
Academic Program Review: Information Guide



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Version 1.3 minor changes to post-Visit Team process (June 3, 2016)

Version 1.2 minors changes to Visit description and post-Visit Team process, added mention of Visit Team Report template

Version 1.1 minor change to history of APR

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PREFACE

Academic Program Review at John Carroll University involves the systematic self-examination of an academic program by its faculty members in order to sustain or improve ***educational effectiveness***. Academic program reviews, approached strategically and creatively, can prove intellectually stimulating to the program's members, improve the curriculum, enhance student learning, build morale, solve difficult problems, and help the program gain new resources and broader recognition (both on and off campus) with the framework of goals set by the program and the University.

The following core principles guide the Academic Program Review process at JCU:

1. Academic program review is intended to foster academic excellence in the context of John Carroll's mission as a Catholic and Jesuit university.
2. Program review is aimed at self-improvement. Its emphasis is on how programs can better realize their own aspirations for teaching, learning, scholarship, and contributions to internal and external communities. Careful analysis and candid reporting of program strengths and weaknesses are essential for self-improvement.
3. While calling for serious attention to all aspects of an academic program, including scholarship, program review places a special emphasis on student learning. If program review is to improve educational effectiveness, it must give particular attention to what students are actually learning. The self-study thus relies upon pertinent quantitative and qualitative evidence, with particular attention to evidence about student learning.
4. The process also includes the participation of external reviewers who can provide a dispassionate perspective and offer suggestions for improvement.
5. Academic Program Review is a particular moment in an ongoing process of reviewing the program's activities, outcomes, challenges, and improvements related to its goals. The University is moving toward a practice of continuous assessment: articulating outcomes, gathering data, analysis, reflection, and change. Thus the academic program review is a look backward at several years of data and information in order to achieve an overall understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the program.
6. Academic Program Reviews is the collective responsibility of faculty members within the program. While a program may designate a faculty member to oversee the process, input from all members of the program is essential. The submitted report should reflect shared participation, and it should be reviewed by all department members. The report should articulate the state of the program and its aspirations.
7. Academic program reviews should incorporate thoughtful reflection upon the nature and sufficiency of College and University resources in support of program activities and student learning.
8. Each program review should follow the guidelines provided in this document unless alternatives have been approved in advance by the appropriate administrator.

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is a Program?

These definitions apply for the purpose of Academic Program Review (APR) only. Within the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), each academic department is considered a program. An APR conducted by a CAS department should include all disciplinary majors, minors, and concentrations, both graduate and undergraduate. Each department is required to complete an APR once during each review cycle.

Within the Boler School of Business (BSOB), each major is considered a program. Each major is required to complete an APR once during each review cycle.

Additionally, each interdisciplinary program that awards a major will conduct an APR once during each review cycle. At the request of the Dean and Provost, the Pre-Health Professions program will also be included in each review cycle.

Beginning with the second cycle of APR, the three major scholarship programs (Honors, Arrupe, and Leadership) will also conduct an APR once during each review cycle.

New programs or majors will first participate in APR during the cycle after the cycle in which they are launched.

[The length of the current and future review cycles, as well as the placement of each major, program, or department within the cycle are posted in the online supplement to this guide.](#)

History of Academic Program Review at John Carroll University

The first cycle of the current incarnation of APR at John Carroll University (JCU) began in CAS in academic year 2007-2008. In the first four years, six departments completed APR. The APR process was suspended for three years (Fall 2011 through Spring 2014) and revised by CAS department chairs to include more focus on student learning and the integrative core curriculum. It was re-activated in 2014-2015 and expanded to include BSOB majors and interdisciplinary programs. Graduate Program Review (which ran consistently from the 1990s until 2014) was once a separate process until it was folded into APR with the 2014-2015 revision. At the insistence of the Higher Learning Commission, all academic programs completed their first APRs by the end of the spring semester in 2016.

Relationship with Assessment of Student Learning

The Office of Academic Assessment (OAA) is charged with oversight of two separate but inter-related processes: APR and the routine assessment of student learning.

Student learning assessment is a routine part of each academic program's activities, in which they use a variety of direct and indirect measures to compare student learning to their articulated learning goals. Based on the assessment data, program faculty make changes to improve student learning and report on their progress annually to the OAA.

APR is a periodic examination of the entire academic program. While there is a focus on student learning assessment data, the full body of data examined in APR reaches far beyond student learning. The changes made because of APR are tracked and assessed as part of the annual student learning assessment reports to the OAA.

