



Program Review Policy Statement 1600-0912

Philosophy Of Program Review

The overriding purpose of program review is to identify the various strengths and weaknesses of our programs so that we may, thereby, examine the degree to which we are using our resources to serve the needs of citizens in north Alabama in the most efficient manner. We believe that every organization has its strengths and weaknesses, and that the strengths and weaknesses of Athens State University should be periodically examined in order to improve the overall efficiency and quality of our programs.

In reviewing our programs at ASU, it is desirable to use at least three different types of criteria. First, it is desirable to use the quantitative (cost-benefit) criteria that are commonly proposed for reviewing programs. In particular, it is desirable to examine the costs of the program in reference to the estimated income generated by the program. Some of the specific quantitative criteria that are used to examine this cost to income ratio include: the number of graduates from the program, and the amount (or value) of other resources generated by the program. These quantitative criteria are important because they help to identify programs that have an unnecessarily high cost to income ratio and, thus, place a heavier financial burden upon the citizens of Alabama.

Second, it is also desirable to consider qualitative and quantitative criteria such as: the qualifications and skills of the faculty, the quality of instructional resources, external certifications, availability of personalized instruction, knowledge and skills acquired by graduates, job and graduate school placements, and general demand for courses. High quality programs are more expensive on a year to year basis, but in the long run, they will yield greater benefits to the citizens of Alabama.

Third, our review should attempt to determine the degree to which our programs are organizationally efficient. We take pride in being an upper-division institution that offers quality instruction through a variety of delivery formats that accommodate the needs of a diverse student body. One way that we try to efficiently utilize our resources is to designate several courses as requirements for two or more degree options. Therefore, despite relatively low enrollment in some degree options, most of our courses maintain acceptably high course enrollments.

The two most important goals of our program review are: 1) to examine the ways that we can maximize our resources and, 2) to explore additional ways to increase our efficiency while maintaining the highest level of quality in all academic programs.

The following program review procedures are designed to apply all three of the above criteria to evaluate the unique strengths and weaknesses of our program.

Procedures For Program Review

Overview

The faculty of Athens State University is committed to a process of program review. By reviewing our programs on a periodic basis, we will be prepared to make informed decisions for program improvement. The following document describes a general program review procedure that will be followed by most programs offered at Athens State University. If, however, a program is being reviewed by an external review agency,

typically a discipline-specific accreditation, the program may substitute the external review requirements for the procedures described herein.

Defining the word "Program"

The word "program" as used in this document refers to an academic department. In other words, when reviewing the programs offered by Athens State University, it is most appropriate to examine each academic department by considering all of the specific degree options or CIP codes it services. In some cases, an academic department will offer only one degree option or CIP code (e.g., Liberal Studies). However, in other cases, a department may offer several degree options. For example, the Psychology Department offers 2 different majors in psychology (CIP codes 42.0101) and a minor in Psychology. Thus, in some cases, if CIP codes are examined individually, the review could easily overemphasize some departmental weaknesses and fail to recognize important departmental strengths. By focusing the review on the whole department, the practical strengths and weaknesses of the program can be identified and, subsequently, can be used to make constructive recommendations for long-range academic master planning.

Steps of the Review Process

The initial step on the Program Review process will be to identify the programs (i.e., academic departments) to be reviewed during the forthcoming academic year. This decision will be made by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the College Deans. After identifying the programs to be reviewed, the Deans will appoint a panel of reviewers for each program. The evaluators will be ASU faculty members. Although it is generally desirable to include outside evaluators, cost and time constraints may eliminate this option. Once the evaluators have been selected, they will establish a timetable for collecting data, scheduling a site visit in the department, and writing the Evaluation Report.

The general timetable for program review is outlined below:

1. **September:** The programs to be reviewed will be selected and the program review evaluators will be appointed.
2. **October:** For each program to be reviewed, the evaluators will meet for the purpose of planning the program review schedule. Once the schedule is finalized, the evaluators will provide a copy of the schedule to the department head, the College Dean, and the Vice President of Academic Affairs.
3. **October-- March:** Evaluators conduct the program review including face-to-face consultations with department heads and faculty. The scope of the review must follow the criteria item described in the attached format (Appendix A).
4. **April:** Evaluators will submit a written Program Review Report to the Department Head and the College Dean. The report summarizes the program's strengths and weaknesses, and suggests possible ways to improve identified weaknesses. The criteria outlined in Appendix B will be used to make these recommendations. A copy of these recommendations along with the written program description will be given to the College Dean and the Vice President of Academic Affairs.
5. **May:** The College Dean will submit the Program Review Report to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Appendix A

Format for Describing Program Resources, Course Offerings, Degree Options, Other Degree Options Served, and Student Achievement

I. Program Resources:

- A. Full-time Faculty:
List each full-time faculty member who is primarily associated with the program. For each, write a short paragraph that summarizes his/her academic degrees, special expertise, courses taught, number of advisees, recent professional activities, and other institutional duties.
- B. Adjunct Faculty:
List each adjunct faculty member and write a short paragraph as described above.
- C. Other Instructional Staff:
List each with a short paragraph as described above.
- D. Instructional Resources:
Describe the instructional resources available to the department. These resources may include labs, computers, software, equipment, etc.
- E. Estimated Tuition Generated:
Calculate the total credit hour production (CHP) from all of the courses taught by the department during the last academic year and then multiply this CHP by the current tuition. This estimated tuition generated can be used to determine the difference between program costs and income earned.
- F. Other Tangible Resources:
Summarize other sources of income or other support. These other resources may include lab fees, grants, and service agreements with other agencies.
- G. Investments for the Future:
In this section, the department may describe other considerations that may have future value for the department or that may establish a foundation for future resources. Examples of assets that could be included here include external certifications, development of new programs that will grow in enrollment, special recruiting efforts that may increase future enrollments, submission of a grant proposal, regional or national recognition, and scholarly papers or presentations co-authored by students.

