Program Review Guidebook

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Purpose of Program Review

Program Review provides the Office of Student Life the opportunity to examine the current programming, services, directions, organizational efficiency and resource capabilities of a unit; validate strengths; identify opportunities for improvement; and achieve high-level performance results. Program Review also serves as an important mechanism for communication within a unit and between a unit and Student Life administration.

The objectives of Program Review are to:

- assess how well a unit performs in relation to its objectives, university priorities and Office of Student Life goals and strategic initiatives.

- encourage strategic thinking about a unit's plans for the future.

- define ways, primarily within existing resources, that a unit can continue to improve in the quality of its programs, services, activities and operations.

- provide evidence of the excellence and effectiveness of a unit's programs, activities, services and operations.

- determine the extent to which a unit has managed its resources in an efficient and effective manner.

- evaluate the extent to which a unit has successfully addressed student learning and development outcomes and/or business and service outcomes.

- identify obstacles that inhibit a unit from achieving its desired goals and develop ways in which these obstacles can be managed.

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Principles of Student Life Program Review

Fundamental to the success of Program Review are the use of a core set of principles serving as important criteria for our work.

- **Principle 1**: The primary reasons for conducting program reviews are to ensure the continuation of high quality programs and services in Student Life and to ensure that our offerings are central to the role and mission, overarching goals and priorities of Student Life and the university.

- **Principle 2**: What can be gained from reviews of programs and services is as important for attaining program quality and effectiveness as the report or conclusions derived from the reviews.

- **Principle 3**: All Student Life units contribute to the work of Student Life as a whole; therefore, all units will be a part of the program review process.

- **Principle 4**: It is important to establish a safe climate for inquiry as we conduct our program reviews. Participants must experience a sense of trust and confidentiality in the review process, knowing that sensitive information will not be shared or reported publicly.

- **Principle 5**: Broad faculty, staff and student participation in program reviews is essential in order to gain important insights and ideas for improvement as well as a broad recognition and understanding of unit strengths.

- **Principle 6**: Program reviews are independent of any other type of review, but should be scheduled to complement and support other unit-specific accrediting processes to reduce unnecessary duplication of effort and ease the overall workload of preparing for agency accreditation.

- **Principle 7**: Although reviews are unit-specific, it is important that the Office of Student Life financially supports and administers the initiatives. This division commitment to evaluating its programs and services sends a strong message about the value Student Life places on Program Review as a continuous improvement strategy.

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Oversight and Coordination of the Program Review Process

The Office of Student Life oversees Program Review and assigns a staff member or members the responsibility of Program Review administration, under the auspices of the Center for the Study of Student Life (CSSL). Costs and funding associated with unit reviews will reside in the Office of Student Life. The funding allotted for each review will vary depending on the size and complexity of the unit under review. The Office of Student Life, through CSSL, and the unit under review will share responsibility for carrying out reviews.

Program review administration responsibilities handled by the Office of Student Life Program Review Coordinator(s) will include:

- establishing and maintaining the overall program review cycle

- managing individual unit program review calendars

- notifying units scheduled for review

- planning and conducting unit program review orientation meetings

- arranging meetings and meeting room space for all program review sessions

- participating in unit program review meetings as needed

- developing and overseeing unit program review budgets in consultation with the unit under review

- forming External Unit Review Committees in consultation with the unit under review and the relevant Assistant/Associate Vice President, with final approval of the Senior Vice President for Student Life

- reviewing unit self-studies for completeness of information

- making arrangements related to the External Review Committee's site visit, including hotel reservations, travel and honorarium

- ongoing consultation with members of the unit self-study teams and External Review Committees to ensure that the process remains on schedule, that issues or questions are addressed and all steps in the review process are completed

- coordinating discussion meetings and distributing and signing off on the action plans resulting from unit reviews

- monitoring the action plan follow-up reporting

- evaluating the review process itself and implementing recommendations for improvement to the program review process as deemed necessary

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The Student Life Program Review Coordinator(s) will also serve in a support role for the program review responsibilities assigned to the units under review. The responsibilities for those units include:

- appointing a unit staff member to serve as the primary contact for review-related activities

- forming the unit self-study team

- deciding/confirming the self-study protocol

- gathering evidence, data and information for inclusion in self-study

- contributing to the formation of the External Review Committees

- conducting the self-study and compiling information for use by the External Review Committees

- assisting with the gathering of additional data requested by the External Review Committees

- arranging meetings and meeting room space for all program review sessions

- providing copies of the various unit review reports and action plans for distribution to review Committee members and university administrators

- drafting action plans in consultation with relevant Assistant/Associate Vice President and the Senior Vice President for Student Life

- executing the action plan and submitting action plan progress reports

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Program Review Cycle

Student Life unit program reviews will occur on a five-year cycle. The Senior Vice President for Student Life, in consultation with the Student Life Executive Team, develops this schedule. When possible, the schedule is coordinated with other review and accreditation activities.

