

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW GUIDELINES

WHY PROGRAM REVIEW

Program review is a necessary process whereby departments within Arizona Western College periodically undergo a check on quality assurance which includes taking a critical eye to what a department is doing and how well it is meeting its objectives. Program review is the foundation upon which all departments assess, maintain, and enhance program quality and vitality. As such, program review gives us the opportunity to reflect on the performance of a department/program, document what is being done well, identify areas where things need improvement, and plan for the future.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A PROGRAM

A program can be defined in many ways depending on what activities within the institution are being reviewed. An operational definition of a program is any activity or collection of activities of the institution that consumes resources (dollars, people, space, equipment, time). This can lead to several ways of defining programs; for example:

- A sequence of prescribed courses, which may or may not include general education courses and/or electives, that leads to an officially recognized associate degree or certificate
- The general education component of an associate degree
- Courses in a specific transfer discipline, such as university pathway programs
- Pre-collegiate or developmental courses, such as English or Mathematics
- Special programs for selected students, such as Honors

FRAMEWORK FOR PROGRAM REVIEW REPORTS

The following report framework is to be utilized as a guide, aimed at getting a department to do an analysis of what it is aiming to accomplish and how successful it is in doing so.

- I. Overview**
- II. Mission / Program Purpose**
- III. Quality Assurance**
 - A. Focus on the Department Program(s)
 - B. Focus on Assessment
 - C. Focus on Students
 - D. Focus on Faculty and Staff
 - E. Focus on Support
 - F. Focus on Community
- IV. Summary of Significant Developments Since Last Program Review**
- V. Guide for the Future**
- VI. Action Plan**
- VII. Appendices with Supporting Data / Evidence**

Below is additional information for each section of the framework.

I. Overview

The purpose of the overview is to *briefly* describe the program to individuals who may be unfamiliar with the program. This section may also serve to describe the process used to conduct the review and the internal and external context within which the program operates.

II. Mission / Program Purpose

To help frame the discussion on what the department does, the mission or purpose of the program(s) offered by the department should be indicated. The relationship of the department purpose to overall college mission and goals or any principles of the profession or business practice should be indicated.

III. Quality Assurance

Address the key questions:

- What are we trying to do?
- How are we doing it?
- Who is responsible for doing it?
- How do we know we are succeeding?
- How can we do even better?

It is helpful to use a lens that focuses on various areas pertaining to how the department knows whether or not what it is doing is working well; i.e., whether it is succeeding in meeting its objectives.

A. Focus on the Department Program(s)

In this section the department should reflect on the various academic and non-academic activities that it provides.

Curricula

Degrees and certificates

[Indicate the degree and certificate programs offered by the department as well as any non-credit training provided.]

Student Learning Outcomes

[Degree program *student learning outcomes* detail what knowledge, skills, and values students should acquire from their educational experience. What students will gain from their college experience needs to be identified and how this experience will pay off in employment, societal contributions, and quality of life helps focus what the program is trying to accomplish. The learning outcomes should be based on the needs of the profession as well as any specialized accreditation or other expectations. How mastery of learning outcomes fits in transfer pathway programs to the universities should be considered.]

Summary of program curricula

[Information on the various degrees or certificates provided by the department needs to be presented. In doing so, sequences of courses, articulation pathway programs connecting to

the universities, etc. should be described. How the curricula are designed to achieve program learning outcomes should be addressed; perhaps via a curriculum map. A discussion on how the curriculum supports the delivery of the program's learning outcomes should be presented. What is being taught, in what order, and from what perspective should be articulated – whether the curriculum builds cumulatively on students' prior knowledge and capacity and to what extent the co-curriculum supports the curriculum and the program's learning objectives should be indicated. How the curricula benefit from the General Education curriculum as well as how the department contributes to the delivery of General Education should be addressed. How the curricula are structured to meet the needs of transfer pathway programs should be considered.]

Lead-in courses

[Developmental preparation, prior courses and their impact, alignment with AGEC or with Course Equivalency Guide transfer requirements, and dual enrollment or articulation agreements with high schools should be described so that there is an understanding of what prepares a student for the program.]

Follow-up courses

[How the curricula are sequenced, why the sequential nature is needed, and how various activities connect toward the delivery of the learning outcomes should be indicated.]

Scheduling

[How the curricula are delivered should be discussed. Enrollment patterns and trends; time and date issues such as day, afternoon, evening, or weekend, format issues such as self-paced, distance, online, short-term; etc. should be indicated. How instructional activity is made available across the various AWC campuses and how facility usage impacts scheduling should be considered. Faculty efforts in various delivery modes should be addressed.]

Curricula comparisons

[Information on differences (e.g., course offerings, costs, program requirements, enrollments, etc.) between various similar or related discipline degree or certificate programs within the institution should be indicated. Benchmarking against comparable programs offered in any other colleges should be done so that there is an understanding of how the program compares with State or national standards (if such exist) for similar programs.]

