Background

1. Why do program reviews? What’s the purpose and for whom?

   • The University of Wisconsin Regents and System requires program reviews at least every ten years.

   • On the Madison campus, program reviews are the responsibility of the Provost Office and the University Academic Planning Council. Every year, SoHE’s Associate Dean of Academic Affairs provides a report to the Provost Office on the status of reviews, as well as an executive summary of completed reviews.

   • At the School/College level, the selection of programs to be reviewed is directed by the Dean of SoHE with consultation with SoHE APC and the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

   Note: A schedule of program reviews is approved and revised by APC. Factors considered in timeline decisions are: elapsed time since last review, accreditation cycles, planned changes in the program, marked changes in the program profile, and special needs of a program.

2. What is a review and what is the value to the program?

   • Reviews are an assessment activity at the program level, rather than assessment at the individual student/faculty level.

   • Reviews are an opportunity to do meaningful planning related to improving the quality of a program. The process can generate documents for evaluating strategies of action and for assessing planned growth of a program.

   • Types of reviews include:
     o Self-study
     o Internal institutional undergraduate and graduate program reviews,
     o Internal joint reviews
     o External reviews, for example USDA, CIDA accreditation reviews
• Reviews are concerned with the outcomes of a program or student performance in a collective sense. It is a systematic appraisal of the performance and direction of the program. The task involves assessment of the following components: Faculty, Undergraduate Education and/or Graduate Education, Outreach Programs, Departmental Structure and Resources, such as FTE’s, funding lines, staff personnel, facilities and equipment.

• Research shows that the self-study within an institutional or accreditation review is the most beneficial step of the process. It not only provides evaluators with information to assess program quality but serves the program in several ways:
  o a self-study reveals the clarity and strength of a program’s mission and goals related to research, teaching/learning and outreach.
  o a self-study reveals a rationale for the structure of the curriculum.
  o a self-study identifies academic strengths or weaknesses over a period of time.
  o a self-study captures the program’s context and relationship to the administrative unit in which the program is housed. Its own distinctive characteristics and approaches to a body of knowledge are documented and shared with others.
  o a self-study provides information important to faculty loads, resources, administrative processes and assessment information for future decision-making.
  o a self-study is beneficial to strategic planning.

3. What does the self-study need to include? And what happens once it is completed?

• The programmatic self-study results in a narrative document and a factual appendix providing support information for the narrative.

The narrative (approximately 25 double-spaced pages) is prepared by the program faculty and staff, reflecting the consensus of the program’s members. Questions that serve to guide the review are attached.

The factual appendix should include information needed to support contentions or requests made in the narrative. Specific categories of information are also attached below.

• Concurrent or subsequent to the self-study, a program should have external reviewers visit the program to provide a review that would accompany the self-study. (See following attachment for process guidelines and expectations.)

• The Associate Dean, upon receipt of the external reviewers’ report and self-study, meets with the chair of the department to review information and determine if written corrections to any factual errors are needed.
• The self-study (including appendices) and the external reviewers’ report are provided to a review committee. The review committee is appointed by the Dean in consultation with the department chair and the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. The review committee shall be comprised of three faculty members, one of whom is a current APC member.

• The review committee reads, discusses and evaluates the materials. The committee provides a written summary to the Dean highlighting program strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations for action based upon their discussion and analysis.

• This written summary and the basic narrative of the self-study are presented to the APC by a panel comprised of the committee and the chair of the department. The review committee chair will lead discussion that includes a review of the process, comments on the self-study by the department chair, and the final summary/conclusions and recommendations for the program.

• The Dean (with Associate Dean of Academic Affairs) provides results of the program review to the Provost for inclusion in the University's Annual Report to the Board of Regents. An executive summary is kept on file in the Provost's office. The full self-study, appendices, external reviewer's report, executive summary, and APC action/notes are kept on file in the Associate Dean's files.

4. Is there any follow-up regarding the recommendations to a program?

• Within a two-year period following a review, the department chair, in consultation with the Associate Dean, will provide comments, reflections and subsequent programmatic changes to APC that address recommendations.

