ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW HANDBOOK
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

Prepared by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness
January 2025

About this Handbook

This handbook was designed to facilitate a successful academic program review (APR) process. It provides detailed information as to what an APR entails, including the specific steps and a timeline of the process. Guiding questions and other resources are provided to support self-study activities and lead to actionable items aimed at improving student outcomes over time. The Table of Contents can be used to quickly navigate to a specific section or resource.

Department chairs and program coordinators are encouraged to share this handbook and its accompanying resources with faculty and staff participating in the review to ensure everyone is aware of the expectations for completing an APR.

If you have questions about the APR process, please contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at assessment@southalabama.edu.

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Introduction

Academic Program Review (APR) is required of all programs without periodic, discipline-specific accreditation or approval. APR provides program faculty the opportunity to more thoroughly examine student outcomes and what steps can be taken to improve student success.

Focus of APR

For the purpose of APR, student outcomes encompass more than just the learning outcomes that are assessed through the annual assessment process.

"Student outcomes" refers to a broader scope of outcomes such as course success rates, retention and graduation rates, preparedness of graduates, and job placement and graduate school acceptance rates.

Learning outcomes (LOs) are a type of student outcome that define the specific knowledge, skills, and values students should acquire upon successful completion of a course of study.

APR Cycle and Coordination

APR operates on a seven-year cycle. New programs undergo APR after completing their post-implementation review by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education and every seven years thereafter. The APR schedule can be found on the OIE website under Assessment>Academic Program Review.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) assists and coordinates the APR process by:

- maintaining the review schedule;
- providing orientation sessions for academic programs prior to review;
- providing institutional data (in conjunction with Institutional Research);
- compiling data for peer programs;
- conducting surveys and/or focus groups of current students upon request; and
- training on and assisting with Watermark's Planning and Self-Study (P&SS), the University's assessment management system.
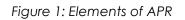
In addition to the above,
program faculty as needed.

Overview of Academic Program Review Process

The APR process is comprised of three elements:

- A self-study of the program with a focus on student outcomes;
- A peer review of the self-study by a qualified external reviewer; and
- An action plan designed to improve student outcomes.
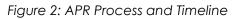

Figure 1: Elements of APR

As displayed in Figure 1, the self-study and external review should result in an action plan aimed at improving student outcomes with steps to be implemented over the next one to five years. That action plan is monitored through the annual assessment process.

The APR process is typically completed in three phases over three long semesters (see Figure 2). Programs are expected to adhere to this timeline and complete their APR on schedule.[1] A more comprehensive timeline for each phase of the APR process, including specific tasks and responsible individuals, is provided in Appendix A of this handbook.

Figure 2: APR Process and Timeline

The completed program review (self-study, external reviewer's report, and action plan) and all supporting documentation should be loaded into P&SS by the end of April of the APR year for review and approval of the dean. Once approved by the dean, OIE staff will review the completed APR and provide feedback. The resulting action plan is added to the program's annual assessment plan in the fall following the review year.

Annual Assessment during APR

Programs are not required to report on the annual assessment of student learning outcomes for the year they complete an APR. (See Figure 3.) However, they are encouraged to continue to collect assessment data and include it in their annual assessment report for the year following their review.

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[1] Programs that anticipate a shortage of resources to complete their APR within the scheduled timeframe should contact OIE to discuss scheduling alternatives. Extensions for completing an APR will not be given.

Figure 3: Annual Assessment Activities during APR

Self-Study

Prepared by the program faculty, the self-study is not simply a description of the current state of the program. Instead, the self-study should be a forward-thinking analysis that considers the program's student outcomes and what actions can be taken to positively impact student success.

Below is an outline of the self-study and its major sections. A more detailed outline with guiding questions and suggested resources for each section can be found in Appendix B of this handbook. Appendix C provides a list of the supporting documentation and evidence that is to be submitted with the self-study. The recommended length for the self-study is 10 – 12 pages, not including appendices.

I. Program Overview
   A. Introduction
   B. Mission Statement
   C. Changes since last APR
   D. Peer Programs
II. Program Details
   A. Enrollment
   B. Curriculum
   C. Program Learning Outcomes
   D. Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes
III. Student Outcomes Assessment
   A. Quality of Student Learning
   B. Student Progression through Program
   C. Quality of Instruction
   D. Preparedness of Graduates

IV. Summary and Action Plan
   A. Conclusions
   B. Action Plan
   C. Response to External Review

Expectation of Broad-based Participation

Although the program may choose to appoint a committee to write the self-study, wide-spread program level participation is expected. It is imperative that the development of the narrative consider the perceptions of all stakeholders – faculty, staff, administrators (advisers, recruiters, support staff), students, alumni, and employers. Meeting regularly with faculty and staff throughout the self-study is critical to the process. Perceptions of other stakeholders can be gathered in the form of surveys and/or focus groups.

