

University of Idaho External Program Review Review Team Guidelines

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities has recommended that the University of Idaho “exercise the leadership and coordination necessary for periodic program review that will inform future planning and further the relationship between the University’s mission and goals and education programs.” The primary purpose of external program review is self-assessment, using a set of criteria or performance indicators, from which judgments are made about program centrality, quality, need/demand, and cost- effectiveness. These judgments are the major guide for strategic planning for the programs.

A thorough External Program Review (EPR) of both academic and service/support programs is conducted on a seven-year cycle (with variations planned to correlate with specialized accreditation practices). The department chair develops a list of three to five nominations for the external review team from sources such as accrediting agencies, professional societies, well-known scholars, and counterparts at peer institutions. The Dean and Provost or Provost-Designee then approve the team membership, invitations are extended, and the team visit scheduled.

The unit faculty and staff conduct a self-study of the program, gathering both qualitative and quantitative information which respond to specific U-Idaho criteria, and submit this to reader(s) for critique prior to dissemination to the External Review Team.

The functions of the review team are to assess and report their judgments on:

- the program quality according to the criteria provided;
- the role of the program in the U-Idaho environment, relative to U-Idaho role and mission and goals;
- the projected value or feasibility of various planning alternatives and priorities set forth by the department;
- recommendations to assist the unit toward continual improvement; and
- additional questions posed by the Dean or other key university-level administrators (for example: Dean, Vice Provost, Vice President, Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable, and/or Vice President for Research).

Unit personnel are expected to participate actively in the review team’s campus visit, including such activities as interviewing with team members; providing information such as course syllabi, research reports, benchmarking/target reports, budget, and other documents, unit and committee minutes, productivity and quality measures; and facilitating classroom observations/interviews, student and faculty interviews, and lab and field site review. A draft schedule for the EPR Team visit is attached.

Typically, a pre-conference is held with the Unit administrator and key university-level administrators once the EPR team arrives. Prior to leaving campus, the review team holds exit conferences with the unit faculty/personnel and administrator, college and key university-level administrators, and representative of the External Program Review Committee, separately or concurrently. A final conference includes the Provost, the Dean, the Vice President for Research, the College of Graduate Studies Dean, and Vice Provost, depending on the level of degree programs involved, providing a preliminary review and evaluation of the program.

Within one month of visiting campus, the review team submits a written review and evaluation of the program to the reviewed program and key university-level administrators. The report provides reflections and judgments on

- the unit self-study;
- strengths and weaknesses relative to the criteria and questions provided;
- the centrality of the program to the U-Idaho role, mission, and goals;
- specific items of inquiry requested by the unit administrator or university administrator;
- the validity of the unit's identification of demand and need for the program;
- evaluation of the various program improvement alternatives proposed by the unit in the context of available and projected resource levels; and
- additional questions posed by the Dean or other key university-level administrators.

Following receipt of the review team's written review and evaluation of the program, the unit administrator and university-level administrator will reflect on the perceptions and recommendations of the review team, and provide a response to the recommendations. This response, as well as proposed actions, will be forwarded with the review team's report to the Office of the Provost.

Unit staff then engages in collegial discussions of the response to the evaluation and reviewer comments, and communicates with the key college and university-level administrators about the resulting priorities and proposed actions. Within 30 days of receipt of the written EPR Team's Report, the unit administrator will schedule a meeting with the Dean or Vice President to discuss proposed actions to address the review team's recommendations. Within three weeks of this discussion the university-level administrator will submit the report to the Provost's Office and to the External Program Review Committee with comments and proposed actions. The unit administrator will complete the timeline and actions column on the External Program Review template.

Each year following the site visit, the unit administrator and university-level administrator will follow-up with a review of actions and progress toward recommendations and will post these online in the External Program Review template. At the time the template is updated, an automatic email will be forwarded to the Provost's Office, through Institutional Research and Assessment, with notification that the template has changes ready for review.