Curricula issues

[Articulation issues/trends, professional accreditation concerns, new program development, new course development, changes in use of technology, facility changes, etc. should be addressed. Where the curricula are evolving as learning expectations of the discipline or profession change should be indicated.]

Innovations or changes

[New issues, significant changes, improved methodologies, etc. should be discussed as it pertains to the later discussion within the self-analysis on future directions the department can pursue.]

Use of assessment information

[How information from the assessment of degree program student learning outcomes has been used in making curricula changes should be discussed.]

Finances

Revenues and expenditures

[An indication of whether the costs of the program are aligned with the budgeted resources and, if appropriate, what revenues are generated through program activities. If comparative data are available, benchmarking against others to indicate whether resources seem appropriate given the program size and duties. Trends in budgeted resources and the impact on the department should be addressed.]

B. Focus On Assessment

In this section the department or program should reflect on how well it has ascertained whether it is accomplishing its mission and achieving its goals and objectives. Detailed assessment of whether or not graduates of the curricula know and are able to do what the faculty has identified as learning expectations for the degree programs must be documented.

Approach to assessment

[Documented outcomes, degree of faculty participation in regular assessment activities, results of assessments, what has been learned from assessments, what has changed as a result of assessments, what plans are there for changes in the future, whether appropriate feedback loops to improve student learning exist, etc. should be discussed.]

Student learning assessment

[Detailed discussion on measures used to assess student learning outcomes and whether they are constructively aligned with program or department objectives should be discussed. Information summarizing annual student learning outcomes assessment activity over the time since the last program review should be provided. Summarizing student learning outcomes assessment efforts should include information on whether assessment results are providing evidence of learning, whether they indicate trending upward or downward in regard to student success in learning, and whether they inform quality improvement efforts; and if so, how.]

Culture of Inquiry

[While use of assessment information is addressed within each of the focal areas, an overall discussion of how a culture of inquiry aimed at evidence-based decision making is working within the department should be presented.]

C. Focus On Students

In this section, departments should reflect on how well the program is meeting student needs.

Demographics

[Analysis or examination of the demographics of the students enrolled, special populations being served or not being served, trends and patterns of enrollment, comparisons to other Arizona colleges or national trends, etc. should be discussed.]

Student satisfaction

[Surveys of students receiving services, enrollees, transfer pathway students and/or graduates should be carried out and discussed. Results of qualitative measures aimed at looking at how best the department is providing services for students or supporting student learning efforts should be presented. Use of focus groups or interviews should be considered.]

Student success

[Retention and completion rates with a comparison to other Arizona colleges and national trends should be discussed. Success of students in regard to transfer rates and/or transfer success should be indicated. Perspectives of alumni and employers in regard to the degree to which students succeed at next educational level or in the workforce and how well diverse populations succeed should be covered.]

Use of assessment information

[How the department has used assessment information in making changes for improved student services or improved success should be addressed.]

D. Focus On Faculty And Staff

In this section, programs should reflect on the faculty and staff in the program and the degree to which their needs are met, in order for them to in turn be successful helping students learn or in providing student services.

Organizational chart

[An indication of the responsibilities of personnel in key functional areas and how the structure of the department has changed over time should be indicated. How the staffing, as reflected in the organizational structure, meets the department needs should be indicated.]

Demographics

[Information on faculty including status as full-time and part-time, permanent and associate faculty, trends in numbers, etc. Information on full- and part-time staff including coordinators, secretarial/clerical support, technicians, other support positions, etc. and how the personnel within the department have changed over time.]

Faculty / staff development

[For permanent and associate faculty, how the department goes about hiring, coordinating duties, providing support leading to effective teaching, communicating on department issues, etc. should be addressed. Efforts to improve personnel skills and abilities aimed at enhanced performance or services should be described.]

Professional activities

[Information on faculty or staff who have pursued special projects, had reassigned time, are active professional organizations, sought grants, collaborate with others in partnerships, have publications, have made presentations, or other contributions.]

Use of assessment information

[How assessment information, such as faculty and staff appraisals, employee evaluations, opinion surveys, etc. have been used in making changes for improvement.]

Teaching And Learning

Teaching and learning methods

[What teaching methods are used – active learning, cooperative learning, supplemental instruction, etc. Ways of stimulating student involvement. Ways of engaging students in their learning. How technology supports learning and how the department knows it is effective.]

Effectiveness of teaching

[How faculty assure themselves and others that the designs for curricula, teaching and learning methods, and student assessments are being implemented as intended. How the

department assures that other priorities don't push the education quality to the sidelines. How the effectiveness of efforts by associate faculty is determined. How ideas for improvement are turned into practice.]

Use of assessment information

[How assessment information, such as, learning outcomes assessment, student ratings of instruction, or peer evaluation of teaching, is used in making changes for improvement in teaching and learning.]

