



ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW POLICY

Introduction

This policy rescinds and replaces the Board of Regents (BOR) for the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) policies 14-080 (Policy on Academic Program Review) and 18-152 (Low Completer Policy Amendment).

This policy applies to *Academic Programs* that include one or more academic degrees or certificates. It also applies to *Academic Disciplines* that offer credit courses but do not offer degrees or certificates. It does not apply to institutional programs falling outside of these parameters (e.g., general education programs, honors programs, etc.). Institutions are strongly encouraged to develop policies and procedures for review of such programming but are not required under this policy to report such activities to the Board of Regents.

What is an Academic Program?

An academic program is an organized sequence of learning experiences and related activities designed to teach students a defined body of knowledge and skills leading to a recognized level of mastery in an academic discipline or applied field. Academic programs include one or more certificates and/or degrees approved by the Connecticut State College and Universities Board of Regents and in keeping with the requirements of the State of Connecticut Office of Higher Education, the New England Commission of Higher Education, and other programmatic accreditors.

What is Academic Program Review?

Academic Program Review (APR) is a structured, cyclical, ongoing, and dynamic process for assessing the mission, goals, infrastructure, operations, and outcomes of academic programs and disciplines and their relation to the mission of the institution and the mission of the Connecticut State College and University System. At a minimum, all non-degree academic disciplines and every credit-bearing degree and certificate program is subject to review at least once every seven-years. Programs that are independently accredited may submit the self-study report required by their external accreditor in lieu of an APR self-study report. However, if a program's external accreditation self-study report does not respond to all the sections listed in this policy, then it must attach an addendum report that responds to any unaddressed sections.

Purpose of Academic Program Review

Academic Program Review serves the dual purposes of quality assurance and quality improvement. At the institutional level, the purpose of APR is to strengthen academic programs through inquiry, assessment, and reflection. APR is the primary means by which institutions ensure continuous quality improvement of their academic programs and disciplines through a comprehensive assessment of goals, infrastructure, operations, and outcomes in relationship to the mission of the institution and the CSCU system.

At the system level, the program review process facilitates dialogue among the CSCU Board of Regents, the CSCU President and Provost, and the Presidents, Chief Executive Officers, and Chief Academic Officers of each CSCU member institution. The process provides an organized and structured opportunity for all parties to reflect on educational practices, and to review the role of the program in the context of all academic offerings at both the institutional and system levels.

Objectives of Academic Program Review

The Academic Program Review process is intended to assess and improve:

1. The extent to which program goals, objectives, and student learning outcomes are aligned with the mission of the institution and the mission of the CSCU system.
2. The degree to which students achieve the stated program learning and employability/transfer outcomes.
3. Student success, based on both aggregated and disaggregated data, in terms of access, retention, progression, completion, and post-completion attainment.
4. The degree to which program outcomes are equitable across all student groups.
5. The program infrastructure and resources.

Process

The CSCU APR process is shaped by the principles of Outcomes Based Program Review (Bresciani-Ludvik, 2019), which focuses APR on the degree to which programs achieve their intended results. To engage in the process, programs must have explicitly stated Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) and reliable and valid methods for measuring those outcomes. They must also be prepared to describe how the results of SLO assessment are used to identify and address issues of equity, inclusion, employability, and transfer as well as inform program improvement efforts using methods such as Backward Design and Universal Design for Learning.

Academic Program Review is intended to be a reflective process with distinct, yet integrated, components that provide a comprehensive understanding of program functioning and support continuous examination and revision. This policy describes the general framework and

parameters of APR. Within these parameters, more specific guidelines, procedures, and practices may be established by each CSCU member institution according to its unique culture, professional norms, and mission through a collaborative process that includes faculty, staff, students, administrators, and external stakeholders. It is highly recommended that self-study teams make use of accreditation and assessment tools and processes already in place whenever possible, e.g., NECHE e-series reports (<https://www.necche.org/resources/institutional-data-forms/>).

