

## 3.7 ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

### 3.7.1 Purpose

In carrying out constitutional responsibilities within the framework of 70 O.S. §3208 (2001), the State Regents recognize the primary role of institutional faculty, administrators, and governing boards in initiating and recommending needed changes in functions and educational programs. Each institution has a distinct mission, academic expertise and understanding of its own programs; the institutionally developed review reports will be the foundation of the statewide review process. It is therefore both desirable and necessary that institutions provide leadership in developing processes and criteria for the review of educational programs and functions at the campus level. The results of institutions' review of educational programs in connection with this policy will be utilized at the campus level to make determinations about the quality and efficiency of instructional programs. Also, the outcomes of such program review will assist the State Regents in decision making at the state level with regard to educational programs and functions.

Program review is the method by which the State Regents and the institutions evaluate proposed and existing programs. The primary purposes of program review are:

- A. To maintain and enhance the quality of instruction, research, and public service conducted at state colleges and universities.
- B. To respond to existing and emerging social, cultural, technological, scientific, and economic needs (including addressing the needs of business/industry).
- C. To provide to citizens a variety of high-quality opportunities for intellectual growth.
- D. To make programs commonly accessible to academically qualified citizens of the state.
- E. To utilize the state's and the institution's resources effectively and efficiently.

Informed decisions related to program initiation, expansion, contraction, consolidation and termination as well as reallocation of resources are among those that may result from the program review process.

The policy that follows strikes a balance between legitimate needs for program improvement, public accountability and institutional autonomy in matters of internal management. Further, it recognizes the roles as defined by tradition and statute of institutions and their governing boards, and the State Regents. It is knowledge-based rather than opinion- and intuition-based; it requires conclusions be based on analysis and assessment of qualitative and quantitative information reviewed and summarized in a written report by an internal or external team as defined in policy.

At the community colleges, programs culminating in associate in arts and associate in science degrees may be reviewed collectively instead of individually when there is no substantive major field of study.

### 3.7.2 Definitions

The following words and terms, when used in the Chapter, shall have the following meaning, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Academic Plan” is an annual report submitted to the State Regents by institutions that provides a mechanism to view each institution’s accomplishments, priorities and aspirations about current and future plans including technology, academic efficiencies, learning sites, strategic plan, academic priorities and enrollment projects.

“External Review Team” refers to academic peer evaluators from outside the institution who are proficient in the specialization pertinent to the academic program being reviewed. The peer evaluators will be made aware of the academic department’s mission and the academic program’s scope prior to the evaluation.

“Internal Review Team” refers to academic peer evaluators from within the institution who do not teach in the same program being reviewed.

“Low Producing Programs” do not meet the criteria measures specified in this policy.

“Program” is a sequentially organized series of courses and other educational experiences designed to culminate in an academic degree or certificate. For purposes of this policy, instructional program, academic program, and course of study will be considered synonymous.

### 3.7.3 Institutional Autonomy and Responsibility

The philosophy of the State Regents supports institutional autonomy in matters of internal management. Therefore, each institution should assume primary responsibility for the review of proposed and existing programs consistent with governing board guidelines. This central role of the institutions is based on the concept that self-studies, reviews and evaluations, and subsequent recommendations must provide for institutional participation and be sensitive to institutional needs, e.g., accreditation requirements, internal plans, program improvement decisions, resource allocation patterns, etc. The process of review is also an institutional prerogative within the framework of the components specified in this State Regents' policy and general procedures.

### 3.7.4 Program Review Principles

All degree programs in the State System are scheduled for review on a five-year cycle. The review will encompass all levels of degree programs. Certificates embedded in a degree program will be included in the associated degree program review. Certificates not embedded in a program will be reviewed independently. Institutions that have programs with special accreditation status may request the program review coincide with the accrediting body’s review cycle. The institution must provide documentation from the accrediting body to set the review cycle. Research institutions may request an alternative review schedule.

At the core of the review process is the selection of criteria to be used in the evaluation. Both qualitative and quantitative criteria must be included in the review process. Careful collection and analysis of data is essential to the review process. The various criteria may be weighted differently for each program depending upon its objectives; the evaluation should make clear the relative weight given to the criteria by the institution.

### 3.7.5 Program Review Criteria

Analysis and assessment of program review should be determined from an institutional perspective using the Program Review Criteria. The outcome of the qualitative and quantitative program review analysis shall be used to improve program quality and student learning as outlined in this policy. This section is designed to provide sufficient flexibility to accommodate the differences existing among Oklahoma's public institutions while ensuring their program review processes meet consistent measures. Recommendations may include: modifying, suspending, or deleting programs, as set forth in this policy.

