

Program Reviews: Purpose, Mandates and Expectations*

The review is intended to be a periodic self-examination that will contribute to a strategic plan for the future. The primary goal of the review is to improve the program's effectiveness and quality. The objectives of the review are to provide a clear assessment of the program's strengths and weaknesses and to develop a guide for the program's future direction.

The University of Nebraska is committed to providing the highest quality of post-secondary education for the citizens of Nebraska. The Board of Regents recognizes that periodic review coupled with coordinated, long-range strategic planning is essential to insure the quality of academic programming, both instructional and non-instructional.

The Nebraska State Constitution (Article VII, Section 14) authorizes the Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (CCPE) to "... review, monitor, and approve or disapprove each public postsecondary educational institution's programs..." As part of its oversight, the CCPE reviews all academic programs using data from institutional reviews and accreditation cycles. Based on the review, the CCPE may recommend one of the following actions: Continue; Continue with Follow-up Report; Postpone Action; In-depth Review; Discontinue. One of the criteria for authorization to continue a degree program/major is the average number of graduates per year during a five-year review interval. These minimums are:

Less Than Two Years and Associate Degrees, 10 students;
Baccalaureate and First Professional Degrees, 7 students;
Master's Degrees 5 students;
Specialist Degrees, 4 students; and
Doctoral Degrees, 3 students.

The University of Nebraska's Regents Policies (RP-2.1.6) state that the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) "...is the primary research and doctoral degree-granting institution in the state for fields outside the health professions and offers a broad range of undergraduate and graduate programs. UNL has primary statewide responsibility for the land-grant activities of the University of Nebraska which emphasize application and integration of knowledge and applied research in diverse areas. Scholarship at UNL should emphasize teaching and discovery but should also include the scholarship of integration and application."

According to the UNL Bylaws, existing academic program reviews must emphasize the need for and the goals of the program in terms of its relationship to the needs and goals of the State of Nebraska, the University of Nebraska and the people affected by the program; resources available; and resources not now available but needed to meet these needs and goals. Success in achieving past and current program objectives is an important criterion. Reviews will also articulate future program objectives as part of the University's ongoing strategic and budget planning cycles.

The University of Nebraska Board of Regents has created multi-departmental academic centers for research, teaching and/or service. "Such multi-departmental organizational entities may organize faculty and programs for numerous purposes such as creation of partnerships with external organizations, enhanced university research and outreach programs, development of new funding patterns, addressing emerging multi-disciplinary educational needs, and other emerging problems and issues." The President of the University of Nebraska is required to periodically review Centers based, in part, on function, justification, relevance to the University's strategic plans, and evidence that the multi-departmental center will more effectively achieve stated academic objectives than traditional departmental, school, or college structures.

*There are several sources for this text, including some quoted verbatim from existing policy documents.

Bylaws of the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska (<http://nebraska.edu/docs/board/bylaws.pdf>)

University of Nebraska Board of Regents Policies (<http://www.nebraska.edu/docs/board/RegentPolicies.pdf>)

Bylaws of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (<http://www.unl.edu/ucomm/chancldr/bylaws/>)

Academic Program Review Guidelines (2006) (http://www.unl.edu/svcaa/documents/apr_guidelines.pdf)

Nebraska Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (<http://www.ccpe.state.ne.us>)

Review Team Expectations

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln expects the review team to submit a final written report within 30 days of the site visit. The report should be factual, succinct, and explicit. Review teams are asked to relate their comments to the program or college/Division strategic plans, all our Land-Grant missions (teaching, research, Extension, outreach, service), and to the core values of UNL. The Review Team is asked to keep in mind that many recommendations that would improve a given program might not be feasible because of the expense involved and the requirements of other programs within the University. The team is, therefore, encouraged to: 1) Respond to the specific questions posed by the unit and IANR/UNL administrators, 2) Focus recommendations on what can and should be done within existing resources, and 3) Make one or two suggestions for new investment that would have the greatest impact on program quality.

In addition, we request that the review team examine data on both the quality of the degree programs under consideration and the average number of graduates per year at each level. The review team report should include a separate section that addresses whether the degree programs under review should be continued, and the criteria that would be used to justify this decision to University and State policy boards.

When a Center is being reviewed, the team report should include a separate section regarding that Center. Specifically, the team should determine and outline if: 1) There is a future need/value for the Center (review the Center's mission), 2) the Center structure allows it to more effectively achieve stated academic objectives than traditional departmental, school, or college structures, and 3) Center status should be retained. If applicable, the team should also provide specific guidance to improve the Center's operations, function(s), and mission.