

UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT PROGRAM REVIEW GUIDELINES

Established Fall 2010

Updated February 2020

In compliance with University policy #5002 and the SACSCOC mandates for continuous performance improvement, the University Advancement Program Review is intended to provide departments the opportunity to evaluate and improve departmental performance, in order to best contribute to the university's mission. Reviews are done with and for department directors.

Program reviews will be conducted on a five-year cycle. Each review cycle will last seven to ten months, during three phases. All program reviews must follow the dates and deadlines outlined in the master schedule.

Phase 1 – Self-Study

Timeline steps #1-5

Led by the department director, the self-study will last approximately 6 months (for Alternate Cycle Reviews, it should be 3 months), concluding in a program review self-study "binder". (For environmental and storage reasons, directors are encouraged to pursue digital means for distributing binder contents versus a traditional paper notebook.)

The self-study will include:

- A review and update (if appropriate) of departmental mission, vision, values and organizational chart.
- An analysis of the department's performance against national best practice. The director, working with the AVP and committee chair(s) will select the national standard to be referenced prior to the beginning of the review. This discussion will be held at the opening program review meeting.
- A departmental SWOT analysis
- A review of recommendations established during the department's previous program review.

The product of Phase 1 will be a self-study "binder" that will include the following content:

- Standard UA intro information and table of contents
- Organizational chart.
- Updated mission, vision and value statements
- Review of planning goals and objectives over the past 2 years
- Narrative of the results of the analysis of the department's performance against the national best practices, including relevant data.
- Report on recommendations established during the previous program review.
- SWOT analysis. Led by the department director, department staff should work together to form the SWOT analysis.
- A list of primary university constituents and partners – including contact information, position/title and a brief description of their role with the department (both internal and external constituents & partners).
- A list of key peer institutions, as determined by the Director, with contact information.
- Key short and long-term objectives/initiatives

“Binder” content continued:

- Other information. The department director may wish to include additional information that will aid the committee with understanding your department purpose, culture and ethos.

In addition to the self-study “binder”, departments should be able to produce, if requested by the committee or external reviewer:

- Budget Information for the current and past 2 years
- Policies & Procedures
- Staff position descriptions & EWP’s
- Staff resumes
- Other information, as deemed necessary by the committee

Phase 2 – Committee

Timeline steps #6-9

Lead by the committee chair(s), the committee phase typically lasts three months. The chair(s) will assemble and lead the committee, author the comprehensive program review report and ensure that the program review is completed in a timely fashion.

Under direction of the chair(s), the committee that will review the self-study, conducts its own research and present a program review report. Committee or sub-committee research could include such methods as staff interviews, customer focus groups, surveys, personal internal and/or external interviews & peer reviews. The Office of Institutional Research could help the committee conduct survey research. Written findings and recommendations are provided by sub-committee chairs to the committee chair(s) by the established deadline.

In this phase, key campus stakeholders must be given the opportunity to evaluate the department’s programs and services. Additionally, the department director, unit AVP and VP may identify one or two targeted topics of interest or concern for study by the committee.

The work of the committee should strive to address the following keys questions:

- What is the current quality and level of the unit’s performance?
- What are specific recommendations for improving the unit’s performance in the future?

While the size and make-up of the committee are at the discretion of the department director, AVP and chair(s), typical committees are between 5-8 individuals and include representatives from the following groups:

- University Advancement (representation within each unit)
- Other university divisions, departments and academic units
- Students, faculty and faculty emeriti
- Alumni, parents, donors and friends

External Reviewer

The committee phase may also include review by an external source. In the initial program review meeting – involving the AVP, director and review chair(s) – it may be determined that an external reviewer would be helpful in conducting the review. This is something that should be strongly considered. The external reviewer is an off-campus expert in the department's work. This may be a paid external consultant or a peer at another institution. Costs associated with an external review will come from the department's budget. External reviewer fees exceeding \$2,000 must be approved by the Vice President.

An external reviewer must be given the opportunity to evaluate the department's programs and services. This may be done by review of the self-study binder, interviews with key stakeholders or requests for additional information. All on-campus interviews should include time with the VP.

Phase 3 – Final Report

Timeline steps #10-13

Lead by the committee chair(s) the final report phase typically lasts one month. The VP, unit AVP, department director and committee chair(s) will have an opportunity to meet and discuss the final report. This discussion and subsequent steps will ensure that the program review recommendations are similarly interpreted and that plans for implementation are universally understood and recognized.

Timeline

1. Notice is given to the department director and unit AVP to be reviewed.

At least one month prior to the start of the Program Review, the Program Review coordinator will contact the department director, unit AVP and division VP, notifying them of their upcoming review. The communication will include the Program Review timeline and process.

2. Committee chair or co-chairs are assigned.

The Vice President of University Advancement will assign a committee chair or co-chairs.

3. Initial meeting with the VP, unit AVP, department director and chair(s)

This meeting is convened by the Program Review coordinator. The key participants review the program review process, finalize the master schedule, determine national standards to be used, come to agreement on the self-study binder content, discuss likely committee members, determine whether there will be an external reviewer and identify one or two targeted topics of interest or concern for study by the committee. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that all of the involved parties are on the same page regarding the review.

4. Self-study begins

The director begins the work of conducting the unit self-study according to divisional guidelines. The self-study may take up to six months for a full cycle or three months for an alternate cycle review and must be completed by the scheduled date.

