Program Review

The Ohio State University
Office of Student Life

Program Review Guidebook

Updated October 2023

Table of Contents

Program Review Overview

Purpose of Program Review

Program review's central purpose is to foster exemplary programs and practices within the Office of Student Life that support student engagement, learning and well-being. Program review also strengthens departmental alignment to the mission and priorities of Student Life and the university. Through program review, departments also validate strengths and identify opportunities for improvement.

The objectives of program review are to:

- Assess how well a department performs in relation to its objectives, university priorities and Office of Student Life goals and strategic initiatives.
- Encourage strategic thinking about a department's future direction.
- Define ways within existing resources that a department can continue to improve in the quality of its programs, services, activities and operations.
- Provide evidence of the excellence and effectiveness of a department's programs, activities, services and operations.
- Evaluate the extent to which a department has successfully addressed student learning and development outcomes and/or business and service outcomes.
- Identify obstacles that inhibit a department from achieving its desired goals and develop strategies to manage these obstacles.

Program Review Key Principles

- A robust program review process centers open-ended reflection to clarify a department's strengths and challenges and works to identify attainable next steps for departmental excellence.
- Broad campus community participation in program reviews is essential to gain important ideas for improvement as well as an understanding of department strengths.
- Program review participants must experience a sense of trust and confidentiality in the review process, knowing that sensitive information will not be shared or reported publicly.
- The Office of Student Life should financially support and administer program review to reflect its commitment to growth and appreciation of existing work.

Program Review Key Processes

- All Student Life departments contribute to the work of Student Life as a whole; therefore, all departments will participate in program review at least every five years, unless exceptions are granted by the Senior Vice President.
- The Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) Self-Assessment Guides (SAGs) serve as a foundation for the program review self-study by examining all aspects of departmental programs, structure and practices through consensus-derived benchmarks. Departments may use additional standards or benchmarking materials beyond the CAS standards as appropriate.
- Program review site visits are virtual by default. An in-person review may be necessary if the primary function of a department is the upkeep or provision of a physical campus space or in other outstanding circumstances.
- Conducting a thorough and robust program review is the responsibility of the department director and supported by the program review senior analyst. Delegation is permissible as workloads allow.
- Program review should be as transparent as possible, including by disseminating materials to department staff and sharing action plans publicly.
- All departments will create an action plan in response to findings from the self-study and external committee report. Departments will provide regular updates on action plans to Office of Student Life senior leadership and the Program Review Senior Analyst.

Oversight and Coordination of the Program Review Process

The Office of Student Life oversees program review and assigns a staff member responsibility of program review administration though the Center for the Study of Student Life (CSSL). Costs and funding associated with department reviews will reside in the Office of Student Life. The Program Review Senior Analyst and the department under review will share responsibility for carrying out reviews.

Program review administration responsibilities handled by the Program Review Senior Analyst will include:

- Establishing and maintaining the overall program review cycle
- Managing individual department program review calendars
- Notifying departments scheduled for review
- Planning and conducting department program review orientation meetings
- Participating in department program review meetings as needed
- Developing and overseeing department program review budgets in consultation with the department under review
- Forming the external review committee in consultation with the department under review and the relevant Associate Vice President, with final approval of the Senior Vice President of Student Life (or a designee)
- Supporting department in drafting their self-study
- Creating appendices from supporting documentation
- Making arrangements related to the external committee's site visit, including honorarium and travel (as applicable)
- Arranging Zoom sessions and/or meeting room space for all program review panels
- Ongoing consultation with members of the department self-study team and external committee to ensure that the process remains on schedule, that issues or questions are addressed and that all steps in the review process are completed
- Coordinating discussion meetings and distributing the action plans resulting from department reviews
- Monitoring action plan follow-up reporting
- Evaluating the review process itself and implementing recommendations for improvement

The responsibilities for the department director and other identified leadership include:

- Forming the department self-study team
- Selecting the self-study protocol
- Nominating experts to serve on the external committee
- Orienting staff to the program review self-study
- Conducting the self-study on schedule
- Gathering evidence and data for inclusion in the Appendix
- Assisting with the gathering of additional information requested by the external committee
- Providing copies of the self-study and action plan to the Program Review Senior Analyst for distribution to external committee members and university administrators
- Sharing copies of the self-study, external committee report and action plan with department staff
- Participating in site visit panels as requested
- Drafting action plans in consultation with relevant Associate Vice President
- Executing the action plan and submitting action plan progress reports

Program Review Process

Program Review Cycle

Student Life department program reviews will occur at minimum on a five-year cycle. The Senior Vice President for Student Life, in consultation with the Student Life Executive Team, develops this schedule. When possible, the schedule is coordinated with other review and accreditation activities.

