OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE PROGRAM REVIEW
PROGRAM REVIEW GUIDELINES MANUAL

Contents

Purpose of Program Review .................................................................................................................. 3
Principles of Program Review in Student Life .................................................................................... 3
Oversight and Coordination of the Program Review Process .......................................................... 4
Program Review Cycle .......................................................................................................................... 5
Program Review Process and Timeline ............................................................................................... 6
  Pre-Review Preparation ....................................................................................................................... 6
  Unit Self-Study and Unit Self-Study Report ....................................................................................... 8
  Internal Program Review ..................................................................................................................... 9
  External Program Review and Site Visit .............................................................................................. 9
  Unit Program Review Report .............................................................................................................. 10
  Developing the Unit Action Plan ......................................................................................................... 10
  Implementing the Unit Action Plan ..................................................................................................... 11
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 central 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

PRINCIPLES OF PROGRAM REVIEW IN STUDENT LIFE
Fundamental to the success of Program Review is the use of a core set of principles serving as important criterion for our work.

• **Principle 1**: The primary reasons for conducting program reviews is 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 central office 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. Central office coordination of reviews also ensures consistency in the review process and monitoring of results.

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. 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 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 Administrator(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 with participation for the Office of Institutional Research and Planning’s program review coordinator
- 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 Internal Unit Review Panels and External Unit Review Panels in consultation with the unit under review and the Office of Institutional Research and Planning and 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 Panel’s site visit, including hotel reservations, travel and honorarium
- ongoing consultation with members of the unit self-study teams, Internal Review Panels and External Review Panels to ensure that the process remains on schedule, that issues or questions are addressed and that 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
- serving as Student Life’s liaison with the Office of Institutional Research and Planning in conducting Student Life unit reviews and when Student Life units participate in university functional reviews

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

- appointing a unit staff member to serve as the primary contact for review-related activities
- forming the unit self-study team
- contributing to the formation of the Internal and External Review Panels
- conducting the self-study and compiling information for use by the Internal and External Review Panels
- assisting with the gathering of additional data requested by the Internal and External Review Panels
- arranging meetings and meeting room space for all program review sessions
- providing electronic and/or hard copies of the various unit review reports and action plans for distribution to review panel members and university administrators
- drafting action plans in consultation with members of the Internal Review Panel, the Senior Vice President for Student Life and senior line reporting supervisor
- executing the action plan and submitting action plan progress reports

PROGRAM REVIEW CYCLE

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

It is important to note that 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.

A schedule of the complete Student Life unit review cycle is available in Appendix A.

PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS AND TIMELINE
The Student Life program review process consists of seven steps:

1. Pre-review preparation
2. Unit self-study and Unit Self-Study Report
3. Internal panel review
4. External panel review and site visit
5. Unit Program Review Report
6. Developing the Unit Action Plan
7. Implementing the Unit Action Plan.

The explanation of each step 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.

The normal timeline required for the program review process includes a pre-review preparation period and 12 months for the review itself. Actual time for each step may vary according to the unit and the unique needs of each review. The one-year schedule, however, creates a timeline that structures and standardizes the review process.

Pre-Review Preparation
September to December

Notification in Writing to Unit(s) Scheduled for Review
Using the established seven-year review calendar, the Senior Vice President for Student Life and/or the Program Review Administrator(s) will notify units slated for review in writing via a letter. The letter of notification will include a copy of the Program Review Guidelines Manual and other specific information regarding the review.

Unit Review Orientation Meeting Scheduled/Held
The Student Life Program Review Administrator(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 Panel
The unit director, in consultation with unit staff, will identify and invite people to serve as members of the self-study team. Student Life suggests that members of unit or program
advisory councils should be included on the self-study team.

**Identification and Formation of Internal Review Panel**

The Internal Review Panel will consist of five to eight people from outside the Office of Student Life, but within the University, who can provide an objective and informed institutional perspective to the program review process. Panel members will be chosen based on their suitability for a specific unit review.

The unit director, unit supervisor and Program Review Administrator(s) will generate a list of potential panel 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 panel members is developed, again including more names than panel slots.

This list of suitable panel members is forwarded to the Senior Vice President for Student Life for consideration. In consultation with senior staff, the Senior Vice President for Student Life identifies a final list of approved panel members.

The Senior Vice President for Student Life and/or the Program Review Administrator(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 panel is formed.

**Identification and Formation of External Review Panel and Scheduling of Site Visit**

The External Review Panel 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, unit supervisor and Program Review Administrator(s) will generate a list of potential panel 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 panel members is developed, again including more names than panel slots.

This list of suitable panel members is forwarded to the Senior Vice President for Student Life for consideration. In consultation with senior staff, the Senior Vice President for Student Life identifies a final list of approved panel members.

