### Academic Program Review Guidelines
#### Effective 2014

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**Basis for USM Academic Program Review**

The primary focus and purpose of academic program review is continually improving the quality of programs through self-reflection, analysis, and goal-setting for the future.

The comprehensive approach to program review provides evidence and support for systematic improvement in the key areas of planning, curriculum development and management, professional development, and resource (budget and time) allocation.

More broadly, program review provides a context for examining how the program presents itself within the university community and to the outside world. In this regard, academic program review also serves as an accountability measure to external constituents and stakeholders.
Guiding Organizations for Academic Program Review

The University of Southern Maine Constitution includes Academic Program Review in Part II, Article II, Section V.

The University of Maine System (UMS) requires academic program review. The guidelines, including timelines for new and continuing programs, are appended to this document and can be read in the system-wide Administrative Procedures Manual. Please take the time to read this information; familiarity with the guidelines is important to the academic program review process.

The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) Standards for Accreditation governs all aspects of the university. These standards demand focused attention on program review, assessment of student learning outcomes, and progress toward achievement of mission (institutional effectiveness).

NEASC accreditation is essential to USM; the standards inform the academic program review process. The full set of standards can be found at: http://cihe.neasc.org/standards_policies/standards/.

The standards that relate directly to academic program review and student learning outcomes assessment are presented in the sidebar.

In constructing the self study, programs should explicitly incorporate information from their annual Assessment of Student Learning Plans (ALSP’s), from relevant Core course assessment documents (including Core Course Blueprints) as well as any department-based assessment materials.

Accredited programs may request to substitute the specialized accreditation for the program review self-study. Such requests are negotiated between the college dean and Provost.

NEASC Standards for Academic Program Review and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

- 2.5 The institution has a system of periodic review of academic and other programs that includes the use of external perspectives.

- 2.6 Evaluation enables the institution to demonstrate through verifiable means its attainment of purposes and objectives both inside and outside the classroom. The results of evaluation are used systematically for improvement and to inform institutional planning, especially as it relates to student achievement and resource allocation.

- 4.2 Through its system of academic administration and faculty participation, the institution demonstrates an effective system of academic oversight, assuring the quality of the academic program wherever and however it is offered.

- 4.4 The institution publishes the learning goals and requirements for each program. Such goals include the knowledge, intellectual and academic skills, and methods of inquiry to be acquired. In addition, if relevant to the program, goals include creative abilities and values to be developed and specific career-preparation practices to be mastered.

- 4.8 The institution develops, approves, administers, and on a regular cycle reviews its degree programs under effective institutional policies that are implemented by designated bodies with established channels of communication and control. Faculty have a substantive voice in these matters.
OVERVIEW of the Process

The Academic Program Review Process has four steps: the self study, the external review, the program response to the external review, and the action plan. These steps are outlined in the appended timeline.

STEP ONE: Self Study

The self study is a candid assessment and includes reflection on accomplishments since the last review, identification of current challenges, and a realistic course for the program’s future for the next seven years.

The self study should be a collaborative product of the chairperson/director, the faculty, and other key constituents and stakeholders within the unit and across the school/college/university.

Data will be automatically generated in September and supplied to the program from Assessment (APLAs), IR (student demographics and performance), financial managers (program cost analysis), and OSP (grants generated) to assist in the analysis and narratives. The data should be appended to the self-study report.

The self study should be comprehensive yet concise. Ideally, the report follows the format of:

1. Abstract with key findings
2. Summary, analysis and goals
   a. Includes review of recommendations from the last program review, mid-cycle report, and the subsequent program improvements that have been implemented.
   b. Includes analysis of the current strengths and weaknesses of the program.
   c. Includes potential program improvements and budget neutral goals.
   d. Includes potential program improvements and goals requiring additional resources.
   e. Includes specific questions to be presented to the external reviewers.

Guiding Principles:

The review should consider the role of the program in the context of the mission and goals of the respective school, college, and overall university.

The self study should be candid and supported by institutional data. It should feature reflection and analysis on the program and be used as the basis for improvement and identification of future goals.

Both the self study and the external review should consider the program as it currently stands and with its current budget. They should illuminate the strengths, limitations, and challenges facing the program in its current state.

The external visit should be used strategically to gain insights into improving the program and the level of student learning.
3. **Narrative/program overview including mission and goals**
   a. Includes how the program contributes to university goals of student success, community engagement, and fiscal sustainability.
   b. Includes study plans (i.e. the 4-year plan of courses a student would take to complete the degree).
   c. Includes evidence that curricula are periodically reviewed and revised as needed to maintain discipline currency and program quality.
   d. Includes schedule and rotation of course offerings and the process used to develop said schedule.