Accreditation reviews are conducted for other purposes and do not take the place of Student Life program reviews. However, elements of and preparation for these reviews may overlap; therefore, coordination of these reviews will occur to eliminate unnecessary duplication of effort. Where possible, university functional reviews involving Student Life departments will be scheduled to coincide with the Student Life program reviews.

The program review schedule is flexible; the Senior Vice President for Student Life, in consultation with the Executive Leadership Team staff, may revise it. A department can request a program review at any time. When circumstances warrant, Student Life may extend or postpone a review. In situations where program review indicates serious challenges in the department, the department may be added back into the schedule for re-review on an accelerated basis to ensure that identified challenges have been addressed.

Program Review Phases

The Student Life program review process consists of four phases:

1. **Review Preparation** (Semester prior to scheduled review): Department orientation; Establish self-study protocol; Nomination and approval of program review committee members; Committee member invitations; Site visit date selection

2. **Self-Study** (Target weeks 1-8 of semester): Biweekly meetings with senior analyst; Information/evidence/document collection; Complete self-study; Develop site visit agenda and recommended panelists; Draft charge for external committee; Committee orientation

3. **Site Visit** (Target weeks 9-13 of semester): Constituent/Stakeholder/Partner meetings; Presentation of preliminary findings; Submission of final report within 30 days of site visit

4. **Action Planning and Reporting** (End of semester and ongoing): Develop action plan to respond to external committee report and self-study; Regular review of progress

The explanation of each phase below includes guidelines for the review process. While guidelines are not binding and may be adapted to the needs of the individual department under review, departments should follow them as closely as possible.

The typical timeline required for the program review process is a pre-review preparation period, several weeks to complete a self-study, a two- or three-day site visit, 30 days to complete the external committee report and 30 days to complete an action plan. Actual time for each step may vary according to the unique needs of each review.

Review Preparation
(Semester before scheduled review)

Notification of Department(s) Scheduled for Review

Using the established five-year review calendar, the Program Review Senior Analyst will notify departments slated for review the semester prior to the scheduled review period.

Department Review Orientation Meeting

The Student Life Program Review Senior Analyst will meet with department staff to discuss the review process, answer questions and provide clarification about the process. All members of the department should be active participants in the review, although they do not need to attend the initial orientation meeting.

Formation of the Self-Study Committee

The department director, in consultation with department staff, will identify and invite people to serve as members of the self-study team. Members of department, and where appropriate, advisory councils, should be included on the self-study team.

Identification and Formation of External Committee and Scheduling of Site Visit

The external committee will consist of three people from outside the university who have expertise in the area under review. For the purposes of a holistic and objective program review, directors should nominate at least one individual from an Ohio State peer or aspirant institution and an Associate Vice President (or individual with a similar title or scope of leadership) with extensive experience outside of the department's specific expertise area.

The department director and relevant Associate Vice President will generate a list of potential committee members. At least six nominations should be generated with sound rationale for each nomination. This list of suitable committee members is forwarded to the Senior Vice President for Student Life or a designee for consideration. The Program Review Senior Analyst will send invitations to the individuals identified. If a person is unable to serve, another person from the approved list will be contacted until the committee is formed.

Self-Study
(Target: Weeks 1-8 of Semester)

The department self-study provides the basis for the review process. It represents an opportunity for the department to make a direct assessment of itself and to consider further directions to build exemplary programs and practices.

The goals for the self-study are to
- Address how well the department performs in relation to its objectives, institutional priorities and Student Life goals and strategic initiatives
- Define ways within existing resources that the department can improve in the quality of its programs, services, activities and operations
- Provide evidence of the excellence and effectiveness of the departments' programs, activities, services and operations

Between 100 to 30 days before the site visit, the department under review will prepare a self-study report using a self-study protocol based on a Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) Self-Assessment Guide (SAG). Current SAGs are maintained by the Program Review Senior Analyst. For some departments, more than one SAG may be appropriate, or the self-study may be supplemented with other standards; in these cases, the department director should work with the Program Review Senior Analyst and their Associate Vice President to establish the self-study protocol.