The Senior Vice President for Student Life and/or the Program Review Administrator(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 panel is formed.

The External Review Panel will be invited to campus to conduct a two- to three-day site visit.
Unit Review Issues, Topics and Performance Criteria Finalized
Using the Student Life Performance Review Criteria (Appendix B), the unit director, in consultation with the Senior Vice President for Student Life and the Student Life Program Review Administrator(s), will finalize the list of issues, topics and performance criteria for use in the unit’s review.

Unit Self-Study and Unit Self-Study Report
(January – March)

The unit self-study provides the basis for the entire 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 the Student Life Performance Review Criteria (Appendix B) and any other questions and/or topics that identified for study. These criteria will provide a structure for the review.

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 units’ programs, activities, services and operations

Documents and other materials that will inform the Internal and External Review Panels 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. A list of suggested Unit Self-Study Report documents that should be included as appendices is available in Appendix C.

All unit staff should see 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 vitae/resumes).

The unit self-study panel should submit the complete report (including appendices) to the Office of Student Life Program Review Administrator(s). Electronic transmission of the complete report is the preferred method, but if electronic copies of all materials are not available, the panel may submit unbound print copies of these documents instead.

The Program Review Administrator(s) will review the Unit Self-Study Report for completeness. The administrator(s) will return incomplete reports to the unit with detailed feedback on how to revise the report.
Copies of the final Unit Self-Study Report will be sent to members of the Internal Review Panel in preparation for their review.

**Internal Program Review**  
*(April – June)*

The internal review procedure and itinerary should be flexible and may be influenced by the results of the self-study. Generally, the Internal Review Panel will conduct its review based on the Unit Self-Study Report. In addition, the panel may wish to conduct interviews or focus groups with students, faculty, university administrators and other staff and individuals who have contact with the unit under review. The panel may gather additional data as needed.

The Internal Review Panel will draft a preliminary report of their findings and recommendations with emphasis on the strengths and limitations of the unit; how the unit can continue to improve the quality of its programs and services; the efficiencies of the unit’s operational practices; and where the unit can contribute more fully to Student Life or university priorities. Copies of the preliminary Internal Review Report will be sent to members of the External Review Panel in preparation for their site visit.

**External Program Review and Site Visit**  
*(July – August)*

The External Review Panel, 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 and the Internal Review Panel’s preliminary report 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 the Internal Review Panel, 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.

The Internal Review Panel is encouraged to use the External Review Panel to answer questions and address issues that they are not qualified to answer. These questions and issues should be posed to the external reviewers in advance of or at the beginning of their campus visit. Because of their expertise in the specific field, members of the unit under review may view the external reviewers with more credibility than the Internal Review Panel and may raise different issues with the external reviewers than with the internal reviewers. Thus, the External Review Panel should view the list of issues and questions provided by the Internal Review Panel as a guide and be open to different issues and questions raised during their site visit.

Ideally, at the conclusion of their visit, the External Review Panel will meet with the
members of the Internal Review Panel, the Program Review Administrator(s) 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 Administrator(s) for distribution the Internal Unit Review Panel for their use in writing the final report.

**Unit Program Review Report**  
*(September)*

The Internal Review Panel is responsible for preparing the final Unit Program Review Report using information from the Unit Self-Study Report, their Internal Review Panel findings and the External Review Panel findings. Appendix D outlines key elements that should be included in the final Unit Program Review Report.

To avoid any factual errors in the Unit Program Review Report, the chair of the Internal Review Panel will share the report with the unit’s director. The unit director is advised not to discuss the report prior to submission.

The Unit Program Review Report with the External Review Panel findings attached as an addendum is forwarded to the Senior Vice President for Student Life, the Student Life Program Review Administrator(s) and the unit director and supervisor. A meeting is scheduled for the chair of the Internal Review Panel, the Senior Vice President for Student Life, the unit supervisor and members of the unit management team to discuss the findings and recommendations presented in the final report.

Electronic submission of the Unit Program Review Report is preferred; however, if there are documents for which an electronic copy is unavailable, an unbound, print copy should be submitted.

**Developing the Unit Action Plan**  
*(October – December)*

Following consultation with the Senior Vice President for Student Life and the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, 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 for review and approval. The Senior Vice President for Student Life will circulate the action plan for signoff by the appropriate parties determined by the Senior Vice President for Student Life. Signed copies of the Unit Action Plan will be distributed to the proper offices.
Implementing the Unit Action Plan
(January of the next year and beyond)

The Office of Student Life will evaluate progress on the unit’s action plan via updates included in the unit’s annual budget report and annual year-end report.