• The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs will include this information in the School's annual assessment report provided to the School and Provost's Office. (A question usually asked by the Provost is: "Have any changes occurred in the program as a result of assessment activities and a program review?")
Self Study Narrative

Outline for Narrative

Cover Page: (Title of Self-Study and Year; Department Name, School and UW-Madison Submitted by __________________; (Names of collaborators and date)

1. History and Mission of the Department
2. Quality and Reputation of the Department
3. Departmental Organization
4. Undergraduate Education (Majors and Service/Outreach) Curricula and Summary of Student Performance Indicators
5. Graduate Education and Research/Creative Performance
6. Staffing
7. Selected Departmental Financial Concerns
8. Facilities and Equipment
9. Support of School and UW-Madison Priorities
10. Special Challenges/Directions/Future Goals

Questions That Might Guide Program Self-Study

1) What is the mission of the department or program and its pertinent history?

2) How does the department or program mission contribute to the School of Human Ecology and University of Wisconsin-Madison strategic goals?

3) What are quality indicators/reputation of the department related to other similar programs, needs in area of knowledge and study, faculty contributions, student placement, awards, etc.?

4) Faculty recruitment and retention
   a. Does the program recruit and retain strong faculty? Do these faculty members become leaders in their disciplines? How does the faculty compare in strength to peer programs at other universities?
   b. What are the priorities and goals of the program for hiring faculty during the next decade? Does the program foresee any shift of emphasis in the fields represented in the program? Are there important areas that should be covered by a program of this size but are not? Are there some areas that now have too much emphasis?
   c. What problems has the program encountered in the hiring of new faculty? What advantages does the program have in the competition for new faculty? What are the disadvantages? What are the plans for dealing with quality replacements, given the age structure of the program?
   d. Are there changes to recommend to the program on the use of resources in
making new staffing decision? Are there changes to recommend on allocation of merit raises and on strategies for responding to or preempting outside offers to junior faculty?

. What is the appropriate teaching load for members of the program, and what is the rationale for this policy?

f. What are the program's procedures for evaluating the performance of faculty and staff?

5) Undergraduate Education

a. Does the program attract and produce good students, both majors and non-majors who might be served by the department?

b. Does the program provide adequate coverage of its major subject areas, both as they are now defined and as they are likely to develop in the future?

c. Do students exhibit competencies in areas of knowledge expected by field (e.g., based upon student assessment data)?

d. How does the department contribute to the general education goals of the School, the University (e.g., Essential learning outcomes such as Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) goals, see: http://www.aacu.org/LEAP/index.cfm)

e. How is the program connected to other elements of “The Wisconsin Experience” – opportunities to apply knowledge in the real world, develop global and cultural competence and engagement, undertake leadership and/or research that has a positive impact (see: www.learning.wisc.edu).

f. What plans does the program have for the improvement of instruction or curricular requirements in its various levels of courses?

g. Are students served by collaborative programs?

h. Does the program schedule courses so as to minimize the likelihood of under-enrollment? Does it use instructional staff efficiently? Does it assure access to needed courses to students at all levels within a reasonable period of time?

i. Has the program recently developed any innovative teaching activities? In what ways does the program recognize and promote excellence in teaching?

j. What role do interdisciplinary activities play in the program?

k. In review of a sampling of students' work and/or portfolios - What strengths and concerns are recognized in student performance? What is the placement of graduates?

l. What progress has been made in implementing a program's assessment plan findings?

6) Graduate Education and Research/Creative Performance

a. How is the research of the program regarded in the field?

b. Does the program attract and retain outstanding graduate students? What is the attrition rate for graduate students? How successful are the MS and PhD graduates? Is the size of the graduate program appropriate given the size of the faculty, the support available for graduate students, and future opportunities for
an individual obtaining the degree?

c. Is there a problem with the length of time to completion of the degree in the program? If so, what can be done to shorten it?
d. Are there actions to be taken to promote the level of excellence in the program, as evidenced by the scholarly productivity?
e. How effective are relationships/collaborations with other programs on campus?
f. Does the program have an agreed-upon sense of future direction?
g. What progress has been made in implementing an assessment plan?

7) Structure and Resources
a. Are the program's internal policies and procedures effective and supportive of quality?
b. Do present governance structures adequately promote both disciplinary and possible interdisciplinary?
c. Do faculty members contribute to shared governance of the program, the department, the School and the University?
d. What is the record of outreach activities in the program/department?
e. Does the program have any organizational arrangements or practices that are worth recommending as a model to others?
f. How adequate are the program's physical and technical facilities? Are there plans that should be considered for improvements?
g. What are the program's major problems that are NOT related to the level of resources available to it?
h. If new resources were available to serve the program's mission and goals, where or how could they be most effectively applied?