Accreditation reviews are conducted for other purposes and do not take the place of Student Life program reviews. However, elements of and preparation for these reviews may overlap; therefore, coordination of these reviews will occur to eliminate unnecessary duplication of effort. Where possible, university functional reviews involving Student Life units will be scheduled to coincide with the Student Life program reviews.

The schedule is flexible; the Senior Vice President for Student Life, in consultation with senior staff, may revise it. A unit can request a program review at any time. When circumstances warrant, Student Life may extend or postpone a review. In situations where Program Review indicates very serious problems in the unit, the unit will be added back into the schedule for re-review on an accelerated basis to ensure that identified problems have been addressed.

Program Review Process and Timeline

The Student Life program review process consists of four phases:

1. Pre-Review (90 to 100 days before visit): Unit orientation; Nomination and approval of program review committee members; Committee member invitations; Reservations

2. Self-Study (30 to 100 days before visit): Self-Study planning; Information/evidence/document collection; Establish self-study protocol; Complete self-study; Committee orientation

3. Site Visit / Constituent Meetings (0 to 30 days after visit): Constituent/Stakeholder/Partner meetings; Presentation of preliminary findings; Submission of final report

4. Response, Action Plan (60 days after visit, and ongoing): Respond to recommendations via action plan; Semi-annual review of progress

The explanation of each phase below includes guidelines for the review process. While guidelines are not binding and may be adapted to the needs of the individual unit under review, units should follow them as closely as possible.

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The normal timeline required for the program review process includes a pre-review preparation period, a two- or three-day site visit, 30 days to complete final report and 30 days to complete an action plan. Actual time for each step may vary according to the unit and the unique needs of each review.

Pre-Review (90 to 100 days before visit)

Notification of Unit(s) Scheduled for Review
Using the established five-year review calendar, the Senior Vice President for Student Life, the relevant Associate/Assistant Vice President and/or the Program Review Coordinator(s) will notify units slated for review.

Unit Review Orientation Meeting Scheduled/Held
The Student Life Program Review Coordinator(s) will meet with unit staff to discuss the review process, answer questions and provide clarification about the process and emphasize the importance of all members of the unit being active participants in the review.

Formation of the Self-Study Review Committee
The unit director, in consultation with unit staff, will identify and invite people to serve as members of the self-study team. Members of unit, and where appropriate, advisory councils, should be included on the self-study team.

Identification and Formation of External Review Committee and Scheduling of Site Visit
The External Review Committee will consist of two to three people from outside the university who have expertise in the area under review. Where appropriate, experts should be selected from similar offices or functional areas at other universities and from the private sector.

The unit director, relevant Associate/Assistant Vice President and Program Review Coordinator(s) will generate a list of potential Committee participants for their collective deliberation. They should identify more potential participants than there are slots to fill. They should present sound rationale for why they have nominated each person. From these names, a list of suitable Committee members is developed. This list of suitable Committee members is forwarded to the Senior Vice President for Student Life for consideration. The Senior Vice President for Student Life identifies a final list of approved Committee members. Program Review Coordinator(s) will send invitations to the individuals identified. If a person is unable to serve, another person from the approved list will be contacted until the Committee is formed. The External Review Committee will be invited to campus to conduct a two- to three-day site visit, or a two- to three-day virtual site visit.

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Unit Self-Study and Unit Self-Study Report (30 to 100 days before visit)

The unit self-study provides the basis for the review process. It represents a valuable opportunity for the unit to make a candid assessment of itself and to consider future directions and options that might strengthen it. Each unit will prepare a self-study report using as its framework a self-study protocol based on:

- Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) Self-Assessment Guide (SAG),
- accreditation standards,
- other national standards,
- or a combination.

Where appropriate, Self-Assessment Guides from the Council for the Advancement of Standards should be used. Current Self-Assessment Guides are maintained by the Program Review Coordinator(s). For some units, more than one Self-Assessment Guide may be appropriate; in those cases, the unit director should work with the Program Review Coordinator and Assistant/Associate Vice President to establish the self-study protocol. Hybrid self-study protocols are permissible with AVP approval.

The goals of the Unit Self-Study Report are to:

- address how well the unit performs in relation to its objectives, institutional priorities and Student Life goals and strategic initiatives
- define ways, primarily within existing resources, that the unit can continue to improve in the quality of its programs, services, activities and operations
- provide evidence of the excellence and effectiveness of the unit's programs, activities, services and operations

Documents and other materials that will inform the External Review Committees about the unit should be included in the Unit Self-Study Report. These materials may include data on performance measures through which a unit's success in meeting its goals can be determined.

