

# Academic Program Review: A Guide for Accredited Programs

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/administration/academicaffairs/vpoffice/senate/progreviewcouncil/>

The Academic Program Review Council is a standing committee of Academic Affairs/Academic Senate

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## Welcome

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Congratulations on working hard to achieve quality recognition in the form of outside accreditation for your program. Accredited programs within Ferris State University are recognized for their excellence and are not required to undergo the academic program review process outlined in *Academic Program Review: A Guide for Participants*. However, there are some processes and procedures specific to accredited programs that are outlined in this document.

Note – programs are free to waive the accreditation exemption and undergo the standard academic program review process. [Contact the APR chair.](#)

### ***Which programs qualify for exemption?***

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Programs currently holding *program specific* accreditation in good standing from a recognized accrediting body are not required to undergo the academic program review process outlined in *Academic Program Review: A Guide for Participants*. Note – accreditation must be specific to the program in question. Programs not specifically reviewed but under the umbrella of larger departmental or college accreditation do not qualify for exemption. Contact the APR chair if there is any question as to eligibility. [Contact the APR Chair](#)

## Goals of Academic Program Review

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Career oriented education is at the core of the mission of Ferris State University. The instruction that meets this goal occurs primarily at the program level. An effective academic program review process is essential for the health of the University’s degree programs. The academic program review process strives to ensure the quality and academic integrity of all programs through continuous program improvement. At its most basic, the program review process is simply a review of the good works, processes, procedures, and measured learning outcome results that programs develop as they strive for continuous improvement.

Academic program review has been present at Ferris State University since 1988. It fulfills one of the criteria that the University must meet for regional accreditation by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association (NCA). According to the *Handbook of Accreditation*, Core Component 4a.1 of Criterion Four (Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement) is as follows: “The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs. (And) maintains a practice of regular program reviews.” As part of a larger institutional system that collects, disseminates, and evaluates institutional information, an effective academic program review process thus provides evidence that the University meets the criterion. Academic program review processes across the United States are administered by both administration and faculty. At Ferris State University program review is a faculty-led process conducted with administrative input and support. The Academic Program Review Council is

comprised of representatives from all colleges and other support services. Through its recommendations, the council serves the Academic Senate, Provost's office, and the President.

### Mission Statement of Ferris State University

Ferris State University prepares students for successful careers, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning. Through its many partnerships and its career-oriented, broad-based education, Ferris serves our rapidly changing global economy and society.

<http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/ferrisfaq/mission.htm>

It is at the program level at which the mission of Ferris State University to "...prepare students for successful careers, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning" is truly accomplished. As a consequence, programs must respond to advances in knowledge and changes in the workplace and technology if the University is to maintain its vitality. The academic program review process provides an opportunity for program faculty and administration to evaluate the goals and effectiveness of a program and make appropriate changes that will lead to improvement in the quality of instruction, improved career and life preparation for students, and effective and efficient use of University resources. The program review process is designed to be both reflective and progressive. It is important to understand where a program has been, where it is, where it strives to be in the future, and what the plans are for accomplishing identified goals.

### The goals of academic program review include:

1. Assist programs in identification, evaluation and assessment of their mission and goals and the development of short and long-term strategic plans.
2. Assist programs in determination of their relationship to the Mission of the University, College, and department.
3. Assist programs in evaluation of their effectiveness in preparing students for successful careers, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning.
4. Assist programs in assessing the quality of instruction, instructional methodology, student learning, and the strengths and challenges in their curriculum.
5. Assist programs in identification of existing resources and determination of the resources needed to carry out identified mission and goals.
6. Assist programs in the development, implementation, and evaluation of clearly defined and measurable student learning outcomes at the program level.
7. Contribute to the effort of the University to build a culture of academic quality and excellence, including the goals of good citizenship, diversity, and inclusion.
8. Assist the University in evaluation of the viability, value, quality, effectiveness and efficient use of resources for the academic programs at Ferris State University.
9. Provide direction and priorities for the University that can be used for needs assessment, resource allocation, and planning.
10. Provide structure, a plan of action, and information for continuous program improvement.