The criteria listed below are designed to facilitate the analytical evaluation of the present goals and objectives, activities, outcomes, strengths and identify areas of improvement for the program. These criteria will form the basis for an institution's program review self-study. Each criterion should be applied to the program under review and addressed by whatever process the institution identifies as appropriate (i.e., internal or external review process).

#### A. Centrality of the Program to the Institution's Mission

An assessment and written analysis as to the centrality of the program to the institution's mission and in the context of the institution's academic plan are required. The purpose of the mission of an institution is to indicate the direction in which the institution is going now and in the future. The mission defines the fundamental reason for the existence of the institution. Together with the planning principles and goal statements, the mission reveals the philosophical stance of the institution with respect to education and learning while at the same time providing a framework for the maintenance of institutional integrity and development.

#### B. Vitality of the Program

Vitality of the program refers to the activities and arrangements for insuring its continuing effectiveness and efficiency. To maintain its vitality and relevance, a program must plan for the continuous evaluation of its goals, clientele served, educational experiences offered, educational methods employed, including the effective incorporation of technology, and the use of its resources. This vital principle or force can best be observed by examining the past and present initiatives to insure the vitality of the faculty, students, and program.

1. Program Objectives and Goals

Objectives should be written so that the need they address is clear; program outcomes can be assessed; and program clientele are specified. Program objectives and goals are extremely important not only because they guide the activities of the program but also because they provide the context for program assessment and planning.

2. Quality Indicators

Quality indicators may vary by institutional mission; however, institutions should measure the efforts and quality of their programs by: faculty quality, ability of students, achievements of graduates of the program, curriculum, library, access to information technology resources including efficiencies and improved learner outcomes through appropriate use of this technology and appropriate use of instructional technology to achieve educational objectives, special services provided to the students and/or community, and other critical services. As appropriate, institutions should evaluate the program against industry or professional standards utilizing internal or external review processes. Institutions must provide specific documentation of student achievement. Such documentation should include programs outcomes assessment data consistent with the State Regents' *Student Assessment and Remediation* policy. Program quality may also be reflected by its regional or national reputation, faculty qualifications, and the documented achievements of the graduates of the programs. This includes a program self-review that provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission and how it relates to Higher Learning Commission Criteria and Components listed below:

- The program's goals for student learning outcomes are clearly stated for each educational program and make effective assessment possible.
- The program values and supports effective teaching.
- The program creates effective learning environments.
- The program's learning resources support student learning and effective teaching.
- The institution's curricular evaluation involves alumni, employers, and other external constituents who understand the relationship among the course of study, the currency of the curriculum, and the utility of the knowledge and skills gained.

- The organization learns from the constituencies it serves and analyzes its capacity to serve their needs and expectations.

3. Minimum Productivity Indicators

The following are considered to be the minimum standards for degree program productivity (averaged over five years). Programs not meeting these standards may be identified for early review as low producing programs. Institutions will be notified of programs not meeting either one of the two standards listed below and other quantifiable measures in this section.

a. Degrees conferred:

Associate in Arts and Associate in Science	5
Associate in Applied Science	5
Baccalaureate Level	5
Master's Level	3
Doctoral Level	2

b. Majors Enrolled:

Associate in Arts and Associate in Science	25 head count
Associate in Applied Science	17 head count
Baccalaureate Level	12 head count
Master's Level	6 head count
Doctoral Level	4 head count

4. Other Quantitative Measures

- a. The number of courses taught exclusively for the major program for each of the last five years and the size of classes for each program level listed below:

Associate in Arts and Associate in Science
Associate in Applied Science
Baccalaureate Level
Master's Level
Doctoral Level

- b. Student credit hours by level generated in all major courses that make up the degree program for five years.
- c. Direct instructional cost for the program for the review period.
- d. The number of credits and credit hours generated in the degree program that support the general education component and other major programs including certificates.
- e. A roster of faculty members including the number of full-time equivalent faculty in the

specialized courses within the curriculum.

- f. If available, information about employment or advanced studies of graduates of the program over the past five years.
- g. If available, information about the success of students from this program who have transferred to another institution.

The comprehensive support function of the courses supporting the degree program may be used to determine whether or not an early program review is warranted. See 3.7.6.A for details.

