

At-A-Glance Research Overview

The objective of a program review is to conduct effective research so that findings are accurate and resulting recommendations are useful. Below you'll find a summary of some of the more common research techniques involved in the program review process.

Research Method	Used When	Targets	Cautions	Notes
External Reviewer	An expert, outside opinion will contribute to the research effort.	Industry experts/peers at other universities/institutions. Conducts an on-campus visit, interviews unit members, consults with committee members, writes a report and sends to co-chairs.	Represents just one person's view	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss with unit head to determine reviewer Write expectations for the reviewer beforehand Provide guidelines for writing the report <i>Used for almost all reviews</i>
Personal Interviews	The committee needs to quickly learn the key issues affecting the unit.	Mr. King, the unit AVP, members of the unit, key constituents.	These are just individual opinions and perceptions. Look for trends across <i>all</i> research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It helps to interview Mr. King and the unit AVP to understand the university's key intent for the unit <i>Used for almost all reviews</i>
Focus Group	Perceptions of the unit are needed. Ideas about unit improvement from key constituents would be valuable.	Various. A review may consider multiple focus groups, one for customers, one of internal unit members, one of professional colleagues, etc.	A focus group is a moderated discussion, not the vehicle for delivering a survey. The goal is the communication of unrehearsed, top-of-mind perceptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often used to help write surveys 8-12 persons per group with a moderator Sometimes recorded. Good notes should always be taken <i>Used for most reviews</i>
Survey	The unit has a large number of core customers/constituents throughout the campus or off. When trending information from a large group of people is needed.	Those who are most likely to use the unit's services.	The survey instrument should be carefully crafted. Keep a central focus on what you want to learn and do not stray. Keep it brief, be specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Survey Resource team exists to help with all aspects of survey creation, posting, analysis, and reporting. <i>Used for some reviews</i>
Peer Study	The unit is involved in highly specific and/or technical work where it is unrealistic to assume that members of the committee will have much knowledge of the unit's work.	Persons at other universities/institutions who perform the same or similar work.	Each peer will respond to the research out of the context of his or her particular institution. Keep in mind the uniqueness of JMU and the unit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IT, Finance, Public Safety may be key areas where a peer study will help because of the technical nature of the work. <i>Used for some reviews</i>
Document Review	Used when the committee feels that communication and information flow and processing may be at issue.	Documents, manuals, websites, etc.	Since every unit generates volumes of information, it will be important to narrow the focus. You cannot review everything.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Especially important for a unit that depends a great deal on its website for customer service. <i>Used for some reviews</i>
Internal Process Study	Used when a unit's internal data flow and information process is directly tied to customer service success	Work flow charts, interviews with members of the unit, unit data entry policies, etc.	Members of the program review committee may not have enough knowledge to make significant recommendations. Therefore, this subcommittee may take considerable work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Units to which this may apply are those such as Payroll, HR, Budget, Accounts Payable, etc. <i>Used for some reviews</i>