# WKU

**POLICY & PROCEDURE DOCUMENT**

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| NUMBER: | 1.7000 |
| DIVISION: | Academic Affairs |
| TITLE: | Academic Program Review |
| DATE: | April X, 2022 |
| Authorized by: | Robert Fischer, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs |

## I.  Scope and Purpose

A.  Overview: The Academic Program Review (APR) process is an essential part of Western Kentucky University's ongoing efforts to ensure the educational mission is being met through the delivery of academic programs. The primary goal of the APR is to evaluate the quality of WKU's undergraduate and graduate educational programs (degrees/majors and certificates) and provide faculty and staff the opportunity to reflect upon the content of their programs, curricular delivery and research through an evaluation of academic program planning and effectiveness. The Academic Program Review is intended to:

1. Assess the quality and effectiveness of academic programs.
2. Identify program strengths and opportunities for improvement.
3. Encourage accomplishment of both short- and long-term goals and objectives.
4. Establish program action plans and strategies for continuous improvement.
5. Ensure that current and proposed degree programs are aligned with WKU and Council on Post-Secondary Education strategic priorities, mission, and purpose.
6. Utilize the information collected through the APR process to inform planning and priorities at the university level.

B.  Definitions:

1. **Program** is a combination of courses for the attainment of broad educational objectives leading to a degree. SACSCOC defines an "academic program" as "a credential as defined by the institution." A program is a combination of courses and related activities organized for the attainment of broad education objectives that leads to a credential. WKU considers undergraduate degrees/majors, graduate degrees, and certificates as programs because the university awards a credential upon completion.

2. **Credit Hour** is defined in WKU Policy 1.403V.

3. **Program Coordinator** is a member of the academically qualified program faculty with primary responsibility for program review. See Policy 1.505V—Academic Program Coordinator.

**II.     Policy**

A. <u>Overview:</u> Academic programs will undergo a regular review with flexibility in the process for accredited programs. Since accredited degree/major programs are required to complete external reviews and compile and analyze much of the same data as WKU's APR process, WKU allows accredited programs to submit annotated accreditation self-study reports as the bulk of evidence and analysis for the review. Furthermore, APR is divided into two pathways—Degree Review (DR) and Certificate Review (CR).  DR is a more rigorous process than CR since undergraduate and graduate degrees are larger and more complex.

B. <u>Frequency:</u> Because accrediting bodies operate under different time cycles, The Provost's Office tailors different pathways/cycles to facilitate the primary goal of the APR process—promoting continuous improvement. Unaccredited degree programs will undergo review every 5 years.  Accredited degree programs will submit their reports aligning with those accreditation cycles.  Accredited degree programs with cycles of 7, 8, or 10 years will provide an abbreviated, mid-cycle report.  Certificate programs will be reviewed every five years.  The Provost's Office will maintain a public schedule for DR and CR on the APR web site.

C. <u>Coordination:</u> The Provost's Office coordinates APR and maintains a web page that includes a schedule, guidelines, templates, rubrics and other information to support the process.

**III     Procedure**

A. <u>Degree Review (DR):</u>  DR is a five-step process for non-accredited programs.  For accredited programs, steps 2, 3, and 4 are generally covered with the external accreditation report.

1. <u>Step 1: Initiation of Program Review:</u>  Each year, in late spring, the Provost's Office will ask the dean's offices to provide an update on program review activity in their colleges. The information provided in this response is used to compile annual reports to CPE. When a program review is pending (usually at the end of spring semester), the dean will issue a program review charge memo to the lead member of the program faculty, usually the department chair and cc the Provost's Office.

2. <u>Step 2: Self-Study Report:</u> The program faculty prepare a self-study report according to the instructions in the charge memo and with the template provided on the APR web site. As noted in III.A., most accredited programs will be allowed to submit an annotated report and an abbreviated template for their APR self-study—see final note in III.A.6 on accredited programs. When the self-study is complete, the program faculty formally endorse the report and submit the self-study to the dean, along with the names of the external reviewers upon which the dean and department chair have agreed.

3. Step 3: Review Committee & Visit: The review committee is appointed and convened by the dean, who shares the program's self-study with the committee. The committee is typically comprised of two members external to WKU and two or more WKU faculty members who are external to the academic program being reviewed. This means they are not in the same department that houses the academic program and are not actively involved (e.g., teaching, executive committee, advising) in the program.  Most of the review committee should be tenure-eligible faculty. Academic staff, including research and clinical faculty, may be members of a review committee but should not comprise the majority of a committee. The dean selects the chair of the committee from among the appointed external members.  Program review committee and chair responsibilities are elaborated on the APR web site along with report expectations. The review committee report is submitted to the dean. The dean sends the report to the program faculty to review for errors of fact and may request a response to any major issues. One committee may be convened to review multiple programs/self-studies when appropriate (i.e., undergraduate and graduate programs in the same discipline).