Student Perceptions

While input from all stakeholders is expected, *programs are **required** to include student feedback in their program review.* If the program routinely collects and reports on student perceptions as a part of their annual assessment, these data may be utilized in the APR. Otherwise, input can be gathered through surveys and/or focus groups of currently enrolled students. OIE staff are available to assist with conducting surveys and/or focus groups. A sample survey and focus group protocol can be found in Appendices I and J.

Resource Data

To alleviate the burden of collecting large amounts of complex data, OIE provides a core set of data to be utilized in the review process. These data elements are listed below:

- Student Enrollment by Semester for the last five years
- Student Credit Hours generated by program majors
- Course Success Rates for the last three years
- Retention and Graduation Rates (Undergraduate programs only)
- Time to Degree (Graduate programs only)
- Number of Degrees Awarded
- Annual Assessment reports for the last three years (or sufficient number of recent reports to provide a three-year trend for each outcome)

The following resources will need to be by compiled by the program faculty:

- Student Perceptions – results from survey or focus group of current students (Note: If OIE is asked to collect student feedback, OIE will provide a summary of results.)
- Summary of Post-Graduate Outcomes for the last three years (may include, but is not limited to, exit surveys, alumni surveys, employment rates, graduate school acceptance rates, etc.)
- Student Participation in High Impact Practices (HIPs; Undergraduate programs only)
- Curriculum Map
- Degree Plan – for most programs, this will be the Graduation Plan published in the University Bulletin.

Additional guidance on where to employ each of these resources is provided in the detailed self-study outline in Appendix B.

Peer Programs

When feasible, peer comparison data should be included in the self-study. Programs should identify at least three to five peer programs. Additional guidance for identifying peer programs can be found in Appendix D. OIE staff will assist in gathering peer comparison data. *While peer comparisons are a valuable part of the APR process and should be included, it is not required to complete the self-study.*

External Review

An external review provides an objective assessment of how well the program is supporting student success and achieving its student outcomes. The external review may be conducted virtually, although in some instances, an on-site campus visit may be warranted. *While a site visit is optional, an external review is **required** for a complete APR.* The department chair and/or program coordinator should confer with the dean to determine whether or not the external reviewer will conduct an on-site visit.

Selecting an External Reviewer

Expectations regarding the qualifications of the reviewer should be discussed with the dean. Minimum qualifications for the external reviewer are:

- Certified reviewer from a professional association or a distinguished colleague in the discipline; and,
- Must not have a conflict of interest (e.g., current/former USA faculty, family member, or business partner with current departmental faculty).

The department chair and/or program coordinator will identify three potential reviewers and submit the curriculum vitae for each to the dean who will make the final selection and notify the department.

Suggested Schedule for External Review

The completed self-study and supporting documentation should be made available to the external reviewer no less than two weeks in advance of the site visit. Just as board participation is expected in the self-study, the site visit should include opportunities for the external reviewer to visit with multiple stakeholder groups. At a minimum, separate meetings should be scheduled with program faculty, current students, and the dean/dean's representative.

Guidelines for External Reviewer's Report

A suggested outline for the external review's report, including questions to consider, is provided in Appendix E. Program faculty are encouraged to include any additional questions they would like the external reviewer to address as well. This outline should be provided to the external reviewer with the completed self-study in advance of the external review. It should be noted that this is a *suggested* outline only and reviewers are welcome to develop their own format.

Action Plan

The intent of an APR is to identify what steps the program can take to support the continuous improvement of student outcomes. Based on the findings from the self-study, this action plan should include:

- Two short-term action items that can be implemented within a short time frame (typically a year); and
- Two-long-term action items that may require more long-term planning.

A draft of the action plan is included in the self-study for the external reviewer's review and feedback. Each action item should include:

- Rational for the selected action;
- Details on how the action item will be implemented, including the specific steps to be taken and a timeline;
- Expected impact of the action taken; and
- How that impact will be determined.

Final Review and Approval

Once the external reviewer's report has been received, the faculty should review and discuss the feedback with their department chair and dean. The program's response to the external reviewer's findings should be added to the self-study and the action plan

updated as needed. The external reviewer's report, program's response, and any updates to the action plan are uploaded to P&SS and the completed APR is submitted to the dean for final approval.

Suggestions for Organizing the Process

The following suggestions for organizing the APR process are intended to facilitate a successful review. These suggestions are also incorporated into the timeline presented in Appendix A.

