

Guidelines for the Academic Program Review Process

Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Bradley University

**Approved by the Council of Academic Deans
December 14, 2021**

Introduction

The Academic Program Review (APR) process is an ongoing activity in which all academic programs that are not accredited by external bodies will be reviewed over a multiple-year span of time. These guidelines will be reviewed and updated as needed no later than every six years by the University-wide Assessment Team. The University-wide Assessment Team serves as the coordinating and consultative group for all APR endeavors. The University-wide Assessment Team is available to help with any part of this process and has resources available on the Provost's website.

The Purpose of the Academic Program Review Process

The academic program review process provides information that supports planning and decision-making regarding programmatic changes aimed at improving the quality and appropriateness of Bradley's programs. The review process will therefore focus both on the role of each program in the overall Bradley mission and on assessing the quality of each program being reviewed. The APR process is designed for program reflection, curricular enhancements, assessment review, and continuous improvement. Please note there is an annual follow-up component regarding assessment as a result of the Higher Learning Commission Reaccreditation of 2021 and the elimination of Program Prioritization.

Definition of "Program" for APR purposes

This document will refer to "program" as a singular construction; however, "program" may be multiple programs within a single department or unit (e.g. Biology, Computer Science, or English) or a stand-alone program (e.g. Health Professions Advisory Center, Honors Program, or EHS 120). The APR process covers all organized academic activities conducted within academic units (e.g., departments, colleges) and other key academic activities (e.g., Student Affairs, Centers) or spanning multiple units. Such activities include all non-accredited academic programs, including majors, minors, and interdisciplinary educational programs. Programs, units, or centers that do not grant academic credit should modify their self-studies as needed, in collaboration with the University-wide Assessment Team.

Leadership of Academic Program Review

Throughout the document, the terms "Program Leader" and "Dean" have been used. If a program is undergoing review from outside of a college, the Vice President or other appropriate administrator will be fulfilling the role of Dean.

The Frequency of Academic Program Reviews

Academic programs at Bradley that are not reviewed by external accrediting bodies will be reviewed every six years. Where there are programs that are reviewed by external accrediting bodies, the academic program review cycle will align with the external accreditation review cycle. However, under special circumstances a program may be scheduled for review outside this normal cycle. A special circumstance could be requested by the program leader to the appropriate administrator. Final consideration for the schedule change is required by the Provost, with approval recommended by the Dean. Approval would be granted by the Provost.

Criteria for Selection of Programs to be Reviewed

The University-wide Assessment Team will administer the schedule of APR in consultation with the Provost and the academic deans. Selection and inclusion of programs to be reviewed may also be based on the following considerations:

- a. Relationship of the program to other programs being reviewed
- b. Planned program changes
- c. Changes in the program market

- d. Accreditation cycles
- e. Time since the last review of the program

Elements of the APR Process

Once a program is scheduled for review, an APR Coordinator will be identified from within. The program will prepare a self-study in accordance with the guidelines provided in this document. An APR Team will be constituted in consultation with leadership (typically, the department chair), the college dean, and the Provost. The APR Guidelines, including construction and responsibilities of the APR Team and guidelines for developing the review, will be provided to the APR Team. A site visit will be conducted and an APR Team report will be submitted to the program leadership and college dean. The program submits a response to the report to the dean. The dean shares the complete packet of documents with the Provost, including the self-study document, the team report, and the program response. Based on the outcome of the review, appropriate recommendations for follow-up actions may be made by the Provost. The program will develop an action plan.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) serves as the repository of all of the APR documents for historical recording-keeping purposes. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness receives a copy of the self-study document at the time it is submitted to the external review team. The University-wide Assessment team will conduct a review of the program's assessment plan that is included in the self-study document. Copies of the team report, response, and action plan are submitted to the Office as those documents are completed.

Composition of the APR Team

The composition of the APR Team will vary from program to program and will not duplicate the role of visiting accrediting teams where information from the accreditation visits can be incorporated into APR. In such cases (where there is an accreditation visit) the APR Team will include only those persons necessary to accomplish the objectives of the APR while incorporating the results of the accreditation visit and report. In general the composition of the APR Team will include:

- Two individuals from other institutions with relevant expertise, one of whom will be designated as the chair of the APR Team.
- Two Bradley faculty or staff members (at least one of these must be a member of the graduate faculty if a graduate program is being reviewed, and both must be external to the program in which the review is taking place). At least one internal member should be external to the college in which the program is located.