## **Academic Program Review Council**

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Members of the Academic Program Review Council (APRC) are appointed for one, two, or three-year renewable terms by the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate. The Council shall include the following:

Eleven faculty members, preferably tenured:

- one from each college,
- one FLITE librarian, and
- two at large.

No more than two members from any one college should serve on the council at any one time.

The APRC Chair is appointed by the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate for a three year term. [Contact Information](#)

The APRC normally operates as a committee of the whole. To facilitate timely and effective review, however, the APRC can (at its discretion) divide itself into subcommittees. Though some reviewing work may be split among subcommittees, decisions made by the subcommittees will be ratified by the APRC as a whole.

## **Report Guiding Principles**

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Any complex organization such as a university is composed of a number of constituencies with different responsibilities and perspectives. Three major constituencies in any university are the students, the faculty, and the administration. The primary responsibility of students is to obtain an education. The faculty facilitates instruction and guides the learning of those students. The administration is responsible for the management of the university and for providing an environment and the resources necessary for the faculty to carry out their responsibilities to students. Clear and continuing communication among these constituencies is essential for optimal function of the university and for an effective academic program review process.

At Ferris State University academic program review is a collaborative process that is largely faculty driven. However, input from program administration at all levels is critical for a complete accounting of the state of a program. The central role the faculty in the academic program review process does not diminish the importance of input from or supplant the responsibilities of other constituencies in the University.

Implementation of the recommendations made by the Provost and approved by the President with respect to curricular matters is the responsibility of the faculty in the program, the Department Head/Chair, and Dean of the College. Allocation of fiscal and human resources necessary to implement the recommendations is at the discretion of the administration.

The following guiding principles should be used in conducting program reviews. These guidelines should help (1) reduce the amount of documentation required in the program review process and (2) focus the review on program goals and student learning outcomes, how well the program has done to date in meeting those goals and outcomes, and the future actions needed for continued program quality improvement.

The principles that should guide report development:

1. The report will be goal-oriented. Specific goals should be stated for the program and the attainment of those goals should be the focus of the program review report. The goals should reflect the University's mission and the departmental, college and divisional strategic plans.
2. The report will look at the program as a whole. The focus will be on the program, not on individual courses.
3. The focus of the report will be both descriptive and assessment-oriented. **The report will evaluate progress toward overall program goals rather than merely document the status of the program.** It will analyze available data, both quantitative and qualitative, that has been provided to or generated to assess the program's progress in meeting its goals and established program-level student learning outcomes.
4. Recommendations will be expressed in terms of action. Recommendations for action will indicate who will do what specific tasks, and when.
5. The Program Review process will be continuous.

## Required Documentation

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Accredited programs in good standing are exempt from the academic program review process including submission of a program review report or meeting face-to-face with members of the program review council. ***However, accredited programs must submit the following information every three years no later than August 15 to the chair of the APR.***

Note – as with all other FSU programs undergoing academic program review, the documentation received by the APR council will be submitted to the Senate Executive Committee and the Academic Senate for review and approval prior to submission to the Provost with the cycle in which submission was made.

Accredited programs are to submit a document with the following information to the chair of the APR no later than August 15 of the year they are scheduled for review. [Important Dates](#)

*Note – if, after reviewing the submitted documentation from an accredited program, the APR identifies deficiencies in the subject program it reserves the right to require the program to undergo review using the standards outlined in [Academic Program Review: A Guide for Participants](#) during the next APR cycle.*

### ***Program Information***

*Program name(s)*  
*Name of accrediting agency*  
*Date accreditation expires*

### ***Evidence of Accreditation in Good Standing***

*Current evaluation of program standing from the accrediting body including identified program strengths and opportunities for improvement.*

*Current program response and plan for action addressing identified opportunities for improvement.*

### ***Enrollment Trends***

*Program enrollment numbers covering the most recent five year period.*  
*Program response and plan for action addressing enrollment trends.*  
*Graduation rates covering the most recent five year period.*  
*Program response and plan for action addressing graduation rates.*  
*Certification exam pass rates compared with regional, state, and national averages*  
*Program response and plan for action addressing certification exam pass rates*