- Appoint a self-study committee
  - Three or more faculty (junior and senior level)
  - Consider employing assessment committee (if program has one)
- Create a detailed timeline for self-study
  - Include meeting dates/times
  - Assign tasks
- Ensure broad-based participation
  - Solicit input from faculty, students, advisers, alumni, and employers
- Utilize provided resources
  - Self-study outline with guiding questions and suggested resources
  - Timelines for each phase of the review
  - Worksheets and other guides
- Focus on student outcomes
  - How to prepare student for what comes next
  - Consider University's LevelUP QEP when developing action items

Appendix A:
Academic Program Review Timeline

Spring Prior to APR Year

When	Activity	Responsible Person(s)/Office
January		
2nd week	Notify program of upcoming review	OIE
February		
1st week	Attend APR Orientation (conducted by OIE)	Chair/Program coordinator
2nd – 3rd weeks	Meet with Dean to discuss • Format for External Review • External Reviewer Requirements • Organization of Self-study	Chair/Program coordinator
4th week	Deadline to request OIE assistance gathering student feedback (survey or focus groups; by end of the month)	Chair/Program coordinator
March		
1st – 4th weeks	Appoint self-study committee Develop timeline for self-study	Chair/Program coordinator
	Survey students/conduct focus groups	OIE
	Collect student feedback (if OIE assistance *not* requested)	Chair/Program coordinator
2nd week	Submit list of potential external reviewers to dean	Chair/Program coordinator
4th week	Forward list of approved external reviewers to Chair and/or Program coordinator/director (by end of month)	Dean
April		
1st – 4th weeks	Research possible peer programs	Chair/Program coordinator
	Begin collecting additional data/resources: • Summary of Post-Graduate Outcomes • Student Participation in HIPs (UG only) • Degree plan • Curriculum Map	Chair/Program coordinator Self-study committee
4th week	Submit list of peer programs to OIE (by end of month)	Chair/Program coordinator
	Secure external reviewer (by end of month)	Chair/Program coordinator

Fall of Review Year

When	Activity	Responsible Person(s) / Office
September		
1st week	Forward data packets to programs	OIE
	Follow-up with External Reviewer as needed Finalize date(s) of review	Chair/Program coordinator
1st – 2nd weeks	Finish compiling additional data/resources: • Summary of Post-Graduate Outcomes • Student Participation in HIPs (UG only) • Degree plan • Curriculum map	Chair/Program coordinator Self-study committee
Mid-September – December	Self-Study activities[1] • Review mission statement; revise as needed • Discuss changes since last APR • Draft section I of self-study • Review and discuss program data • Review and discuss program curriculum and learning outcomes[2] • Review and discuss assessment plan • Draft section II of self-study • Gather input from program stakeholders on student outcomes • Review and discuss student outcome[2] data • Draft section III of self-study • Identify program strengths and areas in need of improvement (as they related to student outcomes) • Identify action items • Develop action plan with specific steps and timeline for each action item • Draft narrative for section IV of self-study	Self-study committee

NOTES:

(1) The activities listed here are *suggestions* based on the sections of the self-study. Programs are strongly encouraged to develop their own timeline for completing their self-study with specific tasks, dates, and assigned responsibilities.

(2) The terms "Learning Outcomes" and "Student Outcomes" represent two different types of outcomes.

- Learning outcomes refer to the specific knowledge, skills, and values students should acquire upon successful completion of the program.
- Student outcomes encompass a broader scope of outcomes such as course success rates, retention and graduation rates, preparedness of graduates, and job placement/graduate school acceptance rates. Learning outcomes are included as a type of student outcome.

Spring of Review Year

When	Activity	Responsible Person(s) / Office
January		
1st – 4th weeks	Finalize narrative of self-study	Self-study committee
3rd and 4th weeks	Prepare schedule for external review	Chair/Program coordinator Self-study committee
	Provide training on how to enter APR materials into P&SS	OIE
February		
1st week	Enter self-study and all supporting documentation into P&SS.	Chair/Program coordinator
	Submit self-study to dean and OIE for preliminary approval (by end of 1st week)	Chair/Program coordinator
3rd and 4th weeks	Preliminary approval of self-study	Dean OIE
	Send self-study and all supporting documentation to External Reviewer (at least two weeks prior to review) Finalize preparations for external review	Chair/Program coordinator
March		
1st – 4th weeks	External Review (with or without site visit) conducted	Chair/Program coordinator Self-study committee
April		
2nd week	External Reviewer's report submitted to dean (target due date end of second week depending on timing of actual review)	External Reviewer
3rd and 4th weeks	Review External Reviewer's report and discuss with dean Draft response to External Reviewer's report Update action plan as need	Chair/Program coordinator Self-study committee
	Enter external reviewer's report and updates to self-study into P&SS. Submit APR to dean and OIE for final approval (by end of month)	Chair/Program coordinator

Additional APR Activities

When	Activity	Responsible Person(s) / Office
Summer prior to Review	Compile all data resources for programs • Core data • Peer data • Student Perceptions (if OIE assistance was requested)	OIE
Summer after Review	Review APR and provide feedback to programs (by the end of August)	OIE
Fall after Review	Submit action items in lieu of annual assessment report (due 3rd Thursday in October)	Chair/Program coordinator
	Implement action plan	Program Faculty

I.   **Program Overview** (no more than 2 pages)

    A. **Introduction**

    Provide a brief description of the program. Include the following information:

- Degree(s) offered
- History of the program
- Context of where it's housed within the University (what department, etc.)
- How the program supports the University's mission and strategic plan

    B. **Mission Statement**

    Enter the program's mission statement. Discuss any changes to the mission statement since the last review.