Responsibilities

Program being reviewed

1. Identify an APR Coordinator.
2. The APR Coordinator may be the program leader, but the program leader is not required to be the APR Coordinator.
3. Confirm dates for the review
4. Develop the draft schedule for the on-site review
5. Prepare the self-study, including developing specific questions for the APR Team.

APR Coordinator

1. In consultation with program leadership, recommend to dean prospective APR Team members
2. Oversee the completion of the program responsibilities listed above

3. Coordinate review logistics: finalize on-site visit schedule, make travel arrangements, and secure rooms and meals
4. Ensure that the APR Team report is reviewed by program members
5. Oversee the development of a program response to the APR Team report
6. Meet with the Provost and the college dean to discuss the APR Team report and response

Department/Program Chair

1. Provide appropriate assistance to the program's APR Coordinator as needed
2. Submit to the dean's office two months prior to on-site visit: the self-study, potential lists of internal and external reviewers (5-6 names each), draft schedule of on-site visit, and preferred dates for on-site review
3. After the college dean has approved the self-study, submit the self-study to the Director for Institutional Effectiveness for review by the University wide Assessment Team (preferably 1.5 to 2 months prior to on-site visit)
4. After consultation with the dean, secure internal and external reviewers and send the self-study and draft on-site visit schedule to the APR Team one month prior to on-site visit
5. Provide specific questions to be posed to the APR Team
6. Seek approval for expenses and manage the process to pay honoraria and expenses for external reviewers.

Academic Dean

1. Confirm the selection of programs to be reviewed
2. Meet with the chair or the faculty of the programs involved to explain and discuss the review process and purpose
3. Identify specific issues to be addressed in the self-study
4. Approve or revise potential lists of internal and external reviewers
5. Review and evaluate the self-study. Approve release of self-study (for review by University-wide Assessment Team and APR Team)
6. Provide specific questions to be posed to the APR Team
7. Participate in the visit as scheduled by the APR Coordinator and the Team
8. Review the APR Team's report
9. Meet with the chair or the faculty of the program to discuss the APR Team's report
10. Meet with the Provost to discuss the documents and approve the action plan
11. Submit action plan to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness

Office of Institutional Effectiveness

1. Conduct an orientation session for the program chair or faculty
2. Provide Institutional data to support the process
3. Serve as liaison with the University-wide Assessment Team
4. Maintain historical records of Academic Program Review documents

University-wide Assessment Team

1. Provide support for the development of the program's self-study and assessment activities
2. Provide the program with a critical and facilitative appraisal of the program's self-study and assessment activities
3. Provide consultative support to the APR Team
4. Approve program's assessment plan as written in the self-study

APR Team

1. Examine the self-study and questions posed for the review
2. Identify a chair, responsible for coordinating the written report
3. Conduct the campus visit, which will include two exit interviews: one with the faculty of the appropriate program and one with the college dean and administrative representatives
4. Provide a written team report on the APR one month after the exit interview

Program Review Timeline and Review Activities by Phase

Typically, the process of preparing for and completing a program review will span most of two semesters. In many cases the process will be contained within one academic year. However, there will be situations where it will be more efficient or effective to begin the process in the spring semester of one academic year and complete it in the fall semester of the subsequent academic year.

A typical timeline for a program review and the review activities by phase are illustrated in the following figures.

Program Review Timeline

	Pre-Review Activity						APR Team Visit	Post-Visit Activity		
	Months Before Review							Months After Visit		
	6+	5	4	3	2	1		1	2	3
Consult with University-wide Assessment Team										
Prepare Self-Study										
Program Identifies Potential Reviewers										
Program Submits Self-Study to Dean										
Chair and Dean Identify Potential Internal and External Reviewers										
Self-Study Sent to Director for Institutional Effectiveness and APR Team Members										
Program, Chair, Dean and Provost Identify Questions for APR Team										
Agenda for Site Visit Completed										
Visit										
Preparation of APR Team report										
Program's Response to APR Team report										
Dean's Response to APR Team report AND Program's Response										
Meet with Provost and discuss recommendations										

Guidelines for Preparation of the Self-Study Document

The guidelines for preparation of the self-study document are intended specifically for programs that are not reviewed by external accrediting bodies. For accredited programs, the accreditation report will serve as the APR self-study.

