



*California State University, Chico  
Academic Program Review Guidelines:  
Undergraduate Degree Programs*

## Academic Program Review

### Introduction:

### Definition, Scope, and Purpose:

Our regional accreditor, the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) defines program review as “a cyclical process for evaluating and continuously enhancing the quality and currency of programs.” For WSCUC, the actual review should be “a combination of self-evaluation, followed by peer-evaluation by reviewers external to the program or department, and, usually, also external to the organization.” It is essentially a “comprehensive analysis of program quality, analyzing a wide variety of data about the program.”

All non-externally accredited undergraduate and graduate degree programs must be reviewed every five to eight years. Wherever possible, “any conclusions drawn within a self-study report or decisions made as a result of a program review are to be informed by... qualitative and/or quantitative evidence.”

Also according to WSCUC, program reviews are “used to inform follow-up planning and budgeting at various levels at various levels in the institution—program, department, college, university—and incorporated into the institution’s overall quality assurance system.”

### Benefits and Uses of Program Review Include:

- Aligning the program’s, department’s, college’s and university’s mission and strategic plan or goals;
- Identifying and acting to decrease, if not eliminate, any equity gaps;
- Measuring and identifying ways to increase graduation rates;
- Evaluating the sustainability and needs of the program;
- Evaluating and making adjustments to the curriculum in order to increase student success, inclusivity, and rigor currency in the discipline or profession.;
- Identifying and addressing any enrollment and retention issues;
- Identifying and advocating for programmatic needs;
- Developing faculty learning and/or professional development programs to improve development and assessment of student learning outcomes, pedagogy, and curricular cohesion;
- Evaluating and addressing faculty and student demographics;
- Identifying, creating, and implementing mutually beneficial interdisciplinary or interunit collaborations.

The contents of the Self-Study Report should be organized as follows:

1. Self-Study: Criterion-by-Criterion Reports
2. Concluding Reflective Essay
3. Appendices
  - External Review Report
  - Annual Assessment Reports During the Entire Program Review Period
  - Sample Syllabi for Required Courses (At least one should be a core required course and at least one should be a course whose materials are reviewed as part of the program's assessment of its learning outcomes.)

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## CRITERIA FOR REVIEW

### 1. Program Overview

This area examines the program at a broad, macro-level. The program should have a clear and conscious sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, and its place in the campus community. It should also maintain sustainable enrollment in the program as a whole as well as within each option (if applicable).

Criteria for Review	Guidelines for Documentation and Reflection
<p><b>1.1 Introduction and Overview:</b> Program history, issues, and distinctiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a brief history of the program at Chico State as well as Chico State, CSU-specific, or discipline specific issues and trends specific to the program, including anything distinctive.</li> </ul>
<p><b>1.2 Previous Program Reviews:</b> The program closes the loop from the previous program review and (if applicable) the interim program review by acting on recommendations made from the last program review. The program also identifies major changes affecting it since the last program review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain how the recommendations from the last program review and (if applicable) the last interim report have been addressed. Indicate what was accomplished or not as well as what related future actions are planned.</li> <li>• Provide an overview of any substantive changes to the program since the last program review.</li> </ul>
<p><b>1.3 Mission Statement:</b> The program has a clear, comprehensive, and published mission statement, related to the North State region's needs as well as to the University and college missions, which guides the curriculum and decision making.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide the program's mission statement and indicate where it can be located.</li> <li>• Describe the process whereby the mission statement was developed and disseminated. When was it last updated and who was involved?</li> <li>• Provide a brief account of how the mission statement relates to the University mission (and, if in existence, the College mission), the North State region, how it promotes student success, equity, diversity, and inclusion while reflecting the current state of the discipline.</li> </ul>
<p><b>1.4 Enrollment:</b> The program maintains a robust number of students overall and in each option (if applicable). Note: Please contact the Office of Institutional Research and Strategic Analytics (IRSA) for relevant data in this area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide enrollment in the program and option (if applicable) for each year of the program review period.</li> <li>• Address any enrollment declines and, if applicable, what the program has done to address them.</li> <li>• Address any enrollment increases and explain what the program has done (successfully) to</li> </ul>

	<p>do so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Making reference to analogous programs in the CSU system and beyond, indicate what an ideal enrollment in the program and options would be and why (preferred but optional)</li><li>• Provide average student enrollment in all upper-division required classes and lower-division required classes (optional)</li></ul>
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## 2. Curriculum and Assessment

This area examines the courses offered as requirements or electives for the program, as well as the effectiveness of programmatic quality controls (e.g., assessment, programmatic standards, etc.).

