

Guidelines for Undergraduate Program Review (UPR)

The University of Southern California is committed to high quality, ongoing review of all undergraduate degree programs. The purpose of the reviews is to ensure continuous quality improvement in teaching, learning, curricular and co-curricular offerings, student services, and student outcomes.

Consistent with USC's decentralized institutional context and culture of faculty governance, USC has a federated model in which academic units administer the review processes in alignment with the university-wide guidelines described below. These guidelines provide a baseline of academic objectives for all reviews while allowing units latitude to add components and tailor the process to their varied academic contexts.

In order to ensure continuity across the university, all reviews are submitted to the University Committee on Academic Review (UCAR). As the university-wide committee that collects all academic program reviews, UCAR provides a direct line of report to the Provost. The sole exception to this model is General Education. The Provost initiates GE reviews.

All undergraduate degree programs should be reviewed not less than once every seven years, including reviews conducted through professional accreditation organizations. It is further recommended that, when feasible, undergraduate program reviews occur the year prior to Ph.D. program reviews administered through UCAR. In consultation with the Office of the Provost, deans may consider exceptions to these recommendations. Undergraduate degree programs that reviewed regularly by their professional accreditor are not expected to perform additional internal reviews.

UNIVERSITY-WIDE GUIDELINES FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM REVIEW

- A. **PRINCIPLE CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM REVIEW**
 - 1. Provide a concise, honest appraisal of an academic unit's strengths and weaknesses
 - 2. Are forward-looking and provide recommendations for improvement
 - 3. Are evaluative, not just descriptive

- B. **CORE AREAS FOR REVIEW**
 - 1. Characteristics of faculty, including proportions of tenured, tenure track, and RTPC faculty
 - 2. Quality and coherence of curricular program
 - 3. Quality of teaching/instruction as evidenced by student evaluations, syllabi, class observation
 - 4. Evidence of student learning
 - 5. Quality and effectiveness of co-curricular offerings, including study and enhancement opportunities (such as field-based student clubs, Maymester, Washington semester, Trans-Siberian Alternative Spring Break, and the like),
 - 6. Quality and effectiveness of advising and other student services

- C. **CORE ELEMENTS OF THE REVIEW PROCESS**
 - 1. A *memo of understanding* (MOU) between the chair of the department and the dean of the unit or, in cases where the dean and the chair are the same person, with the Vice Provost for Academic & Faculty Affairs.

2. A *self-study*, typically 8-12 pages in length. Self-studies must include:
 - A set of 3-5 aspirational peers at other institutions
 - An evaluation of student body diversity
 - A clear set of program learning objectives and evidence of effectiveness using varied forms of direct and indirect evidence, including student quality indicators, persistence and graduation, assessment of student work, evaluations, and surveys
 - An evaluation of the program's assessment plan to evaluate student learning and quality of teaching.
 - An assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the program(s)
 - A list of recommendations for improvement divided between things that can be accomplished only with additional resources and things that can be accomplished without additional resources
 - A summary of undergraduate research
 - An assessment of curriculum changes due to new knowledge in the field

The self-study is given to the dean of the academic unit and the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic & Faculty Affairs.

3. A visit team with at least 3 members, at least one internal and one external to USC. Opportunities for student participation in the review process are provided wherever appropriate. The team will produce a report, which is shared and discussed with the program faculty.
4. The program under review will produce a response to the team report to be submitted the dean of the academic unit and the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic & Faculty Affairs.
5. The University Committee of Academic Review (UCAR) will have a general discussion of the review-related documents with the internal member. The UCAR Chair will draft a summary of recommendations to the Provost.
6. A post-review meeting will be held to draft an action plan for addressing the issues raised in the review.

D. ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

1. Departments formulate 4-8 program learning objectives for their degree programs.
2. Learning objectives are posted to department and/or academic unit websites.
3. Departments develop a plan to gather qualitative and quantitative evidence of student learning.
4. Evidence compiled is reviewed with the faculty.

E. SOURCES OF EVIDENCE OF STUDENT LEARNING

1. Aggregated/disaggregated student quality data. (Office of Institutional Research)
2. Aggregated/disaggregated student performance data. (Office of Institutional Research)
3. Data on persistence and graduation. (Office of Institutional Research)
4. Evidence of teaching effectiveness from student evaluations, without instructors' names. (Department or program)
5. Direct evidence of student learning. (Department or program)
6. Surveys of USC freshmen and continuing students reporting measures of student engagement, satisfaction, and perceived gains. (Where available)
7. Surveys of alumni reporting measures of satisfaction, preparedness, and achievements. (Where available)

Academic units will design operational documents for program reviews, including features not enumerated here, and submit those to the Executive Vice Provost. Dornsife College has a review process that meets these criteria. Other units may wish to examine Dornsife's documents and use them as a guide.