4. **Narrative/learning outcomes and assessment**
   a. Includes identifying learning outcomes including knowledge, skills, and dispositions.
   b. Includes maps of student learning outcomes identifying the learning experiences which support specific outcomes and where in the curriculum an outcome is introduced, reinforced, and mastered.

5. **Narrative/community collaboration**
   a. Includes how the program involves the expertise that exists in other areas of the university and System to support the program, students, faculty, and staff.
   b. Includes how the program shares its own expertise to support the mission of the university.
   c. Includes how the program collaborates across the System to leverage resources beyond USM.
   d. Includes how the program’s curriculum interface with the university’s general education program with attention to ways in which the program encourages and supports faculty teaching in general education.
   e. Includes how the program collaborates with external community organizations.

6. **Narrative/students and alumni**
   a. Includes profile of current students speaking to demographics, first time and transfer students as well as five year projection of the student profile.
   b. Includes analysis of course sections and enrollments for the past three years.
      i. Reference any courses that were canceled due to under-enrollment.
      ii. Reference any courses that have systemic under-enrollment and must be offered regardless, including a three-year projection.
   c. Includes analysis of progression, including credits taught, and completion.
      i. Analysis should cover the most recent three years. Credits should be reported as undergraduate, graduate, and total; and, degrees should be reported by type (BA vs BS) and level (bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral) with totals.
   d. Includes discussion of program 4, 5, and 6 year graduation rates and year to year retention rates differentiating between first time and transfer students.
Also includes average length of time to degree completion for a graduate-level program.

i. Describe the student academic monitoring process

ii. Describe the academic unit advising for the program.

7. Narrative/faculty and staff
   a. Includes discussion of tenure/tenure track and non-tenure track full time faculty, the part time faculty, and the staff including length of employment with the University and program.
   b. Includes discussion of teaching load for full time and part time faculty.
   c. Includes discussion of internal and external professional development activities of faculty and how they are supported. Comment on how the activities contribute to student success, the university, the discipline, and improvements in pedagogy.
   d. Includes discussion of research, scholarship, and creative activity opportunities across the program.

8. Appendix
   Assessment Data
   7 years of ALSP
   7 years of Core Blueprints
   HR Data
   Current year of faculty affiliation, including all tenure, tenure track, part-time, with associated salaries and benefits.
   IR Data
   3 years of student demographics including first time and transfer students
   3 years of 4, 5, 6 year graduation rates
   3 years of retention including first time and transfer students
   3 years of course sections and enrollments
   3 years of full and part time generated SCH
   3 years of SCH taken by undergraduate and graduate
   3 years of degree completion by degree level
   3 years of 4, 5, 6 year graduation rates
   Financial Manager Data
   3 years of non-compensation expenses
   3 years of student wage expenses
   OSP Data
   7 years of grant-related data; proposal submissions and awards received listed by year
The self study process may take up to one semester to research and write. It should include critical stakeholders: faculty, staff, and students. In addition, it should involve external advisory groups as appropriate. The self study should be forwarded to the Dean and the Provost for review and revision prior to sending it to the external reviewers.

**STEP TWO: The External Review**

In the fall semester as the program works on the self study, they must also work on the external review. The chair submits a list of 5-8 potential external reviewers from the University of Maine System, other NEASC schools, and USM to the dean. The list includes the rationale for each reviewer and should be free of potential conflicts of interest. The dean forwards the list of potential external reviewers to the Provost with comments.

In conjunction with the dean, the Provost selects three external reviewers, one each from within the UMaine System, a NEASC institution, and USM or another institution which has a program similar to the USM program.

The Provost sends the letters of invitation to the potential reviewers. Once the full team of three reviewers is confirmed, the Office of the Provost notifies the dean and the chair. The chair provides the review team members with the self study, and coordinates all details of the on-site visit (including personal services contracts, scheduling, travel, accommodations, meals, and itineraries).

The department, the College, and the Office of the Provost will each pay 1/3 of the cost of the review. The department will incur all charges then provide a detailed accounting and invoice to the College and Provost for payment.

A ‘lead reviewer’ is identified for purposes of drafting the review report. The chair makes this determination predicated by conversations with the reviewers and the ability to adhere to the deadline for the external review. It is rarely the USM reviewer.

**External Review Quick Steps:**

**September:** Program identifies potential external reviewers and provides list to Dean. Dean and Provost deliberate and select external reviewers.

**Office of Provost sends letter inviting external reviewers to participate in review.**

**October:** Office of Provost notifies program of review team status. Program sets up personal services contract for each reviewer.

**November:** Program begins to plan site visit including setting times to meet with the Provost, the Dean, faculty, staff, and students.

