**Academic Program Review AA/PPS No. 02.01.50**

**Issue No. 4**

**Effective Date: 11/15/2022  
Next Review Date: 09/01/2025 (E3Y)**

**Sr. Reviewer: Assistant Vice Provost for Accreditation and Assessment**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

*Texas State University is committed to offering high quality, rigorous, and productive academic programs and ensures quality through thorough review of its programs.*

1. **SCOPE** 
   1. Texas State University maintains an effective and efficient process for conducting regular reviews of its academic programs. This policy summarizes the key elements of Texas State's Academic Program Review (APR) process. It also provides guidance for conducting APRs and for utilizing the results of these APRs for continuous improvement of the university's academic programs.
2. **GENERAL INFORMATION**

02.01 The primary purpose of the APR process is to maintain and strengthen the quality of Texas State's academic programs by auditing the quality, rigor, and productivity of existing degree programs and developing strategies for ongoing improvement. Reviews are intended to be helpful and supportive in the following areas:

1. recognizing strengths and achievements;
2. identifying areas in need of attention; and
3. promoting goal setting and planning.

Reviews should primarily provide perspectives useful to the academic units whose programs are under review and to their respective college deans. They should also give those outside the academic unit an informed overview of the strengths, challenges, and needs of academic units.

02.02 The APR process has a direct relationship to other assessment processes. Program accreditation and APR reports and reviews will be combined as much as possible to create a unified process. When completed, the APR of graduate programs will fulfill the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) requirement for periodic review of graduate programs ([TAC, 19, 1.5.C. Rule 5.52](http://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=1&ch=5&rl=52)). Undergraduate programs that hold current programmatic accreditation in good standing are exempt from the APR process.

02.03 The associate vice president for Institutional Effectiveness (AVPIE) will oversee the APR process and provide guidance and training for academic units engaged in the program review process. The dean of The Graduate College should also be consulted by the graduate programs undergoing review.

**03. DEFINITIONS**

03.01 Academic unit refers to the following:

* 1. a department residing within a college;
  2. a school residing within a college; and
  3. a degree program having a program chair or program coordinator who ultimately reports to the college dean.

03.02 Academic programs are those that lead to a credential recognized by THECB and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). Procedures for initiating or modifying academic programs are described in [AA/PPS No. 02.01.10](https://policies.txstate.edu/division-policies/academic-affairs/02-01-10.html), Academic Programs: Additions, Changes, and Deletions, and [AA/PPS No. 02.01.11](https://policies.txstate.edu/division-policies/academic-affairs/02-01-11.html), Academic Certificates. Broadly defined, academic programs include:

* 1. a **major** or **degree program; and**
  2. a **certificate program that is separate from an existing undergraduate or graduate degree program.**

03.03 The primary focus of the APRs described in this policy is on **majors or degree programs as typically identified by the first four digits of the program CIP code at each level of instruction (i.e., bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral) offered by separate academic units**. However, during each APR, relevant questions may also be asked about any minors, specializations, or certificates offered in the academic unit, and about any significant service course commitments of the unit.

03.04 A Texas State APR includes the following elements:

a. a self-review culminating in an academic unit self-review report including a review of the academic unit and a separate review for each degree program;

b. a site visit or, when appropriate, a desk review by a program review team (PRT) culminating in an external review report; and

c. a follow-up response and action plan from the academic unit for each degree program developed in consultation with the college dean, provost and vice president for Academic Affairs (VPAA), and with the dean of The Graduate College (for graduate programs).

