**Northern Michigan University**

**Academic Program Review Guide**

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# Purpose

The Academic Program Review (APR) is a seven-year cyclic review process for all degree programs. It is intended to give departments and programs an opportunity to conduct a critical evaluation of their current activities, identify specific strengths and areas for improvement, and engage in strategic planning for the purpose of improving quality. APR is a process where the University can regularly review its academic offerings for alignment with the University’s mission statement and student and employment market needs, and to include long-term academic program needs in the planning and budgeting processes. APR provides a standard procedure with a timetable, at the institutional level, to insure consistency of data collection, analysis, report templates and external review. APR is conducted at the departmental level to better integrate or synergize programs – all programs within a department are reviewed concurrently, but individually. The APR template has a departmental section for a consolidated analysis (Part A) and requires reporting at the program level for detailed analysis (Part B).

For purposes of APR, a ***program*** refers to a degree program. A degree program is defined as any undergraduate or graduate program that includes a major and leads to a degree. Minors and certificate programs are not required to complete an APR.

# General Procedure

The review process has several components:

1. An internal self-study conducted at the departmental level, reported at the program level and aided by Institutional Research.
2. An external review of the department’s self-study
3. A department response to the external review
4. Educational Policy Committee (EPC) review of all the above and recommendations to the Provost
5. Provost review and response to all the above

## Frequency

Programs shall be reviewed on approximately a seven-year cycle that should accommodate accreditation cycles and changes in program leadership. With some exceptions, the seven-year cycle appears to fit either the cycle or half-cycle for accreditation reviews, thereby reducing duplication of efforts, and it provides a manageable number of programs for review each year.

## Criteria for Selection

The Provost and academic deans establish the department rotation list. Ultimate selection of the departments to be reviewed in a given year will be made by the Office of the Provost.Recognizing that approximately one-seventh of the departments will be reviewed each year, the following factors should be considered in selection:

* Relationship of the department to other departments under review.
* Marked change in student demand.
* Recent or planned program changes.
* Accreditation cycles. While APR and accreditation reviews have different purposes, they are sufficiently similar to warrant completion of both within the same time frame. Thus, the cycle of APR may be aligned with departmental accreditation reviews, to the extent possible.
* Elapsed time since last major review of budget, staffing or program for any purpose.

## Timetable

Departments to be reviewed shall be notified prior to the completion of the winter semester of the preceding academic year. A department may commence with the self-study procedure at any time after receiving notification of APR. *The detailed APR Timetable is in a separate document available from the same sources as this Guide.*

# Roles and Responsibilities

## APR Coordinator (at the institutional level)

The Office of the Provost determines the institutional APR Coordinators, most typically the Assistant Provost for Faculty Affairs and Undergraduate Programs and the Assistant Provost of Graduate Education and Research. Tasks may be delegated to the Director of Institutional Accreditation and Assessment. The responsibilities of the APR Coordinator include:

* Send reminder notification to departments in the summer of their scheduled APR
* Request creation of data tables from Institutional Research in summer
* Answer questions about self-study, providing best practice samples, holding help sessions
* Manage Share(access for submitters, renaming, zipping, moving documents to folders for retrieval, posting updated documents)
* Send out periodic reminders during the fall semester
* Help coordinate external reviewer selection, visit date, visit itinerary and arrangements, including sending of pre-visit material, transportation, housing, meals, and honoraria (where appropriate).
* Ensure that the Department responds in writing to the external reviewer's report.
* Coordinate EPC review procedure, provide guidance and meet with the EPC and the academic dean during their evaluation of the program
* Collect all related documents for repository (initial study, reviewer report, dept response, EPC recommendation, Provost response)
* Maintain/revise Guide, APR templates, Reviewer Report Template
* Maintain rotating schedule

## Office of Institutional Research

The Office of Institutional Research (IR) serves as a central data bank for each program. IR will provide a common data set on all programs to the APR Coordinator to include:

1. Departmental enrollments (Part A)
2. Freshman and Transfer student statistics (Part B)
3. Program enrollment data (Part B)

## Department

The department organizes the preparation of the program review document by defining tasks, establishing work groups, assigning tasks and resources to accomplish them, orienting the faculty involved, setting timelines, and establishing coordination and communication. All program faculty must be consulted and given the opportunity to provide meaningful input to the development of the APR document. In the best of circumstances, the APR document will be developed by the faculty through a fully participatory process under the guidance of the department head.

The Department should work with Institutional Research and other areas of the University, as appropriate, in compiling and analyzing data relevant to the APR Report.