#### 5. Duplication and Demand

Given the fiscal constraints on Oklahoma higher education and the desire to use limited resources wisely, the elimination of unnecessary program duplication is a high priority of the State Regents. In cases where program titles imply duplication, programs should be carefully compared to determine the extent of the duplication and the extent to which that duplication is unnecessary. Not all duplication is undesired or unnecessary. Normally, similar undergraduate programs in the core areas of basic liberal arts and sciences disciplines would not be considered unnecessarily duplicative. Unnecessary duplication is a specific concern in vocational/technical, occupational, graduate and professional programs that meet special manpower needs. There are cases where student demand or the economic development needs of the state are sufficient to warrant the existence of similar programs at different institutions. There is also a vital synergy between undergraduate and graduate education and some graduate programs may be needed to help sustain the quality of the related undergraduate programs. This synergy may be addressed through sharing institutional resources. Program sharing among institutions is encouraged and should be noted in the report.

An assessment of the demand for a program takes into account the aspirations and expectations of students, faculty, administration, and the various publics served by the program. Demand reflects the desire of people for what the program has to offer and the needs of individuals and society to be served by the program.

Consistent with the Academic Program Approval Policy and the historical place of the program in the institution's mission, the following criteria will be used to evaluate the degree to which similar programs are unnecessarily duplicative:

- a. Demand from students, taking into account the profiles of applicants, enrollment, completion data, and occupational data.
  - b. Demand for students produced by the program, taking into account employer demands, demands for skills of graduates, and job placement data.
  - c. Demand for services or intellectual property of the program, including demands in the form of grants, contracts, or consulting.
  - d. Indirect demands in the form of faculty and student contributions to the cultural life and well-being of the community.
  - e. The process of program review should address meeting demands through alternative forms of delivery
6. Effective Use of Resources

The resources used for a program determine, in part, the quality of the educational experiences offered and program outcomes. Resources include financial support (state funds, grants and contracts, private funds, student financial aid); library collections; facilities including laboratory and computer equipment; support services; appropriate use of technology in the instructional design and delivery processes; and the human resources of faculty and staff. The efficiency of resources may be measured by cost per student credit hour; faculty/student ratio; and other measures as appropriate. The effective use of resources should be a major concern in evaluating programs. The resources allocated to the program should reflect the program's priority consistent with the institution's mission statement and academic plan.

### 3.7.6 Low Productivity Review Process

Annual reports on low producing programs will be generated and sent to institutions. Programs that do not meet the minimum productivity standards listed in Section 3.7.5.B.3 will be identified for external review as detailed below. Programs identified for low productivity must be reviewed within one year of State Regents' notification of the required review. State Regents' staff will review and determine exceptions for low-producing programs based on the institution's report.

Programs identified for external review must be granted an exception or be reviewed by an external review team as outlined below. Programs justified through either process will be placed back into the five year cycle.

#### A. Exceptions for Low Producing Programs

Continuation of low producing programs may be justified because of the subject matter, the students served, the

educational methods employed, and the effect of the program's achievements on other institutions or agencies. Such programs may be maintained at an institution even though low enrollments are experienced if acceptable justifications are made. Exceptions for low productivity will be based on the categories listed below. Institutions must provide adequate data and narrative to support the rationale to allow an exception to productivity requirements.

1. New Programs. New programs provisionally approved with a specified period of time to operate and meet certain criteria may be granted an exception until the program gains full approval.
2. Liberal Arts and Sciences Programs. These liberal arts and sciences programs support the general education component and other degree programs, i.e., the continuation of a program may be justified as exempt based on the subject matter and/or service/support function.
3. Offline Programs. Programs scheduled for deletion or suspension.
4. Restructured Programs are expected to meet minimum productivity within a given time period.
5. Special Purpose Programs. The programs are designed to meet the special needs of the state and its constituents (e.g., Women's Studies, Native American Studies, Process Technology, Wind Turbine Technology and Technical Supervision and Management).
6. Data Discrepancies. This includes other factual issues that can be verified.
7. No Cost/Justifiable Cost Programs. Programs that require no additional cost or justifiable costs are not expected to meet minimum standards for productivity as listed in 3.7.5.B.3.

B. External Review Process

The site visit or paper review process identified below will guide the external review of low producing programs not granted an exception:

1. Team Selection. A minimum of two academic peer reviewers from outside the institution will be selected by the chief academic officer, from a list of nominees provided by the department head, after consulting with the program faculty and the appropriate academic officer. Nominees must be from high quality, respected peer programs with proficiency in the areas of specialization that are important to the academic program being reviewed. Institutions must ensure the absence of conflicts of interest by the evaluators

selected.

