



CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

Office of Planning, Assessment and Research

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW:
Assessment Guidelines and Procedures**

OPAR 2012

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CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

Academic Program Assessment Regulations

I. INTRODUCTION

The systematic assessment of an institution's academic programs is essential for ensuring that a quality educational experience is provided to all students. Internal academic program review is a central component of institutional effectiveness, strategic planning, assessment of student learning outcomes and in achieving organizational goals and objectives. While certainly motivated by standards and requirements established by regional and other specialized accreditation bodies like the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), internal academic program review at Clark Atlanta University (CAU) is recognized as a core component of the institutional mission.

The impetus for academic program review at CAU is *faculty driven* and is guided by Section 1.4.6.3 of the Faculty Handbook. The Faculty Handbook provides a policy for periodic review of academic programs by the faculty for the purpose of determining, at a minimum, the "quality of academic curricula, the utilization of existing resources, the research and service activities, long-range plans and objectives, adequacy of financial support and the physical facilities, and the appropriateness of the departmental or program structure." The academic review will determine the effectiveness of each academic program.

Assessment of student learning outcomes is a key component of academic program review. Expected educational outcomes must be established for each graduate and undergraduate degree program offered by the University. Respective faculties within the academic departments should identify what students should know (cognition), think (attitude) and be able to do (behavior) upon completion of their degree programs inclusive of outcomes specifically for the general education curriculum. Moreover, the respective faculties are expected to assess the extent to which established educational outcomes are achieved by their students. Further, results of assessment must be used to enhance curricula and instructional strategies as well as improve the administration of the academic programs.

These regulations establish procedures that are to be followed in implementing Section 1.4.6.3 of the Faculty Handbook and were informed by the work of the Committee on Academic Program Reviews and the Committee on Student Learning Outcomes,¹ two of the Ground Work Committees, established as a part of our Institutional Effectiveness process. The Committees' recommendations are codified in these regulations.

¹See CAU's Committee on Academic Program Reviews Final Report, dated July 31, 2002, and the Final Report of the Committee on Student-Learning Outcomes, dated August 13, 2002

As noted, the periodic academic program review is articulated as item 1.0 Academic Programs, among our Institutional Strategic Plan Focus Areas. Most relevant in this focus area is the affirmation that “Clark Atlanta University will maintain its tradition of providing strong academic programs that are consistent with its mission. The program will be framed by demands for intellectual rigor, critical perspective, and connected learning. The University affirms the importance of providing students with diverse curricular offerings at the undergraduate, graduate and professional levels, and *will place high priority on [periodic] review and evaluation of degree programs* consistent with the bench marking framework established through the Strategic Academic Plan.”

As an institution of integrity it is imperative that CAU, also continue to ensure its external constituents, i.e., external accreditation associations, that the quality of the educational programming is and will remain consistent.

The Committee on Academic Program Review report further delineates the framework for academic program review at CAU. It warrants repeating here.

Preparation for the program review should be carried out and conducted by the faculty with the Dean/Chair/or Degree Program Coordinator playing a role in the process.

Program review is evaluative, not just descriptive.

Program review is directed toward improvement of the program, not simply assessment of its current status.

Degree programs, departments, and schools are evaluated based on academic criteria, not financial or political ones. They are looked at on the basis of their academic strengths and weaknesses, not on the basis of their ability to produce funds for the institution. While financial and organizational issues are relevant to the review, they are relevant only as they affect the quality of the academic program.

Degree program review is an objective process in which degree program coordinators, departments, and schools assess their effectiveness, as objectively as possible. Faculty members from other programs, departments, and schools within the University make independent judgments about degree programs under review as part of the Internal Review Team. Their primary purpose will be to review the self-study conducted by the respective department. The inclusion of persons who have no vested interest in the results is important.

Program Review is an independent process, separate from any other review, i.e., regional, professional accrediting body, or licensing agencies.

Program Review results in action. Recommendations are used to bring about desired changes based upon an agreed upon timetable.

