

# Academic Program Review

## University of Oklahoma

### Overview

Academic Program Review (APR) is a form of institutional self-study mandated for every degree-granting unit at the University of Oklahoma by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The first cycle of program review at OU began in 1986-87 (For background, see [OSRHE Policies & Procedures, 3.7 Academic Program Review, p. 28](#) and OU Faculty Handbook 5.37.).

Academic units are reviewed every seven years. The reviews are under the auspices of the Provost's Office and are handled by the Senior Vice Provost. The reviews are characterized by several themes:

- 1) The reviews are meant to be collegial and are based on peer review.
- 2) The reviews should be forward-looking and directed toward improvement of the program.
- 3) The reviews should be scholarly, evaluative, and based on academic criteria. They should seek to define questions that will help increase the understanding of the unit.
- 4) Every attempt should be made to make the review an objective process.
- 5) The reviews are meant to be comprehensive in that they view the programs in terms of how they are connected to the university and to the intellectual discipline at large.
- 6) The reviews should be focused on how to improve the program without additional resources. The review should address if there are more efficient or economical ways to run the programs and the effectiveness of the program.
- 7) The review will address short and long term demand for the programs in each unit and direction of change in demand for each program.
- 8) The reviews should be dynamic and should lead to improvements in programs.

### Objectives

The purpose of the program review is to improve the quality of education at the University of Oklahoma. Academic programs require regular review and self-examination to improve and program review is a crucial part of this process.

The process should provide a useful academic review to the unit, Budget Dean, and Provost. From the administrative point of view, the review can be important for long range planning by providing data on the overall health of a unit, faculty resources, student demand, facilities, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the unit. For the unit, the review can provide a mechanism for

improvement and change. The faculty should participate in the process and the review is important for faculty governance. Externally, the reviews provide the opportunity for the university to be accountable to the students, taxpayers, donors, funding agencies, accreditation organizations (Higher Learning Commission - North Central Association [HLC-NCA]), and state government (e.g., State Regents).

Questions that are commonly addressed during program review include the following:

- Is the teaching in the unit effective and useful?
- Is the curriculum appropriate, given the numbers and qualifications of the faculty?
- Are department resources sufficient to meet the student demand?
- Are the faculty's publication record and/or other indicators of creative activity indicative of high quality?
- Does the unit encourage faculty to seek external funding for their research/creative activity?
- Is this a unit that is recognized within its professional community for the quality of its contributions?
- What is the opinion of experts from outside the university?
- Does the unit have a forward-looking strategic plan?
- Is the unit successfully meeting its' own mission as well as the mission of the university?
- Does the unit have a plan to incorporate service learning into the curriculum?

## **Procedures (See attached Timetable)**

The APR Process is coordinated by the Senior Vice Provost (SVP) in the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost. The two-year review process consists of:

- 1) During the fall prior to the review, the SVP meets with the units to be reviewed to outline and discuss the APR process. The unit is asked to provide a list and contact information for at least six potential external reviewers. The external reviewers should not have connections to the unit unless approved by the Senior Vice Provost. The SVP recruits two external reviewers for each unit during the following spring/summer semester for on-site reviews during the APR.
- 2) During the spring and summer, academic units prepare a self-study document which is supplemented by university generated quantitative departmental profile information as well as results from an online survey of the faculty and students. The self-study instructions document describes what should be included in the self-study. The self-studies are submitted to the SVP in late August or early September.
- 3) In the late summer/early fall of the first year, the SVP forms the APR committee which consists of a representative from the office of Dean of the Graduate College, representatives from two dean's offices of colleges whose units are not under review, and faculty approved by the Faculty Senate.
- 4) At an organizational meeting of the APR committee, the SVP explains the APR process. Each member will be responsible for writing a draft report for one unit although the reports are consensus documents. At this meeting, the APR committee is divided into two subcommittees (A and B) the SVP serving as chair of each subcommittee. Each subcommittee will be assigned 4-6 units depending on the number of units undergoing review.
- 5) Both APR subcommittees will have hour-long meetings to discuss the self-study of each unit undergoing review (4-6 meetings depending on number of units undergoing review). During these discussions, it is assumed that each member of the committee has read the self-study document. The primary reviewer for the unit leads the discussion. These meetings generally consist of moving carefully through the self-study report to ask and answer questions that arise. The committee may find that some questions cannot be answered by the information in the self-studies. These questions are drafted and sent to the unit chair/director.
- 6) When the questions have been answered by the chair/director and returned to the appropriate subcommittee, the chair/director of the units are invited to come to a meeting to discuss the questions and other aspects of the review (on-site visit, external reviewer report, etc.). This meeting occurs in the late fall/early spring semester.
- 7) After meeting with the chair/director, the APR subcommittees meet with the unit deans to discuss the self-study questions.

