

**GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW
KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS**

November 2010

Introduction

Program review is inextricably bound to academic quality and the allocation of resources within the public universities governed by the Kansas Board of Regents. Its primary goal is to ensure program quality by: (1) enabling individual universities to align academic programs with their institutional missions and priorities; (2) fostering improvement in curriculum and instruction; and (3) effectively coordinating the use of faculty time and talent.

The Kansas Board of Regents' program review policy reads as follows:

(1) In cooperation with the universities, the Board will maintain a program review cycle and a review process that will allow the universities to demonstrate that they are delivering quality programs consistent with their mission. (12-19-86; 6-23-88; 9-18-97)

(2) The review of degree programs shall encompass all levels of academic degrees from associate to doctoral. Program reviews are institutionally based and follow the departmental or unit structure of the institution. "Program" means an academic plan that is approved by the appropriate governing board and leads to an award, for example, a degree or a career/technical certificate. (12-17-82; 1-20-84; 6-23-88; 9-18-97; 6-23-05)

On September 18, 1997, the Kansas Board of Regents approved guidelines for the current program review cycle. These guidelines provide goals for program review at two levels, campus and system. At the campus level they include assessment to strengthen the quality and accessibility of academic programs; identifying program needs and campus priorities; and identifying areas for reorganization, including "modification, merger, and discontinuance." Principal goals at the system level include ensuring that programs are consistent with institutional missions and roles; ensuring optimal student access and use of resources; minimizing duplication; and encouraging institutional cooperation.

These levels coincide with the two distinctive types of assessment, namely, assessment for improvement and for accountability. Campus level review of academic programs is primarily aimed at improvement, while system level review focuses primarily on accountability. This is not to say that the two goals are mutually exclusive; only to recognize that they are two different processes that respond to distinct dynamics. It is important that institutions and Board staff remain mindful of the creative tension that exists at each level between these two types of review.

Purpose of Academic Program Review.

The Board and Regents universities conceive program review as integral to the academic planning process that occurs at both the institutional and system levels, with the overarching purpose of maintaining and improving the quality of academic programs offered by the system universities. Program review provides an opportunity for faculty and administrators to reflect on their institution's educational practices and review the role of their programs in the context of the totality of programs offered by Regents universities. This is accomplished by ensuring:

1. the highest possible level of academic program quality;

2. an appropriate differentiation of institutional missions and roles within the Regents system;
3. optimal effectiveness in the use of state and student resources; and
4. maximum responsiveness to the intellectual, cultural and workforce needs of the state.

Although the overarching purposes remain the same, the goals and operation of program review vary at the campus and system levels. A differentiation of goals implies that the campuses and the system have different responsibilities in the program review process.

Program review begins at the campus level, where its goals include but are not limited to:

1. strengthening the quality and accessibility of academic programs by assessing existing program strengths and concerns;
2. augmenting institutional self-management by identifying and articulating academic program needs and campus priorities; and
3. identifying needs to reorganize academic programs, including modification, merger and discontinuance.

Individual universities may specify or add to these campus goals for program review.

At the system level, the primary goals for program review include:

1. ensuring that program quality and priorities are consistent with institutional missions and roles;
2. refining the scope of program offerings to optimize student access and use of resources; and
3. identifying viable opportunities for minimizing unjustifiable program duplication and supporting appropriate institutional cooperation.

In addition, as directed by the Board, staff may undertake different types of system review. Examples of such reviews are the analysis of system-wide program array and the system-wide review of individual academic program categories.

The Program Review Process

Program Review Cycle

Each public university is charged with the review of its academic programs and the implementation of its own process for program review. Each academic program offered by the institution will be reviewed at least once within an eight year cycle determined by the institution.

The current eight year cycle is 2007–2014, meaning that the next cycle will be 2015 – 2022. Institutions will provide Board staff with the schedule of programs to be reviewed in the next cycle no later than December 2014. Subsequently, institutions will provide staff with the schedule of programs to be reviewed in the upcoming cycle no later than December of the year preceding the first year of that cycle.

Program Review Process and Criteria

Program review documents are due in the Board office by February 16 of each year. Board staff will review individual program review reports and program data provided to KSPSD. Based on this review, staff will consult with chief academic officers regarding any questions, issues or problems that should be addressed.