2. **Review Schedule.** Opportunities should be arranged for team members to communicate with faculty members of the department and chairs of related programs in person or by technological means. The review schedule should be arranged to accommodate the reviewers' need to have time to work individually and as a team.
3. **Materials.** At least four weeks prior to the visit, the following information will be provided to each member of the external review team. Additionally, a copy of this material will be available to the unit undergoing the review and to the central administration review group:
  - a. **Team Charge.** The team will validate and evaluate the extent to which the program meets policy criteria. The team will make and substantiate recommendations to suspend, modify, continue or delete the program. Recommendations to suspend or modify the program will follow procedures outlined in the team report.
  - b. **Self Study.** The institution's program review/self-study report addressing all criteria in policy 3.7.5. The appropriate academic officer and faculty for the program may include areas of emphasis for review (e.g., review of labs, major courses, resource for the program, etc.).
  - c. **Previous Reviews/Findings.** Previous program review reports and any subsequent reports related to previous recommendations will be made available to the team.
  - d. **Review Schedule and Report.** A preliminary schedule for the review (with the understanding that the team may request additional or follow-up interviews or may otherwise choose to modify the proposed schedule), a timeline for submission of the team's preliminary report (including an opportunity for factual changes), and final report with recommendations will be determined by the team chair and academic vice president.
4. **Team Report.** A preliminary draft of the team's report will be provided to the appropriate academic officer for review of factual errors. A final report will be provided to the chief academic officer by the review team within the agreed upon time after the conclusion of the visit. Copies of the final report will be sent to members of the program faculty and administrators after conclusion of

the review. The team will recommend actions that include the following: suspend, modify, delete, or continue the program. If the recommendation includes suspending or modifying the program, the team will state measurable goals required for the program to meet policy requirements and will include a timeline for monitoring the program in one-, two-, three-, or four-year increments. Policy requirements related to program suspension and modification apply.

5. State Regents' Review and Action. The team report and institutional response to the recommendations will be sent to the Chancellor by the President with proposed action, e.g., suspend, modify, delete, or continue. If the recommended action includes suspend or modify the program to meet policy requirements, the recommendations and detailed information about the timeline for monitoring the program will be included in the information that is forwarded to the State Regents. Following State Regents' action, recommendations must be implemented by the institution within one year. Suspended or modified programs with a specified time period recommendation will be monitored by State Regents' staff accordingly.

### 3.7.7 Program Review Reports

Although the length of a written evaluation can be expected to vary with the complexity of the program under consideration, a comprehensive analysis and assessment should be possible within ten or fewer pages. Each program review report must be submitted to the institutional governing board prior to submission to the State Regents and will include the following:

#### A. Report Format

1. Introduction. This section should reference the general process of the review, including a list of participants (internal or external reviewers) in the review process and any unique features of the review, such as the use of outside consultants or conducting the review in relation to an accreditation visit.

If the program has been reviewed previously, this section should include a brief summary of prior recommendations and how they were addressed.

2. Executive Summary. The Executive Summary will include the program's connection to the institution's mission, program objectives, and the strengths and areas for improvement of the program. It will also include the key findings and recommendations of the internal or external reviews with regard to the Program Review Principles and Program Review Criteria.

3. Analysis and Assessment. This section will include a complete review and analysis of the Program Review Criteria based on the internal or external team's review. It will also assess developments since the last program review in the context of the current recommendations of the internal review and any recommendations.
4. Program Review Recommendations. This section should start with a description of recommendations that have been made as a result of the review and of actions that are planned to implement these recommendations; for example, expand program, maintain program at current level, reduce program in size or scope, merge or consolidate program, reorganize program, suspend program or delete program.

Recommendations should be clearly linked and supported by the information and analyses that were articulated in the previous sections and should contain a realistic strategy for implementation of any changes. For example, if the program is recommended for expansion and will require additional resources, the institution will develop a plan for the acquisition or allocation of such resources. If the program is recommended for deletion, the institution will include a plan that outlines the following: personnel matters, number of students enrolled in the program and plans to accommodate them, and identify resources and the amount that will be available for reallocation.

If the program is recommended for suspension it will be placed in an inactive status, no students recruited or admitted to the program, and the program will not be listed in the college/university catalog. The program will be reinstated or deleted within three years or other specified period designated when placed on suspension.

B. State Regents' Review and Action

The State Regents' staff will review the respective institutions' program reviews. The staff may request additional information or evidence at this time from the institution. Following the completion of the State Regents' staff review, the staff will provide summary of the report and recommendations to the State Regents. State Regents' action will be conveyed in writing to the institution's president.

C. Monitoring the Review Process

Each institution will monitor the program review process and modify internal procedures to improve its effectiveness. The State Regents' staff will monitor the overall process and suggest improvements as appropriate. Detailed procedures for program review reporting are in the State Regents' *Academic Affairs*

*Procedures Handbook* and are available upon request.

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