

Program Review Overview

The aim of periodic program reviews at UC Santa Barbara is to assess and improve program quality in academic departments and programs. Academic reviews of both undergraduate and graduate programs are used in departmental and institutional planning. The appropriate faculty committees use the review results in their recommendations, and the administration considers the review process in resource allocation. Most important, the review process provides the department with a periodic mechanism for in-depth evaluation of programs and goals. UCSB's review process has been evolving since the 1980's, when it was initiated jointly by the faculty and administration.

The Executive Vice Chancellor (EVC) is the campus official responsible for academic reviews of departments. For the task of overseeing the process, the EVC appoints a Program Review Panel (PRP); the Director, Academic Program Review, coordinates the panel's work. The panel interacts with the department under review and with four faculty agencies: the three Academic Senate councils participating in the review (the Council on Planning and Budget, the Graduate Council, and the Undergraduate Council), and the Executive Committee of the college or school to which the department belongs. The dean responsible for the department is involved at several stages in the review process. The department is encouraged to consult with its dean at the outset of the process, regarding particular issues to be addressed in preparations for the review. The dean meets with PRP during its discussion of the Notebook. The dean also is invited to provide written comments on the Notebook and on the ERC report and department response. One significant aspect of the review is the report of an independent ERC (External Review Committee) which bases its evaluation and recommendations on a visit and written materials provided by the department. PRP oversees the preparation of the departmental review Notebook and prepares a final report based on the ERC report, the departmental response to it, and comments from the four faculty agencies.

The process of selecting members of the ERC begins with the department, which provides the EVC with the names of distinguished scholars in the discipline to act as nominators. PRP then asks the nominators to identify several colleagues nationwide whom they deem most qualified to review the department. The department is asked to comment and rate each nominee. The PRP meets with the department to discuss the review procedures and deadlines. The statistical information in the Notebook is prepared jointly by the department, APR office, and Institutional Research. PRP sends student surveys to undergraduate majors and graduate students asking about all aspects of their educational experience. The results of the surveys are transmitted to the department and based on this information, the department prepares their self-assessment.

Before the site visit, ERC members will have received the notebook login to access the information to assist in their evaluation of the department. The ERC will meet with faculty, staff and students of the department. In addition, the committee will discuss the review with the EVC, the Vice Chancellor for Research, the Associate Vice Chancellors for Academic Personnel and for Diversity, Equity, and Academic Policy, the appropriate deans, and PRP. After the site visit, the ERC assembles its findings in a written report. The report responds to the charge letter and addresses any other issues that the ERC considers important. The text of the report avoids identification of individuals by name. The department is given an opportunity to comment on this report. PRP then asks the dean and four faculty agencies for their observations on the ERC report and the departmental response.

PRP analyzes and evaluates all the information gathered in the review process and writes a final report to the EVC. On receipt of PRP's report, the EVC consults with the academic dean and sends a letter to the department identifying major issues and requesting specific actions as appropriate. The letter sets a date by which the department is to report on its progress, generally one year later. After not more than one year, the department submits a formal progress report to the EVC. The EVC may request comment on the report from the four faculty committees before responding to the department.