In general, unit staff should have the opportunity to contribute and review the Unit Self-Study Report, which should represent consensus or state the nature of differences in viewpoints before its submission as a final report. In general, the length of the narrative portion of the report should not exceed 30 pages (exclusive of appendices and position descriptions).

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The unit self-study committee should submit the complete report (including appendices) to the Office of Student Life Program Review Coordinator(s). The Program Review Coordinator(s) will review the Unit Self-Study Report for completeness. The Coordinator(s) will return incomplete reports to the unit with detailed feedback on how to revise the report.

The final Unit Self-Study Report will be sent to members of the External Review Committee in preparation for their review.

External Program Review and Site Visit (0 to 30 days after visit)

The External Review Committee, as experts in the field, will be encouraged to evaluate the unit in its national context and provide insight and feedback on issues and trends particular to the unit operations under review. The external reviewers will receive and study the Unit Self-Study Report and corresponding materials in advance of their site visit.

The site visit should span a two- to three-day period to allow sufficient time for the reviewers to meet with unit staff, administrators, faculty, students and others; to visit facilities; and to meet as a review team to discuss points that will be included in their analysis. Virtual site visits are possible, to be decided by director of unit under review, relevant AVP and Program Review Coordinator(s).

At the conclusion of their visit, the External Review Committee will meet with the director of unit under review, relevant AVP and unit personnel to share their initial observations. Within two to four weeks of their visit, the external reviewers will be asked to provide a written assessment of the strengths, limitations, operational practices, leadership and opportunities for the unit. This report will be sent to the Program Review Coordinator(s).

Developing the Unit Action Plan / Implementing Action Plan / Review of Progress (60 days after visit, and ongoing)

In consultation with the Senior Vice President for Student Life and relevant Assistant/Associate Vice President, a plan of action will be developed. The Unit Action Plan should specify proposed actions, implementation strategies and who is responsible for carrying out each action. If there are review recommendations that the unit is not in agreement with, the action plan should acknowledge these differences in thinking and, where appropriate, present alternative recommendations.

The completed Unit Action Plan is submitted to the Senior Vice President for Student Life and relevant Assistant/Associate Vice President, for review and approval. Progress on implementation of Action Plan should occur at minimum semi-annually, by the director of the unit to the relevant Assistant/Associate Vice President.

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Student Life Program Review Timeline

Four phases:

1. Pre-Review
2. Self-Study
3. Site Visit / Constituent Meetings
4. Response, Action Plan

Activity	Staff Responsible	Time From Visit	Notes
Phase 1: Pre-Review			
Orientation of Directors/AVPs	Program Review Coordinator	100 days	Establish standards and format of Self-Study; Decide dates
Nomination of Program Review	Unit Director/Program Coordinator	95 days	AVP/SVP approval
AVP/SVP approval of Nominees	AVP/SVP	90 days	
Contact Program Review Committee	Program Review Coordinator	90 days	
Reservations: Travel, Hotel, Food, Rooms	Program Review Coordinator	90 days	

Activity	Staff Responsible	Time From Visit	Notes
Phase 2: Self-Study			
Information gathering; Document collection	Unit Director	100 days	
Unit Orientation; Self-Study planning	Program Review Coordinator	90 days	Establish procedure and plan for completion of Self-Study
Establish Study Protocol	Program Review Coordinator/Unit	80 days	Requires AVP approval
Writing Self-Study	Unit Director/Staff	50 days	
Distribute Self-Study to Program Review Coordinator	Unit Director	50 days	
Virtual Orientation of Committee	Program Review Coordinator with Unit Director	Between 45 and 30 days	Overall process; itinerary Self-study and standards
Distribute materials to Committee	Program Review Coordinator	Between 45 and 30 days	Unit Self-Study; OSU/SL materials (e.g., Strategic Plans, Annual Reports)
Confirmation of reservations: Travel, Hotel, Food, Rooms	Program Review Coordinator	21 days	

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Student Life Program Review Timeline Continued

Activity	Staff Responsible	Time From Visit	Notes
Phase 3: Site Visit/Stakeholder meetings			
Stakeholder meetings	Program Review Coordinator	0 days	
Writing report and recommendations	Committee Members	30 days	
Distribute report to Program	Committee	30 days	
Coordinate honorarium distribution, Thank you letters from SVP	Program Review Coordinator	30 days	

Activity	Staff Responsible	Time From Visit	Notes
Phase 4: Response/Action Plan			
Writing Response/Action Plan	Unit Director	60 days	
Distribute Action Plan/Response to AVP/SVP	Unit Director	60 days	
Semi-annual review of progress	Unit Director/AVP Director	Ongoing	