STANDARD TIMELINE

Late Fall Semester of the Year Before Academic Program Review

Academic Program Review Orientation

Spring Semester of the Year Before Academic Program Review

The chair or director of the program should discuss an upcoming review at a department/program meeting: go over the guidelines, outline the process, and preview the documentation that is necessary. Faculty should determine what other constituencies to involve—adjunct faculty alumni, students, or faculty and staff in collaborative or interdisciplinary programs.

Program faculty should begin the process of data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Program faculty should identify possible members of Review Team.

The chair or director should designate the author or author team and provide their names to the Director of Academic Assessment.

Summer

The bulk of the Self-Study Report should be written before the beginning of the fall semester.

Fall Semester

The CONCLUSION section of the Self-Study Report is written in consultation with the program faculty, and the entire self-study document is submitted to the appropriate administrator before the third week of September.

Faculty will revise the Self-Study Report at the administrator's request and then submit it to the Review Team.

The Review Team conducts a campus visit prior to Thanksgiving.

Spring Semester

The Review Team sends the chair or director the Visit Team Report.

Program faculty may prepare a written Response to the Visit Team Report.

The chair or director (or full program faculty) meets with the appropriate administrator to discuss the Report and possible future actions.

When all APRs in the cohort are completed, the Provost will meet with the designated administrators to discuss the future allocation of resources. Once the administration has communicated these commitments to program faculty, the program faculty should prepare the final APR Action Plan, which must be completed and approved by the appropriate administrator.

PART I:

Self Study

The Self-Study Report is the centerpiece of Academic Program Review (APR). To ensure broad participation and support, all full-time faculty members on continuing appointment are expected to participate in the creation, review, and discussion of this document; avenues for the participation of part-time and affiliate faculty, as well as students should be included, with the scope of such participation dependent on their role in the program.

A thoughtful, well-written self-study is critical to the success of APR. It is the primary occasion for the program's central members to demonstrate understanding of the goals and dynamics of the program. It is also a time to evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and to make a persuasive case for specific actions to enhance program quality and effectiveness.

- *Be brief.* Each section should be as short as possible but long enough to present evidence and make effective arguments. External reviewers will find tedious narratives that fail to distinguish major issues from minor ones.
- *Be judicious.* The narrative should certainly highlight the program's strengths and distinctive qualities, including the nature and value of the contributions it makes to the campus and, where relevant, to the larger community. It also should highlight problems candidly. Accompanying discussion of problems should be a discussion of steps the program that can be taken to remedy them. The self-study should invite the external reviewers to offer constructive recommendations for solving the problems.
- *Provide evidence.* The narrative should provide supporting evidence for the arguments, drawing on and efficiently referring to the data contained in the self-study and appendices. Narrative portions should focus on the implications of data for the review.
- *State disagreements explicitly.* If the self-study raises disagreements about faculty (and other constituencies), these disagreements should be stated explicitly, including a sense of what is at stake in such disagreements, and a plan outlined that can enable the program to deal constructively with those disagreements.

Data Sources

The information forming the basis of the Self-Study Report will come from a variety of sources. The time window of interest for APR is usually three years. A standard package of information will be provided to each program.

[Precise details of this standard package \(contents, timeline, and processes\) will be explained at the orientation and are available in the online supplement to this guide.](#)

Programs will need to collect updated CVs from all program faculty, syllabi (as described below), and information about current students' activities and achievements.

The Self-Study Report

The body of the document is limited to twenty-five single-spaced pages. Faculty are strongly encouraged to follow the structure outlined below. However, the specific topics, and their specific ordering, can be adjusted to best fit the specific program. Substantive changes should be discussed beforehand with the Director of Academic Assessment.

The chair should designate an author or author team to take the lead in assembling the information, drafting the Self-Study Report, and involving the rest of the department. The names of the author or author team should be sent to the Director of Academic Assessment during the spring semester of the year before the Visit. There is a stipend available for the author or author team. The stipend will be issued when the Self-Study Report is approved by the appropriate administrator to be sent to the Review Team.

The value of the author stipend will be provided at the orientation.

