

## External Program Review University of Idaho Overview

Program review, as it is widely used across the nation, is evaluation aimed at building quality, delivering cost-effective programs, responding to needs and constraints, and thereby enhancing an institution's fulfillment of its mission. The primary purpose of program review is self-assessment, *not* financial enhancement. Using a set of criteria or performance indicators, judgments are made about a program's centrality, quality, need/demand, and cost-effectiveness. These judgments are the major guide for strategic planning for the programs.

The UI conducts external program reviews of its academic and service/support programs for the purposes of improving the quality of those programs, providing accountability data for strategic planning, and enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the institution as it fulfills its mission. Annually, unit data profiles (on selected quantitative indicators) are monitored internally and then reported to the Office of the State Board of Education/Regents. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities has recommended that the University of Idaho "exercise the leadership and coordination necessary for periodic program review that will inform future planning and further the relationship between the University's mission and goals and education programs." Thorough External Program Reviews (EPR) of both academic and service/support programs are conducted on a seven-year cycle (with variations planned to correlate with specialized accreditation practices). External Program Review, along with ongoing annual action planning, academic outcomes assessment, and specialized accreditation (all of which will be incorporated in the reviews where possible), have become part of our routine institutional processes.

In the external program review process, the unit faculty and staff conduct a self-study of the program(s) relative to defined criteria, gathering both qualitative and quantitative information for this purpose. (Those departments with specialized accreditation are able to use content from their self-studies and evaluating team report for this EPR self-study and vice versa.)

The unit's personnel report results of their self-study, concluding with descriptions of areas in which the program excels, areas in which the program needs improvement, and program development considerations.

The review team will assess the program quality with respect to the questions and criteria provided, as well as the role of the program in the UI environment relative to UI role and mission and goals. The composition of each team is tailored to each unit, integrating activities between external peers, UI faculty and administrators, and others. Vice presidents, vice provosts, and academic deans (hereafter referred to as university level administrators) should be invited to review and suggest modifications to the schedule, the self-study, and the review team membership before they are finalized.

The review team will submit a written review and evaluation of the program. The unit administrator and university level administrator will reflect on the perceptions and recommendations of the review team, and provide a response to the recommendations as well as proposed actions, which will be forwarded with the review team's report to the Office of the Provost. Copies should also be provided to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. In addition, along with completing the columns, all documents should be uploaded to the External Program Review template.

When external program reviews are joined with an active strategic planning process, the UI will be able to better map the future in ways that will enable us to respond to the economic and educational needs of the state and region, and fulfill our mission with greater effectiveness.

## Purposes of External Program Review

The overarching goal of conducting external program reviews is to enhance UI's fulfillment of its role, mission, and goals by providing decision-makers the information needed to build quality programs and deliver these programs cost-effectively. More specific objectives for the institution are to:

- (1) enable UI to meet goals implied by our role and mission effectively;
- (2) improve UI's ability to respond to student demand and to regional and state educational and economic needs;
- (3) improve the interface of key performance indicators, quality improvement, and ongoing assessment efforts with strategic planning;
- (4) provide a sound foundation for the unit's internal planning and budgeting decisions;
- (5) broaden the knowledge base for establishing priorities, strategies, and budgets;
- (6) make cost-effective use of state resources as we fulfill our mission; and
- (7) assist the institution in making sound decisions regarding allocation and reallocation of funds in an era of constrained resources.

## External Program Review Participants and Their Responsibilities

### Major participants are as follows:

1. **First and foremost, the program personnel/faculty** have four central responsibilities described below, with the department chair or director (hereafter referred to as the unit administrator), and the Dean, Vice President or Vice Provost responsible for the unit (hereafter referred to as the university-level administrator) providing the leadership.
2. **The External Review Team**, which will review the program or unit using the UI criteria. Information sources for the team will be the self-study, with on-site interviews, observations, and document/facility review.
3. **The university-level administrator's office** handles all routine matters related to each external program review including designation of the review team (with the participation of the unit administrators and review and approval from the Provost's Office or the Provost's designee), and planning and participating in the campus visit.
4. **The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (IRA)** provides units with an overview of the EPR process, an orientation to the guidelines for the unit self-study, and maintains the External Program Review template and website. In addition, IRA is available to assist the unit administrator or university-level administrator as needed.