    Question(s) to consider:

- Have there been any changes to the mission? If yes, what was the rationale for those changes?
- Is the mission statement current and relevant? Does it need to be updated?

    Resource(s):

- Checklist for reviewing a mission statement (Appendix F)

    C. **Changes since last APR** (If this is your program's first APR, leave this section blank.)

- Provide a summary of the recommendations from the program's last APR, the changes that were made in response to those recommendations, and the impact of those changes.
- Discuss any other changes that have occurred since the last APR, including the rationale for and impact of those changes. Changes discussed should focus on actions intended to impact the program as opposed to an individual course within the program.

    Resource(s):

- Action items from assessment of student learning (annual assessment reports)

D. Peer Programs

Provide a list of three to five peer programs. These may or may not be programs within the University's peer institutions. You should identify peer programs that are most like your program and/or are aspirational programs.

Resource(s):

- Identifying peer programs (Appendix D)

II. Program Details (no more than 3 pages)

A. Enrollment

Discuss the trends in the program's student enrollment and how they compare to that of its peer programs.

Question(s) to consider:

1. Is student enrollment and credit hour production adequate and/or appropriate to support the program and create an environment of continued success for students?
2. How does the program's enrollment compare to that of its peer programs? (If data is available.)

Resource(s):

- Student Enrollment by Semester for the Last Five Years
- Student Credit Hours generated by program majors

B. Curriculum

Describe the course pathway students take to complete this degree program.

Question(s) to consider:

1. How does the design of the curriculum facilitate student learning?
2. Does the curriculum reflect coherence in sequencing and increasing complexity?
3. What changes, if any, have been made to this pathway or degree requirements over the course of this cycle? What was the rationale for these changes?
4. How does the program's curriculum compare to that of its peer programs, including the inclusion or exclusion of program requirements?

Resource(s):

- Degree plan
- Curriculum Map

- Guide to creating a curriculum map (appendix G)

C. Program Learning Outcomes

Enter the program's student learning outcomes. Discuss the relevance of these outcomes and how they are addressed through the curriculum.

Question(s)s to consider:

1. How do these outcomes pertain to the program's mission?
2. Do the learning outcomes reflect the knowledge, skills, and values students will need to successfully pursue a career in their chosen profession and/or continued studies?
3. How do the student learning outcomes align with industry needs?
4. What changes, if any, have been made to these outcomes? What was the rationale for these changes?
5. Do all of the key courses address at least one outcome? Are the outcomes addressed in a logical order?
6. Are all outcomes first introduced and then reinforced?
7. Do students get practice on all the outcomes before being assessed, e.g., in the capstone?
8. Do all students, regardless of which electives they choose, experience a coherent progression and coverage of all outcomes?

Resource(s):

- Curriculum Map
- Guide to creating a curriculum map (Appendix G)
- Assessment of student learning (annual assessment reports)

D. Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes

Discuss the strategies employed to assess how well students achieve the program's learning outcomes.

Question(s) to consider?

1. What measures have been selected or developed to assess student learning outcomes? Is there at least one direct measure for each learning outcome?
2. Do these measures provide adequate diagnostic information that allow faculty to identify students' strengths and areas where additional support is needed?
3. What changes, if any, have been made to the assessment process? What was the rationale for these changes?
4. How do program faculty participate in the assessment process?
5. What additional assessment opportunities are there that could be included in the assessment process?

Resource(s):

- Curriculum Map
- Guide to creating a curriculum map (appendix G)
- Assessment of student learning (annual assessment reports)

III. **Student Outcomes Assessment** (no more than 3 pages)

A. **Quality of Student Learning**

Discuss the quality of student learning.

Question(s) to consider:

1. To what extent have students met the program's learning outcomes?
2. Are there student learning outcomes where students perform particularly poorly or particularly well?
3. Is the standard for achievement set at an appropriate level?
4. Are there student learning outcomes where the standard for achievement should be raised or lowered?
5. Is the standard understood and agreed upon by all faculty?
6. Where data are available, how do the program's students compare to students in other USA programs or nationally?

Resource(s):

- Assessment of student learning (annual assessment reports)

B. **Student Progression through Program**

Discuss students' ability to progress through the program and graduate.

Question(s) to consider:

1. Has student retention remained in an acceptable range?
2. Are completion rates in line with expectations?
   (GR Programs: Is time to completion in line with expectations?)
3. How does the program's student retention and completion rates compare to that of its peer programs? (if data is available.)
4. Do students exhibit difficulty progressing through the major at any point? If no, what are the things that faculty do that support student progression? If yes, at what points and/or why?
5. Do students exhibit difficulty completing the program? If no, what are the things that faculty do that support student completion? If yes, at what points and/or why?

