

Academic Program Review Requirements

Introduction:

The University of Texas Rio Grande ([UTRGV](#)) values and actively seeks opportunities to weave excellence throughout the fabric of the university and into the core of everything that it does. As part of this commitment to excellence, UTRGV engages in periodic review of each of its academic degree programs. The University supports the Academic Review (APR) process through the Office of Academic and Institutional Excellence and is overseen by the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence.

APRs are designed to evaluate the quality, productivity, and role of each degree program in the fulfillment of the University's mission and strategic priorities. APRs are also conducted to fulfill requirements of [The University of Texas System](#) and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board ([THECB](#)). APRs provide a means of:

1. monitoring the current status, progress, and effectiveness of degree programs;
2. identifying programmatic strengths and weaknesses;
3. pinpointing programmatic needs, trajectories, and priorities;
4. identifying emerging professional, regulatory, and disciplinary directions; and
5. stimulating reflection, goal setting, and planning.

These guidelines establish the institutional procedures for the preparation of APR materials and other steps of the review process.

Overview of the Review Process:

Review Schedule

UTRGV degree programs will be reviewed every ten years in compliance with the THECB Graduate Program Review Schedule. The THECB must approve the 10-year review cycle in advance of its implementation. THECB allows alterations to the schedule, but any changes require prior approval. Reviews will only be scheduled during fall and spring semesters with undergraduate degree programs reviewed at the same time as the corresponding graduate degree program. Programs that undergo external review for reasons of programmatic licensure or accreditation may use their accreditation self-studies in lieu of the review process outlined in these guidelines. In order to do this, review schedules will be synchronized with the accreditation reviews of the professional association/organization.

Components of the APR

Program reviews are formative in nature, include peer review, and are conducted by the faculty of the academic program. The components of the APR include a comprehensive ***self-study report***, an ***external review report***, and the ***program response report***.

The self-study process is the academic degree program's opportunity for self-evaluation. **The self-study report** provides basic information about the program and includes an assessment of the quality, productivity, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges to the program. All program faculty should contribute to preparation of the self-study report.

In addition to the self-study process, external reviewers are invited to participate in an on-site evaluation of the academic degree program. The purpose of the external review process is to provide feedback regarding the status of the program and make recommendations for improvement. Upon completion of their review, the reviewers will provide the academic degree program with the **external review report**.

After receiving the external reviewers' recommendations, program faculty will discuss the findings and identify future directions for program improvement. The **program response report** should address all recommendations provided by the external reviewers as well as the areas for improvement identified by the program faculty.

The General Review Process

1. The college/school dean and the dean of the Graduate College (graduate programs) or Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence (undergraduate programs) select no less than two and no more than three external reviewers from outside of the state of Texas and arrange a site visit.
2. The program prepares the self-study report and incorporates feedback provided by the school director/chair, college/school dean, dean of the Graduate College and the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence.
3. The external reviewers review the self-study report, request additional information, conduct a 2-day on-site visit and prepare the external review report.
4. The program responds to the external review report.
5. The program coordinator, director/chair, college/school dean, dean of the Graduate College, and the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence discuss and review the program response report.
6. The program coordinator incorporates feedback provided by the Director/Chair, college/school dean, dean of the Graduate College and Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence.
7. For graduate program reviews, a summary of the self-study report, the external review report and the program response report are submitted to THECB.
8. The college/school dean prepares a response to the self-study report and program response report indicating priorities to pursue and an explanation regarding how the graduate program's improvements will fit into the college's overall improvement initiatives.
9. The Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence provides all reports to the Executive Vice President for Graduate Studies, Research, and New Program Development, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Executive Vice President for Health Affairs as appropriate.
10. Follow-up meetings among the program coordinator, school director/chair, college/school dean, dean of the Graduate College, and the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence are held after one year and then after three years to monitor the program's progress in responding to the external review.

Responsibilities:

Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence

The Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence oversees the APR process and _____

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serves as the primary point of contact.

The Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence:

1. Coordinates the 10-year review cycle in consultation with THECB.
2. Schedules annual program review dates in consultation with the degree program.
3. Maintains the APR process guidelines.
4. Resolves any issues of academic degree program definition.
5. Notifies the college/school dean, director/chair, program coordinator, and other relevant individuals of an upcoming review.
6. Ensures the program receives institutional data needed for the self-study report.
7. Collaborates with college/school dean to select external reviewers and alternates for undergraduate programs.
8. Collaborates with the director/chair, college/school dean, and dean of the Graduate College to provide feedback on all APR reports prepared by the degree program.
9. Serves as the primary institutional reviewer for undergraduate program self-study reports.
10. Extends formal invitations to potential reviewers and secures agreement to serve.
11. Advises the program and external reviewers of program review procedures and practices.
12. Sets the agenda and makes travel arrangements for the external reviewers.
13. Provides funding for most review-related expenses.
14. Communicates agendas and travel itineraries with the school/department, college/school, and the Office of the Executive Vice President for Graduate Studies, Research, and New Program Development, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Executive Vice President for Health Affairs as appropriate.
15. Provides external reviewers with the self-study report.
16. Submits required APR reports to THECB.
17. Monitors the program's progress in responding to the external review.
18. Communicates results and progress to the Executive Vice President for Graduate Studies, Research, and New Program Development, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Executive Vice President for Health Affairs as appropriate.

Dean of the Graduate College

The dean of the Graduate College serves as the primary institutional reviewer for graduate program self-study reports.

The dean of the Graduate College:

1. Collaborates with the college/school deans to select external reviewers and alternates (graduate programs).
2. Collaborates with the director/chair, college dean, and the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence to provide feedback on all APR reports prepared by the degree program.
3. Participates in designated review meetings before, during and/or after the on-site visit.
4. Monitors the program's progress on responses to the external review team's recommendations.

College/School Dean

The college/school dean provides leadership and support to the school/department in the APR process.

The dean:

1. Collaborates with the dean of the Graduate College (graduate programs) or the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence (undergraduate programs) to select external

reviewers and alternates from the list provided by the program, and identifies additional potential reviewers as needed.

2. Prepares a college/school response to the self-study and program response reports indicating priorities to pursue and program improvements that will fit into the college's overall improvement initiatives.
3. Participates in designated review meetings before, during and/or after the on-site visit.
4. Monitors the program's progress on responses to the external review team's recommendations.

School Director/Department Chair

The director/chair of the school or department provides leadership and support to the program coordinator in the APR process.

The director/chair:

1. Appoints a program self-study committee composed of faculty who teach in the program.
2. Assists the program coordinator in the identification of suitable external reviewers for consideration by the college/school dean and dean of the Graduate College.
3. Collaborates with the dean, dean of the Graduate College and the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence to provide feedback on all APR reports prepared by the degree program.
4. Participates in designated review meetings before, during and/or after the on-site visit.
5. Monitors the program's progress on responses to the external review team's recommendations.

Program Coordinator

The program coordinator prepares the self-study report and monitors the program's progress in the years following the on-site visit.

The program coordinator:

1. Reviews the UTRGV Academic Program Review guidelines well in advance of the program's scheduled review.
2. Seeks guidance and schedules meetings with the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence, dean, and the dean of the Graduate College to discuss the review process, expectations and timeline.
3. Provides the college/school dean and dean of the Graduate College (graduate programs) or Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence (undergraduate programs) with the names of 4 to 6 potential external reviewers and a statement of each reviewer's credentials with a description of any prior contact the program or its faculty has had with the reviewer.
4. Engages the program faculty in a self-evaluation process that provides insights regarding the quality and health of the program.
5. Gathers and aggregates locally collected data needed for the self-study report.
6. Seeks and incorporates feedback from the director/chair, college/school dean, dean of the Graduate College and Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence.
7. Provides the final self-study report to the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence for distribution to the external reviewers.
8. Participates in designated review meetings before, during and/or after the on-site visit.
9. Prepares the program response report and submits it to the director/chair, college/school dean, dean of the Graduate College and Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence for feedback.

10. After incorporating feedback, provides the final response report to the director/chair, college/school dean, dean of the Graduate College and Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence.
11. Ensures that the program monitors progress on the recommendations provided by the external reviewers.

