



## **Florida Atlantic University Academic Program Review**

### **PURPOSE**

Under Florida Board of Governors Regulation 6C-8.015 adopted March 29, 2007, all academic degree programs in State universities must be reviewed at least every seven years. Program reviews ensure that academic programs are administered and delivered effectively, efficiently, and consistent with FAU's mission and the Board of Governors' strategic priorities. The results of program reviews are expected to inform strategic planning, program development, and budgeting decisions at the university level, and, when appropriate, at the state level. Program review processes in the State University System must emphasize the assessment of student learning outcomes and continuous program improvement. All aspects of a program—undergraduate and graduate education as well as teaching, research, service, and community engagement activities—are covered in the self-study. The Academic Program Review is conducted in addition to any external accreditation process and should be seen as a complement to existing accreditation procedures.

Several principles guide the Academic Program Review process:

- The review is aimed toward action plans for the future, rather than solely evaluating a unit's current situation
- The review defines a unit's goals and action plans in accordance with the overall mission and strategic plan of the university
- A clear action plan is the outcome of the review process which enables assessments of accomplishments
- The review demonstrates accountability to university stakeholders and should be considered as an additional measure of institutional effectiveness

The Academic Program Review helps the unit establish its goals and direction and allows the university to make decisions on resource allocation, priorities, and actions which strengthen and improve the unit as well as align its direction with the university's strategic plans. The results of the Academic Program Review are important for examining how the unit contributes to the university's mission and how it presents itself to external constituents.

Thus, the overall aim of the Academic Program Review is to enable continuous improvement and to support the aspirations of Florida Atlantic University.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

### *Board of Trustees*

The Board of Trustees has ultimate authority over the Academic Program Review process. The Board approves procedures for the review and approves the final reports and action plans that are a result of the review.

### *Office of the Provost*

The Office of the Provost has responsibility for the Academic Program Review process, ensuring that it meets state regulations and Board of Trustees priorities. Throughout the entire cycle of the Academic Program Review, the Office of the Provost provides leadership, continuity, consistency, and support to the units undergoing review, including the following responsibilities:

- Ensure that reviews are conducted according to the Board of Governors' schedule
- Initiate the process with units scheduled for review
- Orient units and review teams to the purpose and requirements of the review
- Receive nominations of review team, following approval by College Dean
- Approve the unit's self-study report
- Review for completeness the unit's response to the reviewers' report and action plan
- Communicate the results of each review to the Board of Trustees
- Oversee implementation of review recommendations and planned actions

### *The College*

The Dean of the College is involved with the Academic Program Review process by appointing a college liaison to work with the Provost's office and guide the process within the school. The dean will approve the unit's nomination of reviewers, approve the unit's self-study report, meet with reviewers during the site visit, meet with other university stakeholders as appropriate, and review and provide feedback to the unit on their response to the reviewers' report, including the unit's action plan.

### *The Unit (Department, School, Center or Program)*

The unit works with the Office of the Provost in order to understand the full scope and responsibilities of the Academic Program Review. The unit nominates potential reviewers, prepares the self-study report, schedules the site visit (in accordance with site visit protocol described later in this document), conducts the site visit, responds to the review team's recommendations, and prepares an action plan in consultation with the College Dean. The unit is also responsible for implementing the action plan and assessing its progress on key goals at the 4-year interim.

### *The Review Team*

The Review Team is made up of internal and external members. The role of the Review Team is to ensure the integrity of the Academic Program Review, provide feedback to the unit, and provide recommendations for improvement. The Review Team reads the self-study, conducts a site visit, and prepares a final report. The external members of the Review Team receive an honorarium, and

all travel and lodging expenses are covered by the university. Honorariums and travel and lodging expenses will be reimbursed to the Colleges by the Provost's office. All food costs incurred with the program reviews will be paid for by the College/Departments. Typically the academic department/school/unit will make the travel arrangements. The internal member of the Review Team will also receive an honorarium. The FAU internal reviewer is a critical member of the site team. This member is responsible for meeting with the external members of the review team and coordinating the written review. It is expected that the internal reviewer will be present at all meetings on campus and will serve as a host to the external reviewers.

## **PROCESS**

Academic program review at FAU is composed of the following elements:

- Self-study by the unit
- Consultation on self-study with other FAU representatives (see below)
- Selection of the Review Team
- One to two-day site visit
- Report by Review Team
- Unit and College response to Review Team recommendations and corresponding implementation agreements (“Action Plan”)
- Review by Office of the Provost
- Presentation of program review to Board of Trustees for their approval

### *Preparation of Self-Study Report*

The unit prepares a descriptive and evaluative self-study report that also outlines short- and long-term goals. The self-study should not be authored solely by a chair or one or two faculty members; rather, it is intended to be the product of the entire faculty. The self-study report is reviewed by other FAU representatives from the Office of the Provost, the Dean of the college, the Undergraduate and Graduate Colleges (as applicable), the Faculty Senate, and other constituents that a unit or college may deem appropriate (such as a member of the College Advisory Board). The Dean of the College approves the self-study report prior to review and approval by the Office of the Provost. The program review must identify the CIP/degree combinations under review and contain specific information on each degree program.

### *Consultation with FAU Representatives*

When the self-study report is completed, it should be sent to representatives of other FAU units, including:

- Associate Provost for Assessment and Programs
- Representative from the Undergraduate College
- Representative from the Graduate College (if applicable)
- Representatives from the Undergraduate and Graduate (if applicable) Programs Committees of the Faculty Senate

- Member of a unit's or College Advisory Board, if desired

These representatives meet with the unit head and the college Dean to review the self-study report, offer any additional information, or recommend changes. At the conclusion of the meeting, the committee should approve the self-study document as is or with revisions.