PREFACE (One-page overview of the University and the program's place within it)

I. MISSION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

- A. Mission Statement
- B. Student Learning Goals/Objectives
- C. University and Academic Learning Goals
- D. Contribution to Core Curriculum
- E. Other University-Wide Programs

II. FACULTY

- A. Faculty Profiles
- B. Faculty Development and Evaluation
- C. Professional Service and Community Engagement

III. CURRICULUM

- A. Curriculum
- B. Course Profile
- C. Enrollment Trends
- D. Contribution to Core Curriculum (Optional)

IV. STUDENT LEARNING

- A. Pedagogy
- B. Advising
- C. Student Scholarship, Internships, Experiential Learning, Creative Work, Volunteerism
- D. Professional Development, Post-Graduation, and Alumni Outcomes

V. UNIVERSITY SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

VI. STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

VII. COMPARATIVE POSITION

- A. Comparison with Other Institutions
- B. Best Practices in Field
- C. Unique Features

VIII. CONCLUSION

- A. Summary of Program Strengths and Weaknesses.
- B. Action Plan
 - 1. Vision Statement
 - 2. Improvements Using Current Resources

3. Improvements Requiring New Resources

VIII. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

APPENDICES

- A. Program governance documents
- B. Entry for program in Bulletins
- C. CVs of full-time faculty
- D. List of courses offered in each of the past three years
- E. Syllabi for required courses in major
- F. Syllabi for courses offered as part of the Core Curriculum
- G. Curriculum maps
- H. Reports on assessment of student learning
- I. Assessment Plan
- J. Any other documents that might be useful to the external reviewers
- K. Supporting evidence, tables, charts, etc.

A [more detailed document](#) including prompts for each heading is available in the online supplement to this guide, and an editable version of it is available from the Director of Academic Assessment and will be provided following the APR Orientation.

Role of the Department

The minimal expectation is that all faculty members of the department will be providing information to the author or author team of the Self-Study Report, validating the information provided and conclusions drawn in the Self-Study Report, and participating in the conversations that lead to the text of the CONCLUSION section. To document faculty involvement, faculty will be asked to sign their names to the following statement on a Signature Page:

By signing below, I affirm that I participated in the Academic Program Review process and endorse the accuracy and completeness of our program's self-study.

The [signature page](#) will be provided following the APR Orientation.

Administrative Approval and Distribution

Following the completion of the document, the appropriate administrator should receive the Self-Study Report by the third week of September and may request revisions from the program faculty. Once any necessary revisions have been completed, the administrator should notify the author or author team and the Director of Academic Assessment that the Self-Study Report has been approved and can be sent to the Review Team. The Review Team should receive the report no later than two weeks before the visit.

Each program's [designated administrator](#) will be identified at the orientation. The administrator in question is usually the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences or the Dean of the Boler School of Business.

The Self-Study Report should be provided to the office of the appropriate administrator, to the Office of Academic Assessment, and to each member of the Review Team in two formats: a digital version of the entire Report including appendices and a print version of the Report excluding appendices. A print copy of Appendices should be provided to Review Team members, if requested. The Signature Page should be included with the print version given to the Office of Academic Assessment.

PART II:

The Review Team & Visit

The Self-Study Report provides the program a chance to take a deep look at strengths and weaknesses and begin planning for the future. The Review Team serves an important consultative role in helping validate the program's self-assessment, identify additional strengths and weaknesses, and provide additional recommendations for improvement.

The Review Team: Qualifications and Duties

The Review Team is composed of one or two outside members, one of whom serves as chair, and one optional internal member. Outside members should be faculty members at institutions other than John Carroll University in the same field and/or have appropriate value for and experience in relevant interdisciplinary arenas. The internal member should have faculty status at John Carroll University but be unaffiliated with the program in question. No reviewers should be friends or close colleagues of program faculty; rather, they should be selected so that they bring an objective perspective and forward-looking vision to the review process.

The members of the Review Team will review the Self-Study Report before coming to campus and then spend two days on campus meeting faculty, staff, and students and seeing the facilities. (Travel costs are reimbursed by the Office of Academic Assessment.) The members of the Review Team work together to identify strengths, weaknesses, answers to questions posed by faculty and administrators, and recommendations for improvement. The chair is responsible for collecting the Review Team's conclusions and producing a written Visit Team Report. Once this Report is returned to the chair or program director, the Office of Academic Assessment will pay each member of the Review Team a stipend (the chair receives an additional supplement for producing the Visit Team Report).

The value of the Review Team stipend and the chair's supplement will be provided at the orientation.

The Review Team: Selection Process

Program faculty should identify a number of possible reviewers. Once the potential reviewers have been approved by the appropriate administrator, the chair or program director should contact the reviewers and, working in conjunction with office of the administrator, set a date for the Visit. Once the Visit date has been established, the administrator's office will send an official invitation. Travel and lodging arrangements are typically handled by the administrator's office in conjunction with the chair or program director and are paid by the Office of Academic Assessment.