The purpose of these guidelines is to encourage program reflection, support curricular enhancements, nurture assessment review, and foster continuous improvement within the program. It is not meant to constrain programs in the presentation of the self-study information.

Academic Program Review Self-Study Component

The APR self-study document should contain two components, one focused on the work of the program, the other focused on the work of the APR Team.

Component 1: Work of the Program

Vision, Mission, & Alignment

1. What is the vision for the program five years from now? (<500 words)
2. What is the mission of the program? (<250 words)
3. How does mission align to Bradley University's mission? (<500 words)
4. Describe how the program is serving the college and university mission. (<500 words)
5. Describe how the current program is aligned with disciplinary standards. (<500 words)
6. Describe how the program is aligned with professional preparation/liberal arts education/co-curricular activities? (<500 words)

Program Goals

7. What are the short-term goals of the program (3-5 goals)?
8. What are the long-term goals of the program (3-5 goals)?
9. How are these goals linked to the mission? (<500 words)
10. How are these goals being measured? (<500 words)

Quality of the Program

11. How is the curriculum relevant to similar programs at other institutions? (<500 words)
12. What students have enrolled in the program since the last APR? Please include demographic information The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will assist with these data (<500 words)
13. What evidence exists to support the appropriateness of the program to the external market? (<500 words)
14. What are the post-graduation outcomes of students enrolled in the program? – The Smith Career Center will assist with these data (<500 words)
15. What are distinctive aspects and special strengths of the program? (<500 words)
16. What are the weaknesses in the program, if any? How can these weaknesses be addressed? (<500 words)
17. Discuss faculty contributions to the generation, application, and interpretation of knowledge (<5,000 words)

Student Learning Outcomes

18. What are students expected to learn as a result of participation in the program (5-10 learning outcomes)?
19. How are the student learning outcomes linked to the program goals and mission? (<500 words)

Student Learning Assessment

20. How are student learning outcomes being assessed? (<500 words)
21. How are both direct and indirect measures being used? If both are not being used, why not? (<250 words)

Data Collection

22. What data are being collected for student learning outcomes? (<500 words)
23. How are data aligned with both program goals and student learning outcomes? (<500 words)

Data Analysis & Interpretation

24. How are the collected data being analyzed? (<500 words)
25. How are the collected data being interpreted? (<250 words)

Data Use

26. How are the collected data being shared within the program? (<500 words)
27. What plans have been developed as a result of the data analysis and interpretation? (<500 words)
28. What curricular changes have been implemented as a result of the analysis? If no changes have been implemented, why not? (<500 words)

Resourcing

29. Describe how the program is resourced (e.g., staffing levels, facilities, equipment, budget, ancillary support) (<5,000 words)

Component 2: Work of the APR Team

1. Please develop a list of 15-25 questions to guide the work of the APR Team when they are on campus. (<1,000 words)
2. Please indicate any areas that should be specifically addressed by the APR Team. (<1,000 words)

Guidelines for Academic Program Review Team's Report

Please provide the following report guidelines to the APR Team prior to their arrival on campus.

The APR Team report should address:

- the appropriateness of the program's goals, vision, and student learning outcomes. Are the program's goals, vision and student learning outcomes consistent with those of the University mission?
- the quality of the program -particularly the curricula; the program distinctiveness, and the students enrolled in the program
- the appropriateness and effectiveness of the student learning outcomes, assessment procedures, and response to change as applied to the curricula
- the appropriateness and effectiveness of the assessment data collection, analysis, and use processes
- service and research productivity of the program's faculty
- program productivity and efficiency
- program financial viability
- specific APR Team recommendations regarding the additional questions provided for the program under review

Annual Follow-Up

As a result of the April 2021 Higher Learning Commission reaccreditation and the elimination of Program Prioritization, each program subject to the Academic Program Review process is required to submit an Annual Assessment Update by May 31 addressing the following questions to the University-wide Assessment Team:

1. What did you assess this year? (<250 words)
2. What measures did you use? (<250 words)
3. What did you learn from the data? (<250 words)
4. What will you implement based on your findings from the data? (<250 words)