

AURORA UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

GUIDELINES

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I. Overview

# There are two primary purposes of this document. First, it provides the Aurora University community an understanding of the role of the academic program review process as it relates to the larger aims of student, program, and institutional assessment and program development practices. Second, it details the protocol and expectations for University programs as they engage in the review.

# II. Purposes of Program Review

The overarching goal of the program review is to ensure that Aurora University’s academic offerings support the institution’s mission. Compilation and presentation of curricular materials, dialogue among faculty within academic programs, and the resultant formulation of strategic goals and objectives, ensure regular, formative feedback for academic programs and for the University as it considers its mission and goals. The program review process has three purposes:

* First, the program review offers timely, formative assessment of program quality;
* Second, the review offers opportunities for program development to better meet the needs of students as they prepare for participation in graduate education or employment;
* Third, the program review contributes to a cycle of regular review that engenders ongoing reflection and dialogue about program growth and development and fit within the range of University program offerings.

At the departmental level, the academic program review provides evidence of effectiveness relative to student learning. In addition to the University-wide core commitments to effective communication, critical thinking, responsible citizenship, and discovery and reflection, each academic department has articulated its own, discipline-specific student learning outcomes. The extent to which each program meets the University learning outcomes as well as its own, discipline-specific outcomes will be assessed through a variety of methods. In addition, reviews will reveal opportunities for program refinement, expansion and/or diversification where warranted in order to provide a wider range of educational options for Aurora University students.

Academic programs that are part of the regular cycle of reviews include academic majors at the undergraduate and graduate level unless those majors are accredited by discipline-specific accrediting bodies. Academic minors *per se* will not be subject to program reviews, but minor programs may be included, at the discretion of the Chief Academic Officer, as a dimension of the review of related programs. The reviews will cover programs on the Aurora campus, the Woodstock campus, and the George Williams College campus as well as On-line programs. The schedule of reviews will be set in advance and is established by the Assessment Director(s) and the Chief Academic Officer.

III. Expectations of Program Executive Director, Chair and Faculty

The program chair and faculty are expected to:

1. Identify three potential institutions (two peer and one aspirant) to base an external scan as part of the program review. Complete the “Peer and Aspirant Institution Selection Form,” and provide it to the Dean of Academic Administration (DAA). (See Section VI). The DAA will confirm the acceptance of these institutions in a timely fashion, and provide an additional aspirant institution to be incorporated into the external scan as well.
2. Compile the Program Materials File (See Section IV and Appendix).
3. Prepare the Program Review Report supported by reflection upon and analysis of the Program Materials File (See Report Template).
4. Submit the Program Review Report and Program Review Materials File to the Dean of Academic Administration and Chief Academic Officer.

# IV. Program Review Materials File

The materials to be assembled for reference in the preparation of the Program Review Report are detailed in the Appendix.

V. External Scan Guidelines

The external scan is captured by the comparison to peer and aspirant institutions, as well as the reflection upon program demand, development and change (Foci VIII, IX, & X on the Report Template). Details regarding the elements to be explored in the external scan of peer and aspirant institutions are included in the Appendix.

# VI. Selecting Peer and Aspirant Institutions

Two peer and one aspirant institution will be identified by the program by filling out the “Peer and Aspirant Institution Selection Form.” This form is available on the University Assessment website. The program will then submit the completed form to the Dean of Academic Administration.

The following guidelines should be followed in selecting institutions:

1. Peer institution should be of comparable size and share similar student demographics.
2. Chosen peer institutions, as a whole, should offer programs that are comparable to those offered at AU.
3. Peer and aspirant institutions should be accredited by comparable agencies at the institutional and/or program level.

# VII. Program Review Report

The report should follow the format outlined in the “Program Review Report Template” document, which is available on the University Assessment website. The report should be written to a broader academic audience, rather than specifically to faculty of the particular discipline. These reports will be used by program chairs, faculty, and administrators to guide program planning and assessment decisions

VIII. Timeline

November 15 Program Executive Director/Chair forwards list of potential external scan institutions to the Dean of Academic Administration

Before Dec 1 Dean and Chief Academic Officer select a fourth aspirant institution and affirm the peer and aspirant institutions submitted by the program undergoing review

April 1 Program Executive Director forwards draft of Program Review Report to Dean of Academic Administration and Chief Academic Officer

Before June 1 Debriefing meeting with Program and Academic Affairs Office

APPENDIX

Program Review Report Areas of Focus and Relevant Program Review Materials File Components:

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| **Program Review Report Areas of Focus** | **Materials Components** |
| Program Description | * Admission requirements, any changes thereto * Records of enrollment in the major for the past five years\* * Breakdown by part-time and full-time\* * Breakdown by native 4-year and transfer students\* * Student body diversity including enrollment of low-income and first generation students (compare to overall AU demographics)\* |
| Alignment with University Mission Goals & Objectives | * University Mission, Goals, & Objectives |
| Quality of Instruction | * Aggregated course evaluations (compare to AU averages) (Note that SmartEvals for a five year period can be retrieved using the Specialized Reports function – University Analytics can provide data reflecting AU averages) * Any Exit Interview / Survey or Focus Group data |
| Quality of Curriculum | * Course descriptions and course grid for major completion * Sample course syllabi * Curriculum map that indicates where program’s student learning outcomes are introduced, reinforced, and enhanced * Alignment of the curriculum with AU General Education and University Student Learning Outcomes |
| Quality of Co-Curriculum | * Departmental definition/concept of co-curriculum * Inventory of co-curricular opportunities and intended impact * Evidence of actual impact of co-curricular opportunities * Evidence (minutes) of a meeting with Phillips Library representatives about the extent to which library holdings and resources are sufficient to the needs of the program. This may include a meeting with the Academic Support Center. * Evidence (minutes) of a meeting with ITS representatives about the extent to which IT resources and processes are suited to the needs of the program |
| Quality of Student Learning | * Assessment Reports for the past three years * Any additional evidence of student learning (e.g. Alumni Survey data) * Grade distributions across the major and by course\* |
| Quality of Program Assessment | * Current Assessment Plan * Assessment Committee’s feedback on last three Assessment Reports |
| Comparison to Peer and Aspirant Institutions | * Program policies (admission, retention, etc.) * Program marketing / branding * Program mission / theoretical orientation * Faculty qualifications and expertise * Modes of delivery (traditional, online, blended etc.) * Number of core courses required, core course topics * Number of electives required, number offered, range of topics * (If relevant) Labs: number, topics, alignment with classes * Majors, minors, certificates, endorsements, CEUs * Areas of concentration or specialization * Internships, field placements, or practica – required or not, hours required or offered, placement within the curriculum, paired courses to enhance learning * Career development opportunities – job shadowing, informational interviewing, alumni panels, career fairs * Evidence of student participation in program development (e.g. presence on advisory boards or councils) * Student organizations * Mentorship activities (e.g. senior – to – freshman etc.) * Student participation in research, including publication participation and presentation at conferences * For fine arts students, recitals, concerts and other performances, plays, musicals, shows * Additional high-impact practices, such as learning communities and study abroad * Evidence that the program is forging effective partnerships outside the college / university * Other evidence of opportunities for development of students in the discipline |
| Program Demand, Development & Change | * Associated careers with the program degree * Bureau of Labor Statistics Data * Alumni feedback * Employer surveys |

\* Provided upon request by University Analytics