E. Focus On Support

In this section, programs should reflect on the support issues related to this department – to what degree are they met, where are there kudos to be given, changes that have taken place, improvements to be made, etc.

Technology

[Hardware and software, technical issues and/or support, instructional issues and/or support, training for faculty and staff, etc. can be addressed.]

Facilities and equipment

[Cycles for replacement or refurbishment of equipment, classroom spaces, labs, furniture, or other infrastructure components should be indicated. Any connection to technology or facility planning should be discussed.]

Learning resources

[Collection of books, databases, journals, videos and whether they are adequate to provide proper support should be indicated. Learning assistance or tutoring connected to the program educational outcomes could be discussed. How resources are made available across campus locations should be considered.]

Marketing and public relations

[Brochures, print materials, website, special events, recruitment efforts, etc. aimed at helping the department provide its services, attract clients, etc. and whether such efforts are successful can be addressed.]

Support services

[Advisement, assessment, testing, job placement, etc. – whether part of what the department does or whether something provided externally to the department but is aimed at the success of the department in meeting its objectives – should be discussed. How services are delivered across campuses and how departments rely on such distributed services should be addressed.]

Resources

[How resources – staffing, operating and capital budgets, grants, etc. – allow the department to meet its objectives or whether there is a lack of suitable resources to meet the aspirations of the department should be addressed.]

Use of assessment information

[How assessment information is used in making changes for improved use of technology, facilities, etc. should be discussed.]

F. Focus On Community

In this section, programs should reflect on the degree to which regular input from outside of the college—the community—is sought and how this information is used to help guide the department.

Advisory council

[If one exists, the composition of the Advisory Council, information on meetings held, the involvement in review of competencies of degrees or certificates, and other functions or activities should be discussed.]

Community groups

[High school connections, community agency connections, and other forms of community involvement which pertain to the mission of the department should be indicated.]

External requirements or considerations

[Information on certifications, accreditations, licensures, professional organization status or involvement which impact what the department does should be addressed. Employment success of graduates could be considered.]

Community issues

[How well the department is meeting its community-based objectives can be discussed.]

Use of assessment information

[How assessment information has been used in making changes to allow the department to meet the changing needs of the community should be indicated.]

IV. Summary of significant developments since the last program review

This portion of the self-analysis should provide a summary of significant developments since the last program review, with particular emphasis on challenges identified during the previous review, accomplishments relating to the action plans, any work yet to be done.

Information on how the department pursued action plan items in the previous program review and how successful the department was in carrying out the action plan should be discussed. Annual assessment of student learning outcomes, or ongoing assessment of how well a department is providing services, should be summarized in this section to help explain how the department has evolved since the last program review took place.

V. Guide for the future

The purpose of this section is to describe what is planned as a result of what was learned during this program review. Recommendations for specific actions to improve or sustain quality and to address weaknesses should be clearly stated and focus on what the program itself can do, not on what other departments might do for the program. At the same time, there should be a discussion on any areas where departments outside the one being reviewed can be better utilized to help the program sustain quality.

Challenges confronting the program at the present time should be discussed in context with where the program would like to be in the future. Community and compliance influences by external factors (e.g., state laws, external accreditation requirements, changing community demographics) which will impact the department's ability to achieve future goals should be discussed.

Projecting where the program will be in five years should also be included in this section. For those programs whose lifecycle has reached its end, a plan for how best to "sunset" the activity should be indicated.

VI. Action Plan

Culminating the program review effort should be a plan of action aimed at accomplishing the objectives that have been identified as part of the look forward to the future. The action plan can be specific when such issues are identified; e.g., goal, objective, timeframe, responsible Party(ies), resource Implications.

A yearly monitoring of progress on the Action Plan – as shown by evidence – should occur.

VII. Appendices

Information that helps explain the discussion in the self-analysis report, such as data from Institutional Research, student survey data, suggestions from advisory boards, faculty/staff/students, course enrollment and delivery modes, success of students in terms of retention and graduation, etc. should be provided.

A. Program Data

The specific data that a program needs to help it in doing a self-analysis will vary depending on which particular department is undergoing program review. Nevertheless, the data supporting the analysis should be meaningful and useful rather than data that is voluminous but tells little that would allow a program to learn about itself to the point of making informed decisions for improvement.

B. Supporting Evidence

Here departments may provide material that the narrative may refer to when making quality assurance points or when raising issues of concern that may need addressing in the action plan for the future.

Some performance indicators that programs could consider as supporting evidence include the following:

- Student satisfaction surveys
- Alumni satisfaction surveys
- Faculty/staff satisfaction surveys
- Pass rates on licensure exams
- Employer satisfaction surveys
- Focus groups
- Facilities Improvement Plans
- Technology Improvement Plans
- Number and type of complaints
- Comparison to peer institutions
- Alignment with professional organization best practices
- Tracking the use of a survey
- Tracking complaints and how they are resolved
- Benchmarks set by national, state, or peer organizations