Program Self-Study Committee

The Program Self-Study Committee actively participates in the development of the APR reports.

The Committee:

1. Assists the program coordinator in collecting data and other information needed from the program faculty to complete the self-study report.
2. Compiles information, analyzes data, and prepares the narrative of the self-study report under the leadership of the program coordinator.
3. Assists the program coordinator in engaging the faculty in a self-evaluation process that provides insights regarding the quality and health of the program.
4. Assists the program coordinator in the preparation of the program response report.

Program Faculty

The program faculty contribute much of the information and data needed to complete the self-study report.

The program faculty:

1. Actively engage in the program's self-evaluation process.
2. Provide documents, reports, files, data and any other relevant information for use as evidence of the program's quality and health.

External Reviewers

The external reviewers review and analyze the program's self-study report.

The external reviewers:

1. Identify program strengths and weaknesses from the self-study report.
2. Request additional information from the program as desired.
3. Participate in a two-day on-site visit.
4. Conduct interviews of faculty, staff, administrators and other relevant parties during the on-site visit.
5. Provide a prioritized set of recommended strategies for future improvements.
6. Complete an external review report.

Specific Review Process and Timeline:

1. The Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence coordinates with the dean of the college/school 9 to 10 months in advance of the on-site visit to identify potential site visit dates
2. The program coordinator reviews Academic Program Review Guidelines, seeking guidance and requests training as needed.
3. The director of the school/chair of the department in which the program is housed forms a program review self-study committee composed of faculty who teach in the program upon notification of the upcoming review.

4. The program coordinator identifies a list of 4 to 6 potential external reviewers at least 8 months in advance of the on-site visit.
5. UTRGV's Office of Academic and Institutional Excellence compiles and sends the historical statistical and demographic data needed for the self-study to the program no later than 8 months prior to the self-study submission deadline. Data from the most recently completed year must also be included and will be provided as soon as it becomes available.
6. The program coordinator compiles self-study data from the program faculty, the school/department, college/school, and other resources as needed.
7. The program coordinator and program self-study committee prepare the self-study report and seeks frequent feedback from the director/chair.
8. The college/school dean and dean of the Graduate College (graduate programs) or Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence (undergraduate programs) collaborate to select external reviewers at least 6 months in advance of the on-site visit.
9. The program coordinator submits the self-study draft to the college/school dean at least 90 days prior to the on-site visit and then incorporates any feedback.
10. The program coordinator submits the draft of the self-study to the dean of the Graduate College and/or Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence at least 2 months prior to the on-site visit and incorporates any feedback.
11. The program coordinator submits the final draft of the self-study to the dean of the Graduate College and/or Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence at least 1 ½ months prior to the on-site visit.
12. The final self-study report is distributed to the external reviewers at least 1 month in advance of the on-site visit.
13. The external reviewers request additional information to be made available during the on-site visit.
14. The on-site visit is conducted and the program provides any additional information requested.
15. The external reviewers submit the external review report to the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence, the dean of the Graduate College (graduate programs only), and the college/school dean two weeks after the on-site visit.
16. The program coordinator and the program self-study committee complete the draft program response report 1 month after the on-site visit.
17. The program coordinator, director/chair, college/school dean, dean of the Graduate College, and Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence meet to discuss the draft program response report 1 to 2 months following the on-site visit.
18. The program coordinator incorporates any feedback provided and submits the final program response report to the director/chair, college dean, dean of the Graduate College and Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence at least 3 months following the on-site visit.
19. The college/school dean prepares a college response to the self-study report and program response report at least 4 months following the on-site visit.
20. The Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence provides the Executive Vice President for Graduate Studies, Research, and New Program Development, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Executive Vice President for Health Affairs with all reports as appropriate.
21. The Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence uploads reports to the THECB at least 180 days (6 months) following the on-site visit. (THECB requires reports be uploaded no later than 180 days after the conclusion of the review).
22. Follow-up meetings among the program coordinator, director/chair, college/school dean, dean of the Graduate College, and the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence are held after one year and then again three years after the review to monitor the program's progress in responding to the external review.