### ***Strategic Plan***

*Program's short and long-term strategic plans for continuous program improvement.*

### ***Program-Level Student Learning Outcomes***

*Program-level student learning outcomes*  
*Assessment methods designed to measure the outcomes*  
*Procedures for establishing, implementing, and monitoring learning outcomes*

### ***Perceptions of Overall Quality***

*To be completed by:*

*Dean*  
*Director / Department Head*  
*Chair / Coordinator*  
*Faculty teaching within the program*

The process of program review is one element in a program's plan for continuous quality improvement. The overall rating assigned should be in consideration of the program as it relates to the following: relationship of the program's mission to its department, college, and the university; program visibility and distinctiveness; enrollment; the characteristics, quality, and employability of students; the quality of the curriculum and assessment; the composition and quality of faculty; the composition and quality of program administration; and the overall value of the program to stakeholders, including Ferris State University.

*Perceptions of Overall Quality*

On a scale of 1 – 100 (with 100 representing the highest program quality achievable) rate the overall quality of the program.

Summarize the reason(s) for the rating assigned.

Outline recommended next steps to improve program quality.

***Signature Page***

*The submitted report is to include a signature page signed by program representatives attesting to the completeness and soundness of the information presented. [Example Signature Page](#)*

***Additional Information (optional)***

*Programs have an opportunity to provide additional information that speaks to continued program quality and improvement.*

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## ***Frequently Asked Questions***

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Below is a list of typical questions heard from programs about to undergo the review process. If questions remain, please contact the APRC chair at any time. [Contact the APRC Chair](#)

### ***Why do we have to undergo the review process? Seems like so much busy work.***

Program review should be one component of a program's continuous improvement process. The entire reason for program review is to ensure that Ferris State University offers the best product possible for all stakeholders. Programs with accreditation in good standing from an industry-related accrediting body have met this requirement and are not required to undergo additional review as outlined in the *Academic Program Review: A Guide for Participants*.

### ***Is FSU required to undergo program review?***

Yes. The university's accrediting body requires that it engage in regular program review to ensure quality.

### ***I am one faculty member, why should I care about program review?***

Program quality is the purview of all stakeholders (faculty, administrators, support staff, etc.) The development of a quality program offers many faculty benefits including increased student demand and retention, a more satisfying workplace, and increased recognition and support (among other benefits).

### ***I am an administrator with program oversight, why should I care about program review?***

Quality programs strengthen departments, colleges, and (ultimately) the university. Quality programs will attract more and better qualified students, and (typically) enjoy increased recognition and support.

### ***Will students be impacted by the review process?***

Yes. The process of continuous program improvement greatly benefits students by providing faculty, staff, and administration the opportunity to improve curriculum, pedagogy, facilities and equipment, and other areas that impact program quality.

### ***What is required for us to demonstrate program accomplishments?***

The form of the review document is at the discretion of programs and their accrediting bodies. Programs need to determine what sources and quality of information (and the steps developed to implement results of the review) are best suited to make program quality improvements.

**How often is a report required?**

Programs with current accreditation are required to submit updated information regarding accreditation in good standing to the APRC Chair every three years.

**I have a million things to do, how am I going to find the time to research and write the report?**

The time and effort required for a complete program review are recognized, that is why programs with accreditation in good standing from outside bodies are exempt from the standard review process. Accredited programs are only required to submit the information outlined in this document.

**Our program has a very small number of faculty. How are we supposed to juggle the process of program review with all the other roles and responsibilities we have? It seems unfair that larger programs can spread the work related to APR to many faculty.**

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of program administration to define and develop an equitable process regarding faculty roles and responsibilities related to program operation – including continuous program improvement efforts. In instances of programs with limited faculty, administrators with direct program oversight will have to assume a larger role in successful completion of the program review process and/or provide available faculty with the time and other necessary resources for successful completion of the program review report.