8) Summary Strengths, Challenges, and Suggested Recommendations?

After reviewing the narrative (1-8) and supporting appendices of the self-study, what strengths emerge? What challenges are present? Are there directives that emerged for the program for the future?

Factual Appendix

Materials to support assertions in the self-study narrative should be provided (as appropriate) in a factual appendix. Typically, this would include, but not necessarily be limited to the following:

1) Undergraduate Program Materials
a. curriculum and requirements for undergraduate major
b. service courses and their relation to the undergraduate major
c. enrollment trends
d. number of male/female, minority and foreign students matriculated
e. number and quality of majors (e.g., incoming gpa’s)
f. course enrollments; issues related to low enrollment or bottleneck courses
g. student opportunity to engage in the Wisconsin Experience (see
http://www.learning.wisc.edu) - participation in leadership/experiential education activities such as student organization, service learning, internships
h. undergraduate advising program (e.g., SAA vs. faculty roles/responsibilities)
i. student placement upon graduation

2) Graduate Program Materials
a. curriculum and requirements for graduate majors and minors
b. enrollment trends
c. number and GRE scores of those matriculated
d. number of male/female, minority and foreign graduate students matriculated
e. distribution of majors among subfields and major professors
f. graduate advising program
g. support types and levels (e.g., number of fellowships, TAships, RAships, etc.)
h. number of years required to complete the program
i. placement of graduates

2) Student Assessment Data
a. Direct evidence of student achievement of program outcomes (e.g., portfolio reviews, employer feedback, certification exam scores)
b. Indirect evidence of student achievement of program outcomes (e.g., alumni survey data, student awards)
c. Student satisfaction data (e.g., from focus or exit interviews, alumni survey, etc.)

3) Faculty
a. incoming and outgoing faculty for the past ten years on a year-by-year basis
b. faculty profile, including age, tenure status, gender, and minority status and their percentage representation in the program
c. current areas of research interest among faculty members
d. vitae of program faculty members
e. summaries of extramural and Graduate School research support over the past five years.
f. faculty workload/instructional effort
g. course evaluation summaries

4) Other Staff (FTE’s and source of salary support for each subcategory)
a. non-student instructional staff such as adjunct and visiting professors, lecturers
b. graduate student personnel such as teaching assistants, research assistants
c. student hourly help
d. administrative, secretarial and technical support personnel

5) Outreach Program
a. target audiences for credit and noncredit outreach programs  
b. types of outreach activities  
c. number of outreach events per year  
d. estimated numbers of persons reached by outreach programs

Procedures for Engaging External Reviewer and Expected Outcome

Another service that is often helpful during a self-study and preparation for institutional/accreditation reviews is to invite external reviewers to participate. These persons should be highly regarded practitioners, scholars and/or educators familiar with the disciplinary specialty and conduct of program reviews. Steps and outcomes might include:

• Program nominates a pool of at least three individuals that could possibly serve as external reviewers.
• Program discusses reviewers’ background and service with Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.
• Dean appoints at least two external reviewers.
• Dean’s office contacts reviewers requesting date and time, outlining general procedures and expectations for the review as well as payment of honorarium or arrangement of service as professional courtesy with no charge.
• One month prior to visit, University, School and Program materials sent to reviewers. Materials also include an itinerary and agenda.
• Two weeks before visit, Program Chair, Associate Dean and one faculty member from department conducts conference call with reviewers. Purpose: to see if there are general questions and if there are specific needs that the reviewers have when visit is made.
• Site visit:  
  Chair and Associate Dean meet with reviewers on night of arrival. Reviewers examine student work pulled together by department. Reviewers meet with academic and financial administrators, faculty and staff, student focus groups, alumni-community groups, and tour the facilities. Reviewers have exit interview with the Dean of the School.
• Post visit:  
  Review chair provides written report (three copies) to the School that addresses general process of review, materials reviewed, general description and profile of program, strengths and concerns about program, program opportunities, and recommendations to capitalize on opportunities. School may request a post visit conference call.
• Program incorporates reviewers’ remarks in self-study and/or may attach in appendix.

References for Program Assessment  

Accreditation Manual and Documents UW-L&S Academic Program Review Guidelines:  
http://www.ls.wisc.edu/handbook/ChapterFive/chV-4.htm

UW system: http://www.wisc.edu/