23. The Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence will provide the Executive Vice President for Graduate Studies, Research, and New Program Development, Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Executive Vice President for Health Affairs with a summary of the one year and three year improvement activity as appropriate

Review Process Timeline

PRIOR TO THE SITE VISIT		
Responsibility	Approximate Timeframe	Person/Office Responsible
Choose potential review dates	9 to 10 months prior	Dean and Associate Vice President for AVPAIE
Form program faculty self-study committee	8 months prior	School Director/Department Chair
Submit nominations for members external reviewers to the dean	8 months prior	Program Coordinator
Provide institutional data	8 months prior	Office of AVPAIE
Begin preparation of self-study report	7 to 8 months prior	Self-study committee
Approve and submit names of potential external reviewers to Dean of the Graduate College (graduate) or AVPAIE (undergraduate)	7 months prior	Dean
Approve list of potential external reviewers	6 months prior	Dean of the Graduate College (graduate) AVPAIE (undergraduate)
Invite external reviewers	6 months prior	AVPAIE
Submit 1 st draft of self-study report to dean	3 months prior	Program Coordinator
Submit 2 nd draft of self-study report to the Dean of the Graduate College (graduate) or AVPAIE (undergraduate)	2 months prior	Program Coordinator
Submit final self-study to the Dean of the Graduate College (graduate) or AVPAIE (undergraduate)	1 ½ months prior	Program Coordinator
Submit final self-study report to external reviewers	1 month prior	AVPAIE
AFTER THE SITE VISIT		
Submit external site review report to AVPAIE	Two weeks	External review committee
Submit draft response report	1 month after	Program Coordinator
Meet to discuss draft response report	1 to 2 months after	Program Coordinator, director/chair, college/school dean, Dean of the Graduate College & AVPAIE
Submit final draft of response report	3 months after	Program Coordinator
Submit a college response report	4 months after	College/school dean
Submit all reports to EVPAA, EVPR, and Dean of the Graduate College	4 months after	AVPAIE
Upload reports to THECB portal	6 months after	AVPAIE
Follow-up and Monitoring		
Schedule a follow-up meeting to review	1 year after	AVPAIE

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progress		
Schedule a follow-up meeting to review progress	3 years after	AVPAIE

Appointing External Reviewers

1. After notification from the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence regarding the APR, the program coordinator recommends 4-6 external reviewers with subject-matter expertise, and employed by institutions of higher education outside of Texas. The program coordinator may seek advice from the director/chair regarding recommendations for potential reviewers. The list of potential reviewers must be provided to the college/school dean and dean of the Graduate College (graduate programs) or Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence (undergraduate programs) at least 8 months in advance of the on-site visit.
2. External reviewers must:
 - a. hold the rank of Associate or Full Professor and be actively involved in the highest level of the academic program under review;
 - b. have no conflicts of interest with their review of UTRGV academic programs;
 - c. not be former UTRGV or legacy institution faculty;
 - d. not be scholarly collaborators with UTRGV faculty; and
 - e. not be from a university where current UTRGV faculty were recently employed.
3. The following information should be submitted for the possible reviewers:
 - a. Name
 - b. Institution
 - c. Contact Information
 - d. CV or resume
 - e. Justification of why the individual is appropriate to review the programs
4. The college/school dean reviews the list and adds or deletes names before submitting it to the dean of the Graduate College (graduate programs) or Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence (undergraduate programs) for approval.
5. The dean of the Graduate College (graduate programs) or Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence (undergraduate programs) approves the list of potential reviewers at least 6 months in advance of the on-site visit.
6. The Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence verifies willingness of the candidates to serve as external reviewers and invites at least two but no more than three to serve within a mutually agreeable timeframe.

