

# Western Illinois University

## Academic Program Reviews: 2024–2025

### Introduction, Purpose, and Guiding Principles

The periodic review of academic programs serves several purposes including the evaluation of quality and the improvement of programs. When program review is done well, faculty and administrators gain an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of their academic programs; there is clear agreement on goals for the future; budget decisions are based on academic priorities; institutions are accountable to their students and other constituencies for the quality of their product; and finally, but most importantly, programs improve.

The review process will be determined by the individual academic department in concert with the Dean, and will follow the general guidelines set forth by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). To avoid redundancy, academic departments have the discretion to use current findings from specialized program accreditations and other reviews as the basis of the program review process, if they are not more than two years old.

Program Review allows academic units to thoroughly and candidly evaluate:

- the mission and goals of the program and its relation to those of the University
- the educational objectives, curriculum, and student learning outcomes of undergraduate and graduate programs
- the quality and diversity of faculty and their contributions to the program
- resources (e.g., library, physical facilities)
- the reputation of the program among peers in the discipline

Guiding Principles for Review:

- the review should provide a candid assessment of program strengths and weaknesses and should result in program improvement
- the process should be broadly participatory involving faculty, students, administrators, and relevant constituents
- the process should facilitate short-term and long-term strategic planning

Program review is evaluative, not just descriptive. More than the compilation of data on a particular academic program, it requires academic judgments about the quality of the program and adequacy of its resources. Most important of all, program review should result in actions. Growing out of the review process, the department and college should develop a plan to implement the desired changes. This plan should be linked to the University's planning and budgeting processes to make certain that the desired changes are actually made, the resources are set aside, and that the program's goals fit into the University's strategic plan.

## **Delineation of Responsibilities**

**Academic Vice President:** The University has an established program review schedule, which can be viewed at [www.wiu.edu/provost/aprschd.php](http://www.wiu.edu/provost/aprschd.php). The program review process is initiated by the Associate Provost for academic programs according to the University program review schedule. Guidelines for the academic program review process will be distributed to departments with programs under review. While general guidelines for the review process are established by the Academic Vice President, departments and colleges are encouraged to structure the review process to meet their individual needs.

Summary information obtained from program reviews will be used in the annual results report submitted to the IBHE by the Associate Provost for academic programs.

**College Dean:** The College Dean, or designee, participates in the initial planning for the program review. Specific college guidelines/requirements for review, which may be in addition to those established by the Academic Vice President, should be presented to each department undergoing an academic program review process. Internal college deadlines for self-study submission will be established to coincide with timelines required by the Academic Vice President and University planning/budgeting schedules. The College Dean will conduct follow-up meetings with departments to incorporate the review findings into the College and University's long-term plans and has primary responsibility for implementing a plan of action resulting from the review.

**Department Chair:** The Department Chair shall plan the review process by conducting a thorough self-study review process. The Chair oversees the self-study process and preparation of the self-study document. Final submission of the required program review documentation is the responsibility of the Department Chair.

**Program Review Team:** It is suggested that the department establish a Program Review Team, consisting of faculty and other appropriate individuals, for the purpose of conducting the self-study. Program Review Teams should maintain close contact with the Department Chair and College Dean.

**External Reviewers:** One External Reviewer is required for each department undergoing the program review process. Additional reviewers may be necessary for departments with programs in multiple disciplines. See Guidelines for External Reviewers.

## Program Review Self-Study Report Guidelines

- **January 1:** Department/School submits preliminary self-study to Dean (to be submitted with executive summary—see page 6)
- **February 1:** Dean submits preliminary self-study to Associate Provost for academic programs (to be submitted with executive summary—see page 6)
  
- **April/May:** Department/School submits final self-study (electronically in Microsoft Word) to Dean (to be submitted with IBHE review summary—see page 6)
- **June 5:** Dean submits final self-study (electronically in Microsoft Word) to Associate Provost for academic programs (to be submitted with IBHE review summary—see page 6)

While the individual departments and colleges are responsible for developing their own review procedures, it is expected that the review process will minimally include a departmental/program self-study, which is both descriptive and evaluative. **Programs offering courses and/or degrees in the Quad Cities should include relevant information in all areas of the self-study where applicable.**

Elements of the self-study should include, but are not limited to, the following:

### Section I: Description and Analysis of the Program

1. Overview of the academic unit
  - a. Mission of the academic unit
  - b. Centrality to the mission of the University
  - c. Programs offered
  - d. Outstanding characteristics of the unit
  - e. Academic Advisement and Career Counseling
  - f. Facilities (overview of space and equipment, maintenance plan if applicable)
  - g. Library (resources necessary for the unit, interaction/collaboration with the library, role of the unit in determination/selection of library resources)
  - h. Budget and planning process
  - i. Other
  
2. Overview of the degree program being reviewed
  - a. Program goals
  - b. Student demand (enrollment history, credit hours generated)
  - c. Profile of majors
  - d. Degrees conferred
  - e. Cost study information
  - f. Other

3. Relevant contextual information
  - a. Description and evaluation of major changes in the program
  - b. Description and evaluation of changes in the discipline or field
  - c. Student demand
  - d. Societal need
  - e. National trends in recruiting faculty
  - f. Other elements appropriate to the field
  