Resource(s):

- Retention and Graduation Rates (Undergraduate programs only)
- Time to degree (Graduate programs only)
- Course Success Rates
- Number of degrees awarded
- Assessment of student learning (annual assessment reports)

C. Quality of Instruction

Discuss the quality of instruction overall as well as in the program's key courses.

Questions to consider:

1. If there are areas of student learning identified as needing improvement (improving outcomes or raising standards), is modification/improvement of instruction identified as a possible means to improvement?
2. Have there been efforts made to support and/or improve the quality of faculty instruction? If yes, what were those efforts?
3. Did program faculty implement any high impact practices and what was their effect, if any, on student learning outcomes, faculty or student engagement, etc. (UG programs only)

Resource(s):

- Assessment of student learning (annual assessment reports)
- Student Perceptions
- Student Participation in High Impact Practices (UG program only)

D. Preparedness of Graduates

Discuss how prepared students are to enter the workforce and/or continue their education.

Question(s) to consider:

1. How do the program's student learning outcomes translate to knowledge, skills, and/or values that make your students attractive to potential employers and/or graduate school?
2. How prepared did current and former students indicate they were to enter the workforce and/or continue their education?
3. If your program includes an internship, practicum or other practical experience, how prepared do site supervisors find students to be?
4. How do employers perceive program graduates?

Resource(s):

- Assessment of student learning (annual assessment reports)
- Summary of Post-Graduate Outcomes
- Student Perceptions

IV. Summary and Action Plan (no more than 3 pages)

A. Conclusions

Provide a summary of the significant conclusions drawn from the program review process. Include:

- Program's strengths
- Areas in need of improvement

Data/evidence must be used to justify the conclusions.

Sections B – E: Identify four action items, two short-term and two long-term, designed to have a positive impact on student achievement and the assessment of it. The description of each action item should include:

- A statement as to why a particular action plan was selected.

- The specific action steps to be taken.

- Details on how the action item will be implemented and monitored.

- Details on how the impact of the action item will be assessed.

- Timeline for implementing the action plan.

B. Short-term Action Item 1

C. Short-term Action Item 2

D. Long-term Action Item 1

E. Long-term Action Item 2

F. Response to External Review

Appendix C:
Required Supporting Documentation/Evidence as Appendices for APR

A. Chair and Program coordinator/director Curriculum Vitae

B. Curriculum Map

C. Degree Plan

D. List of Peer Programs with links to websites

E. Student Enrollment by Semester for the last five years

F. Student Credit Hours generated by program majors

G. Course Success Rates for the last three years

H. Number of Degrees Awarded

I. Retention and Graduation Rates (Undergraduate programs only)

J. Time to Degree (Graduate programs only)

K. Annual Assessment reports for the Last Three Years (or most recent three years of completed reports)

L. Student Perceptions

M. Student Participation in High Impact Practices (Undergraduate programs only)

N. Summary of Post-Graduate Outcomes for the Last Three Years

Notes:
- Items E – J are provided by OIE.
- For Item D, the faculty are responsible for identifying the peer programs. OIE will provide a summary table with links to each program's website (where available).
- Item L is provided by OIE only if program requested assistance gathering student feedback. Otherwise, the program faculty are responsible for compiling this information.
- Item K is available in P&SS under the program's "Docs & Reports" section.
- The remaining items are to be compiled by the program faculty.

Appendix D:
Identifying Peer Programs

As you prepare for your Academic Program Review, you will need to identify 3-5 peer programs from other institutions that you consider comparable to your program. Peer programs should:

- Be similar in program size and scope;
- Have comparable student demographics; and
- Have corresponding faculty expertise and resources.

The US Department of Education College Scorecard is a useful resource for identifying potential peer programs. This tool allows you to search for comparable schools by field of study, size, graduation rate, and other factors.

Additionally, the University of South Alabama has a list of comparable peer institutions that you may consider. However, you are not limited to this list.

Once you have identified a list of peer programs, please complete the *Peer Program Identification Form* and submit it to OIE via email at assessment@southalabama.edu. OIE staff will use this list to collect and compile peer data for your program study. To ensure we have ample time to collect this data, please submit your completed form no later than April 30th of the current academic year.

Appendix E:
Guidelines for External Reviewer

This suggested outline is provided as a guide to you as a reviewer, but is not considered a template. You are welcome to organize your response differently and integrate all areas of the self-study as you wish.