As noted previously, a significant part of the evaluation is the review of student learning outcomes. The basis for assessment of student learning outcomes is the following:

- An acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan includes ongoing evaluation of student learning outcomes.
- The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and assesses whether it achieves these outcomes and provides evidence of improvements based on analysis of those results.
- The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty.
- The institution identifies competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those college-level competencies.
- The institution publishes student learning outcomes in all relevant CAU publications to inform the constituency.

Further, the report from the Committee on Student Learning Outcomes clarifies the linkages between assessment and student learning. The report notes that:

- The assessment of student learning begins with educational values.
- Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
- Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.
- Assessment requires attention to outcomes, but equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.
- Assessment works best when it is ongoing, not episodic.
- Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.
- Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions about which people really care.
- Assessment is most likely to lead to improvements when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.
- Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.

These principles form the substance and intent of internal academic program review.

II. TIME LINES AND PROCEDURES

The Self-Study Cycle/Process:

Individual academic program assessment will occur on a **five- (5) year cycle**. If a school, department or program is scheduled for review by an external specialized, professional or licensing agency **in the same year as the internal assessment is scheduled**, it may request a modification of the five-year review cycle from the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The request must be made in writing.

The Self-Study Process consist of revisiting prior assessments/evaluations within the 5-year cycle to assess the program's status of improvement according to findings and recommendations:

- Academic Strategic Plan Reports
- Annual Assessment Plans
- Prior Academic Program Reviews
- Performance Evaluations

What are you looking for?

- Process of continuous improvement
- Corrective action in accordance to the Program Quality Enhancement Plan (PQEP)

Academic Program Assessment Standards:

The Academic Program Assessment should align with the Academic Program Assessment Standards and include quantitative data and qualitative evaluation according to the following:

- **Standard 1.0** - Program Overview, Mission, Goals, and Objectives/Learning Outcomes
- **Standard 2.0** - Organization, Governance, and Resources
- **Standard 3.0** - Faculty
- **Standard 4.0** - Strategic Plan/Annual Review
- **Standard 5.0** - Curriculum
- **Standard 6.0** - Student Services
- **Standard 7.0** - Support Staff
- **Standard 8.0** - Support Services and Facilities
- **Standard 9.0** - Off-Campus Programs
- **Standard 10.0** - Distance Learning Courses
- Results Should also include:
 - (1) Analysis of the Academic Program's **Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats**,

- (2) **Final Recommendations for Improvement** Based on Findings of the Self-Study Report

Gather information, compile and analyze all data according to the **Academic Program Review Assessment Tool**.

Notification:

Schools/departments or programs will be notified of the date that their self-study report is in May. Notification will be made by the Vice President for Academic Affairs in writing to or through the office of the Dean of the school in which the degree program is located. Upon notification, the preparation for the self-study process should commence.

Conducting the Self-Study:

The self-study report must be completed in the fall semester of the academic year immediately following the official notification that the unit is scheduled for review. The period of assessment is the prior academic year. The responsibility for completing the self-study will rest with the School Dean, Department Chair degree Program Coordinator) and the program faculty following the guidelines set for in the Standards for Internal Academic Program Reviews.

Appointment and Role of an Internal Review Team:

By September of the self-study year, the Vice President for Academic Affairs in collaboration with the Dean and Department Chair (or degree program coordinator), will appoint a team to review the degree program's self-study report.

Program Data:

Data for the review should cover that from the previous academic year. The Office of Planning, Assessment and Research (OPAR) will provide data needed for the self-study. The use of data developed by the school, department, or the degree program coordinator is permissible, as long as the validity of such data is documented. Units planning to conduct a degree program self-study should consult with the OPAR regarding data requirements in the year prior to the actual self-study.

Submission of the Self-Study Report:

A draft report will be submitted to the University Effectiveness Committee no later than **March 30th** following the self-study year. The report will be reviewed by the UEC in conjunction with the IRT. The Internal Review Team will conduct a series of activities designed to review and evaluate the degree program's self-study report between May and June following the self-study year. This will include (1) evaluation of the report, (2) interviews with faculty, students and staff, and (3) a review of additional data as needed.

An original and three (3) bound copies of the degree program's completed self-study report should be submitted to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs no later than **July 31st** following the self-study year. A copy should also be provided to the school dean.