The CSCU Office of the Provost is authorized to develop timelines, reporting requirements, and processes as needed to support annual Academic Program Review. At a minimum, these include:

- A timeline for the annual submission of a list of academic programs to be reviewed at each CSCU institution. Such lists are developed by each institution and submitted to the CSCU Office of the Provost, who will compile and submit to the Board of Regents Academic and Student Affairs Committee as an informational item.
- A standard Self-Study Report template that institutions may use to complete their program review.
- Annual submission of reports from each institution to the CSCU Office of the Provost summarizing the academic program reviews completed.
- Annual submission of a report from the CSCU Office of the Provost to the BOR Academic and Student Affairs Committee. This report provides assurance of the effectiveness of the review process at the institutions.

Each CSCU member institution may identify the local individuals, institutional offices, and/or governance bodies responsible for managing the APR process according to its unique culture, professional norms, and mission through a collaborative process that includes faculty, staff, students, administrators, and external stakeholders. Those responsible for overseeing the APR process are expected to encourage participation by key stakeholders in the following ways:

1. Using program outcome data, feedback from national or regional accreditors, student surveys, employer surveys, regional and national trends and forecasts, standards and best practices of program-specific professional organizations, and/or research on evidence-based practices to evaluate courses and programs and make recommendations for changes to curriculum and content.
2. Ensuring that student learning outcomes, learning outcome assessments, and performance benchmarks are equitable and appropriate for the program.
3. Assuring that the program addresses both academic learning outcomes and employability/transfer skills.
4. Ensuring that student learning data is used to improve programs and identify and address institutional performance gaps.
5. Ensuring that all aspects of the program conform to CSCU and State of Connecticut standards and the requirements of any applicable external accreditation bodies.

Self-Study Report

The specific content of Academic Program Review (APR) self-study reports may vary by program type. Program types include, but are not limited to, all credit certificates and degrees as well as academic disciplines that offer credit-bearing coursework but not degrees or certificates.

At a minimum, all self-study reports are expected to include the following:

1. A comprehensive description of the program with data, where applicable, of:
 - an overview of the program;
 - a demographic profile of its students;
 - the curriculum;
 - essential student learning outcomes and a full curriculum mapping;
 - program resources;
 - program operations including efforts to continuously improve program quality and address opportunity gaps;
 - and, most of all, a thorough analysis of program outcomes including detailed analyses (based on disaggregated data) of student access, retention, completion, post-completion success, and the results of academic and employability/transfer learning outcome measures.
2. An appraisal of the program that addresses:
 - The extent to which the program goals, objectives, and student learning outcomes are aligned with the mission of the institution and the mission of the CSCU system.
 - The extent to which students achieve the stated SLO's and employability/transfer outcomes.
 - A discussion of student success metrics, both as a whole and disaggregated by relevant student populations, in the domains of access, retention, progression, completion, and post-completion attainment. The discussion should address any institutional performance gaps (i.e., are outcomes equitable across all student groups) and how program metrics compare to institutional, system, or accrediting body benchmarks?
 - How assessment and program data are used for continuous improvement
 - The quality of the program infrastructure and resources.
 - Responses from external reviewers/advisory committees
 - The value of the program to students, the institution, the CSCU system, and to the State of CT.
3. An executive summary and action plan, including:
 - Program strengths and challenges.
 - Goals for program improvements (as needed).
 - A timeline for implementing improvements.

- Resources needed for program improvements.
- Key stakeholders responsible for implementing improvements.

See Attachment A for the *Recommended Academic Program Review Template*.

External Reviewers and/or Advisory Committees

The diverse degree programs offered throughout the System require that external advisory committees and/or external reviewers with discipline specific knowledge participate in the academic program review process and provide a written report of their findings and recommendations to the self-study team. Feedback from external reviewers/advisory committees becomes part of the self-study report. CSCU member institution may establish specific requirements and procedures for external reviewers according to its unique culture, professional norms, and mission through a collaborative process that includes faculty, staff, students, administrators, and external stakeholders.

Feedback Procedures

Completed APR self-study reports should be submitted to the appropriate institutional person, office, and/or governing body as determined by each CSCU member institution to be responsible for oversight of the APR process and/or to be responsible for providing feedback to the self-study team. Following submission and review of the APR self-study report, such individuals, offices, and/or governing bodies will provide written feedback regarding the report to the self-study team. Such feedback becomes part of the report.