## Faculty and Staff of a Reviewed Program

Faculty and designated staff of a program are urged to be active participants in all phases of the APR process. Prior to beginning the self-study process, the program should engage in a planning process that helps the program move from its past accomplishments and present needs to identifying its future mission, goals, and objectives. Faculty and staff in the program are also expected to contribute to and be familiar with the department's self-study report, participate in the external reviewer's campus visit, and provide the APR Coordinator with responses to documents resulting from the APR process.

## Departmental APR Committee

The purpose of the departmental APR Committee (APRC) is to steer a coordinated process. The APRC may integrate external peers with NMU faculty through inclusion other representatives such as members of industry, alumni, and staff, to provide a broad perspective.

The APRC composition will vary from department to department. The committee composition should typically include:

1. An APR Coordinator from within the department being reviewed.
2. A faculty group representative of the programs being reviewed.
3. One member from EPC assigned as the EPC representative.

Other members may be added if appropriate.

Each Department under review should identify one individual to function as the coordinator of the APR process. This may be the department head, director, faculty member or a representative. Although one individual should be designated as coordinator for purposes of providing contact with the various components of the review, APR activities may be assigned to different people. In departments with a diversity of programs, it may be impossible for a single person to coordinate all of the programs under review. In such cases, it may be appropriate to create a sub-committee composed of individuals from each program under review. An APR Coordinator must still be appointed for the department to serve as the primary contact for the review process.

## Academic Dean

The academic dean is a vital element in the APR process. The dean’s responsibility starts with selection of programs for review and extends to the discussion of the APR report with the Office of the Provost. Before the self- study process begins, the dean should meet with departmental faculty to explain and discuss the purpose and process of the review. The dean should also help identify program and campus-wide issues and concerns that the department or program should address in the self-study. The dean should review and evaluate the department's self-study before it is finalized, be the facilitator of the external reviewer's campus visit and review the external reviewer's final report. Following receipt of the external reviewer's report, the dean should meet with faculty in the department to discuss the review process, external reviewer's recommendations, and strategies for implementing the recommendations as they relate to program, department, college, and University. The dean helps prepare for and participates in the EPC discussion.

## Provost

The Provost is responsible for establishing a rotation schedule, providing resources needed to conduct the external review, offer suggestions to the department from the NMU strategic planning level, selects the external reviewer from a list provided by the Department and responds to the self-study and External Reviewer Evaluation Report with comments and actions.

## External Reviewer

The external reviewer shall be selected from a list of names provided by the Department and/or provided by outside national organizations appropriate to the academic programs under review.

In some instances, multiple external reviewers may be required such as cases in which APR coincides with external accreditation reviews or cases in which multiple external reviewers are required to accommodate the diversity of programs within a given department. See Section VI below for details.

The external reviewer will receive the APR Report prior to the site visit. Using a provided template, the external reviewer will submit an evaluation report within 30 days of the site visit. The report should be factual and explicit with an emphasis on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the programs (SWOT analysis). External reviewers are asked to relate their comments to the program strategic plans and to the mission statement of NMU. External reviewers are asked to keep in mind that many recommendations that would improve a given program might not be feasible because of the expense involved and the requirements of other programs within the University. The external reviewer is encouraged to focus their recommendation on what can and should be done within existing resources and make one or two suggestions for new investment that would have the greatest impact on program quality.

## Educational Policy Committee

The Educational Policy Committee (EPC) reviews the final self-study documents (includes the self-study, the external reviewer's report, and the departmental response to the external reviewer's report) and drafts a formal set of recommendations to send to the Provost and department in response to the documents they have reviewed.

# The Content of the Self-Study

## Templates

There are separate, but similar, templates for undergraduate and graduate programs. The base template, including the undergraduate component, is AcadPrgmReview\_Self-StudyTemplate.docx and available from the Academic Affairs and Share websites.

The internal self-study should:

1. Be factual, explicit, and concise.
2. Provide a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis of the department and the programs.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Helpful*** | ***Harmful*** |
| ***Internal origin*** | Strengths | Weaknesses |
| ***External origin*** | Opportunities | Threats |

1. Provide narrative interpretation of any included data/tables. For example, if there are large fluctuations in program enrollment due to changes in curriculum, the narrative should explain the circumstances that led to the fluctuations. If a program's retention rate is statistically low due to required enrollment caps, the narrative should provide the explanation for the low retention rate.
2. Demonstrate relationship to the Department and University mission (Part A, Section I).
3. Provide thoughtful strategic planning. The conclusion of Part B can provide the foundation for program strategic planning and assessing strengths and weaknesses.
4. Included as part of the department, EPC and Provost responses created after the external review, describe what the program plans to achieve in the period before the next review, indicating how it will redirect resources to accomplish these plans or generate new revenue to support them.