**What resources are available to help in the review process?**

The APRC chairperson enjoys release time throughout the year and is available to assist programs in any way toward successful program review. The APRC also hosts a website with additional information. [APRC Website](#)

**How are the results of the review process used?**

At its heart, program review is designed for programs to identify both strengths and challenges, and to make program improvements. The recommendations for program improvement will be communicated from the APRC to the Academic Senate and through to the Provost and President.

**Are outside reviewers required?**

Outside analysis regarding program quality is recommended.

**What is administration's role in the review process?**

The Department Chair / Head and the Dean of the college are to submit a summary quality review regarding program status based on the completed report.

**Who will see the finished report?**

Initially, members of the Academic Program Review Council, the Senate Executive Committee, the Academic Senate, and the President will have access to the report. Once program recommendations have made their way through the internal process and recommendations have been supported, reports are available to the general public upon request to the Provost's office.

**Do program representatives get a chance to meet with the APRC to discuss the report?**

Accredited programs retain the option to waive exemption, to submit a standard program review report, and/or to participate in the review process in a face-to-face meeting between program representatives and the members of the Academic Program Review Council before final recommendations are made to the Senate Executive Committee and the rest of the Academic Senate. The chair of the APR must be contacted no later than August 15 one year prior to the August 15 deadline for document submission if a waiver of the exemption is requested.

**Will program review reports be used to evaluate individual faculty members?**

No. The process is designed to provide a review of a program as a whole, not individual courses or faculty.

**Will the program receive an allocation to improve the program if the report demonstrates that such support is necessary?**

Maybe. Analysis of a submitted program review report is only one factor that may impact resource allocation. Decisions in this regard are made by the Provost and President.

**Is there a resource on campus that can help with program-level student learning outcomes?**

Yes. Student affairs. [LINK](#)

**Is there a resource on campus that can help with data collection?**

Yes. Institutional Research and Testing. [LINK](#)

**Is there a resource on campus that can help with needed statistics (enrollment numbers, etc.?)**

Yes. Institutional Research and Testing. [LINK](#)

**What happens if a program chooses not to engage in the program review process, or submits a substandard program review report?**

Program review is an integral part of program quality at FSU. All programs are required to participate in the review process. All decisions regarding program continuance for programs choosing not to participate in the process are the Provost's and the President's with consideration of the recommendations from the Academic Program Review Council and the Academic Senate.

Highlights of program success and recommendations for program improvements can only be made based on the information presented in the completed program review report. A poorly presented program review report is taken as one indication of program quality.

## **Important Dates**

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### **PROCESS TIMELINE AT A GLANCE**

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#### **July**

Programs scheduled for review are contacted by the APRC chair.

#### **August**

Program representatives attend an orientation meeting conducted by the APRC chair.

#### **August / September**

Programs form a program review panel (PRP) and develop a timeline for review completion.

Programs submit a PRP summary and budget request to the APRC chair.

#### **August**

Deadline for final report submission to the APRC chair in electronic PDF format is August 15.

Programs requesting a face-to-face meeting with the APRC council must submit the request in writing to the APRC chair in electronic PDF format by August 15.

#### **August / September**

Final reports are distributed by the APRC chair to members of the program review council.

#### **September – November**

If requested, APRC meets with individual programs to discuss report findings.

#### **November**

The APRC arrives at final recommendations for each program under review.

The APRC meets with the Senate Executive Committee to discuss final recommendations.

**January**

Programs are notified of final APRC recommendations before they are presented to the Academic Senate

Final recommendations are distributed to Senate members.

**February**

Final recommendations are formally presented to the Academic Senate for approval.

Approved recommendations are forwarded to the Provost, through to the President and Board.

**October**

Actions taken based on APRC recommendations are reported by the Provost to the APRC chair.

## Example Signature Page

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Widget Design and Engineering – BS  
1234 Prakken  
Big Rapids, MI 49307  
231.555.1234

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My signature below indicates that I have reviewed the Academic Program Review report submitted for review by the Academic Program Review Council, Academic Senate, Provost, and President of Ferris State University and attest to its completeness and soundness:

_____ Signature and Date	Betty White Dean 231.555.1455 <a href="mailto:whiteb@ferris.edu">whiteb@ferris.edu</a>
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**Contact Information**

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