**04. PROCEDURES FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-REVIEW**

04.01 Each August, the AVPIE, in consultation with the college deans, chairs, and directors, will review the [APR long-term calendar](http://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:c1959cfd-6764-4f7d-b5a2-fd38a2e21a33/APR%20Calendar%202019-2029.pdf). Any department or school not able to fulfill the requirements of the APR process as scheduled will prepare a formal request for delay with clear justification. The college dean will submit the request to the AVPIE, who will confer with the provost and VPAA. The provost and VPAA will subsequently forward acceptable requests to the THECB. The [APR long-term calendar](http://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:c1959cfd-6764-4f7d-b5a2-fd38a2e21a33/APR%20Calendar%202019-2029.pdf) identifies the ten-year APR cycle. Insofar as possible, an academic unit's APR is scheduled in coordination with its periodic program accreditation reviews.

04.02 For convenience, APRs are generally conducted on an academic unit basis (i.e., **all academic programs** offered by an academic unit are reviewed in a single year). Each academic unit normally conducts an APR for all of its programs every ten years.

04.03 After receiving the reminder regarding the [APR long-term calendar](https://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:c1959cfd-6764-4f7d-b5a2-fd38a2e21a33/APR%20Calendar%202019-2029.pdf) from the AVPIE, the college dean will notify the academic units identified in a given year to begin the APR process with the self-review. At this time, academic units are encouraged to appoint a chair for their self-review process. Academic units will forward the name of the chair of the self-review process to their college dean and the AVPIE.

* 1. Each October, the AVPIE, along with representatives from other key units (i.e., The Graduate College, the Office of Institutional Research, and University Libraries), will conduct an orientation to the APR process for all chairs, directors, program coordinators, and appointed chairs of the self-review process in units scheduled for APR during the upcoming year. The [Program Self-Review Guidelines](https://gato-docs.its.txst.edu/jcr:426c898e-99b2-4f72-b26f-bee538e47633/Program%20Self-Review%20Guidelines.pdf) and the timelines in academic program review checklists will be reviewed in the orientation. The guidelines will identify the information required to prepare and submit the self-review, and the type of information that will be provided by Budgeting and Planning, Institutional Research, Institutional Planning and Assessment, and the University Library.

04.05 Academic units without program accreditation or with doctorate programs as the highest-level program should follow the two-year timeline provided in the [Academic Program Review Checklist (Two Year Timeframe)](https://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:81dc3629-62eb-4f4b-9297-b6d2154d6be2/Academic%20Program%20Review%20Checklist%20(Two%20Year%20Timeframe).pdf). Academic units with master’s level program accreditation should use the one-year timeline provided in [Academic Program Review Checklist (One Year Timeframe)](https://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:7e70027b-4dae-41cf-9e40-27978be33da7/Academic%20Program%20Review%20Checklist%20(One%20Year%20Timeframe).pdf) as a guide.

04.06 The academic unit chair or director will appoint program coordinators, faculty, staff, and, as desired, student members to the self-review committee, in addition to the chair of the self-review committee, subject to approval of the college dean. In preparing the self-review report, members of the committee shall engage in discussions of program strengths, weaknesses, and goals, organizing the discussions however the self-review committee prefers.

04.07 The self-review report shall be a concise electronic document following the [Program Self-Review Guidelines](https://gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:a70829bd-b584-482e-90a3-30d0e0f0be0e/Program%20Self-Review%20Guidelines.pdfhttps:/gato-docs.its.txstate.edu/jcr:a70829bd-b584-482e-90a3-30d0e0f0be0e/Program%20Self-Review%20Guidelines.pdf) with supporting materials organized in attachments. After consideration by the faculty, the academic unit chair or director will submit the report to the college dean by the date indicated on the appropriate APR checklist. The college dean (for all programs) and the dean of The Graduate College (for graduate programs) will review the report and provide feedback to the chair or director. The chair or director will make any necessary corrections to the report prior to the date indicated on the appropriate APR checklist.

04.08 By the date indicated on the appropriate APR checklist, the unit will forward an electronic copy of the self-review report and related attachments to the AVPIE. Also, by this date, the college dean will provide written notification to the AVPIE of their approval of the report and note any major issues addressed in the report. The AVPIE will review the report and return it to the chair or director for any necessary corrections. After the self-review report is approved by the AVPIE, the academic unit may begin planning the PRT visit or desk review.