Preparing for the Visit

Reviewers will meet at the beginning and the end of their visit with the appropriate administrator. During this initial meeting, the administrator should provide a written charge to the Review Team that includes questions to discuss in the Visit Team Report. During the closing meeting, the chair or director will be present for the first portion of the meeting and then leave before the final debrief

between the reviewers and the administrator. Other meetings and interviews organized as part of the external review vary significantly by program, but for all visits, untenured faculty members should have their own separate opportunities to speak to the Review Team members. In other cases, review committee members may interview core and affiliated faculty singly or in groups. Reviewers will want to talk to undergraduate majors and minors, graduate students, and with staff; many reviews arrange for separate meetings with these relevant constituencies.

Programs should provide time and space for the external reviewers to confer with each other every day while on campus. The Review Team should be able to talk to each other about their initial impressions of the program before their meetings with administrators, faculty, and others begin. In a typical campus visit, reviewers need time by themselves at the end of the first day and another block of time to themselves before any exit interviews.

Meals during the visit are arranged by the program and paid by the Office of Academic Assessment.

A selection of [Visit Team Schedules](#) from previous semesters will be provided following the APR Orientation.

The Visit Team Report

In the written Visit Team Report, members of the Review Team should include the following material:

- Answers to questions posed in the DISCUSSION QUESTIONS section of the Self-Study Report,
- Answers to questions posed in the charge provided by the appropriate administrator,
- A ***brief*** summary of the visit,
- Discussion of the program's strengths and weaknesses, and
- Concrete suggestions for program improvement.

The Visit Team Report should be sent digitally to the chair or program director, typically within a month of the conclusion of the visit. The chair or program director is then responsible to provide digital copies of the Visit Team Report to the appropriate administrator and the Director of Academic Assessment.

An optional [Visit Team Report template](#) is available in the online supplement to this guide, and an editable version of it is available from the Director of Academic Assessment and will be provided following the APR Orientation.

PART III:

Closing the Loop

Assessment of any kind is not complete until findings are used to make changes. The final steps of the APR process are crucial to institutional success.

Response to the Visit Team Report (Optional)

The program has the option to offer a written response to the report. The response provides an opportunity to correct factual errors and ought to indicate clearly those issues on which the faculty of the program agree with the report, as well as highlight points of disagreement.

Action Plan

Upon receipt of the Visit Team Report, the administrator meets with the program faculty to discuss the Report and charges them to finalize an Action Plan that considers the Review Team's findings. The Action Plan consists of a list of specific changes, identifying the responsible parties, timeline, expected costs (if any), and projected impacts on student learning and/or departmental functioning. The Plan should differentiate between initiatives needing no new resources and those requiring new resources. The Plan should include a timeline for implementation for the "no new resource" portion. Programs are encouraged to prioritize the action steps: a simple three-category prioritization is suggesting ranking items as mission-critical, mission-centered, and nice to do. Where possible, linkages should be drawn between the Plan and the University's Strategic Plan.

The final Action Plan, developed in a collaborative process between the administrator's office and the program, is signed by both parties indicating the program's commitment to the plan and the administrator's endorsement of the plan's overall direction. This signature is not a binding commitment for funding, as plans will cover several years and many funding decisions are made on a year-to-year basis. The final document is then filed with the Office of Academic Assessment.

Administrative Response

The administrator should review the entire written record (Self-Study Report, Visit Team Report, optional Response to the Visit Team Report, and Action Plan) and prepare a recommendation for discussion with the Provost. This discussion includes a review of the Action Plan and the dean's preliminary recommendation for resource allocation.

Follow Up

The program will be required to provide evidence that the changes have been made and data demonstrating actual impact on student learning or department function as part of the Annual Assessment Report, filed as part of the routine process of student learning assessment.

CLOSING:

An Offer of Assistance

The Office of Academic Assessment is charged with enabling faculty to successfully complete Academic Program Review. This charge is one of our central functions, so do not hesitate to seek assistance.

APPENDIX A:

Administrator's Guide to Academic Program Review

Preparatory Work

The Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Dean of the Boler School of Business have the responsibility, in conversation with the Provost and the Director of Academic Assessment to establish or alter the review cycle, procedures, and stipends.

Each year, in the fall semester, the Director of Academic Assessment will meet with all relevant administrators to review the previous year's Academic Program Reviews (APRs), provide an update on the current year's APRs and make any necessary adjustments for the subsequent year's. The administrators may attend the subsequent Orientation.