Submission of the Internal Review Team Report:

The final report of the Internal Review Team will be submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs by April following the self-study year. A final copy of this report will be provided to the Dean and Department Chair or Program Coordinator.

Program Quality Enhancement Plan (PQEP):

A Program Quality Enhancement Plan will be developed by the Department Chair or Degree Program Coordinator for each degree-program. It should identify plans to address those findings in the self-study report and recommendations in the report of the Internal Review Team. This plan should be submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs by May 30 following the self-study year.

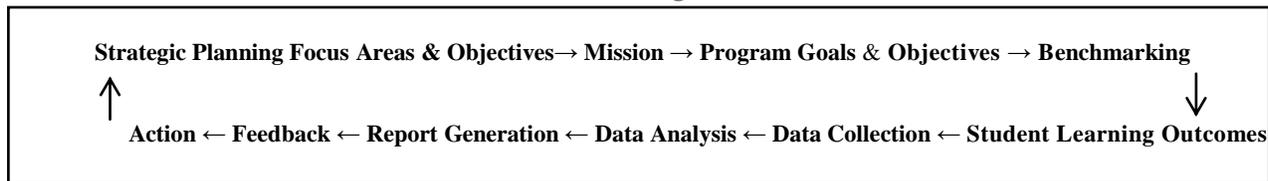
Documentation of Academic Assessment Process:

A copy of the degree program's self-study report, the report of the Internal Review Team, and the Program Quality Enhancement Plan should be provided to the Office of Planning, Assessment and Research (OPAR) and the Vice President for Academic Affairs by May 30 following the self-study year.

III. THE SELF-STUDY REPORT

Assessment of any degree program must flow from its mission, major goals, objectives, and student learning outcomes as well as benchmarking of best practices at peer and aspirant institutions. Therefore, the process should identify peer and aspirant institutions, expected outcome measures, the collection and analysis of valid, relevant, and timely data, and a set of actions to improve the quality and competitiveness of the degree program based on the assessment results. Such assessment requires feedback to the respective department and school and to the university. A chart depicting how this process should flow is shown below.

Academic Program Assessment



Program reviews are conducted against sets of *standards* (including regional (SACS) accreditation standards and in some cases, professional accreditation standards as they affect the evaluation of degree program quality) and *benchmarks of best practices* at peer and aspirant institutions. The primary supporting department chair or degree program coordinator in coordination with the faculty, school dean, and the Director of OPAR should identify at least two peer and two aspirant institutions with a similar degree program as the one scheduled for self-study. The Director of OPAR will assist the faculty, department chair or program coordinator in identifying appropriate data points to be used in benchmarking the degree program with that at peer and aspirant institutions. Standards and benchmarks frame the essential processes used by educational institutions in determining the quality of academic programs and should form the basis for the self-study. The standards and benchmarks should be applied to the following:

The Self-Study Report is a written evaluation addressing recommendations of priorities for the Academic Program's continued improvement. The Self-Study Report should be concise, focus on the key issues, and include an overall review of the Academic Programs' reviewed.

The report provides an opportunity for an academic department to present a comprehensive assessment of the academic degree programs under review. As the Self-Study Report is prepared, areas of concerns and issues developed from the self-study process should be addressed. The completed report should be presented to the Vice President and/or Dean as well as the academic department.

Organization:

- The organization should consist of the following:
- Written in a narrative style
- Use Microsoft Word with a standard 12 point type; double-space
- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Sequentially numbered pages
- Content for the 10 Assessment Standards
- Appendices

Content:

1. Program History and Philosophy

- A. Provide a brief history and philosophy of the academic program:
 - Describe the inception of the program.
 - Explain the affiliation of the program with other programs.
 - Explain any significant additions or major changes to the program since its inception.
 - Explain the relation the program has to CAU's mission/purpose.
 - Explain the educational philosophy of the academic department.

- B. Student Information
 - Number of majors
 - Admission criteria
 - Requirements of students (SAT, ACT, GPA)
 - Graduate placement
 - Students' needs (demand for courses)
 - Retention and graduation
 - Advisement/Counseling services
 - Students' needs met
 - Student satisfaction/Evaluation of instruction.