The unit will make final revisions if needed, and then submit the revised self-study document to the Office of the Provost no later than three weeks before the scheduled site visit to ensure adequate time for the Review Team to read the document. All faculty members in the unit are expected to be familiar with the final self-study document prior to the campus visit of the Review Team.

### *Selection of Review Team*

The Review Team consists of one or more external reviewers, as described below, and one internal (usually FAU tenured faculty) member. The head of the academic unit, in consultation with the unit's faculty, will create a list of potential external consultants/evaluators for the upcoming academic program review (usually 10-12) from external programs considered by the unit to be aspirational peers. Those considered should be prominent faculty and/or practitioners as well as administrators whose talents are relevant to the particular distinctions and aspirations of the unit being reviewed. The potential team members should also have broad interest in general issues within higher education. Team members having primary expertise in only the graduate or undergraduate aspects of the program should be noted so that the final team will include adequate representation to review both aspects. In academic programs with a professional accreditation component, at least one reviewer should be recommended who has current experience as a site visitor for the relevant accrediting agency or an equivalent level of knowledge of current accreditation standards and procedures. If there is a national organization associated with the unit, the organization may have resources for identifying potential reviewers. A brief vita for each nominated reviewer should be submitted along with a brief statement as to why the nominee is appropriate. Reviewers should come from programs/schools with similar academic levels (Masters, Ph.D.) They should be full or associate professors. Reviewers must not have a conflict of interest with faculty or programs in the department undergoing review. Reviewers should not be: a) a close colleague of a faculty member in the unit; b) a current or former external advisor to a unit's program or grant; c) a former FAU doctoral student or former FAU faculty member; d) a co-Principal Investigator on a grant with someone in the unit; or e) involved in any other activities that could be construed as a conflict of interest preventing objective review of the unit.

The unit head will consult with the Dean and Provost's staff in order to determine an appropriate review team. The unit head will be responsible for contacting potential team members to determine availability. In most cases, two external reviewers will be appointed. More may be added if necessary for especially complex reviews, and one may suffice for some smaller programs. At least one of the reviewers should be from an institution that is rated RU/VH (research universities with very high research activity) by the Carnegie Foundation or that is from a clearly defined aspirational peer of the unit.

An internal (usually FAU tenured faculty) member will also be selected by the head of the unit in consultation with the unit's faculty and with the approval of the supervising Dean and the Office of the Provost. Internal nominees need to be familiar with FAU policies and procedures and should be selected from faculty outside of the College housing the unit undergoing review.

### *Prior to the Site Visit*

Prior to the site visit, and after the Review Team members have been chosen, the Dean and all unit heads will meet with all the internal Review Team members. This meeting serves to inform the internal reviewers of their responsibilities and duties during the site visit. The internal reviewer is considered to be the lead reviewer of the team and is responsible for making sure the review team report is thorough with respect to the template provided and is completed within the timeline set by the Provost's office. **The report from the review team will be due 2 weeks after the site visit.**

### *The Site Visit*

The duration of the site visit depends on the size of the unit undergoing review. A small program may require that reviewers are on-site for only one day; a large department may require two full days for an adequate site visit. A draft itinerary for the site visit should be provided to the reviewers for input and comments before the agenda is finalized. Generally, the review team will meet with the following individuals or groups:

- Provost (or designee)
- Vice President for Research (or designee)
- College Dean
- Dean of Graduate Studies (or designee), as applicable
- Dean of Undergraduate Studies (or designee)
- Unit head
- Faculty and staff members from the unit under review (in groups by rank and/or tenure status)
- Current and/or former students (undergraduate and graduate)
- Advisory Board members, if desired

In addition, the Review Team will schedule specific times to be available for any confidential meetings requested by faculty, staff, students or other stakeholders.

The unit is responsible for informing its constituents (faculty, staff, students, and community members if the unit is engaged in direct community interactions) about these meetings. All meetings must be conducted in a way that affords reasonable confidentiality for participants. For example, unit faculty and staff should not be present at meetings held to elicit student comments, and chairs should not be present at meetings with the faculty. The purpose of these meetings is to provide input about overall quality and direction of the unit.

At the conclusion of the site visit, the Review Team prepares its report, which is sent by the internal member of the review team to the Provost designee who will distribute to the Office of the Dean and unit head for consultation and eventual distribution as appropriate. The report from the review team will be due 2 weeks after the site visit.

### *Response and Action Plan*

Once a unit receives the Review Team's report, they should develop a response to the reviewers' recommendations and implementation strategies to act on these recommendations, as deemed appropriate and desirable. The response document should address each recommendation in the reviewers' report and offer reasons why the unit has chosen to address or not to address a recommendation in its accompanying Action Plan. Each action in the plan should have a priority, especially in the case of multiple or conflicting actions. It is important that the entire faculty read the report and engage in the development of the unit's Action Plan. This plan should be reviewed with the Dean of the college, who should indicate a level of agreement or support with each item. The completed response and Action Plan is then submitted to the Office of the Provost.

Upon receipt of the response document and Action Plan, the Office of the Provost and Dean will review the documents and prepare a presentation on the review process and its outcome to the Board of Trustees.

### *Board of Trustees Presentation*

The Provost and Dean will present the College's Academic Program Review for approval to the Board of Trustees at their October meeting. This presentation will provide:

- 1) a summary of the self-study report;
- 2) a summary of the reviewers' report; and
- 3) the unit's response and action plan.

A complete hard copy of the program review will be maintained in the Office of the Provost, Office of the Dean, and will also be posted to an Academic Program Review website. Program Review Summary Reports will be uploaded electronically to a secure standardized template provided on the Board of Governors website.