II. Direct Program Costs:

Summarize the annual cost for operating the department. This cost should include personnel, equipment, and supplies but should not include non-departmental administrative costs or other overhead allocations.

III. Courses offered by the Department:

The department should prepare a list of courses listed in the current ASU catalog. Beside each course, quantitative information obtained from the Coordinator of Institutional Research should be provided. The following facts should be listed in a matrix format:

- A. The number of academic degree options that require this course or list it as one of a few choices.
- B. The number of sections offered during the past academic year.
- C. The total enrollment during the past academic year.
- D. The mean number of students per section during the past academic year.
- E. Estimated tuition generated by this course during the last academic year.
- F. Other income, such as lab and technology fees, generated by this course during the last academic year.

IV. Departmental degree options:

The department should prepare a list of the academic degree options that are administered primarily by the department. This list should include both major and minor degree options. For each degree option, summarize the following information:

- A. A general description of the option and a statement of its purpose.
- B. A listing of the departmental courses required for the degree.
- C. The number of graduates in the past academic year and the estimated amount of tuition generated by graduates of this degree option.
- D. Suggestions for objectively evaluating the quality of the degree option and the extent to which it achieves its intended purpose. Some possible ways to evaluate the quality would be: student scores on a nationally standardized test, the number of graduates who go on to graduate or professional school, and satisfaction surveys of our graduates.
- E. The prorated costs of the degree option. This prorated cost would be based primarily upon the number of graduates but could vary somewhat depending upon the extent of course overlap for two different degree options.

V. Degree Options offered by other Departments that are supported by the Department:

The department should prepare a list of other degree options that require courses taught by the department. For each degree option, summarize the following information:

- A. A listing of the departmental courses required by the degree option.
- B. The number of graduates in the past academic year and the estimated amount of tuition generated by graduates of this option.
- C. The prorated costs of the degree option. This prorated cost would be based primarily upon the number of graduates but could vary somewhat depending upon the extent of course overlap for two different degree options.

VI Student Achievement

The department should prepare a summary of student achievement. For each degree option, summarize the following information:

- A. Graduation Rate/Degrees Awarded
- B. Licensure Examinations Passing Rates (for programs w/ licensure and certification track)
- C. Job Placement
- D. Graduate or Professional School Placement

Appendix B

Program Review Criteria (Questions to ask during the review)

For each program reviewed during the year, evaluators will prepare a written report that summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the academic department, and make recommendations for future improvements. This report will be based upon quantitative, qualitative, and organizational efficiency criteria. Ideally, these conclusions and recommendations will be based upon comparisons with similar departments at other institutions as well as comparisons with other departments at ASU. Some of the criteria that will be considered are listed below:

I. Evaluation of Program Resources and Direct Instructional Costs:

- A. Qualifications of faculty and instructional staff: Is there an adequate number of faculty members who possess the terminal degrees in their field? How well are the individual faculty members qualified to teach the courses they teach? Is there a need for additional faculty with special qualifications?
- B. Adequacy of instructional resources: Are there adequate resources for teaching each course? Are the resources in good condition? Is there sufficient equipment for the number of students enrolled in each section?
- C. Ratio of direct instructional costs to generated income: To what degree is the department able to cover its direct instructional costs with tuition, fees, and other income?
- D. Other: What other quantitative and qualitative factors should be considered when evaluating the resources of the department?

II. Evaluation of Individual Courses Offered:

- A. Mean number of students per section: Is there an adequate number of students enrolled in each course?
- B. Importance for majors in the field: Is this course commonly required at other institutions? Is its content necessary for high scores on nationally standardized exams or for admission to graduate schools? Does this course teach specific skills that are desired by prospective employers?
- C. Income generated: How much tuition and fees are generated by the course?
- D. Other factors: What other factors should be considered when evaluating each other?

III. Evaluation of Each Departmental Degree Options (i.e., major and minor CIP codes):

- A. Number of graduates per year: Does the degree option have a viable number of graduates per year?
- B. Prorated cost: What is the prorated cost of the degree option? If a department offers 2 or more degree options that include many of the same courses, the small enrollment option may have a low prorated cost since most of the courses are offered for the other degree options. Thus, some degree options with few graduates could be justified in terms of little additional cost.
- C. Need: What job and graduate school opportunities are available for graduates of this degree option? Is this degree option available and accessible at other nearby institutions?
- D. Results from program evaluation measures: How well do our graduates compare with graduates from other institutions?
- E. Other: How does the total cost to the student at ASU compare with the cost at other institutions? What feedback has been received from employers and graduate schools? What comments have been made on satisfaction surveys completed by our graduates?

IV. Evaluation of Support for Other Degree Options:

- A. Estimated income generated: For each degree option supported by the department, determine the number of credits a graduate would have taken in departmental courses and then multiply this number by the number of graduates during the past academic year and by the current tuition rate. Then add in the amount of income generated to the department by serving the needs of students in other degree options.
- B. Prorated cost: Determine the prorated costs of serving these other degree options as described above.
- C. Other: What other information is available to evaluate the extent to which the department is serving the needs of the other degree options? Such evidence may include feedback from other department faculty, employers, and students.