Criteria for Review	Guidelines for Documentation and Reflection
<p><b>2.1 Curriculum:</b> The program offers students a rigorous, involving education. The program's required and elective courses are offered on a sufficiently regular schedule; the overall unit requirements does not unnecessarily inhibit timely progress to degree completion. The program is aware of and responsive to required courses with high DFW or GPA gap rates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an overview of the program's curriculum and any related options.</li> <li>• Indicate how the curriculum reflects and responds to the diversity of our student body as well as to equity and inclusion. Are there ways the curriculum could be modified to increase diversity and inclusivity?</li> <li>• Provide the program's Curriculum Alignment Matrix and indicate how often the courses listed there are offered (e.g., every semester, every year).</li> <li>• Provide DFW or GPA gap rates and equity gaps for each required course in the program/option (or, if this is too challenging, the three required courses with the highest DFW or GPA gap rates and equity gaps). Explain how the program has addressed or intends to address its courses with the highest DFW or GPA gap rates and equity gaps. (This information can be found in the <a href="#">Chancellor's Office Student Success Dashboard</a>. In the future, it may also be provided by IRSA.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.2 Program Learning Outcomes:</b> The program has developed and disseminated measurable program learning outcomes (PLOs) that are related the program's mission. (Note: program learning outcomes are program-specific not generally course-specific.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide the program's PLOs.</li> <li>• Describe when the PLOs were developed and who was involved; identify where they are published. Indicate whether the program intends to update its PLOs and why or why not.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2.3 Annual Assessment Reports:</b> The program rigorously assesses each and every PLO during the program review period using direct methods and data analysis. The program utilizes these results to improve the program and closes the loop by implementing improvements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain who within the program was involved in the annual assessments.</li> <li>• Explain how the annual assessment reports and their findings were shared with the program and/or department faculty.</li> <li>• Provide a summary of the most important findings in the yearly assessments since the last program review.</li> <li>• Explain and document program improvements attempted and made on the basis of assessment</li> </ul>

	<p>results since the last program review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Appendix: Include all annual assessment reports during the program review period as appendices with this self-study.</li></ul>
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### 3. Students and Student Learning

This area centers on the alignment of the program with the goal of producing high levels of student learning. This requires a review of curriculum, pedagogy, mode of delivery, faculty recruitment and development, scholarship in support of improved teaching and learning, information resources, student services and co-curricular activities, as well as resources and facilities.

Criteria for Review	Guidelines for Documentation and Reflection
<p><b>3.1 Graduation Rates and Equity Gaps:</b>            The program is aware of, monitors, and addresses its graduation rates and equity gaps. Note: Please contact the Office of Institutional Research and Strategic Analytics (IRSA) for relevant data in this area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide current four- and six-year graduation rates for first-time first year students and indicate how these rates have changed over the program review period.</li> <li>• Provide current two- and four-year graduation rates for transfer students and indicate how these rates have changed over the program review period.</li> <li>• Making reference to the campus and, if applicable, college averages and any relevant Chancellor’s Office goals (e.g., GI 2025), indicate what the program has done or intends to do to improve these rates.</li> <li>• Provide current equity gap data (the difference between six-year graduation rates of first-time first-year URM and non-URM students) and indicate how these rates have changed over the program review period. If applicable, indicate what the program has done or intends to do to improve these rates.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.2 Student Engagement:</b> The program actively involves students in learning and provides ample curricular and co-curricular opportunities to enhance and explore applications of their learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an overview and examples of student engagement in the program including: innovative pedagogy, high impact practices within the program such as service and community learning, student clubs and competitions, faculty-mentored research, study abroad, internships, and/or other projects.</li> <li>• Describe efforts to ensure that these activities are inclusive: that students from varied backgrounds have the opportunity to and actually do participate.</li> </ul>



<p><b>3.3 Student Demographics, Success, and Diversity:</b> The program directs resources in support of the success of diverse students, tracking students by ethnicity, gender, income, and first generation status in support of retention, learning, and timely graduation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide student demographics (e.g., ethnicity, gender, first-generation status, and Pell eligibility). Indicate how these demographics have altered during the program review (if they have) and why. If possible and/or applicable, relate this data to campus averages and indicate what the program has done or intends to do to alter the demographics further (e.g., in order to become more diverse).</li> <li>• Describe efforts inside and outside the classroom to enhance student academic engagement and to create a welcoming environment for diverse students and to increase their success.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.4 Student Advising:</b> Students understand the requirements of the program and receive timely, useful, and regular information and advising about program requirements and post-graduation opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe program policies or process in regard to student advising and efforts to ensure that <i>all</i> students receive timely information and advice on efficient pathways to program completion.</li> <li>• Explain how students receive effective advice about career and post-graduate educational opportunities. Present any available data on students' evaluation of program and career advising as well as job placements.</li> </ul>

## 4. Faculty

Chico State recognizes that the quality of educational program efforts is inextricably linked to the quality of instruction. Faculty, collectively and individually, are responsible for the creation and delivery of effective instruction, the evaluation of instructional effectiveness and student achievement, and continued improvement and innovation in program offerings and instructional processes. Faculty scholarship, research and creative activity are essential components of the university's mission.