Although program review is ultimately focused on discrete academic programs, the larger context of institutional planning, management and budgeting of the university should be enhanced by the process.

Each program will be examined by the university using the following criteria:

1. centrality of the program to fulfilling the mission and role of the institution;
2. the quality of the program as assessed by the strengths, productivity and qualifications of the faculty;
3. the quality of the program as assessed by its curriculum and impact on students;
4. demonstrated student need and employer demand for the program;
5. the service the program provides to the discipline, the university and beyond; and
6. the program's cost-effectiveness.

Additional criteria consistent with institutional mission may also be added. These criteria have relevance for all degree programs, regardless of discipline or degree level. However, the conceptualization, measurement, and application of these criteria in the review of academic programs will vary according to a variety of factors, including institutional mission and degree level. Universities may also implement separate review processes for graduate and undergraduate education.

Institutional reviews may include student learning assessment data, evaluations, recommendations from accreditation reports, and various institutional data, e.g., data on student post-collegiate experiences, data gathered from the core and institution-specific performance indicators, and/or information in national or disciplinary rankings of program quality. Specific and/or additional information that relate to these criteria and that are meaningful and appropriate for the institution can be developed by individual universities.

Data and Minima Tables

Data collected on each academic program are critical to the program review process. Based on institutional data housed in the Kansas State Postsecondary Database, Board staff assemble minima tables for review. The Board has established minima for number of majors, graduates, faculty and average ACT score. Emphasis is placed on those programs up for review in a given year, but staff reviews all minima tables to determine those programs that fail to significantly meet minima requirements.

Based on this review of the data, staff consult with institutions to identify problem areas. The annual report to the Board will include updates on campus actions to alleviate those problems.

Data minima are established for the following categories:

Undergraduate programs:

- number of majors;
- number of graduates;
- number of faculty FTE to deliver the program;
- average ACT score.

Master's and Doctoral programs

- number of majors;
- number of graduates;
- number of faculty FTE to deliver the program

Programs Requiring Additional Review or Monitoring for Improvement

The annual program review process includes both review of individual programs on the regular 8-year cycle, and analysis of the program data provided by campuses to KSPSD. Based on these reviews, some programs will be identified for additional review, while others may be recommended for elimination. In each case, Board staff will consult with staff at institutions and report to the Board on the status of such programs.

Programs Selected for Additional Review or Monitoring

Based on review of both qualitative reports and of these data, Board staff and/or institutions will identify areas of possible concern and consult with institutions to determine what, if any, steps should be taken to resolve problem areas. Institutions may find that some programs require additional review, beyond that provided by the regular review cycle. In addition, some programs may require monitoring for a period of time to assess their progress in rectifying problems identified in the regular program review. Guidelines for prompting additional review or monitoring include minimum data criteria in specific categories. Academic programs which fail to meet any one of these minimum criteria may be targeted for intensive reviews in addition to the regularly scheduled self-study.

Specific data minima that potentially trigger additional review are provided to institutions annually by Board staff. Guidelines are annually reviewed by the Board's Data, Research, and Planning and Academic Affairs staff.

In addition to programs identified by the minima tables, the university may designate any other program for intensive review based on other information in the program review data base or other information sources, such as assessment results, and accreditation reports, pertaining to the program's quality or relationship to institutional mission.

Board staff will monitor campus activities regarding programs identified for further review or monitoring until those issues are resolved. Information about these programs will be included in the annual report to the Board on program review.

Final Report and Recommendations

Upon the conclusion of the reviews each Regents university will provide the Board with an executive summary of its annual review and program-by-program recommendations. The campus reports to the Board should aim for brevity and include the following:

1. An institutional overview, no more than five pages in length, describing the review process, how data sources were used to shape program recommendations and the most significant program changes or recommendations resulting from the program review.
2. A one- to two-page summary assessment and institutional recommendations for each program reviewed, to include the following information:
 - Name of program reviewed
 - College/Unit in which program is housed
 - Brief program description
 - Degrees conferred
 - Placement of graduates, e.g., types of positions, starting salary
 - Sources of external support
 - Conclusions and recommendations

3. A one-page institutional estimate of the fiscal implications of any recommended program changes.

Board staff will develop its required annual program review report on information provided by the institutions on each program, analysis of data in the minima tables, and consultation with the institutions.