**05. ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW REVIEWERS AND EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCEDURES FOR DOCTORAL PROGRAMS OR PROGRAMS WITHOUT PROGRAMMATIC ACCREDITATION**

05.01 Following the approval of the self-review report, an appointed PRT conducts an on-site visit for all doctoral programs and non-accredited master’s and bachelor’s programs to add insight and provide feedback to the academic unit and individual academic programs.

* 1. Each year, the provost and VPAA identifies funds for travel expenses and sets rates for honorariums for external (non-Texas State) PRT members. The AVPIE notifies academic units under review of the established rates. Internal PRT members are not provided remuneration. Rare exceptions to the established honorariums must be negotiated between the college dean and provost and VPAA. The AVPIE will process payment of honorariums while the academic unit will process payment of travel expenses. The academic unit will be reimbursed for allowable expenses in a single transfer after all APR expenses have been paid by the academic unit and the final PRT reports have been received.

05.03 A PRT for doctoral programs or programs without programmatic accreditation will ordinarily consist of three members including one Texas State faculty member residing outside the college. Academic units must adhere to the following criteria based on the highest degree offered when selecting PRT members:

* + 1. Doctoral Degree Programs – Academic units with doctoral programs must include two extramural scholars with subject-matter expertise who are employed by institutions of higher education outside of Texas. External reviewers must be part of a program that is nationally recognized for excellence in the discipline and must affirm that they have no conflict of interest related to the program under review. The reviewers must be brought to campus for an on-site review.
    2. Master’s Degree Programs – Academic units with a master’s degree as their highest offering must include one extramural scholar with subject-matter expertise who is employed by an institution of higher education outside of Texas, while a second reviewer may be employed by an institution of higher education in or outside of Texas. External reviewers must be part of a program that is nationally recognized for excellence in the discipline and must affirm that they have no conflict of interest related to the program under review. The reviewers may be brought to campus for an on-site review or may be asked to conduct a remote desk review as in the case of an accredited program.
    3. Bachelor’s Degree Programs – Academic units with the bachelor’s degree as their highest offering must have one extramural scholar with subject-matter expertise who is employed by an accredited institution of higher education and who can affirm they have no conflict of interest related to the program under review.
    4. Programs Undergoing Accreditation Review in Conjunction with APR – If reviewers from accrediting bodies do not meet the aforementioned criteria, additional reviewers must be added to the review team to address required review team criteria for APR.

Nominations of PRT members meeting the previously-stated criteria will be solicited by the college dean from the academic unit chair or director following consultation with program faculty. The appointments of the PRT and the chair of the PRT are the prerogative of the college dean and are made after consultation with the academic unit chair or director. The chair of the PRT will be selected from the external reviewers. PRT nominees, along with their contact information and qualifications, must be submitted to the AVPIE from the college dean.

05.04 The college dean, or designee, will invite the selected PRT members to participate in the program review. Prior to the review, the college dean may identify issues for the PRT that are important to the review, including issues raised in any previous reviews. The AVPIE will send the PRT members an introductory letter, general instructions, a copy of this policy, and review forms, approximately one month before the review.