Your response provides programmatic feedback on a forward-thinking analysis that considers the program's student outcomes and what action can be taken to positively impact student success. The result of this process is an action plan aimed at improving student outcomes with steps to be implemented over the next one to five years. This action plan should include two short-term (typically less than a year) and two long-term action items. Your feedback will help to inform how that action plan and faculty can better support student success

Focus of Academic Program Review at South

Academic Program Review (APR) at the University of South Alabama is focused primarily on student outcomes. In addition to learning outcomes that define the specific knowledge, skills, and values student should acquire, student outcomes include a broad scope of outcomes such as course success rates, retention and graduation rates, preparedness of graduates, and job placement and graduate school acceptance rates.

Suggested Outline

I. Executive Summary
    a. Discuss the overall quality of the program with regards to student outcomes.
        i.   What are the specific strengths of the program?
        ii. What are the specific areas in need of improvement?
    b. List any recommendations you may have for the program faculty.

II. Overview of Review Process
    a. Provide a brief overview of the review process, what information other than the self-study was employed in the review such as meetings, interviews, document review, etc.

III. Program Overview
    a. Provide any feedback or general observations of the program as a whole and how it supports the University's mission and strategic plan.

IV. Program Details
    a. Enrollment – Compared to similar programs, is the student enrollment and credit hour production adequate and/or appropriate to support the program and create an environment of continued success for its students?

b. Curriculum – Compared to peer programs and/or expectations from professional/disciplinary association(s), evaluate the currency of the curriculum including the inclusion or exclusion of program requirements such as capstone/internship experience, portfolio, thesis, etc.

c. Program Learning Outcomes (LOs) – Evaluate the learning outcomes and assessment methods used by the faculty. Your evaluation should address the following questions:

    i. Do the LOs clearly state the knowledge, skills, and values students will acquire upon completion of the program?

    ii. Are the LOs clearly mapped back to the curriculum?

    iii. Are the LOs current/relevant as compared to similar programs' expected outcomes?

    iv. Are appropriate direct measures employed in the assessment of all LOs?

    v. Are the assessments aligned with the expected LOs with regard to relevancy, rigor, and timeliness?

    vi. (For graduate programs with a related undergraduate degree) Do the LOs demonstrate post-baccalaureate rigor?

V. Student Outcomes Assessment

a. Evaluate the program's student outcomes and how well the program supports students in attaining their educational goals. You evaluation should consider the following:

    i. To what extent are students meeting the expected learning outcomes?

    ii. Are students able to progress through the program in a timely manner?

    iii. What has the program done to ensure quality of instruction?

    iv. Are graduates prepared to enter the workforce and/or continue their education?

VI. Recommendations

a. Based on your review and evaluation, provide recommendations for future actions aimed at improving student outcomes that the program faculty should consider.

Appendix F:
Checklist for Mission Statement

A mission statement…

- is a broad statement of *who* the program is, *what* it does, *why* it does what it does, and *for whom* it does it

- is a clear description of the *purpose* of the program and the learning environment

- reflects how the program contributes to the education and careers of students graduating from the program

- may reflect how the teaching and research efforts are used to enhance student learning

- is *aligned* with department, college, and university missions

- should be distinctive for the program

Components of a Mission Statement

Primary functions or activities of the program – most important functions, operations, outcomes, and/or offerings of the program

Purpose of the program – primary reasons *why* you perform your major activities or operations

Stakeholders – groups or individuals that participate in the program and those that will benefit from the program

Checklist for a Mission Statement

- ☐ Is the statement clear and concise?

- ☐ Does it clearly state the purpose of the program?

- ☐ Does it indicate the primary function or activities of the program?

- ☐ Does it indicate who the stakeholders are?

- ☐ Does it support the mission of the department, college, and university?

- ☐ Is it distinctive and memorable?

- ☐ Does it reflect the programs priorities and values?

Appendix G:
Guide to Creating a Curriculum Map

A curriculum map is a useful tool for visualizing the relationship between a program's learning outcomes (LOs) and its courses. The exercise of creating a curriculum map can help faculty:

- Identify program strengths – LOs that are thoroughly addressed;

- identify gaps – LOs that are addressed by only a few courses;

- Determine if students are taking courses in an optimal sequence; and

- Identifies assessment opportunities.

A curriculum map is structured as a two-dimensional matrix with courses arrayed across the top and LOs listed down the left side (see table below). If a LO is addressed within a particular course, the expected level of learning is noted as either I, R, or M. Opportunities for assessment may also be recorded. A sample curriculum map can be found at the end of this appendix.

	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3	Course 4	Course 5	Course 6
LO 1						
LO 2						
LO 3						
LO 4						
LO 5						

Expected Level of Learning

I = Introduced: Instructional activities focus on the foundational knowledge, skills, and/or competencies at a basic level of complexity. Students are presented with key ideas, concepts or skills, and are expected to demonstrate a basic understanding and/or acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and/or competencies related to the LO.

R =Reinforced: Instructional activities focus on enhancing and strengthening existing knowledge and skills with increasing levels of complexity. Students are expected to demonstrate an increasing level of comprehension and/or proficiency of the knowledge, skills and/or competencies related to the LO.

