
2.S-2016 Cyclical Program Review

1. Overview

Cyclical program review is integral to maintaining program quality and relevance. Regular reviews situate program evaluation within system-wide quality assurance measures. Program reviews identify relative strengths and challenges of disciplinary content, curriculum design, pedagogy, graduate employment and other post-graduation activities, and student demand relative to other programs within the institution, to similar programs at other institutions, and to marketplace standards that employ program graduates. The policy, procedures and program review template are intended to guide the program area through a review process, from initial data gathering and reflective analysis of current program effectiveness, through identifying program objectives, initiatives and action plans for future sustainability and growth. The primary focus of the review is summed up in three questions:

1. How does the program align with St. Mary's University's mission, mandate and vision and with institutional priorities?
2. In what ways does the program meet learners' needs, thus ensuring their success?
3. What content and delivery elements require innovation or re-design for the program to remain relevant, effective and competitive?

1.1 Goals

The Cyclical Program Review Policy has three main goals:

- 1.1.1 to ensure high standards of the academic programs at St. Mary's University (University);
- 1.1.2 to standardize the process of program review; and
- 1.1.3 to document and communicate the results of academic program reviews.

More specific goals include:

For the Area housing the program

- To review and monitor the scope, quality and relevance of current academic programs in the University in a systematic and thorough manner

Approval Authority	Responsible Office	Effective Date	Date Last Revisited	Review Frequency
Board of Governors	Academic/Deans	June 20, 2016	2021	Every 5 years

- To step outside the area's daily operations and assess how well its programs and operations are fulfilling its mission within the University
- To consider and recommend immediate and longer-term changes and improvements that will enhance the area's offerings and performance in relation to the University's mandate and Strategic Plan

For the University

- To review and monitor the scope and quality of current academic programs in the University in a systematic and thorough manner
- To assess the needs of individual programs and Areas within the context of the overall mission and strategic plans of the University
- To inform annual and long-term strategic planning, scheduling, and communications as programs and operations are revised

2. Purpose

The primary purpose of cyclical program reviews is to ensure quality and relevance of academic programs through a process of internal reflection and constructive, formative critique by qualified external reviewers.

3. Communicating Program Review Information

Summaries of program reviews will be published online, subject to the University's confidentiality guidelines and Alberta's *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA).

4. Schedule of Program Reviews

The Vice-President Academic, in consultation with the Dean and Area Chairs, establishes, maintains and publishes the schedule of current and future program reviews.

5. Approving and Revising the Cyclical Program Review Policy

Academic Council and the Board of Governors approve this policy and any revisions to it. Any member of the University community can submit a request for Cyclical Program Reviews Policy revision to the Vice-President Academic to be brought forward to Dean's Council, Academic Council and the Board of Governors.

6. Review Process

Programs are reviewed every 5-7 years, or as needed. The cyclical program review process must be completed within one calendar year.

The primary purpose of a quality assurance review is to evaluate four aspects of a program:

1. Quality
2. Resource use
3. Contribution to the Mandate and Vision of the University
4. Transferability and recognition of credentials

A program review is also a tool for critical reflection and change.

7. Objectives

There are two main objectives for a quality assurance review: 1) identify areas of excellence and areas for improvement and 2) demonstrate accountability within the framework of the *Post-Secondary Learning Act* or other appropriate regulatory bodies.

8. Principles

The review process is based on six principles:

1. The process is fair and open.
2. All program reviews must include experts external to the University.
3. Program faculty, staff, and student involvement is critical.
4. Review documents must be concise and easily understood.
5. The Dean and Area Chairs are responsible for ensuring cyclical program reviews are completed within the recommended time limits (six months for Self Study Report completion and 12 months for completion of the entire review process).
6. The Vice-President Academic is responsible for ensuring all program and area reviews follow the cyclical program review process appropriately and consistently, and for monitoring and comparing the outcomes of reviews.

9. Criteria

The review of an academic program is based on the degree to which it satisfies seven criteria. The self-study and the external review should in turn be based on these criteria, and the reports arising from these steps should reflect them:

1. The program or area is consistent with the University's Strategic Plan.
2. The degrees awarded by the program are recognized for further study or employment.
3. The curricula and learning environment meet disciplinary and institutional standards of quality.
4. Student achievement aligns with the objectives of the program or area, and the University's Strategic Plan.
5. The students in the program or area can access effective support for academic and career planning.
6. The deployment of resources in the program or area is effective and consistent with the objectives of the program.