**December:** Program forwards self study to external review team members and continues to plan the site visit.

**January/February:** Program hosts external reviewers for site visit. Processes stipends and travel reimbursements.

**March:** Dean receives external reviewers report and forwards to program. Program drafts response within 30 days.

**April:** Program forwards self study, external reviewer report, and program response to Dean by April 1.
UMaine System and NEASC reviewers are each compensated $550 and the USM reviewer receives $300 as members of the external review team. The review team members are reimbursed for travel expenses (miles, tolls, overnight, etc). The “lead reviewer” receives an additional $100 for drafting the report.

The site visit is typically one or two days. The schedule should include a tour of the unit’s facilities and meetings with faculty members, students, relevant campus stakeholders, the dean, and the Provost, at a minimum.

The review team sends their draft report to the chair for an accuracy review. After the accuracy is assured, the review team submits the review to the dean by March 1.

**STEP THREE: Unit Response to the Review**

Once the final report is received by the dean, it is transmitted to the unit chair. The program has 30 days (April 1) to submit a response to the review to the dean, if they so desire.

**STEP FOUR: Dean’s Evaluative Report to the Provost and Institutional Action Plan**

The dean writes a brief evaluative report of the program to accompany transmittal of the self-study, the external review, and the unit response. Included will be the dean’s recommendations for future action. Full reports are submitted to the Provost by April 15.

After receiving the full review package from the dean, the Provost assesses the recommendations for future action, writes a brief summary, and meets with the chair and dean regarding the implementation of recommendations.

The Provost then forwards a brief written summary to the President. All components of the academic program review are transmitted to the University System.

Section 305.3 Academic Program Review
Effective: 1/29/87
Last Revised: 1/14/08

Academic program review must be institution-based and reflect an institution’s mission and capacity. Program review should focus on student outcomes and should support a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement through understanding how and what students are learning in their academic program.

Regular program assessment will improve the program review process. Specific identification of program goals and student learning objectives is a critical first step.

1. All academic degree programs are to be reviewed within an established time frame. The schedule of academic program reviews is to be revised biennially in concert with the review and revision of the university operational plan of which it becomes a part. Academic program review schedules are to be submitted to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and any deviations from these review schedules must be approved by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

Program review should be undertaken within five years for new programs and at least every seven years for continuing programs, unless a shorter interval is deemed necessary for specified conditions resulting from a review. The schedule should allow for flexibility and can change to coordinate with the timing of reviews by specialized accrediting bodies. University-level processes should be developed for programs less than degree-level.

2. Academic program review should ensure broad institutional and community representation in the process, including but not limited to appropriate faculty and program alumni. Structures and mechanisms that blend academic affairs and student affairs in a constructive fashion should be encouraged.

3. The program review process on each university should include:

   a. a self-study by the unit being reviewed.

The self-study should include:
• rationale for the program
• five-year summary of program enrollment (number of majors and number of graduates)
• course section enrollments
• number of full-time faculty equivalents
• budgets
• an assessment of progress made in relation to the recommendations of previous program reviews.

The self-study should address the quality of the faculty and the methods used to ensure that quality (such as post-tenure review practices). The quality and appropriateness of the
curriculum should be examined, with attention to such matters as student outcomes assessment and pluralistic perspectives. In addition, the self-study should discuss the relation of the program to the university mission.

b. a report by external reviewers based on a review of the self-study, additional materials as required, and a site visit.

c. a final report by the university, endorsed by the President.

The final report should include:

• a statement on how the program enhances the mission of the university
• a statement on the value of the program to the state and the nation
• a set of recommendations, with rationale, for future action,
• budget implications based on the self-study and the external review, and
• actions taken as a result of previous reviews.

Attention should be given to whether or not a program having had few graduates over a period of years as well as low course section enrollments should be continued. Professional accreditation processes may substitute for appropriate components of this section. The University of Maine System encourages program review and accreditation assessments be held at the same time where possible and appropriate.

4. Program reviews carried out during the previous two years shall become a part of the biennial review and revision of the university operational plan and the recommendations emanating from the review should be taken into consideration in the development of the biennial budget request.

5. Each year, each Chief Academic Officer will submit a report to the Vice Chancellor that summarizes program review activity at the universities. This report should include information on reviews in progress, reviews completed in the past year, an executive summary of the results of completed reviews and actions taken as a result of those reviews.

The Vice Chancellor will review the documents submitted and, based on this review, will recommend that the Chancellor accept the reviews and the recommendations in the final report and initiate any appropriate action(s), or recommend that the Chancellor discuss the review documents with the university President and examine possible future actions. Institutions and the System should fully vet program reviews and provide adequate responses to programs.

Program review documents will be kept on file in the Chancellor’s Office where they can be reviewed by members of the Board of Trustees.