visit the campus sometime in the spring for two to three days in order to meet with the unit under review as well as other appropriate individuals. The consultant will submit a written report to the Associate Provost, and the Dean of the College. The unit reviewed may provide a response to the consultants' report to the Associate Provost no later than one month after receipt of the report.

4. Final Report and Recommendations

After reports have been received from the units on the IRC and the consultant or accrediting body, the Associate Provost develops a Final Report with specific recommendations. This report is sent to the Dean of the college and the unit head. The Associate Provost and the college Dean will meet with the faculty of the unit under review in order to discuss the report and recommendations.

The Final Report, along with the Self-Study Report, the IRC and ERC reports, and any responses to these reports, will be submitted to the Provost and Executive Vice President. Based upon a review of these materials, the Provost and Executive Vice President refers the recommendations to the appropriate body. In the case of the need for new monies, the recommendation is incorporated into the planning and budgetary process. Recommendations for program modification will be referred to the appropriate academic council, e.g. graduate programs to the Graduate Council. Copies of all materials used in the Five-Year Review are placed on file in the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President.

Benefits of Review

The primary object of academic program review is to strengthen the academic programs at Mississippi State University. The actual review process allows an academic unit to better understand its mission and to more clearly focus and state its goals and objectives. The outcomes of the review process are used in a positive way so that strong academic programs are developed. There will be situations that arise which may indicate that an academic program is no longer viable in its present form. To be a comprehensive university with exceptional academic programs, difficult decisions must be made. Taking a positive approach to academic program review offers Mississippi State University opportunities to maintain and achieve excellence in all of its academic endeavors.

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PROGRAM/UNIT SELF-STUDY AND ANALYSIS

Narrative Questions

Previous Program Review

1. What specific actions have been taken from the previous program review recommendations?

Goals and Objectives

2. What is the mission of the unit?
3. To what extent are the various unit programs essential to the mission of the University?
4. List the goals and objectives of the unit and explain how they relate to the mission of the university.
5. Describe the strategies used to attain the goals and objectives of the unit.
6. What are the outcome measures (quantitative and/or qualitative) used in assessing the above goals and objectives?

Staff

7. How do the number, specializations, and professional stature of the staff complement the needs of the unit?
8. Does the staff evaluation and reward system promote achievement that results in the maintenance and retention of excellent employees?
9. Explain how the current staff workload insures the highest quality of service.
10. Discuss those factors that either contribute to or detract from the continued development and performance of the staff.

Function/Operation of the Unit

11. To what extent is the function of the unit relevant and responsive to the needs and opportunities of the University?

12. To what extent does the unit's function contribute significantly to the University's reputation as an academic institution of excellence? Will it make such a contribution in the future?
13. How is the current unit's function similar or dissimilar to what could be considered typical in this area? If it is dissimilar, explain how and why.
14. Is the unit's function/operation in need of a change in direction? Explain.
15. What is the number of students/clients being serviced by this unit? Has this changed, and/or will this be expected to change?
16. How are the needs and satisfactions of the students/clients incorporated into the planning of this unit?

Resources

17. Describe the state of resources available to support the unit's function and its staff.
18. List three areas in which budget additions are most significantly needed and comment on the impact such an increase would have.
19. To what extent can current resources be reallocated to meet these needs?
20. Are there any external sources of support which have the potential for meeting these needs? Identify these.

Assessment and Planning

21. Describe how the outcome measures are incorporated into the unit's planning process?
22. List the major strengths of the unit.
23. List the major weaknesses of the unit. What plans have been developed to address these weaknesses?
24. List the major opportunities for the unit.

25. List the major threats to the unit. What plans have been developed to address these threats?

Summary/Conclusion

26. Place in priority order those activities or actions which as the result of your assessment will be necessary to develop and/or maintain a future unit of excellence.