Audit & Review of Academic Programs

Purposes

Given the need for a data-informed, systematic, and continuous effort to use resources wisely, the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater bases its decisions about academic programs on the results of Audit & Review processes conducted on a regular basis, in conjunction with other relevant information. These Audit & Review processes are intended to:

- Improve the quality of undergraduate and graduate programs;
- Identify needs for additional study and/or planning;
- Help set priorities for allocation/reallocation of resources within or among programs, departments or colleges, and ensure overall institutional financial equilibrium;
- Define and ensure appropriate standards for program quality;
- Identify the needs and unique circumstances of specific programs;
- Identify non-functional or unnecessarily duplicative programs; and
- Identify needs for structural changes in programs or administrative units.

Overview

The Audit & Review process at UW-Whitewater is intended to facilitate continuous program improvement and is conducted for all instructional areas on a five-year cycle. It is carried out at the undergraduate level by the Audit & Review Committee. This faculty committee has been charged by the Faculty Senate with the following responsibilities:

- Be responsible for the Audit & Review of undergraduate academic departments and programs and of academic support programs and activities of the University, in fulfillment of University of Wisconsin System requirements. This responsibility includes:
  - Establishing and following the cycle, and, scheduling and conducting of the department and program reviews;
  - Developing the format and content requirements for department and program self-studies to be submitted for Audit & Review Committee review;
  - Establishing a rubric (and periodically evaluating and improving its effectiveness) for Audit & Review teams to use in reviewing and reporting on department and program self-studies;
  - Appointing Audit & Review teams for conducting each department and program review;
  - Being responsible for the reviewing and reporting on the value and efficacy of the Audit & Review process and results; and
  - Notifying departments and programs of all the above in a timely manner.
• Form an Audit & Review team to conduct each specific Audit & Review, such that:
  o the team shall consist of at least two elected Audit & Review Committee faculty members;
  o the elected Audit & Review Committee faculty members shall constitute the majority of each specific Audit & Review team; and
  o the specific team may include people from inside or outside the University with expertise in the department or program area.

• Make reports of Audit & Review, each of which shall include discussion of:
  o the quality of existing activities, staff, facilities and equipment, and budget;
  o the demand and need for the program reviewed;
  o the anticipated future developments which may affect either of these subjects; and
  o the recommendations for changes in the program as warranted by the review.

  * All reports and recommendations of this Committee shall be made for informational purposes to the Faculty Senate, the University Curriculum Committee, the Academic Development Committee, the Faculty Budget Committee, and the Academic Affairs Staff.

The Graduate Audit & Review Committee is an administrative committee whose duties include:

• Reviewing and coordinating new graduate degree program proposals;
• Assessing immediate and changing needs; and
• Auditing programs and recommending the phasing out of programs.

  * It may also make recommendations on the development of new graduate degree programs

Various other campus committees or offices have ancillary or supportive roles in the Audit & Review process.

The Office of Academic Assessment schedules program reviews, monitors completion of reviews, and otherwise assists both the Audit & Review and Graduate Audit & Review Committees. A representative serves on all program review teams.

The University Assessment Committee assists the university in developing assessment policies and an assessment plan, and assists academic programs in developing and maintaining adequate assessment efforts.

The Strategic Planning and Budgeting Committee conducts an evaluation process to facilitate allocation/reallocation of resources. This evaluation is coordinated with the other Audit & Review processes and will be conducted campus-wide on a five-year cycle.

Finally, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning maintains appropriate databases and provides official data to be included in all Audit & Review processes. These official data provide the basis for some portions of the self-studies prepared by the academic departments and other program units.

PROGRAM EVALUATION, ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING, AND ACCREDITATION

Information from program evaluation and the assessment of student learning is critical in the Audit & Review of all academic programs. During the Audit & Review process, academic programs receive feedback on their mission statements and systematic processes for setting and assessing program goals. Programs also define student learning outcomes, show how program learning outcomes align with campus learning outcomes, and report data related to assessment of these outcomes. Data from program evaluation and from assessments of student learning are used to inform program changes and improvements. Where appropriate, evaluations from external accrediting agencies are included in the Audit & Review process.
**Leadership and Coordination**

The Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs provides the overall leadership for all Audit & Review processes at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. The Provost is supported in this responsibility by the director of Academic Assessment, who serves as an ex-officio member of both the Audit & Review and Graduate Audit & Review Committees; the Dean of the Graduate Studies and Continuing Education, who serves as chair of the Graduate Audit & Review Committee; the chairpersons of the undergraduate Audit & Review Committee and the University Assessment Committee; and the director of Institutional Research and Planning. In conjunction with these individuals, the Provost seeks to maintain efficient and effective Audit & Review processes by integrating on-campus Audit & Review processes, and by coordinating on-campus Audit & Review processes with accreditation and other external reviews. In addition, the Provost serves on the Strategic Planning and Budgeting Committee.