10. Program Review Components

Cyclical program reviews will have the following components:

1. Self-Study
2. External review by qualified academic experts
3. Institutional response to the external review
4. Action plan arising from the self-study and external review with timelines outlining the steps and/or processes proposed by the institution to improve the program and/or respond to the reviewer's suggestions and recommendations

10.1 Self-Study

The Program Review Committee will consist of all full-time faculty from the program under review, at least one sessional instructor who teaches part-time in the program, and one faculty member from the institution who has no direct involvement in the program under review. The Program Review Committee will be chaired by a faculty member within the program under review or by the Program Coordinator if there is one, in consultation with the Area Chair and Vice-President Academic.

The self-study is an important component of the program review. Its focus should be on the achievement of the educational objectives and learning outcomes of the program for its students, the role of the program in the fulfillment of the mission of the university, the scholarship/research priorities of the faculty teaching in this program, their professional activities and any grants they have been awarded, along with any other issues which impact the program's success. The review must address the following questions:

- What is the function of the program within a liberal arts curriculum? What are the goals of the program? How does the program accomplish and promote St. Mary's University's mandate and strategic plan?
- What are the strengths and underdeveloped areas of the program's existing curriculum, taking into account the number and type of courses offered?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program with respect to the quality of teaching, diversity of student learning experiences, assessment of student learning, interaction with students (including advising), faculty professional development, scholarship and research accomplishments, and contact with academics in other institutions, etc.?
- Does the area in which the program is situated have adequate personnel resources to successfully meet the goals of the program? Is there a suitable balance of full-time and part-time faculty? Are there changes in personnel responsibilities or training that need to be undertaken in order to accomplish the area's mission in respect to its programs?
- How adequate are the existing funding levels, equipment and other resources, and physical facilities for sustaining the present program and accomplishing its mission? Are these resources used efficiently or are improvements possible? What resources will be required for the next five years based on strategic programming initiatives and anticipated levels of growth?
- What is the experience of first year students who take courses in your program? Does the area offer any help or encouragement to assist these students overcome barriers to success?

10.1.1 Evaluating Current Students' Experiences

As part of the review process, a questionnaire will be sent to students currently in the program. Questionnaires will be developed and approved at the institutional level and administered through the office of the Vice-

President Academic. Questionnaires will be adapted to the particular programs and investigative needs of the area. In particular, the questionnaire will address the program's efficacy in meeting its stated learning outcomes for students and the program's ability to prepare students for further studies and/or employment. Focus groups with current students should be a part of the self-study process. Additionally, feedback about the student experience component of the program will be solicited from staff, especially program advisors and other student support personnel, through questionnaires and/or focus groups.

10.1.2 Questionnaire to Graduates

As part of the review process, a questionnaire will be sent to alumni who have completed the program within the last five years. Questionnaires will be developed and approved at the institutional level and administered through the office of institutional analysis and will be adapted to the particular programs and investigative needs of the area. In particular, the questionnaire will address the program's efficacy in meeting its stated learning outcomes for students and the program's ability to prepare students for further studies and/or employment.

10.2 External Program Review by Subject Discipline Experts

Typically, programs will be reviewed by two knowledgeable and recognized independent academic experts, preferably one from an academic institution similar to St. Mary's and one from a larger public university. Reviewers will be provided calendar descriptions, syllabi for all courses in the program, sample examinations, curriculum vitae, and other available data and written materials about the program. Evaluators will be asked to assess the adequacy of content coverage; appropriateness of materials for students and program levels; strengths and weaknesses in the scope and balance of course offerings; strengths and weaknesses in individual courses. They will be asked to comment on the scholarly activity of faculty teaching in the program and to make recommendations for strengthening the program based on the mission and size of the university.

Independent academic experts must have doctoral degrees and hold (or have held) academic appointments at the senior level; have experience in the design, delivery or administration of a similar program offered at a degree-granting institution; have

no affiliation with the institution or its faculty/administrators. The Program Review Committee will submit a list of academic experts to the Vice-President Academic for consideration, who will contact prospective external reviewers and supply them with the self-study and supporting materials required for the external review.

10.3 Institutional Response to the External Review

The institutional response to the external review should detail specific recommendations for improving existing programs as follows:

Based on the foregoing data and resulting analysis, what recommendations would you make for strengthening existing programs in your area? Which revisions and improvements can be made with relatively little cost over the next few years? How do these relate to the area's mission? To the mission and values of the university? To the university's strategic planning? In the light of current and anticipated future university financial and human resources, which initiatives can/should be undertaken?

What recommendations do you make for the future development of the program? How will these recommendations enable the program to fulfill its mission within the university? How do the recommendations relate to the university's strategic planning? Do the recommendations take into account the need for a broad liberal arts education and for the ability of graduates to prepare for employment in the marketplace? Learning outcomes of the program should be explicitly addressed in the recommendations.

10.4 Action Plan

Based on the self-study, external review, and institutional response to the external review, an action plan will be developed. The action plan will include specific milestones, timelines and roles of the individuals involved in implementing the recommendations and conducting follow-up to improve the program and/or respond to the reviewer's suggestions and recommendations. The Program Review Committee is responsible for preparing a Program Response to the Self Study Report and External Review Report and presenting these to the Dean. The Dean develops an action plan, with timelines, for addressing any issues raised by the review and presents the action plan to the Vice-President Academic. The Vice-President Academic summarises the results of the entire review and presents it to Academic

Council and the Board of Governors. The Vice-President Academic presents the relevant Dean or Area Chair with the expectations for implementing the recommendations in the review.

10.5 Presentation of all of these elements to Dean's Council, Academic Council, and the Board of Governors.

The Executive Summary of the Self-Study, with Institutional Response to the External Review and Action Plan, should be submitted to the appropriate review and approval bodies in the following order: Dean's Council; Academic Council; and Board of Governors.

10.6 Submission of all of the review elements with an executive summary to the Campus Alberta Quality Council.

The completed Self-Study, with Executive Summary, Institutional Response to the External Review, and Action Plan, should be submitted to CAQC.

11. Program Review Timeline

There are two timelines: one if the program review is to be completed in a fall semester, in which case the review will begin the previous January. Reviews due in the winter will commence the prior August.

Timeline for Reviews to be completed in Fall Semester

Early January	Initial meeting of Area Chair, Program Coordinator (if there is one), Dean and VPA to discuss review process, timeline and appointment of student and faculty members to the Program Review Committee. Timeline established for receipt of data from Office of Institutional Analysis.
January - March	Committee conducts program self-study using template provided.
	Institutional data provided by VPA's Office to Program Review Committee, including enrolment data, current student survey data and graduate survey data.
April - June	Program Review Committee produces a self-study document.
By May 31	Select reviewers and establish a date for site visit.
August	Self-study document reviewed by VPA and Dean and forwarded to external academic experts.
October	Site visit

St. Mary's University: 2.S-2016 Cyclical Program Review

November	Review of external reviewer report and development of Action Plan to respond to recommendations and findings of the self-study.
November - December	Presentation to Deans' Council and Academic Council
December	Submission to Board of Governors for approval
December	Submission to Campus Alberta Quality Council
January	Begin implementation of Action Plan

Timeline for Reviews to be completed in Winter Semester

Mid-August (early January)	Initial meeting of Area Chair, Program Coordinator (if there is one), Dean and VPA to discuss review process, timeline and appointment of student and faculty members to the Program Review Committee. Timeline established for receipt of data from Office of Institutional Analysis.
August - November	Committee conducts program self-study using template provided.
	Institutional data provided by VPA's Office to Program Review Committee, including enrolment data, current student survey data and graduate survey data.
December - January	Program Review Committee produces a self-study document.
By December 31	Select reviewers and establish a date for site visit.
By January 31	Self-study document reviewed by VPA and Dean and forwarded to external academic experts.
Early March	Site visit
March	Review of external reviewer report and development of Action Plan to respond to recommendations and findings of the self-study.
March - April	Presentation to Deans' Council and Academic Council
May	Submission to Board of Governors for approval
June	Submission to Campus Alberta Quality Council
August	Begin implementation of Action Plan