External Reviewer On-Site Visit:

The Office of Academic and Institutional Excellence handles the on-site visit. This includes setting of the agenda and arrangements for the external reviewers. During the on-site visit, the external reviewers will analyze additional documentation provided by the program if requested and will conduct interviews of administrators, faculty, students, staff and other relevant individuals. The schedule will typically consist of:

- Day 1** – External reviewer dinner with the dean of the Graduate College, college/school dean and Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence
- Day 2** – Meetings and interviews with director/chair, program coordinator, faculty, and students
- Day 3** – Exit interview with director/chair and program coordinator
- Day 3** – Exit interview with dean of the Graduate College, dean of the college and Associate Vice

The Self-Study Report:

The self-study is a comprehensive report that examines the status of the program based on its activities and achievements over the previous ten years or since the previous review. The self-study must contain sufficient information for a preliminary evaluation of the program's quality and serves as a starting point for the external reviewers' in-depth review of the program. This document should identify strengths and weaknesses in curriculum and instruction, student quality, educational outcomes, research activities and funding levels, resource availability and needs, and special features or services provided by the program. The self-study should serve as a vehicle by which the program can plan for the future together with the University's strategic plan. Thus, the self-study should include mechanisms for solving current and projected problems, for building on current strengths, and for maximizing opportunities that are likely to develop within the discipline in the near future.

Preparing an Effective Self-Study

The self-study should incorporate the aforementioned information, as well as other information that committee members feel is important to the program. The allocation of resources is an important matter to all academic units, but the self-study is not a budget request. The self-study is an opportunity to provide the administration and the external reviewers' information about the program's strengths, weaknesses, plans, and goals. The report is likely to have its most favorable impact if the academic program uses this opportunity to think creatively about its plans.

- *Responsiveness.* The report should adhere to its outline and be thorough, but concise, digestible, and crisp. It should address issues of program quality and its products; extraneous issues should be ignored.
- *Documentation.* The report should be data driven. Valid internal and external peer comparisons are very helpful. Simplistic, selective, and out-of-context summaries are counterproductive.
- *Tone.* The report should be constructive in tone. Instead of dwelling only on problems, focus on challenges, aspirations, and goals. External reviewers express concern about "ax-grinding," defensive, or lecturing styles.
- *Objectiveness.* The report should be appropriately candid, introspective, and analytical. It should feature an honest look at the status of, and opportunities facing, the academic unit. The report must be credible to be useful.
- *Perspective.* The report should be forward looking, consistent with department, college, and University strategic plans and planning, and be neither an unconstrained "wish list" nor an exercise in self-congratulation. Needs should be addressed comparatively, with appropriate attention to priorities and spending.
- *Accuracy.* The committee responsible for preparing the self-study report must work with the head of the academic program to ensure the accuracy of the statements contained in the document.

External Review Report:

The reviewers should consider both the self-study report and the on-site visit when evaluating the program's quality. In their evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the program and in making recommendations for improvement, the reviewers should:

- describe the program's strengths;
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- describe the program’s weaknesses;
- address the future viability of the program;
- make recommendations for improvement, including both immediate and long-term suggestions;
- provide an assessment of where the program should strive to be in the next ten years; and,
- suggest ways to strengthen the program so it can move to the next level.

Program Response Report:

After receiving the external review report, the program coordinator and program self-study committee prepare the program response report. The program’s response should focus on the recommendations in the external review report. The program should identify those recommendations likely to lead to improvements for the program and, as appropriate, should describe specific actions planned in light of the recommendation. The program response should also include any findings by the external reviewers to which the program disagrees and the basis for such disagreement.

Dean’s Response:

After receiving the program’s response report, the college/school dean prepares a college/school response indicating priorities to pursue and program improvements that will fit into the college’s/school’s overall improvement initiatives. The dean’s response should commit the college/school to a course of action designed to support the program with its improvement efforts.

Follow-Up and Monitoring:

One year following the submission of the program response report, the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence will schedule a meeting with the program coordinator, director/chair, college/school dean, and dean of the Graduate College (for graduate programs) to review progress in responding to the review. Three years following the on-site visit, a second follow-up meeting will be scheduled to discuss continued progress on program improvements.

Accreditation in Lieu of External Review:

Graduate or undergraduate programs that undergo external review for specialized accreditation may use their external accreditation review in lieu of the process outlined in these guidelines. Graduate programs who choose to use an external accreditation review to satisfy THECB review requirements should ensure that the self-study report submitted to the Associate Vice President for Academic and Institutional Excellence includes all of the data points outlined in [Texas Administrative Code 5.52](#). Program information that is not required for the accreditation review may be prepared as a separate document and submitted as a supplement to the self-study report.