## Format

The APR Report will be completed digitally based on a provided template (Microsoft Word document). The Report consists of two parts. ***Part A*** consists of Departmental information. ***Part B*** consists of program information pertaining to individual degree programs within the Department. ***Part B*** will be completed multiple times, once for each degree program. Appendices will be included in the self-study document, which is one consolidated Word document.) The external review report and responses are filed with the APR Coordinator as separate documents.

The completed APR Report structure will be:

1. Self-study
2. Part A: Department
3. Part B: Degree Program 1 (typically 6-10 pages)
4. Part B: Degree Program 2 (typically 6-10 pages)
5. Part B: Degree Program 3 (typically 6-10 pages)
6. Etc.
7. External Reviewer Evaluation Report (using template)
8. Appendix:
9. Most recent assessment of scholarly activities
10. Most recent Assessment of Learning Outcomes Report
11. Faculty Curriculum Vitae

The addenda are External Reviewer Report and the Departmental Response to that review.

# SHARE Submission Procedure

A secured SHARE site at <https://share.nmu.edu> has an APR group holding guides, templates and samples. By August 1 any representative of departments undertaking the APR should have access to the APR SHARE site. Department heads should confirm access for those designated individuals.

The department emails the APR self-study report, any separate support documents and the list of potential consultants to the APR Coordinator. All related documents are stored in Share under the department’s name.

# Guidelines for External Reviewer Site Visit

These are meant to be flexible in order to suit each department’s situation. Departments are provided resources to bring in one or more external reviewers as warranted by the mix of majors.

## Selection Criteria for Reviewers

* Have administrative experience
* Have experience in disciplines which match those of the department
* Are connected with, and have good experience in, departments and institutions of comparable rank and type, preferably identified peers
* Have been an external reviewer previously, preferred

## Reviewer Selection and Site Visit Procedure

1. A list of three-four names of potential reviewers and brief descriptions of their qualifications should be submitted, as a separate document, to Share along with the APR self-study document by December 1.
2. The APR Coordinator reviews the list with the Provost who selects reviewer(s) from provided list by December 5 and communicates the decision to the dean.
3. The dean works with the consultant to determine the consulting fee and to identify several possible dates for the visit. The dean communicates those to the APR Coordinator who confirms the fee and ensures the date chosen works with the schedule of the Provost, APR Coordinator, or both.
4. Reviewers should be contracted by the end of fall semester. When a final agreement between the consultant and NMU is made on the dates and fees, the APR Coordinator sends the IRS tax documents to the dean for the consultant to sign.
5. The process is then turned over to an Academic Affairs administrative assistant to have the personal services contract generated and the scheduling of lodging arrangements

## Site Visit Itinerary (minimum)

(This is a minimum list; some external reviewers or disciplines will require more)

1. The dean will develop the site visit schedule in coordination with the external reviewer.
2. The dean will schedule appropriate meetings for the administration, departmental faculty and contingent faculty, staff, and students.
3. At the start of the review, an orientation meeting with the external reviewer and the dean should be done.
4. The external reviewer will typically be scheduled for separate meetings with the:
   * The Department Head for the Department being reviewed
   * Faculty
   * Undergraduate students
   * Provost or a designee
   * Assistant Provost for Graduate education and Research (if applicable)
   * Graduate students (if applicable)
   * Other constituents as appropriate (i.e. advisory board members or community members)
5. Tour of facilities
6. Exit interview with the Provost or a designee( if desired)

## Materials Given to External Reviewer before Visit

* Self-Study
* URL to overview of NMU’s Systems Portfolio (first chapter). (see NMU AQIP web site)
* URL for department’s web site
  + Curriculum
  + Activities
* URL for Academic Affairs web site
* URL for Institutional Research web site (referencing appropriate sections within)
* URL for Academic Program Review materials: Guide, External Review Report Template
* Itinerary for the visit (should have been coordinated with the reviewer and NMU staff)

**Expectations of the reviewer’s report**Within three weeks of the site visit, the external reviewer will submit an Evaluation Report. A template is available on the Academic Affairs and Share site which should be used, or at least followed.

* Comments on the Self-Study with particular emphasis on:
  + Quality of
    - Students
    - Faculty
    - Facilities and equipment
  + Quality of the major
    - Curriculum
    - Learning outcomes
  + Challenges, Opportunities and Plans for Improvement
* Recommendations for the Department
* Other comments the reviewer feels are appropriate