How Results Will Be Used

Results of APR are used for the dual purposes of quality assurance and quality improvement. At the institutional level, faculty, deans, department chairs, program coordinators, curriculum and general education committees and other duly constituted college/university committees may use the APR process to make programmatic changes such as, but not limited to, credit or contact hour adjustments, modifications to curriculum objectives, learning outcomes, course content, linkages across program components, teaching strategies, allocation of program resources, and/or program restructuring.

At the system level, APR reports submitted by each CSCU member institution to the CSCU Office of the Provost provide assurance of the completion and effectiveness of the review process at the institutions.

Attachment A: Recommended Academic Program Review Template

1. Overview

- a. Program description
- b. Mission statement
- c. Enrollment
 - i. Student demographics
 - 1. # of students in the major
 - 2. # of students in minor(s)
 - 3. # of students in general education courses (Specific to the discipline)
- d. Curriculum
 - i. Degree and certificate options
 - ii. Course requirements
 - iii. Instructional modalities
 - iv. Pathways to/from program (stackable credentials, if any)

2. Goals

- a. Statement of academic student learning outcomes (ASLOs)
- b. Statement of employability student learning outcomes (ESLOs)
- c. Mapping of curriculum to outcomes

3. Infrastructure

- a. List of faculty and staff, including qualifications, teaching loads, and other work responsibilities
- b. Fiscal resources
- c. Facilities, including library and other educational resources available to and utilized by faculty and students.
- d. Specialized equipment and/or materials (if applicable)
- e. External partnerships (if applicable)

4. Operations

- a. Program governance and administrative support.
- b. Student advisement, engagement (including co-curricular and extra-curricular), and support.
- c. Faculty and staff development activities.
- d. Faculty and department contributions in teaching, research, creative activity, scholarly work and service.
- e. Processes to support continuous program improvement:
 - i. Continuous faculty review of the curriculum.
 - ii. Alignment and adequate assessment of course and program student learning outcomes.

- iii. Use of ASLSO and ESLO data to update curricula and/or pedagogy.
- f. Efforts to address previously identified opportunity gaps.
- g. Other (if applicable)
 - i. Curricular and co-curricular contributions to college/university programs.
 - ii. Contributions to diversity and cultural proficiency
 - iii. Outreach activities and service to the institution, the profession, and the community
 - iv. Alumni and business and industry fundraising.
 - v. Contributions to the General Education curriculum.
 - vi. Collaborations with other CSCU institutions and other CT colleges/universities.

5. Outcomes

- a. Student access, retention, completion, and post-completion success
 - i. Disaggregate by gender, race, Pell status, ethnicity, school district.
 - ii. Low completer report (if applicable)
- b. Results of assessment of Academic Student Learning Outcomes.
 - i. Disaggregate by gender, race, Pell status, ethnicity.
- c. Results of assessment of Employability Student Learning Outcomes.
 - i. Disaggregate by gender, race, Pell status, ethnicity.
- d. Safety and adequacy of physical facilities.
- e. Sustainability of human and financial resources to maintain a quality program.
- f. Student, alumni, employer, and other relevant constituent feedback including number of students who are pursuing advanced degrees after completing their bachelors.
- g. Factors affecting the program.
- h. Other (if applicable)
 - i. Peer feedback including external reviewers.
 - ii. Research.
 - iii. National trends.
 - iv. Program involvement of Business and industry
 - v. Economic impact to the State of Connecticut.

6. Appraisal

- a. The extent to which the program goals, objectives, and student learning outcomes are aligned with the mission of the institution and the mission of the CSCU system.
- b. The extent to which students achieve the stated SLO's and employability outcomes.
- c. A discussion of student success metrics, both as a whole and disaggregated by relevant student populations, in the domains of access, retention, progression, completion, and post-completion attainment. The discussion should address any institutional performance gaps (i.e., are outcomes equitable across all student

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- groups) and how program metrics compare to institutional, system, or accrediting body benchmarks?
- d. How assessment and program data are used for continuous improvement
 - e. The quality of the program infrastructure and resources
 - f. The value of the program to students, the institutions, the CSCU system and the State of CT.
7. Executive Summary and Action Plan
 - a. Program strengths and challenges.
 - b. Goals for program improvement (as needed).
 - c. Resources needed for program improvement.
 - d. Key stakeholders responsible for implementing improvement goals.
 - e. Timeline for program improvements.
 8. DEI Initiatives Unique to the Degree
 9. Community Engagement Activities Unique to the Degree
 10. External Reviewers/Advisory Committee Report
 11. Response from Institution Administration/Leadership