The department self-study committee should submit the complete self-study report (including appendices) to the Program Review Senior Analyst. The Program Review Senior Analyst will review the department self-study report for completeness. The Senior Analyst will return incomplete reports to the department with detailed feedback on how to revise the report. The final self-study document will be sent to members of the external committee in preparation for their site visit.

External Committee Review and Site Visit
(Target: Weeks 9-13 of Semester)

The external committee will be encouraged to evaluate the department participating in program review using national context and the department's self-study. The external reviewers will read the self-study and corresponding materials in advance of the site visit.

The site visit should span a two- to three-day period to allow sufficient time for the reviewers to meet with various stakeholders, including department staff, administrators, faculty and students. There will be designated time to meet as a review team to discuss points that will be included in the final analysis. Site visits are virtual by default, although departments with outstanding need may request an in-person review from the Program Review Senior Analyst.

At the conclusion of their visit, the external committee will meet with the director of department under review, the relevant Associate Vice Present, department staff and the Associate Vice President for Strategy, Impact and Academic Partnerships to share their initial observations. Within 30 days of their visit, the external reviewers will be asked to provide a written assessment of the department based on the department charge and self-study. This final report will be sent to the Program Review Senior Analyst.

Action Planning and Reporting
(End of Semester and Ongoing)

In consultation with the Senior Vice President for Student Life and relevant Associate Vice President, an action plan in response to the external committee and self-study findings will be developed. The action plan should specify proposed actions, implementation strategies, target dates and who is responsible for carrying out each action. If there are review recommendations that the department is not in agreement with, the action plan should acknowledge these differences in thinking and, where appropriate, present alternative recommendations.

The completed action plan is submitted to the relevant Associate Vice President for review and approval. Department leadership will report on action plan implementation progress on a quarterly basis to the Program Review Senior Analyst and relevant Associate Vice President.

Student Life Program Review Timeline

Four Phases:
1. Review Preparation
2. Self-Study
3. Site Visit
4. Action Planning & Reporting

Activity	Staff Responsible	Time From Visit	Notes
Phase 1: Review Preparation			
Orientation of Director	Program Review Senior Analyst	100 days	Establish standards and format of self-study; Decide tentative site visit dates
External Committee Nominations	Department Director/ Program Review Senior Analyst	95 days	
AVP & SrVP approval of Nominees	Program Review Senior Analyst	90 Days	
Recruit External Committee Members	Program Review Senior Analyst	90 days	
Reservations: Travel, Hotel, Food, Rooms	Program Review Senior Analyst	90 days	In-person only
Phase 2: Self-Study			
Information gathering: Document collection	Department Director	100 days	
Department Orientation; Self-Study Planning	Department Director/Program Review Senior Analyst	90 Days	Establish procedure and plan for completion of Self-Study
Establish Self-Study Protocol	Program Review Senior Analyst & Department	80 days	Requires AVP approval
Write Self-Study	Department Director/ Staff	~80 to 45 days	
Distribute Self-Study to Program Review Senior Analyst	Department Director	45 days	
Distribute materials to Committee	Program Review Senior Analyst	Between 45 to 30 days	Department Self- Study, OSU/SL materials (e.g. Strategic Plans, Annual Reports)
Virtual Orientation of Committee	Program Review Senior Analyst & Department Director	Between 30 to 15 days	Review Site Visit Agenda and Self-Study Findings

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE

Student Life Program Review Timeline Continued

Activity	Staff Responsible	Time From Visit	Notes
Phase 3: Site Visit			
Stakeholder Meetings	Program Review Senior Analyst	0 days	
Write Report and Recommendations	External Committee	30 days	
Distribute report to Program Review Senior Analyst	External Committee	30 days	
Coordinate honorarium and external committee report distribution	Program Review Senior Analyst	30 days	
Phase 4: Action Planning & Reporting			
Writing Response/ Action Plan	Department Director	~30 to 60 days	
Distribute Action Plan/ Response AVP/SrVP	Department Director	60 days	
Semi-annual review of progress	Department Director	Ongoing	