4. Step 4: College Discussion and Dean's Final Summary of Review: The dean discusses the program review documents (i.e., self-study report, review committee report, and any program response) with program faculty and leads a discussion about the program review. The dean then prepares a final summary of the review. This summary identifies program strengths and recommendations for improvement or any requirements for follow-up reports that the dean may choose to make to the program, and, if applicable, a commitment to provide resources. This final summary document becomes a public summary of the review and is a useful reference document for the time between reviews and at the point of initiating the next program review in the APR cycle. The dean sends the final summary of the review, the self-study report, the review committee's report, and the program's response, if any, to the Office of the Provost and (when appropriate) the Graduate School.

5. Step 5: Completing the Review: For all programs (graduate and undergraduate) The Provost's Office provides a response to the program director and faculty that the review has been completed. The Provost's Office uses these documents to report on Academic Review Processes to the CPE.

6. APR for Accredited Programs: Since accredited programs are required to complete external reviews and compile and analyze much of the same data as WKU's APR process, WKU allows accredited programs to submit annotated accreditation self-study reports as the bulk of evidence and analysis for the APR. Because accrediting bodies operate under different time cycles, WKU has tailored different pathways/cycles to facilitate the primary goal of the APR process—promoting continuous improvement.  WKU houses the cycle of review and requirements on the APR web site.

B. <u>Certificate Program Review (CR)</u>: CR follows a process that is an abbreviated and streamlined version of the DR process and involves a College Certificate Review Committee, without external reviewers.

1. <u>Step 1: Initiation of Program Review</u>: Each year, in late spring, the Provost's Office will ask the dean's offices to provide an update on Certificate Program Review (CR) activity in their colleges. The information provided in this response is used to compile annual reports to CPE. When a CR is pending (usually at the end of spring semester), the dean will issue a program review charge memo to the lead member of the program faculty, usually the department chair and cc the Provost's Office.

2. <u>Step 2: Self-Study Report</u>: The program faculty prepare a self-study report according to the instructions in the charge memo and with the template provided on the APR web site. When the self-study is complete, the program faculty formally endorse the report and submit the self-study to the dean.

3. <u>Step 3: Review Committee</u>: Each dean appoints a single College Certificate Review (CCR) Committee to review batches of certificates annually.  The committee is typically comprised of four or more faculty members and chaired by an associate dean or senior leader in the college. Committee members who are in the same department as the certificate or who teach for the certificate will be recused. Most of the review committee should be tenure-eligible faculty. Academic staff, including research and clinical faculty, may be members of a review committee but should not comprise the majority of a committee. CCR Committee and chair responsibilities are elaborated on the APR web site along with report expectations. The CCR report is submitted to the dean. The dean sends the report to the program faculty to review for errors of fact and may request a response to any major issues.

4. <u>Step 4: College Discussion and Dean's Final Summary of Review</u>: The dean discusses the certificate program review documents (i.e., self-study report, review committee report, and any program response) with program faculty and leads a discussion about the program review. The dean then prepares a final summary of the review. This summary identifies program strengths and recommendations for improvement or any requirements for follow-up reports that the dean may choose to make to the program, and, if applicable, a commitment to provide resources. This final summary document becomes a public summary of the review and is a useful reference document for the time between reviews and at the point of initiating the next program review in the APR cycle. The dean sends the final summary of the review, the self-study report, the review committee's report, and the program's response, if any, to the Office of the Provost and (when appropriate) the Graduate School.

5. <u>Step 5: Completing the Review</u>: For all certificate programs (graduate and undergraduate) the Provost's Office provides a response to the program coordinator and faculty that the review has been completed. The Provost's Office uses these documents to report on Academic Review Processes to the CPE.

**IV      Related Policies**

Policy 0.000V Policy on Policies
Policy 1.403V Engagement Requirements for Hour or Credit
Policy 1.505V Academic Program Coordinator

**V       Reasons for Revision**

This policy replaced Policy 1.402V Academic Program Review, a dramatic overhaul and simplification based on changes allowed by the Council on Post-secondary Education.