Resources -

1. [CSCU Employability Self-Assessment Report](#)
2. [CSCU DSIR PowerBI Dashboard Homepage](#)

Tentative Communication Plan and Evidence of Process –

1. First conversation regarding APR with FAC on February 10, 2023.
Evidence - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PC4M-GpPUs>
2. First round of feedback received from Faculty Advisory Committee members. Evidence – Emails from FAC co-chairs Professors Colena Sesankar and David Blitz on April 18, 2023 (see below).
3. This document is currently with FAC for a second round of feedback (as of May 3, 2023).
4. This document will be shared with all institutional Provosts for their feedback on May 3, 2023. (Four-week window).
5. After the institutional provosts approve this draft, we will seek approval from all institutional presidents via their provost’s office. (Four-week window).
6. During summer 2023, we will onboard the office of Decision Support and Institutional Research (DSIR) and the Institutional Research (IR) Council with this process and seek their input so that we can refine the process of data collection.

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7. Onboarding Chairs of Campus Curriculum Committee, Senate Presidents, Center for Teaching and Learning Directors and other faculty organizations as determined by the Provost Council (September 2023).
8. Seeking feedback from campus faculty via institutional Provost's office (September - November 2023).
9. Finalizing the form in December 2023.
10. Taking the form through existing faculty governance process (Spring 2024).
11. New process implements Fall 2024. First form to be submitted in Summer 2025.

Emails from FAC co-chairs –

Hi Rai,

Here is the initial feedback we got from FAC members:

Comments:

- At first glance, a bit overwhelming in its scope. (Rai - Agreed. It is comprehensive by design. Let us see how campuses react to it and then we can modify as needed.)
- There is some concern about how time consuming it might be and how the process will work at a 12-campus college. (Rai – It is reasonable to expect that the process will take 12 months to complete including external reviews. CT State provost will decide how the process will work for CT State CC.)
- The standard requirement of 3 goals for improvement presupposes that improvement is always needed. (Rai - Suggestion incorporated, "3" removed in the statement.)

Suggested Additions:

- Can we track those who go on to advanced degrees? (Rai – added to section 5f; will rely on alumni office to report these numbers and any related details.)
- A preamble clarifying why this information is being collected and how it is to be used and by whom. (Rai – Description added)

Questions:

- Does this replace the current low completer process? (Rai – See introduction paragraph)
- How will we go about identifying employability outcomes? (Rai – Resource provided via [Hyperlink - CSCU Employability Self-Assessment Report](#))

The timestamped video of the discussion is here: <https://youtu.be/E3mm1W3MCGM?t=2233>

Have I missed anything, David?

Colena Sesanker, Ph.D

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“what matters is not to know the world but to change it” --Frantz Fanon

Sorry to add this afterwards, but I was unavailable today. till now:

1/ Goals: Clearly state that the Program Assessment is for consistent information to the System office and then the BOR, but decisions as to implementation, continuation or discontinuation of programs rest with constituent units, and will not be initiated by SO or BOR. (Rai – Addressed in “Purpose of APR” section on Page 2.)

2/ ESLOS should be separate from transfer student learning outcomes (TSLO?) as employment is distinct from transfer, the former external and the latter internal to the system. (Rai – Suggestion incorporated; focus on ESLOs.)

3/ Disaggregate by gender, race, Pell status, ethnicity, school district: would not be known by departments, and would have to be provided by institutional research; departments would tend to be “blind” to most if not all distinctions (other than gender and race) (Rai – DSIR will provide data via dashboards; sample resource hyperlinked - [CSCU DSIR PowerBI Dashboard Homepage](#), additional dashboards are being built.)

4/ The form is overly complicated and should be simplified to the extent possible, removing any repetitions. (Rai – Let us wait for additional feedback from campuses in Fall 2023 and then we will modify headers as needed.)

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Vice-Chair, Faculty Advisory Committee to the BOR/CSCU
Ex-Officio Member, Board of Regents

President, Bertrand Russell Society
Member, Editorial Board, Journal of Bertrand Russell Studies