The Review Team: Selection Process

Program faculty should identify a number of possible reviewers. The administrator will then approve or deny the list and may express a preference for certain reviewers. Once the potential reviewers have been identified and approved, the chair or program director should contact the reviewers and, working in conjunction with office of the administrator, set a date for the Visit. Once the Visit date has been established, the administrator's office will send an official invitation. Travel and lodging arrangements are typically handled by the administrator's office in conjunction with the chair or program director and are paid by the Office of Academic Assessment.

The Self-Study Document

Administrators should receive the completed Self-Study Document by the third week of September. Once received, the administrator should review the entire Self-Study Report and may request revisions from the program faculty. Once any necessary revisions have been completed, the administrator should notify the author or author team and the Director of Academic Assessment that the Self-Study Report has been approved and can be sent to the Review Team. The Review Team should receive the report no later than two weeks before the visit.

The author or author team will then provide the Self-Study Report to the office of the appropriate administrator, to the Office of Academic Assessment, and to each member of the Review Team in two formats: a digital version of the entire Report including appendices and a print version of the Report excluding appendices. A print copy of Appendices should be provided to Review Team members, if requested.

Preparing for the Visit

Reviewers will meet at the beginning and the end of their visit with the appropriate administrator. During this initial meeting, the administrator should provide a written charge to the Review Team that includes questions to discuss in the Visit Team Report. Other meetings and interviews organized as part of the external review vary significantly by program. For example, review committee members may interview core and affiliated faculty singly or in groups. Reviewers will

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Programs should provide time and space for the external reviewers to confer with each other every day while on campus. The Review Team should be able to talk to each other about their initial impressions of the program before their meetings with administrators, faculty, and others begin. In a typical campus visit, reviewers need time by themselves at the end of the first day and another block of time to themselves before any exit interviews.

Meals during the visit are arranged by the program and paid by the Office of Academic Assessment.

Action Plan

Upon receipt of the Visit Team Report, the administrator meets with the program faculty to discuss the Report and charges them to finalize an Action Plan that considers the Review Team's findings. The Action Plan consists of a list of specific changes, identifying the responsible parties, timeline, expected costs (if any), and projected impacts on student learning and/or departmental functioning. The Plan should differentiate between initiatives needing no new resources and those requiring new resources. The Plan should include a timeline for implementation for the "no new resource" portion. Programs are encouraged to prioritize the action steps: a simple three-category prioritization is suggesting ranking items as mission-critical, mission-centered, and nice to do. Where possible, linkages should be drawn between the Plan and the University's Strategic Plan.

The final Action Plan, developed in a collaborative process between the administrator's office and the program, is signed by both parties indicating the program's commitment to the plan and the administrator's endorsement of the plan's overall direction. This signature is not a binding commitment for funding, as plans will cover several years and many funding decisions are made on a year-to-year basis. The final document is then filed with the Office of Academic Assessment.

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The administrator should review the entire written record (Self-Study Report, Visit Team Report, optional Response to the Visit Team Report, and Action Plan) and prepare a recommendation for discussion with the Provost. This discussion includes a review of the Action Plan and the dean's preliminary recommendation for resource allocation.

Follow Up

The program will be required to provide evidence that the changes have been made and data demonstrating actual impact on student learning or department function as part of the Annual Assessment Report, filed as part of the routine process of student learning assessment.

APPENDIX B:

Provost's Guide to Academic Program Review

Preparatory Work

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Each year, in the fall semester, the Director of Academic Assessment will meet with all relevant administrators to review the previous year's Academic Program Reviews (APRs), provide an update on the current year's APRs and make any necessary adjustments for the subsequent year's. The administrators may attend the subsequent Orientation.

The Visit

Reviewers will meet at the beginning and the end of their visit with the appropriate administrator. The Provost may, at her or his request, be included in these meetings or have a separate meeting with the Review Team.

Action Plan

Upon receipt of the Visit Team Report, the administrator meets with the program faculty to discuss the Report and charges them to finalize an Action Plan that considers the Review Team's findings. The Action Plan consists of a list of specific changes, identifying the responsible parties, timeline, expected costs (if any), and projected impacts on student learning and/or departmental functioning. The Plan should differentiate between initiatives needing no new resources and those requiring new resources. The Plan should include a timeline for implementation for the "no new resource" portion. Programs are encouraged to prioritize the action steps: a simple three-category prioritization is suggesting ranking items as mission-critical, mission-centered, and nice to do. Where possible, linkages should be drawn between the Plan and the University's Strategic Plan.

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