- 8) On-site visits of the external reviewers will take place during the fall semester (or spring semester if extenuating circumstances) of the review depending on their availability and the unit's schedule. The external reviewers are given the self-study document along with institutional data provided to the units in preparation of the document. The 2-day visit starts with a breakfast meeting with the SVP and ends with an exit meeting with the appropriate APR subcommittee. The units are responsible for creating an itinerary for the reviewers. The reviewers are provided with a suggested template for their document but are not required to use it. They are given a month to complete and submit their team review report. The SVP shares the external reviewer report with the unit chair/director and the APR committee.
- 9) When the APR committee feels comfortable, the draft committee report (see guidelines) for each unit is written based on their review and the review report of the external team. Some units will have as few as 3 drafts; some as many as 5-6; it depends on the complexity of the unit report, the degree of problems (if any) in the unit, and the quality of discussions in previous meetings.
- 10) When the APR committee feels that the draft report is ready, it is sent to the unit for their review and as a check to correct any factual errors. A final meeting is scheduled with the APR committee, Provost, SVP, budget dean, APR Subcommittee (must include lead and co lead report writers), chair/director, and the unit faculty. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the report and generally provide a forum for the exchange of ideas.
- 11) During the meeting, possible revisions are discussed. If revisions are necessary, a final draft is prepared following the final meeting and sent to the Provost with copies to the unit and the budget dean.
- 12) During the semester after the final meeting, the budget dean and the unit chair/director prepare an action plan for the unit. A draft version of this action plan is shared with the academic unit at a meeting of the unit with the budget dean. After this meeting, a final version of the budget dean's action plan is shared with the unit and sent to the Provost.

## OU (Norman) Academic Program Review (APR) Timetable (2 years)

Fall, Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Senior Vice Provost (SVP) meets with units who will be reviewed the next year to discuss procedures. The key parts of the departmental profile are discussed. The units are asked to provide contact information for six external reviewers from peer institutions.</li> <li>• SVP conducts online survey of the faculty and students (via Office of Academic Assessment), requests departmental profile dataset from IRR, and sends the survey result and the dataset to the unit.</li> <li>• Unit prepares self-study.</li> </ul>
Spring/Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SVP forms external review committees and the internal APR committee and requests approval of the APR committee from the Faculty Senate.</li> </ul>
Fall, Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Units submit self-studies to the SVP last week of August or first week of September.</li> <li>• SVP meets with APR committee to describe process and works with the external review teams and the units to schedule the on-site visits.</li> <li>• APR committee discusses each self-study and develops a list of questions for the unit.</li> </ul>
Fall/Spring, Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External review teams conduct on-site visits.</li> <li>• External team reports are received, and each unit is discussed by the committee.</li> </ul>
Spring, Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions are sent to the unit chair/director and each chair/director is invited to meet with the APR Committee.</li> <li>• APR committee meets with Deans for an overview of the units.</li> <li>• The committee reaches consensus and a draft report for each unit is written by one member.</li> <li>• Committee members make revisions and shares both the internal and the external review reports with the Provost.</li> <li>• Draft report sent to unit to check for factual errors.</li> <li>• Final meeting with unit, APR committee, Dean, SVP, and Provost to discuss APR committee recommendations.</li> </ul>
By December, Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dean and unit address recommendations in an “Action Plan.” Should be completed by December.</li> </ul>