M= Mastery: At this advanced stage, instructional activities focus on the integration of knowledge, skills, and/or competencies and increasing levels of complexity. Students are expected to demonstrate the acquisition of the LO with a high degree of independence and expertise. Assessment of LOs typically occurs at this level.[2]

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[2] Adapted from Santa Clara University, Educational Assessment, Office of the Provost (n.d.).

Steps to developing a curriculum map

Below are the steps for constructing a curriculum map. An Excel [template](#) is available or faculty may choose to create their own matrix.

1. Compile a list of the program's learning outcomes and core/required courses.

   a. List the learning outcomes in the rows labeled "LO #." Insert additional rows if needed.

   b. List the courses across in the columns labeled "Course #." Insert additional columns if needed.

   c. It is helpful to list the courses in the sequence in which they are typically completed by students.

2. Indicate the expected level of learning each course.

   a. Ask faculty who teach each course to determine which, if any, LOs are addressed and/or assessed in the course.

   b. For those courses where one or more LOs are addressed, ask faculty to identify the expected level of learning related to each LO as an I (Introduced), R (Reinforced), or M (Mastered).

   c. Enter an I, R, or M in the appropriate cell.

3. Identify opportunities for assessment.

   a. For those courses where one or more LOs are addressed, ask faculty to identify how the student knowledge and/or skill related to the LO is assessed in their course.

   b. Enter the potential assessment[3] in the appropriate cell below the expected level of learning. Frequently used assessments include (but are not limited to):

      - Assignment (e.g., homework, case study, literature review, term papers, essay, portfolio, etc.)
      - Capstone (includes thesis, dissertation, capstone project, and portfolios that cover multiple courses)
      - Certification/Licensure Exam
      - Exam (includes standardized exams, course exam, set of items from an exam)
      - Field Assessment (e.g., internship, practicum)
      - Presentation (e.g., oral presentation, poster, exhibition of work)
      - Project (e.g., class project, research project that is not a capstone project)

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[3] Course grades are not considered to be a direct method of assessment and should not be included as a potential assessment in your curriculum map.

Questions to Ask when Creating a Curriculum Map

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) provides the following questions to ask when creating a curriculum map in its [Mapping Learning: A Toolkit](#) (2018):

- ☐ In the key courses, are all outcomes addressed, in a logical order?

- ☐ Do all the key courses address at least one outcome?

- ☐ Do multiple offerings of the same course address the same outcomes, at the same levels?

- ☐ Do some outcomes get more coverage than others?

- ☐ Are all outcomes first introduced and then developed?

- ☐ Are students expected to show high levels of learning too early?

- ☐ Do students get practice (introduced, developed) on all the outcomes before being assessed (assessment occurs at the mastery level), e.g., in the capstone?

- ☐ Do all students, regardless of which electives they choose, experience a coherent progression and coverage of all outcomes?

- ☐ What do your electives, individually and collectively, contribute to the achievement of your student learning outcomes?

Sample Curriculum Map

Program: Institutional Effectiveness BA

Enter Courses in columns and LOs in Rows		IE 101	IE 102	IE 103	IE 104	IE 105
Students will be able to produce departmental goals which are aligned with the institutions strategic plan and are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound.	Enter "I," "R," or "M"	I		R		M
	Enter potential assessments					Capstone
Students will demonstrate knowledge of qualitative and quantitative methodologies for assessment of processes and services.	Enter "I," "R," or "M"		I	R	M	
	Enter potential assessments				Exam	
Students will be able to locate sources of data for peer analysis.	Enter "I," "R," or "M"		I	R	M	
	Enter potential assessments				Assignment	
Students will be able to evaluate current campus' institutional/unit-level effectiveness initiatives and suggest areas for review and improvement.	Enter "I," "R," or "M"			I	R	M
	Enter potential assessments					Presentation
Students will be able to document evidence of closing the loop and institutional improvement as a result of assessment activities.	Enter "I," "R," or "M"	I	R			M
	Enter potential assessments					Capstone

Appendix H:
Suggested template for Summary of High Impact Practices

Below is a suggested template for how you might want to summarize information about HIPs that have been incorporated into your program.

Additional information about HIPs can be found here: https://www.aacu.org/trending-topics/high-impact.

Instructions for using this template:

- In the first column, indicate if this is an option available to students in your program or if it is a requirement to graduate.
- If the HIP is attached to a specific course(s), list the course(s).
- Provide an annual average of the number of students who have participated in this HIP for at least the last three years; no more than 5 years.
- The "Other" row is available for any additional activities you would like to include.