* 1. Prior to the review, the academic unit chair or director will provide PRT members with the self-review report, attachments or links to attachments, contact information for all team members, the itinerary for the review, and any additional comments from the college dean.
  2. When determining the timing of a PRT site visit, the academic unit chair or director will consult with the AVPIE, who will coordinate scheduling on the calendars of the provost and VPAA, associate provost, and associate vice president for Academic Affairs (regarding curriculum-related issues), and as appropriate, the associate vice president for Research and Sponsored Programs and the dean of The Graduate College. The academic unit chair or director, in consultation with the college dean and AVPIE, will establish the basic structure of the site visit. The review team may propose changes to the schedule, as appropriate, during the site visit.
  3. Ordinarily, a PRT site visit will last two days. Typically, the PRT conducts most of its work as a group, although members may work individually at certain times. A copy of the final schedule of the PRT site visit must be presented to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at least two weeks prior to the visit. The academic unit chair or director (unless otherwise noted) shall include the following elements as a part of each site visit:
  4. private meetings with the academic unit chair or director and the college dean;
  5. individual or group meetings with program coordinators;
  6. individual or group meetings with a representative sample of faculty in each program under review;
  7. individual or group meetings with a representative sample of students in each program under review;
  8. open time for faculty and students to sign up for individual or group meetings (as they choose);
  9. private time each day for the review team to discuss its work;
  10. unscheduled time in the latter part of the site visit when the PRT may meet with whomever it wishes;
  11. a meeting with the associate vice president or assistant vice president for Research and Sponsored Programs;
  12. a meeting with the dean or associate dean of The Graduate College (if applicable);
  13. a meeting with the provost and VPAA, associate provost, associate vice president for Academic Affairs, and the AVPIE (scheduled by the AVPIE); and
  14. an exit interview with the academic unit summarizing the on-campus visit.

Additional appointments to showcase aspects of importance to the academic unit and its programs may be added to the PRT schedule as time permits, such as tours, events, and meetings with alumni or advisory boards.

* 1. The PRT will submit an evaluation report for the academic unit and a separate evaluation report for each program in the unit. The chair of the PRT is responsible for the draft PRT reports (composite reports based upon the recommendations of the PRT members). The draft reports are due to the AVPIE four weeks after the site visit or at a time prearranged with the AVPIE. Each PRT report is completed on a form provided by the AVPIE. The draft report will integrate PRT member perspectives into a single report and set of conclusions and recommendations for the academic unit and each program. The PRT should specifically address the following in their reports:

a. the appropriateness and strength of the academic unit, including:

1) the academic unit description and strategic plan;

2) faculty qualifications, contributions, and workload; and

3) resources;

b. recommended improvement to strengthen the academic unit;

c. the appropriateness and strength of each academic program, including:

1) the program curriculum; and

2) the students’ and graduates’ characteristics and accomplishments;

d. recommended improvement to strengthen each academic program; and

e. any other points requested by the college dean or academic unit chair or director.

05.09 The AVPIE will forward the PRT reports to the college dean. After preliminary review by the college dean, the draft PRT reports will be sent to the unit chair or director. The unit chair or director will review the PRT reports for errors of fact and respond to the college dean within two working weeks. Factual corrections will be sent to the chair of the PRT for inclusion in the final PRT reports, which will be returned to the AVPIE within two working weeks, at which time corrected reports will be forwarded to the college dean and chair or director.

**06. ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW REVIEWERS AND EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCEDURES FOR MASTER’S PROGRAMS WITH PROGRAMMATIC ACCREDITATION**

06.01 Following the approval of the self-review report, an appointed external reviewer or reviewers conduct a desk review or an on-site review of accredited programs to add insight and provide feedback to the academic unit and individual academic programs. Master’s level programs with programmatic accreditation may opt for a desk-review (outlined below) or an on-site review (outlined in Section 05.).

* 1. Each year, the provost and VPAA sets rates for honorariums for external (non-Texas State) reviewers. The AVPIE notifies academic units under review of the established rates. Rare exceptions to the established honorariums must be negotiated between the college dean and provost and VPAA. Payments for the honorariums will be arranged by the AVPIE.

06.03 Most reviews for master’s programs with programmatic accreditation will include a single out-of-state reviewer. Academic units must adhere to the following criteria when selecting reviewers:

1. Academic units with a master’s degree as their highest offering must include one extramural scholar with subject-matter expertise who is employed by an institution of higher education outside of Texas. External reviewers must be part of a program that is nationally recognized for excellence in the discipline and must affirm that they have no conflict of interest related to the program under review. The reviewers may have previously been on campus for an accreditation review.
2. Nominations for reviewers meeting the previously stated criteria will be solicited by the college dean from the academic unit chair or director following consultation with program faculty. The appointment of the reviewer is the prerogative of the college dean and is made after consultation with the academic unit chair or director. The reviewer, along with contact information and qualifications, will be submitted to the AVPIE from the college dean.