**Unit Responsibilities:**

1. Development of the self-study, responding to UI criteria and submission to reader(s) for critique prior to dissemination.
2. Participation in drawing up source lists or nominating persons for the external review team.
3. Active participation in the review team's campus visit, to include such activities as interviews with the review team or team members; providing information such as course syllabi, research reports, benchmarking/target reports, budget, and other documents, unit and committee minutes, productivity and quality measures, and facilitating classroom observations/interviews, student and faculty interviews, and lab and field site review.
4. Collegial discussion of and response to evaluation and reviewer comments, and communication with the university-level administrator about the resulting priorities and proposed actions.
5. Scheduling follow-up meeting with the Dean to discuss results of the evaluator report and action strategies and timelines.
6. Submit follow-up reports as required.

Units are encouraged to select someone (who may or may not be the unit administrator) to oversee progress on the self-study, act as coordinator for the entire process, and communicate with External Program Review Committee, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, the Dean or Vice President, and other offices such as Institutional Research and Assessment as needed. Self-study readers will be selected by the External Program Review Committee from programs scheduled for External Review in the subsequent year, in order to facilitate training in the process, as well as communication across campus of programmatic activities.

**External Program Review Team Responsibilities:**

The functions of the review team are to assess and report their judgments on:

- the program quality according to the criteria provided;
- the role of the program in the UI environment, relative to UI role and mission, and goals;
- the projected value or feasibility of various planning alternatives and priorities set forth by the department; and
- recommendations to assist the unit toward continual improvement

Prior to leaving campus, the review team holds exit conferences with the unit faculty/personnel and administrator, university-level administrator, and representatives of the External Program Review Committee, separately or concurrently. The final conference includes the Provost and the Dean or Vice President, providing a preliminary review and evaluation of the program.

**Review Team Report**

Within one month of visiting campus, the review team submits a written review and evaluation of the program to the university-level administrator and the reviewed program. The report provides reflections and judgments on

- the unit self-study;
- strengths and weaknesses relative to the criteria and questions provided;

- the centrality of the program(s) to the UI role, mission, and goals;
- specific items of inquiry requested by the unit administrator or university administrator;
- the validity of the self-study's identification of demand and need for the program; and
- evaluation of the various program improvement alternatives proposed by the unit in the context of available and projected resource levels.

### **Responses of Unit Personnel and Administrators to Review Team Report**

Within 30 days of receipt of the written Evaluators' Report, the unit administrator will schedule a meeting with the Dean or Vice President to discuss proposed actions to address the review team's recommendations. Within three weeks of this discussion the university-level administrator will submit the report to the Provost's Office and to the External Program Review Committee with his or her own comments and proposed actions; while the unit administrator will complete the timeline and actions column on the External Program Review template.

The university-level administrator's report should normally contain such elements as:

- General comments on the review team's report
- General comments on the unit's response
- Recommended action strategies

Dean's/Vice President's recommendations, which will include:

- Examination of program focus
- Possible changes to program focus
- Potential reallocation of resources
- Other proposed actions

Each year following the site visit the unit administrator and university-level administrator will be asked to follow-up the process with a review of actions and progress toward the recommendations to be submitted online in the External Program Review template. At the time the template is updated, an automatic email will be forwarded to the Provost's Office with notification that the template has changes ready for review.

### **Consideration by the Provost and President**

The Evaluators' report is then forwarded to the Provost's Office, and Institutional Research and Assessment along with

- (1) the unit self-study,
- (2) the unit's response,
- (3) the university-level administrator's report, as described above;

### **General Unit Timeline for External Program Review**

Specifics will be determined in advance, and adjusted in each case for other major events, but normally the timeline for a given unit will not extend beyond an academic year. The Review Team visit may occur in fall or spring, and other elements of the timeline will be adjusted accordingly.

Orientation of the unit to the EPR process and the guidelines for the Self-Study will occur the semester before the unit's scheduled review. For academic programs the process will involve the Provost's Office, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and the Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies. For

service/support programs the process will involve the Provost's Office, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, and the Vice President or Vice Provost of the program area under review.

Selection of Review Team	33-45 days
Preparation of Self-Study Report, review by EPRC representative	110-145 days
Review Team Evaluation of Self-Study Report	28-30 days
Campus Visit by Review Team	2.5-5 days
Preparation of Review Team Report	28-30 days
Unit Writing of Response to Review Team Report	21-28 days
University-level administrator's review with unit	14-21 days
Update EPR Template	Annually

### **External Program Review Template**

When the self-study has been completed and the Evaluators' Report received (or at any time during the process), the unit should upload the self-study and report into the EPR web template [add URL]. Following final discussions with the University-level administrator, additional pieces of data should be added to the template: the top several actions to be addressed in the coming year as a result of the review process, a timeline for each of those actions, and finally, the results of each of those actions at the end of the year. These data sets will need to be updated each year following the External Program Review.

S:Jane/EPR/Procedures/APR-OVRD