- C. Comparative Information
 - In comparison to similar academic departments and other institutions, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the program?

- D. Program Accreditation
 - Indicate and explain the program's accreditation (if applicable).

2. Prior Self-Study Findings

- Provide a brief summary of the previous Program Review recommendations including the identified weaknesses and strengths. Explain any issues that are still pending.

3. Summation of Prior Program Quality Enhancement Plan (PQEP)

- Explain the continuous improvement and corrective action.

4. Areas of Review

Standard 1.0 → Program's Mission, Goals, and Objectives/Learning Outcomes

- Briefly describe the academic department's/program's mission, goals, and objectives/learning outcomes.
- Identify the student learning outcomes; indicate the means of assessment to

- measure the outcomes and the criterion for success of the learning outcomes.
- Indicate the documentation for evidence.
- Indicate if the standard was met/not met.
- Provide a summary of the recommendations

Standard 2.0 → Organization, Governance, and Resources

- Describe how the academic program complies with National, State, and Local standards; describe how the academic program complies with CAU's policies and regulations.

Standard 3.0 → Faculty

- Describe the department's faculty and their responsibilities and workload.
- Indicate the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. Indicate plans to ensure ongoing diversity.
- Include each faculty member's curriculum vitae.
- Comment on research-related honors and distinctions of the faculty during the 5-year cycle.
- Explain the department's policy and practice with faculty teaching loads. Describe how the policy and practice link to the program's curricular goals.
- Explain the faculty's responsibility with course development.
- Explain the program's procedures for evaluating the instruction/teaching effectiveness and how the evaluations are used.
- Describe professional development activities for the faculty, providing the opportunity for growth and achievement.

Standard 4.0 → Strategic/Annual Review

- Describe the program's strategic plan and how it links to the University's Strategic Plan; emphasize the program's goals and learning outcomes and the means of assessment (qualitative and quantitative) to determine achievement.

Standard 5.0 → Curriculum

- Explain pedagogy practices connecting curriculum to learning outcomes reflecting on the learning domains (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) that students should be able to demonstrate as a result of the course or program instruction.
- Explain the curriculum design and instructional practices to achieve the objectives for the specialization or concentration as well as the main courses provided.
- Describe the department's instructional program for general education curriculum; describe the requirements for each major and how they promote students' acquisition of core learning abilities and competencies.

- Explain the program’s method of assessment upon completion of the degree programs.

Standard 6.0 → Student Services

- Explain the technology resources available to students in support of their learning.
- Provide an indication of the academic department alluding to information about student admission for undergraduate and graduate programs; admission policy and procedures; and transfers requirements.
- Explain the quality and type of advising and mentor opportunities provided to students.

Standard 7.0 → Support Staff

- Explain the effectiveness of the academic department’s clerical and technical support staff.

Standard 8.0 → Support Services and Facilities

- Describe the adequacy and availability of Library facilities and related informational resources in support of academic programs.
- Describe the status of adequacy of physical facilities and appropriate space for instruction, research, and administration.

Standard 9.0 → Off-Campus Programs

- Describe the collaboration with other institutions within the local geographical domain of the University to support students’ learning and completion of the academic degree program.
- Explain the explicit planning and implementation collaboration process.

Standard 10.0 → Distance Learning Courses

- Describe if applicable the planning and implementation for distance learning courses.

5. Analysis of the Academic Program’s Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats

- The academic program provides an overall written evaluation, Self-Study Report addressing recommendations of priorities for improvement.

6. Final Recommendations for Improvement Based on Findings of the Self-Study

- The program’s SWOT analysis provides an explanation of the strengths and

opportunities of the program and a detailed description of how the weaknesses and threats are addressed.

IV. INTERNAL REVIEW TEAMS

The Role of Internal Review Team:

The role of the Internal Review Team (IRT) is to evaluate the self-study report for each degree program against regional (SACS) and professional accreditation standards (e.g., AACSB, NCATE) and benchmarking comparisons with peer and aspirant institutions, conduct additional inquiry through the review of supporting data, such as faculty, staff, and student interviews. The IRT should utilize any other appropriate means needed to provide information by which determination can be made as to the validity of the degree program's self-assessment. The IRT's report should be a standard-by-standard evaluation of the degree program's report and culminate in a specific recommendation for:

- **Enhancing the degree program;**
- **Continuing the degree program;**
- **Placing the degree program on probation;**
- **Terminating the degree program.**

Review of self-study reports and formulation of specific recommendations must be done in a collegial fashion adhering to the highest standards of professional ethics and confidentiality.

Composition and Appointment:

The Internal Review Team will be composed of faculty appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs in consultation with the School Dean and/or Department Chair. The size of the Team will range from three to five members depending on the size of the degree program under review. At least one of the members of the IRT will be appointed from the primary supporting department, and one member from the UEC. The remaining members must be appointed from outside the school. The chairperson of the IRT will be appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs who must not be a member of the primary or supporting department for degree program under review.

Final Report and Debriefing:

A final written report of the findings of the IRT will be completed and submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs no later than mid-April following the self-study year. Prior to being finalized, a draft of the IRT's report will be submitted to the UEC of the primary supporting department of degree program under review. The primary supporting department may submit any comments or responses to the IRT for further consideration in finalizing the report. These comments may be incorporated into the

final report by the IRT or they may be submitted as a separate attachment to the final IRT report.

Presentation to the Vice President for Academic Affairs:

A meeting should be scheduled with the Vice President for Academic Affairs by the chairperson of the IRT to formally present the final report. This meeting should include the Director, Office of Planning, Assessment and Research (OPAR), the school Dean, chairperson of the UEC committee, and the department chair of the primary supporting department or the coordinator for the degree program. The purpose of the meeting is to present the findings and recommendations of the IRT's review. The school dean and the department chair (or degree program coordinator) should share the results of this meeting with the faculty and staff.

Peer Review

The review process is intended to be fair, comprehensive, utilizing multiple sources of data to review several criteria referenced standards. Peers should make an effort to have a positive expression and remain objective about the academic programs throughout the review process.

V. PROGRAM QUALITY ENHANCEMENT PLAN

Upon receipt of the final IRT Report, Department Chairpersons (or Degree Program Coordinators) should develop a **Program Quality Enhancement Plan (PQEP)**. Included in this plan must be a specific set of actions to respond to the findings of the self-study report and the recommendations of the IRT and should reflect the strategic plan for the degree program. The PQEP should be coordinated with and approved by the School Dean and forwarded to the Vice President for Academic Affairs by May 30th following the self-study year and each subsequent year until notification of the next self-study year. Subsequent annual PQEPs should provide updates on the status and impact of these implementations.

School Deans, Department Chairpersons (or Degree Program Coordinators):

The findings of each academic program reviews and the recommendations of the IRT to guide administration of their respective schools, departments, and degree programs. They should be used to (1) frame the modification of policies and procedures, (2) set degree program goals and objectives, (3) support budget requests and acquisition of resources, and (4) benchmark competitiveness with peer and aspirant institutions.

Vice President for Academic Affairs:

The findings of each academic program review and recommendations from the IRT will be used to provide a framework for (1) the oversight of academic effectiveness and (2) benchmarking competitiveness of all degree programs and support activities at Clark Atlanta University with peer and aspirant institutions, (3) guide policy-making decisions, and (4) provide primary support for budget requests and acquisition of resources.

The PQEP Content:

- A summary of the findings and recommendations provided by the Self-Study Report and the Internal Review Team.
- Detailed information explaining the annual planning priorities for program enhancement as per the Self Study Report and IRT Report.
- Annual implementation plans for the next four years with a Plan of Action that includes:
 - Objectives
 - Actions/Activities
 - Resources
 - Expected results for improvement/enhancement

VI. EXPECTED OUTCOME

Each program review should result in an evaluative recommendation for the continuation of the program. The following should also be noted in the self-study report:

- Program strengths and weaknesses;
- Analysis of cost management;
- Determination if program objectives are met; and
- Results and subsequent recommended course of action