**Scheduling**

The director of Academic Assessment maintains schedules of the Audit & Review processes for undergraduate and graduate programs. These schedules are coordinated to accommodate academic departments with both undergraduate and graduate programs, and are approved by the Provost. Whenever possible and appropriate, on-campus Audit & Review processes are coordinated with accreditation and other external reviews. Academic departments and other program units subject to accreditation may negotiate the scheduling of the on-campus Audit & Review processes immediately before, during, or immediately after the year of accreditation.

Academic departments and other program units subject to five and ten-year accreditation cycles participate in the on-campus Audit & Review processes every five years. Academic departments and other program units subject to other accreditation cycles participate in the on-campus Audit & Review processes at least every five years, adjusted to coincide with the accreditation cycle. Academic departments and other program units not subject to accreditation are reviewed every five years. An approximately equal number of academic departments and other program units are reviewed each year.

**Preparation of Self-Studies**

The Audit & Review Committee and the Graduate Audit & Review Committee establish deadlines for the preparation of self-studies by academic departments and other program units, and provide information concerning the scope and format for the self-studies. The academic departments and other program units are responsible for the proper preparation and completion of the self-studies concerning their academic programs.

The college deans are responsible for reviewing self-studies, offering feedback to the programs being reviewed, and approving self-studies before they are submitted to the Audit & Review Committee. Program chairs and coordinators are responsible for submitting completed self-studies to an electronic Audit & Review submission portal. Each college and/or college dean may establish preliminary Audit & Review processes at the college level, involving faculty committees and/or administrative committees and/or administrative review. Members of the Audit & Review and the Graduate Audit & Review Committees access self-studies through the online portal for review.

**Audit & Review Committees**

The Audit & Review Committee and the Graduate Audit & Review Committee conduct comprehensive reviews of the information submitted by the audited academic programs. The content of the self-studies is augmented by information and data from college and department/program assessment committees, the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, and other units (such as alumni surveys from the Office of Career and Leadership Development). Additional information from accrediting agencies or external consultants may also be utilized where deemed appropriate.
From its review of the self-studies, each committee drafts a final report on each audited program, identifying programmatic strengths and weaknesses, making recommendations for specific required and/or suggested action(s), and recommending a summary conclusion. Each draft report is forwarded to the appropriate dean and to the affected department or unit with a request for a meeting to discuss the report. The Provost, other representative(s) from the Provost’s Office, college dean, program chair/coordinator, program faculty/staff, the Audit & Review Committee chair and committee representatives are invited to attend the meetings. Following these meetings, each committee finalizes its reports.

Occasionally, Audit & Review Committees request progress reports from programs to provide an interim check on progress in specific areas prior to the next scheduled five-year review. Programs are responsible for preparing and submitting progress reports as requested. The review process for progress reports is similar to that of self-studies: The Audit & Review Committee or the Graduate Audit & Review Committee reviews the progress reports and written feedback is prepared. The face-to-face meeting for progress reports includes the Audit & Review Committee chair, program representatives, and any others the program would like to include.

**AUDIT & REVIEW OPTIONS**

In recommending a summary conclusion for an audited program, the Audit & Review Committee and the Graduate Audit & Review Committee may choose from the options below:

- Insufficient information in the self-study to make a determination: revise self-study & resubmit.
- Recommend continuation of the academic program without qualification.
- Recommend continuation of the academic program with minor concerns.
- Recommend continuation of the academic program with major concerns in one or more of the four areas: submit progress reports to the Audit & Review chair, college dean and Provost on progress in addressing the major concerns.
- Withhold recommendation for continuation of the academic program, place the academic program on probation, and require another complete Audit & Review self-study within one to three years at the committee's discretion.
- Withhold recommendation for continuation of the academic program, place the academic program on probation, recommend placing the academic program in receivership within the college, and require another complete Audit & Review self-study within one to three years at the committee's discretion.
- Recommend non-continuation of the academic program.

At the discretion of the Committee, a progress report may be required for any of the final results.

Programs that receive the final result of continuation without qualification may submit a short self-study for their next regularly scheduled Audit & Review, in which they address only required and recommended actions and provide a report on assessment of student learning.

**FEEDBACK AND REPORTING**

Programs receive written and/or verbal feedback on their self-studies from their dean, the Audit & Review Committee or the Graduate Audit & Review Committee, and the Provost. Faculty and staff in the programs are encouraged to participate in the meeting at which the review team’s draft report is discussed with the program, academic dean/s, Associate Vice Chancellor, and Provost. The Audit & Review Committee and the academic deans provide feedback to programs regarding progress reports.

The Audit & Review Committee and the Graduate Audit & Review Committee each prepare an annual report that is delivered to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and to the relevant academic college dean/s. Copies of these reports are also provided to the Dean of Graduate Studies & Continuing Education; Faculty Senate; University Curriculum Committee; Academic Development Committee; Faculty Budget Committee; Graduate Council; and, individually, to the dean and chair of each
affected program. The University Curriculum Committee and the Graduate Council respond to the reports and make recommendations to the Provost relative to their specific areas of responsibility.

The Provost distributes the specific observations, recommendations and expectations for each academic program to the college deans and to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education. The college deans, and the Dean of Graduate Studies and Continuing Education, report annually to the Provost concerning progress in response to previous Audit & Review recommendations.

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