Criteria for Review	Guidelines for Documentation and Reflection
<p>4.1 <b>Faculty Overview:</b> The program maintains a diverse faculty sufficient to provide stability and integrity of the curriculum and on-going quality improvement of the program offerings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide data on the number, status (tenure-track, tenured, and lecturers) including ethnicity and gender (if available), and any other pertinent information of or about the faculty during the span of the program review. List faculty specialties within discipline (and how those specialties align with the program curriculum).</li> <li>• If applicable and making references to university-wide faculty demographics as well as student demographics, indicate how the program has or intends to increase its faculty diversity.</li> <li>• Provide an accounting of the overall percentage of faculty who currently have AWTUs (and how many) as well as an explanation of how AWTUs are reviewed and granted.</li> <li>• Provide a full-time faculty (tenure/tenure track) to student major ratio.</li> <li>• Provide a full-time faculty (tenure/tenure-track/lecturers) to student major ratio.</li> </ul>
<p>4.2 <b>Teaching:</b> The department, directly or indirectly, promotes faculty-driven standards, workshops, or guidelines to promote excellence in teaching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicate how the program evaluates the quality of its curriculum and/or pedagogy.</li> <li>• If in existence, provide the program, department, or college's guidelines for measuring, promoting, and maintaining teaching excellence along with any commentary.</li> <li>• Provide detail about any program-level, established department standards for courses or evaluation that promote high-quality learning.</li> <li>• Appendix: Provide sample syllabi for classes in the program (at least one should be a core required course and at least one should be a course whose</li> </ul>

	<p>materials are reviewed as part of the program’s assessment of its learning outcomes).</p>
<p><b>4.3 Scholarship:</b> Faculty members make scholarly/creative contributions on a continuing basis appropriate to the program’s mission, goals, and outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information or data on faculty scholarly/creative activity related to program mission, goals and outcomes.</li> <li>• Provide the program, department, or college’s guidelines for scholarship/creative contributions along with any commentary.</li> <li>• Present data on the total dollar amount of awards received from internal and external grants and contract proposals by faculty and describe the funded activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.4 Faculty Professional Development, Mentoring, and Review:</b> The program provides faculty with sufficient opportunities for professional development and encourages faculty to pursue professional development opportunities throughout the university at large and externally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicate what professional development opportunities exist for faculty and what faculty have pursued. (Note: You may reach out to the Office of Faculty Development for relevant data.)</li> <li>• Indicate if and how tenure-track and lecturer faculty members are mentored.</li> <li>• Provide a link to the program’s or department’s RTP standards.</li> <li>• If applicable, indicate how the department or program’s RTP standards encourage teaching, scholarly, and service excellence. Also, if applicable, indicate how these standards have been updated during the program review period and/or how they might be in the future.</li> </ul>

## 5. Infrastructure and the Future

The program sustains its operations and supports the achievement of its mission and goals through its investment in fiscal, human, information and physical resources. These key resources enable the creation and maintenance of a high quality learning environment. The program seeks out external partnerships and has a clear and realizable vision for its future.

Criteria for Review	Guidelines for Documentation and Reflection
<p><b>5.1 Staff:</b> The program employs staff sufficient in number and professional qualifications to maintain its operations and to support its mission and program goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the quantity and quality of staff who support the department’s mission and goals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5.2 Space, Facilities, and Technological Resources:</b> The program’s space, facilities, and technological resources are sufficient to support its academic offerings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the program’s space, facilities, and technological resources. Indicate if they are sufficient to support the program. If not, why not and what else is needed?</li> </ul>
<p><b>5.3 Community Partnerships:</b> The program seeks out external partnerships and opportunities for faculty, students, and alumni.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indicate whether the program has an external advisory board. If so, how has it been utilized? If not, why not?</li> <li>Indicate what community partnerships the program has made for internships, job opportunities, co-curricular activities, etc. What other community partners might be added?</li> <li>If applicable, indicate what external partnerships faculty have forged or intend to/hope to form.</li> </ul>

**5.4 The Future:** The program has a clear and ambitious, but realizable vision for the future.

- Discuss anticipated changes in curriculum, pedagogy, or resource allocation to improve program effectiveness for the next five to eight years.
- Provide an initial vision for the program five to eight years from now, explaining what the program would ideally look like then, how it would be different than now, and how the program can get there in this amount of time. This concluding section of the self-study can be used as the foundation for the post-external reviewer, concluding essay, and can be modified pending the results of the external review.

