

Academic Program Review

External Review Committee (ERC)

Guidance for the Visit and ERC Report

University of Oregon

Academic Program Review at the University of Oregon

Redesigned in 2022, program review at the University of Oregon is one part of the ongoing [program assessment process](#), which includes both annual assessment and decennial program review. Program review is a moment for the unit to examine its strengths and weaknesses, identify challenges and opportunities, and assess its academic and strategic goals with an eye towards improvement. The unit's reflection and strategic goal setting should be driven by analysis of relevant data sets and in alignment with the university's priorities. The redesigned program review process and the new self-study template reflect the university's commitment to student learning and achievement, with a particular emphasis on addressing equity gaps where they exist.

In all, the purpose of program review is to gain a broader perspective regarding a program's profile, including:

- mission, goals, and objectives
- quality and breadth of instruction, research and creative practice, and service
- student success and academic excellence
- role within the academic field, university, and wider communities

Role of External Reviewers

External reviewers play a pivotal role within the academic program review process. As experts in the field, they bring knowledge of the larger context of the discipline and peer programs. Additionally, being external to the institution allows reviewers to offer an unencumbered evaluation of the unit within the campus context.

The University of Oregon is especially interested in external review committee (ERC) perspectives and insights on the main elements of the self-study:

- Undergraduate and graduate student success
- Teaching support and excellence
- Research, scholarship and creative activity
- Service

This document provides guidance for the visit and the ERC report, and is structured around what happens before, during and after the visit.

Prior to the Visit

Once the external review committee (ERC) is established, members will begin receiving communications from UO staff to schedule the visit and make travel and lodging arrangements for onsite visits. A typical visit occurs between February and May is 1.5 days with meetings with unit leadership, faculty, staff, students and university leadership. For onsite visits, travel to the campus will occur the day prior to the first day of the visit. Depending on where members are located, travel home may be possible on the afternoon of the second day of the visit.

Prior to the visit, we ask that each external review committee select a chair or lead that will shepherd the review, coordinate the writing of the report and serve as the primary contact with the university.

At least 4 weeks before the visit, ERC members will be provided access to a SharePoint folder that will be used to share and receive information from the ERC. The folder will contain the unit's self-study report.

During the Visit

The visit is the external review committee's (ERC) opportunity to hear relevant university and unit context directly from university and unit leadership, as well as their wishes for the visit. In addition, hearing from faculty, staff and students can provide important, candid information to further inform the ERC's analysis of the unit.

The Office of the Provost will provide units a visit schedule template. The academic unit will coordinate with the ERC to fill in the details of the visit. At minimum, the following meetings are to be scheduled:

- Kickoff meeting with representatives from the Office of the Provost and associate or division dean
- Meeting with academic unit leadership
- At least two opportunities to meet with unit faculty
- Separate meetings with undergraduate and graduate students
- Meeting with staff
- Exit meeting with unit leadership
- Exit meeting with Office of the Provost

Meetings with faculty, students and staff should not include unit leadership. In addition, unit leadership may schedule a dinner meeting with the ERC and/or facility tours as appropriate. They should consult with the ERC on the desirability of these. Finally, there is flex time in the schedule template for ERC members to meet on their own to debrief. Please work with unit representatives to schedule this to suit the ERC preferences.

After the Visit

Within four weeks of the conclusion of the campus visit, the external reviewer(s) are asked to provide a written assessment and set of recommendations for the unit to improve and to either develop or achieve its strategic goals. The report draws from the self-study materials provided by the unit, as well as information gained from meetings with unit members and various stakeholders on campus. This section is intended to provide guidance to the external review team in preparing their report.

External Reviewer Report

The external reviewer report should be a succinct evaluative document of about 6-10 pages. The university is especially interested in external reviewer perspectives on the main elements of the self-study (undergraduate and graduate student success; teaching support and excellence; research, scholarship and creative practice; and service). Although there is not a prescribed format, the report should include the following:

1. Executive summary of the report.
2. An overall assessment of the unit and discussion of the findings.
3. Response to key issues raised in the self-study or questions raised in site visit meetings.
4. Recommendations to maintain or improve the unit's standing or performance over the next 3-5 years.
5. Summary list of the recommendations at the end of the report.

The main body of the report can be organized in whatever manner is most suitable for the unit and its issues. Some reviewer reports discuss issues and conclusions with recommendations in the body, while others only discuss issues and save recommendations for the end. *While either style is appropriate, all recommendations should be summarized at the end, even if they are given in the body of the report. These should ideally engage the key issues raised by department, where applicable.*

External reviewers are encouraged to be as candid as possible in their report to encourage critical reflection and self-evaluation. The report is shared with the unit, school/college leadership, and university leadership.

Confidential Addendum

In exceptional circumstances, external reviewers have the option to add a confidential addendum. This addition is appropriate for any highly sensitive information or recommendations, particularly when relating to specific individuals. The addendum should identify who should see it (e.g., unit head, Dean, and/or central administration). The Office of the Provost can advise on the best way to incorporate such an addendum.

Recommendations

Action-oriented and measurable recommendations are most helpful and appreciated. It is reasonable to make recommendations to university leadership or other people outside the unit but the audience in most cases should be the unit under review. The external review committee should assume that the university and the school/college are generally aware of the financial state of the unit and are engaged in ongoing discussions about resources. As such, it is most helpful if the recommendations are focused on what can be done given the current state of resources.

Submission

The report should be submitted electronically (in Word format) to the uoprogramreview@uoregon.edu within four weeks of the conclusion of the campus

visit. The report is the responsibility of the external review committee, and while we ask for a chair or lead of the review team, the expectation is that all external reviewers will participate equally in writing the report and recommendations.

Questions

Any questions about the process can be directed to the uoprogramreview@uoregon.edu.