06.04 The college dean will invite the selected reviewer to participate in the program review. Prior to the review, the college dean may identify issues for the reviewer that are important to the review, including issues raised in any previous reviews. The AVPIE will send the reviewer an introductory letter, general instructions, a copy of this policy, review forms, and an expected date for completion.

* 1. Prior to the review, the academic unit chair or director will provide the reviewer with the self-review report, attachments or links to attachments, and any additional comments from the college dean.
  2. The reviewer will submit an evaluation report for the academic unit and a separate evaluation report for each program in the unit. The draft reports are due to the AVPIE four weeks after the site visit or at a time prearranged with the AVPIE. Each review is completed on a form provided by the AVPIE. The reviewer should specifically address the following in the reports:

a. the appropriateness and strength of the academic unit, including:

1) the academic unit description and strategic plan;

2) faculty qualifications, contributions, and workload; and

3) resources;

b. recommended improvement to strengthen the academic unit;

c. the appropriateness and strength of each academic program, including:

1) the program curriculum; and

2) the students’ and graduates’ characteristics and accomplishments;

* 1. recommended improvement to strengthen each academic program;

and

* 1. any other points requested by the college dean or academic unit chair or director.
  2. The AVPIE will forward the reviewer’s reports to the college dean. After preliminary review by the college dean, the draft reviews will be sent to the unit chair or director. The unit chair or director will review the reports for errors of fact and respond to the college dean within two working weeks. Factual corrections will be sent to the reviewer for inclusion in the final reports, which will be returned to the AVPIE within two working weeks, at which time corrected reports will be forwarded to the college dean and chair or director.

**07. RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN PROCEDURES**

07.01 After receiving the final external review report, the chair or director, in consultation with the college dean (for all programs) and the dean of The Graduate College (for graduate programs), will develop a response and action plan for the academic unit and for each program to include descriptions of actions planned and actions already taken in response to the conclusions from the self-review and external review report. The response and action plan should address each recommendation for improvement and should include a suggested timeline for each action step. The response and action plan should be considered and discussed with the academic unit's faculty.

07.02 The completed response and action plans are submitted to the college dean by the chair or director for formal review. The college dean signifies willingness to support the action plan by signing the response and action plan.

* 1. The dean reviews the response and action plan with the provost and VPAA who may solicit input from the associate provost, associate vice president for Academic Affairs (regarding curriculum-related issues), AVPIE, and the dean of The Graduate College before providing comments and signing the response and action plan.
  2. Within four weeks of receiving the final external review reports, the college dean forwards signed copies of the response and action plans to the AVPIE.

**08. PROCEDURES AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW CYCLE**

* 1. After the conclusion of the APR cycle, the college dean will ensure that copies of the final self-review report, the external review reports, and the response and action plan are provided to the AVPIE.
  2. The provost and VPAA will forward a summary of the self-study report, the external review report, and response and action plan for each graduate program offered by the academic unit to the THECB within 90 days of the receipt of the external review report and before the close of the academic year.
  3. The action plan should be integrated into the academic unit's strategic plan in accordance with the strategic planning calendar. Progress on the action plan will be monitored as part of the regular strategic plan review process.

**09. REVIEWER OF THIS PPS**

09.01 Reviewer of this PPS includes the following:

**Position Date**

**Assistant Vice Provost for September 1 E3Y**

**Accreditation and Assessment**

**10. CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

This PPS has been approved by the following individuals in their official capacities and represents Texas State Academic Affairs policy and procedure from the date of this document until superseded.

Assistant Vice Provost for Accreditation and Assessment; senior reviewer of this PPS

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs