

<b>ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION</b> Academic Affairs	<b>POLICY NUMBER</b> ACAF 2.20
<b>POLICY TITLE</b> Academic Program Review	
<b>SCOPE OF POLICY</b> University System	<b>SCOPE OF PROCEDURE</b> USC Upstate
<b>DATE ADOPTED</b> February 17, 2017	<b>DATE OF REVISION</b> July 25, 2025
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b> Provost	<b>ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE</b> Office of the Provost

## USC UPSTATE PROCEDURE FOR [ACAF 2.20](#)

### PURPOSE

USC Upstate is committed to ensuring that it is following ACAF 2.20 in a manner that leads to improvement in its academic programs and supports ongoing strategic planning.

### DEFINITIONS

**External Program Review:** Any degree program that is not evaluated by a professional accrediting agency must be reviewed by a team that includes a total of at least three (3) members which includes at least one (1) peer academic member external to the university. Also referenced as external review.

**Professional Program Accreditation:** Accreditation review conducted by the primary accrediting body of the program/college/school.

**Conflict of Interest:** A conflict of interest exists when team members have a personal, professional, or financial investment in the results of the review (e.g., friend or family member of someone in department, job applicant, vendor).

### PROCEDURES

1. Review Parameters and Timeline
  - a. Programs with professional program accreditation that requires an external review are exempt from these procedures but do need to demonstrate how their accreditation addresses the major components outlined in the self-study.
  - b. The Deans and Department Chairs will be notified that a program within their division is up for review at least 6 months prior to the start of the fall semester. The review calendar will be posted so that in most cases, units will know well in advance of 6 months.
  - c. Units up for review in a given academic year will attend an orientation meeting at the start of the fall semester, no later than October 1.
  - d. Self-studies will be completed by the end of fall semester and are due to the external review team members at least one month prior to the team visit.

- e. External reviews will be completed by April 15 and external review team reports will be completed no later than one month after the team visit.
- f. The unit response to the review team report will be due October 1 of the following academic year.

## 2. Responsibility and Oversight

### a. Office of the Provost Oversight

The Provost has the primary responsibility for initiating the review process. The Office of the Provost is responsible for notifying academic units, the library, Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance, and Institutional Research about upcoming external program reviews and ensuring that units have the data needed for the self-study.

Budget forms will also go through the Office of the Provost and Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance. The Provost will provide each program up to \$1500 for program review based on the budget submitted. Any costs incurred beyond the \$1500 must be covered by Dean and/or Department Chair budgets. All budget forms should be submitted by June 1 of the review academic year.

### b. College/School/Department Oversight

The Dean of the College/School and the Department Chair are responsible for initiating and overseeing the internal self-study and the unit's response to the external review report.

The Dean in collaboration with the Department Chair and in consultation with the Provost selects the external review team with at least three members, including at least one external member. No faculty on the external review team can be a member of the program being reviewed and no member of the external review team can have a conflict of interest with the program being reviewed. The external review team:

- i. Must include at least one member of a similar academic unit at another institution;
- ii. May include at least one member of another department at USC Upstate;
- iii. May include one practicing professional or representative of a professional organization in the discipline.

The Dean, in collaboration with the Department Chair, decides whether the external review will be done virtually or on-site and ensures that the external review is completed by April 15. In addition, the college/school and department will oversee making travel arrangements; scheduling meetings with faculty, staff, and students; and meeting any other external review team requirements.

### c. Unit Oversight

The most common unit for review will be a single academic degree program or a single interdisciplinary degree program. Related programs within a department may be reviewed together (i.e., multiple degrees or degree levels in the same discipline, degree, and post-baccalaureate certificate). Departments can request additional funds if more than one program will be included within a single review.

The unit must provide the Provost and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance with a copy of the self-study and the external review team report by the end of the academic year during which the program review takes place. The unit must provide the Provost and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance with the response to the external review team report by October 1 of the following academic year. The Office of Academic Affairs will be responsible for archiving reports for SACSCOC purposes.

d. Faculty Oversight

Full-time faculty of the unit under review are responsible for producing the self-study. The department chair or program director is responsible for ensuring the self-study is completed by the end of the fall semester. Program review is considered to be a collective responsibility of the faculty in the program. Faculty are responsible for producing a formal written response to any suggestions or recommendations made in the review team report. This response will be due on October 1 of the following academic year in conjunction with the unit's continuous improvement blueprint/assessment report.

3. Other Units Involved in Program Review

a. Library

The library faculty and staff will provide a description of the university libraries' collections, services, and resources that support the unit's instruction, scholarship/creative activity, and service endeavors. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Compliance will notify the Dean of the Library each fall semester of units being reviewed during the academic year. The library information must be to the unit by October 15 so that it can be included in the self-study.

b. Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Director of Research and Planning

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IEC) in conjunction with Institutional Research (IR) will provide guidance and assistance to the unit preparing the self-study; relevant current and historical data along with other information available at the program, department, school, college, or university levels; and assistance in presenting, analyzing, and interpreting relevant data. These data will include student enrollment and completion data also required by the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) Program Productivity Report and program-level trend data for enrollment, retention, graduation, NACE competencies, advising, and post-graduate placement. The Office of the Provost will notify IEC and IR by February 15 of units being reviewed the following academic year. All data will be provided to the units by October 1. If unit members require additional data, they should contact the Director of Research and Planning, providing at least two weeks lead time for the request.

4. Appendices

- a. Appendix I: Self-Study Report
- b. Appendix II: External Review Team Report
- c. Appendix III: Response to External Review Team Report

**RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE, AND FEDERAL POLICIES**

University Policy [ACAF 2.00](#) Creation, Revision, and Termination of Academic Programs

## APPENDIX I: SELF-STUDY REPORT

*The external program review is a mechanism by which an academic unit may benefit from the assessment and advice of disciplinary peers and reflect on how the program aligns with other programs of its type and how well the program prepares students for success in the field after graduation. This evaluation extends beyond the assessment of student learning in the annual continuous improvement blueprints/program assessment reports. While the primary focus of the self-study is the academic program and its students, information about the program faculty and other program resources and initiatives to support the program are critical components of any evaluation. In the guidelines below, use of available standard reports is emphasized. The self-study described below and the report of the external reviewers described in Appendix II must be submitted to the Office of the Provost. The response to the report of external reviewers described in Appendix III will be submitted with the program continuous improvement blueprint/assessment report.*

*The outline below is intended to fit a typical academic program, which includes instruction (undergraduate and graduate), scholarship/research/creative activity, and service/outreach endeavors. Appropriate modifications may be made for units for which activities diverge from the usual range of activities in academic units. These modifications should be shared with the college dean prior to submitting the report. The self-study should be informed by data as much as possible. It must be completed by the end of fall semester and be sent to members of the review team at least one month prior to their visit.*

### Program Review Self-Study Report

<degree name> in <major name>

<Department of XXX>

<College/School of XXX>

#### I. Program Representation

- How is your program represented on the website and in other materials?
- Are the career paths for your program clear to a prospective student?
- What consistent messaging do you provide about your program to current and prospective students?
- Based on your program student learning outcomes and your curriculum map, is all messaging clearly reflecting the main impacts of your program?

#### II. Curriculum

- Is the curriculum aligned with current sector or industry trends and technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI)? How can you make your curriculum more aligned to current trends and technology, including AI?
- Are there any barriers to student success in your curriculum? What could be done to minimize or eliminate these barriers?
- Do students have multiple opportunities for High Impact Practices (HIPs)? How are experiential learning opportunities (e.g., service-learning, undergraduate research, internships/practicums) integrated effectively throughout your curriculum?

III. Program: Advising and Mentoring

- How do you ensure that your students receive consistent, high-quality advising?
- What do you do to get regular feedback on the quality of advising in your program?
- If applicable, how do you keep regular communication with your professional advisor(s)?
- As you reflect on available program data, including advising results from the 3-month out alumni survey and advising survey data from current students, what else can be done to increase advising satisfaction for your program?
- What are some ways in which faculty mentor students in your program?
- What do you do to ensure all of your students feel they belong at USC Upstate?

IV. Faculty: Teaching

- How much do your faculty engage in professional development in teaching and learning? How does this professional development impact their engagement with students and the achievement of learning outcomes in their courses?
- What are your faculty doing to find and delineate the role of AI in teaching in the discipline?
- How does your faculty integrate a range of inclusive teaching strategies to support the diversity of our student body?
- Is the percentage of your courses offered in a flexible format (e.g., online, hybrid) meeting the needs of the students in your program? Are there opportunities to change the modality of courses to meet current student needs?
- How do faculty engage students outside of class?

V. Faculty: Scholarship and Creativity

- What does your unit do to support faculty scholarship and creativity as faculty move through tenure and promotion?
- How active are your faculty in applying for grants? What are the barriers to securing more grants in your unit?
- How involved are faculty in public scholarship? How do you encourage public scholarship in your unit?
- How does your program involve students in faculty scholarship and creativity?

VI. Faculty: Service

- How involved are your faculty in faculty governance and other service to the program, department, college, or university? What are the obstacles to getting all faculty actively involved?
- How involved are your faculty in service to local, state, national, and/or international communities? What impact does this service have on USC Upstate?
- How involved are your faculty in service to their profession? What impact does this service have on USC Upstate?

VII. Student: Program Assessment

- Looking over your results from the student learning outcomes assessment (Continuous

Improvement Blueprint) over the past 5-7 years, in what areas are you meeting your outcomes and in what areas are you falling short?

- As you consider the measures that you use in assessment, are they providing you with the data you need to make improvements? What changes might you make to get more meaningful results?
- How has the Program Data Sheet informed changes you have made to your program over the past few years?
- What other obstacles do you encounter to having a meaningful and manageable assessment process? What can be done to overcome these obstacles?

VIII. Student: Enrollment, Retention, and Graduation Data from Dashboards and Other Institutional Research Requests

- As you reflect on the enrollment data for your program, how well is your program contributing to the strategic goal of enrollment growth at USC Upstate? What else might be done in your program to increase enrollment?
- As you reflect on the retention data for your program, how well is your program contributing to the strategic goal of increasing retention at USC Upstate? What else might be done in your program to increase retention?
- As you reflect on the graduation data for your program, how well is your program contributing to the strategic goal of increasing graduation rates at USC Upstate? What else might be done in your program to increase graduation rates?
- As you reflect upon the data on transfer students for your program, how well is your program serving this population? What else might be done in your program to better attract and support transfer students?
- How do you ensure that you are not creating unintended barriers for some students?

IX. Student: Career Preparation

- What is your program doing to prepare your students for careers in their fields?
- Does the program offer certifications, credentials, or skills that are in demand?
- As you reflect on program NACE competency results from the 3-month out alumni survey, how well is your program contributing to the strategic goal of increasing NACE competencies at USC Upstate? What else might be done in your program to increase NACE competencies?
- As you reflect on the graduate placement data, how well is your program contributing to the strategic goal of increasing successful placement after graduation? What else might be done in your program to increase placement rates?
- How does the program partner with industry, government, or community organizations to align career readiness skills?
- What AI tools and opportunities are integrated into the curriculum to prepare students for emerging fields and future challenges? How does your program find out about the role of AI as envisioned by different community actors?

X. Faculty and Staff Belonging

- What do you do to ensure all of your faculty and staff feel they belong at USC Upstate?
- What do you see as obstacles to providing your faculty and staff with the support they need in this area?

- In what ways are program modes of engagement with faculty and staff inclusive?

#### XI. Community Input and Impact/Reciprocity

- What are the impacts that your program makes on the local or regional community? How do you evaluate these impacts? What else might be done to enhance your impacts?
- Do you have an advisory board for your program or does your program participate in thematic or allied professional advisory board? If so, what is working well and what might be improved in terms of its contributions? If not, how do you get community input about your program?
- What relationships do you have with specific community partners? How do you ensure that these relationships are reciprocal? What could you do to increase reciprocal community partnerships?

#### XII. Facilities and Equipment

- In what ways do your current facilities/spaces enhance your program and in what ways do they fail to enhance your program?
- What equipment, software, etc. do you need to remain relevant in the near future?
- How do you ensure all students have access to the program-specific resources and technology they need?

#### XIII. Innovation, Strengths, and Opportunities

- As you reflect on the data and responses in this self-study, what are the greatest innovations your program has implemented to address the current competitive landscape of higher education?
- As you reflect upon the data and your responses in this self-study, what are the greatest areas of strength in your program?
- As you reflect upon the data and your responses in this self-study, what are the greatest areas of opportunity in your program?

## **APPENDIX II: EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM REPORT**

The following is an outline for the external review team report. Units may add additional criteria or requirements, if needed. The self-study report should be sent to the external review team at least 1 month in advance of the team's visit, along with information on travel arrangements, and a schedule for the visit.

### **I. Cover Page**

- Name of College/School, Department/Unit, and Academic Program(s)
- Dates of Program Review Visit and Report Submission
- External Review Team Membership
- External Review Timetable/Schedule
- External Review Procedures Followed

### **II. Executive Summary (maximum two pages)**

The review team should provide an executive summary to act as a brief overview of the most compelling findings of the review team report encapsulating what the review team believes administrators most need to know about the academic program(s) under review. The information sources serving as the basis for the report should include the sections included in the self-study for the academic program(s) under review as well as interviews, questionnaires, and/or surveys with appropriate unit/program personnel or clients.

### **III. Academic Program Analysis**

The review team should be able to address each of the major categories in the self-study which are also listed below. The review team is asked to reflect on the content included in these categories and provide comments on the current status, program strategies, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, possible future status, and other necessary topics they deem essential to the review to include about the program(s).

1. Program Representation
2. Curriculum
3. Program: Advising
4. Faculty: Teaching
5. Faculty: Scholarship and Creativity
6. Faculty: Service
7. Student: Program Assessment
8. Student: Program Data from Dashboards and Other Institutional Research Requests
9. Student: Career Preparation
10. Faculty and Staff Belonging
11. Community Input and Impact/Reciprocity
12. Facilities and Equipment
13. Innovation, Strengths, and Opportunities
14. Other Observations or Relevant Information (Optional)

### **IV. Reviewer Recommendations**

The Review Team should address concerns noted above and include recommendations on how the program should sustain stated strengths and improve upon stated weaknesses.



### **APPENDIX III: RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL REVIEW TEAM REPORT**

The following is an outline for the response to external review team report. External team reports are due to the unit within 30 days of the external review team visit. No external team members will be paid until the unit has the final report. The response to the external review team report will be based on the initial self-study report as well as the external review team report. It will be due October 1 (with the next continuous improvement blueprint/assessment report) so that units have time to reflect on the content of the report and to plan actions for improvement.

#### **I. Overall Impressions**

- What were your overall impressions of the visit and the report?
- What was particularly useful about the process and what could have made the process better?

#### **II. SWOT Analysis**

- What are your program's greatest strengths? How can you best utilize or communicate these strengths?
- What are your program's greatest weaknesses? How can you best mitigate or eliminate these weaknesses?
- What are the greatest opportunities for your program? How can you best leverage these opportunities?
- What are the greatest threats to your program? How can you best mitigate or eliminate these threats?

#### **III. Action Steps for Improvement**

Discuss specific improvement action steps you will take based on your analysis of this review. Include responsible persons and a timeline for each action step.