	Option/Required	Courses	Average Number of Students
First-Year Experience			
Learning Communities			
Writing Intensive Courses			
Collaborative Assignments & Projects (Team-Based Learning)			
Undergraduate Research			
ePortfolios			
Service & Community-Based Learning			
Internships			
Capstone Courses & Projects			
Diversity/Global Learning (includes Study Abroad)			
Other:			

Appendix I:
Student Satisfaction Survey

Welcome

Please answer the following questions about your experiences in the _____ program. Your opinion is very important and helps inspire change where needed. Your responses to the following survey questions are confidential and your individual responses will NOT be reported.

If you have any questions or comments about the survey, please contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at effectiveness@southalabama.edu or (251) 460-6447. We greatly appreciate your participation and thank you for your time.

Clicking next and continuing with the survey indicates your voluntary participation.

This section of the questionnaire asks questions regarding the different activities, in class or out of class, that students participate in while enrolled in the _____ program.

1. Which of the following have you done or plan to do before you graduate? (Undergraduate programs only)

	Done or in progress	Plan to do	Do not plan to do	Have not decided
a. Work with a faculty member on a research project				
b. Work with a faculty member on a creative project				
c. Present the results of research, scholarly activities, or creative works at a formal conference or exhibition either on campus or elsewhere				
d. Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together				
e. Participate in a study abroad program				
f. Participate in an internship, co-op, field experience, student teaching, or clinical placement				
g. Participate in service learning (volunteering required as part of a class)				
h. Volunteer in the community				
i. Hold a formal leadership role in a student organization or group				
j. Start or help launch a new organization or initiative either on or off campus				

2. **If you indicated that you have participated in any activity above, please provide feedback on your experience(s).**

3. **The following questions ask about your experience with coursework in your program. These courses typically have a subject code(s) of _____ .**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	N/A
a. The courses in my program prepared me for my future career.					
b. The courses in my program have prepared me for graduate/professional school.					
c. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of my program's courses					

4. **The following questions ask about your experience with different course formats. When responding to these questions, think about the courses in your program only. These courses typically have a subject code(s) of _____ .**

How satisfied are you with the *quality of instruction* in your…	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	N/A
a. On-campus courses					
b. Online courses					
c. Hybrid courses (combination on-campus and online)					
How satisfied are you with the *accessibility of the instructor* in your…					
a. On-campus courses					
b. Online courses					
c. Hybrid courses (combination on-campus and online)					

5. **What did you like about the coursework in your program?**

6. What are some improvements you think your program can make to the course offerings?

7. To what extent has the ___ program …

	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Very much
a. inspired you to make connections between ideas from different disciplines?				
b. addressed topics from multiple disciplinary perspectives?				
c. delved deeply into complex issues?				

8. The next set of questions focuses on the quality of your academic advising experience *within the _____ program* outside of your first year advising.

How satisfied are you with…	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
a. the overall quality of academic advising that you have received				
b. information about courses, programs, and requirements provided through academic advising				
c. the availability of academic advising				

9. Please provide feedback on your academic advising experience.

10. What is the highest level of education that you wish to acquire? (Undergraduate programs only)

- ○ Certificate (EMS)
- ○ Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)
- ○ Post Baccalaureate Certificate
- ○ Master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.)
- ○ Doctoral or professional degree (Ph.D., J.D., M.D., Ed.S., etc.)

11. In your time here, how would you rate your overall educational experience?

- ○ Poor

- ○ Fair

- ○ Good

- ○ Excellent

12. Please add any additional comments regarding your academic experiences at USA.

13. What is your classification?

- ○ Sophomore

- ○ Junior

- ○ Senior

- ○ Graduate – Master's

- ○ Graduate - PhD

Appendix J:
Focus Group Protocol

(5 minutes) Welcome and Introduction

The University of South Alabama values your insights on [PROGRAM] and how it has contributed to your progress and success during your time here. This focus group is part of an academic program review that occurs every seven years, to identify ways to improve the program and better support student success. Your feedback is crucial to this process.

We encourage open discussion, as your candid thoughts—whether on areas that are working well or need improvement—are equally important. I understand that being part of a select group might make discussing certain topics feel daunting, but please know that this session aims to explore opportunities for growth within the program.

Rest assured, your feedback will remain confidential. No individual responses will be attributed to you personally; instead, your comments will be compiled and shared with the faculty conducting the program's self-study in an aggregated format. Just as we will keep your responses confidential, we ask that you extend the same respect to your classmates by maintaining their privacy as well.

Participation in this focus group is entirely voluntary. During the session, we will explore your progression and retention within the program, curriculum structure, and your experiences with faculty. Additionally, we may ask for any extra feedback on areas not covered by the prompts.

Questions/Prompts:

1. What are some of the strengths of the program? (12.5 minutes)

2. What skills or competencies do you feel need more emphasis in the program? (12.5 minutes)

3. What do you feel most prepared to do with your degree? What do you feel least prepared to do? (12.5 minutes)

4. What other comments do you have about the program? (12.5 minutes)

Thank you for your time and valuable input.