4. Curriculum of degree program being reviewed
  - a. Rationale for curriculum (major/minor, general education, service courses)
  - b. Desired student learning outcomes
  - c. Coherence and overall design of curriculum and course offerings
  - d. Methods of course delivery, including improvements in technological innovation and comprehensive data systems
  - e. Measures used for assessment of student learning and assessment results (include department/program assessment plan)
  - f. Co-curricular and out-of-classroom academic experiences
  - g. Measures of curricular effectiveness (student/employer satisfaction, results of national certification tests, placement results, etc.)
  - h. Process for curriculum revision
  - i. Other
  
5. Faculty of degree program being reviewed
  - a. Profile of faculty
  - b. Method of faculty evaluation (department criteria)
  - c. Indicators of faculty quality inherent to the discipline/field of study
  - d. National reputation of the program faculty
  - e. Scholarly/creative activities of program faculty
  - f. Faculty development opportunities
  - g. Other
  
6. Quality measures for the program
  - a. Indicators of quality in the discipline/field and justification for these as the best measures of quality
  - b. Peer comparisons for each of these measures from established University benchmark institutions or other appropriate institutions based on specific programmatic uniqueness.
  - c. Other

## **Section II: Response to previous program review recommendations**

1. Actions taken addressing the previous program review recommendations

### **Section III: Major Findings**

1. Strengths identified from the review process
2. Weaknesses identified from the review process
3. Evidence of students meeting desired learning outcomes

### **Section IV: Recommendations and action plans**

1. Recommendations identified from the review process
2. Initiatives and action plans for the program for the next three to five years to meet recommendations

**A. Executive Summary (to be submitted with preliminary self-study)**

- **January 1:** Department/School submits executive summary to Dean
- **February 1:** Dean submits executive summary to Associate Provost for academic programs

By January 1, the department will submit the preliminary self-study and an Executive Summary to its dean. The Executive Summary should consist entirely of concise statements in bullet form describing items that have been identified in the preliminary self-study:

1. **Program Strengths**
2. **Potential Concerns and Remedies**

**B. IBHE Review Summary (to be submitted with final self-study)**

- **April/May:** Department/School submits IBHE review summary (electronically in Microsoft Word) to Dean
- **June 5:** Dean submits IBHE review summary (electronically in Microsoft Word) to Associate Provost for academic program

By April/May (date to be determined by the Dean), the Department/School will submit the final self-study and the IBHE Review Summary to its Dean. The IBHE Review Summary should consist entirely of concise statements in bullet form describing:

1. **Description and evaluation of any major changes in the program [e.g., (a) changes in the overall discipline or field; (b) student demand; (c) societal need; (d) institutional context for offering the degree; (e) other elements appropriate to the discipline in question; and (f) other].**
2. **Description of actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes.**
3. **Description of major findings (strengths and weaknesses) and recommendations, including evidence of learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement.**
4. **Description of actions to be taken as a result of this review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes.**

**Report Length: 2-3 pages.** Any report shorter than 1.5 pages or longer than 3 pages when properly formatted will be returned for editing.

## **Guidelines for External Reviewers for Program Review**

One External Reviewer is required for each department undergoing the program review process. Additional reviewers may be necessary for departments with programs in multiple disciplines. The Provost's Office will provide funding for an \$800 stipend and up to \$1,200 to cover additional costs associated with the review (e.g., travel, lodging, meals). Reviewing multiple programs during the same visit could qualify for negotiation of a higher stipend.

### **Programs subject to accreditation review**

Departments with programs subject to accreditation review may coordinate the cyclical review with an accreditation review. The timing of the cyclical review should be coordinated with the Associate Provost for academic programs. An external review, as outlined in this document, may not be required. By **June 5**, the Department/School should submit all program review materials (including the self-study and external reviewer's report) and the IBHE review summary to the Associate Provost for academic programs, through the Dean. All documents should be submitted electronically in Microsoft Word.

### **Guidelines for planning and conducting an external review**

- The department usually coordinates the external review, preparing the Agreement for Professional Services prior to the campus visit
- The campus visit should occur in **February or March**
- The External Reviewer should use the preliminary self-study prepared by the department as a guide to the review
- Two weeks before the campus visit, the department should send the External Reviewer:
  - the preliminary self-study (prepared by department; reviewed by Dean and Associate Provost for academic programs)
  - an itinerary of the campus visit
  - University catalog(s) or link to WIU catalog web page(s)
  - other documents the faculty deem relevant or that the External Reviewer may request. The list of documents sent should be cleared with the Dean.
- The department works with the Provost's Office to arrange reimbursement for the external reviewer

### **Campus Visit Itinerary**

The campus visit should include meetings with faculty, students, and administration. The last meeting (exit interview) should include only the Chair, Dean, Provost, Associate Provost for academic programs, and External Reviewer. The schedule should include sufficient time for the reviewer to meet with faculty and students as deemed appropriate by the department.

### **External Reviewer written report**

The External Reviewer report should highlight program strengths, challenges, and recommendations for improvement as related to the self-study and any other areas they may wish to address. The written report will be submitted (electronically in Microsoft Word and hard copy) to the Dean, copy to the Department Chair, within four weeks of the campus visit or by **April 15** at the latest.