## External Reviewer Report

In addition to a programmatic self-study, a program review includes a visit by an external reviewer.<sup>1</sup> Per WSCUC, “External reviewers should be distinguished scholars/teachers/practitioners in the field and... be chosen from campuses that are similar to the campus of the department undergoing review. It is also helpful for external reviewers to have had experience with program administration.” WSCUC also recommends that an external reviewer have experience “with student learning outcomes assessment and have the ability to review and analyze the program’s assessment processes.” The external reviewer should be qualified to assess the program (ideally, a faculty-administrator who has served at least two years as chair of an analogous program).

The external reviewer must be approved in advance by the Vice Provost for Academic Programs as well as the Dean of the College. The program is responsible for providing the external reviewer(s) with relevant materials at least 30 days in advance of the visit. The academic college is responsible for incurring any costs related to the external review visit, which may be held in-person, hybrid, or virtual, upon agreement from the program/department/college and the external reviewer(s).

The external reviewer has the following responsibilities:

1. Evaluate the program’s self-study and other related materials.
2. Analyze and evaluate the program’s achievement of each criterion for review based on of the supporting elements in the self-study.
3. During the visit, meet with faculty, staff (e.g. academic advisors), students, and administrators, including the program director, the department chair, the college dean, and the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and/or the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. If applicable, the external reviewer should also meet with the external advisory board or important community partners.
4. Make overall recommendations and commendations in a written report (see criteria on the last page).
5. Submit the report to the program director or department chair in a timely fashion (e.g., a month or two after the visit).

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<sup>1</sup> One external reviewer will suffice, although, pending finances, an additional external reviewer or two could add more.

## **Concluding Reflective Essay: Program Five to Eight Year Improvement Action Plan**

Following the completion of the self-study and an analysis of the external reviewer's insights and suggestions for improvement, the program develops a five to eight year improvement plan that provides (appx. three to five pages).

1. A response to the external reviewer's report
2. Areas of program strengths and areas of improvement
3. An explanation of how the areas of improvement will be addressed over the next five to eight years
4. Other concerns, programmatic needs, or areas of important attention

### **Completion of the Program Review**

After the program representative/chair has completed the entire program review (self-study, external review, and concluding, reflective essay), the materials should be presented to the department and department chair for review, and to the college dean (if desired by she/he/they) for approval.

Subsequently, the materials will be submitted to the Undergraduate Program Review Committee, who will evaluate them. The Committee will then submit, to the program, college, and Provost's Office, a memo detailing their commendations and recommendations for the program. This memo will conclude with an overall recommendation regarding reaffirmation (or not) of the program). This recommendation shall be one of the following:

1. **Recommend Reaffirmation:** This recommendation implies that the program is clearly fulfilling its mission, is maintaining overall high quality, has no significant issues to address, and has processes in place that assure continuous improvement. The five to eight year plan is reasonable and realistic; there is no need for interim reporting. Pending the strength of the program, the program will be affirmed for a minimum of a five years and a maximum of eight years.
2. **Recommend Reaffirmation with Interim Report(s):** This recommendation also implies the program is fulfilling its mission and has processes in place that assure continuous improvement. However, the program likely has some concerns or issues that should be examined and/or addressed further in the coming years. Consequently, the program will be asked to submit an interim report before the next five to eight year program review cycle has completed. A due date for the interim program review is set (with guidance for what the report should focus upon) as well as the due date for the next full program review. Pending the strength of the program, the program will be affirmed for a minimum of a five years and a maximum of eight years.

3. **Delay Reaffirmation and Recommend a Subsequent Review:** The recommendation reflects significant concerns the program must address before a recommendation for reaffirmation can be contemplated or made. The program will be given a period of time to address these concerns in a written report.
4. **Recommend Suspension:** This recommendation reflects concerns so serious as to impair the ability of the program to function in an effective and/or financially sustainable manner. However, with time, the concerns could be addressed and the program reinstated.
5. **Recommend Discontinuation:** This recommendation reflects concerns so serious as to impair the ability of the program to function in an effective and/or financially sustainable manner. There is not sufficient support that these concerns can be addressed.

The Provost's Office will then issue a final memo with commendations, recommendations, and one of the five actions outlined above. This memo will be distributed to the program director, the department chair, and the college dean. It may be shared with the program's faculty as well.