- 5. Second meeting with the unit AVP, department director and chair(s)**

This meeting is convened half-way through the self-study phase by the committee chair(s) and ensures that the key leaders are abreast of all of the activities related to the review. They also discuss any adjustments to the master schedule and finalize the committee membership. This is primarily an information sharing an update meeting and it must be held by the scheduled date.
- 6. Committee invitations are extended**

About half-way through the self-study phase, the committee chair will request participation on the committee. It is recommended that this been done via a formal letter from the VP. This invitation letter should include the date, time and location of the first committee meeting and define the committee expectations and timeline.
- 7. First committee meeting (suggested 2 hours)**

At the first committee meeting the chair(s) will introduce the department director, who will provide a presentation of the self-study binder and answer committee questions. Following the presentation, the director and unit AVP, if in attendance, will leave the meeting. The chair(s) will then review the role of the committee, recommend a sub-committee structure, request sub-committee chairs, discuss methodologies for reviewing the department, review the sub-committee report layout, agree upon additional full committee meetings and announce deadlines.
- 8. Draft report to AVP and director**

After the first draft of the report is created, it should be sent to the unit AVP and director for review. The AVP and director review the report carefully and provide feedback to the committee chair(s) for report improvement. The chair(s) may make improvements to the report based on the AVP/director feedback and/or may include the AVP and/or director responses to certain elements of the report verbatim as added narrative in the report. The AVP, director and co-chairs work together to determine how to incorporate AVP/director feedback into the final version of the report.
- 9. Final Report Sent to the VP and Program Review Coordinator**

Once finalized, the chair(s) email the final version of the report to the VP, copying the Program Review Coordinator for the divisional program review archives. This must be submitted by the scheduled date.
- 10. Final Meeting with the VP, unit AVP, Director, Committee Chair and Program Review Coordinator**

This meeting will be convened by the Program Review Coordinator. At this final meeting, the VP, unit AVP, director and chair(s) decide which of the program review recommendations will be made departmental objectives. Following the meeting, the AVP and director ensure the recommendations (as objectives) are entered into the JMU planning tool STAR.
- 11. Final Report is sent to the committee**

The committee chair will email the final report to the full committee. The chair is also responsible for sending formal thank you letters to all committee members.

Timeline continued...

12. Debrief with Director and Department

Following the approval of the recommendations, the director meets with the members of the department to review the program review process and report, with a particular emphasis on discussing the recommendations that became objectives and the implication of those objectives both for individual members of the department and the department as a whole.

13. Director presentation at a Director/LEAD meeting

Following the department debrief, the director will request time on the next Director/LEAD meeting agenda to review findings and recommendations with the full division leadership.

Key Roles

Vice President – establish and monitor the division’s program review guidelines and timeline; read and analyze program review reports; at the conclusion of each review, meet with the unit AVP, director and committee chair(s) to establish the list of resulting recommendations that the department will track using the university’s planning database (STAR).

AVP – support and guide unit directors through the program review process; assist in ensuring that deadlines are met; meet with the department director and committee chair(s) at stages throughout the process; review the draft report generated by the chair(s) and offer advice and feedback; meet with the VP, director, chair(s) and program review coordinator at the conclusion of the review.

Director – conduct/oversee the program review self-study; generate the self-study “binder” for submission to the co-chairs and committee members; coordinate the program review along with the chair(s); if elected, select and coordinate the external reviewer visit along with the chair(s), lead an/or participate in relevant meetings throughout the process.

Committee Chair(s) – assist the director and AVP as needed; ensure deadlines are met; assemble and lead the program review committee; lead the analysis of the self-study “binder”; lead the committee’s research efforts; write the program review report; meet with the VP, unit AVP and Program Review Coordinator at the conclusion of the review.

Sub-committee chair(s) – review and analyze the self-study “binder”; coordinate the sub-committee research activities; finalize the sub-committee program review report; adhere to deadlines established by the chair(s).

Committee members – review and analyze the self-study “binder”; assist in the research process; assist with the drafting of the program review report.

Program Review Coordinator – assist the VP with establishing and monitoring the division’s program review guidelines and timeline; notify directors and AVPs of upcoming reviews; assist committee chair(s) as needed; monitor the timeline and ensure all deadlines are met; convene the initial and final meetings of the VP, AVP, director and chair(s); store and archive all program review self-study “binders” and final reports for future reference.

Program review intended outcomes

- To provide the department being reviewed with the opportunity to evaluate its overall operation and operation and identify ways in which the department is functioning well and to identify areas in which functions may be improved.
- To compare the department's status and performance with national standards
- To seek perspectives on the department's performance from campus constituents (other UA departments, university departments, staff, faculty, students, alumni and donors).
- To provide the senior vice president and the department's AVP with evaluative feedback about the department, suggestions for improvement, and a plan of action.
- A review of the unit's mission statement.
- Updating of key current and future objectives and verification that they are entered and tracked accurately in the JMU STAR Tool.
- Updated budget processes and needs.
- Updated job descriptions and performance management documents.
- A study of key unit constituencies to reflect needs and the service quality provided by the unit.
- Updated documented departmental policies and procedures.
- Acknowledgement of significant successes and accomplishments.

Resources

The following resources can be found on the UA common drive:

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- Master list of past committee members
- PowerPoint template for first committee meeting (Chair slides)
- Committee invitation letter
- Sub-committee report template/format
- Committee report template/format
- Standard UA order of contents for self-study
- Committee thank you letter