

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
ACADEMIC QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
(Doc. T97-111, Performance Measurement System)**

GUIDELINES

Academic Quality Assessment and Development is a component of the University Performance Measurement System. The primary purpose of this component is to assess and improve the core academic functions of teaching and learning, research/professional/creative activity, and public service/academic outreach through an ongoing system of quality control/program assessment at the unit level (i.e., department or program).

Each campus will establish, in consultation with the President's office and in accordance with these guidelines, procedures for implementing the Academic Quality Assessment and Development. These procedures will include a list of units (programs/departments), hereinafter called "Programs", to be reviewed; the cycle of reviews; and a list of core data to be used in Program reviews on that campus. The "Program Chair" shall be defined as the person with administrative oversight of the Program. Campus procedures shall be approved by the President.

All Programs will address the same core evaluation criteria, although these criteria will have varying degrees of relevance and applicability across the campus. Programs undergoing reviews for other purposes (e.g., accreditation) may submit these reviews in lieu of the Academic Quality Assessment and Development review, provided the review addresses the core criteria. If not, the Program shall prepare and submit a supplemental document addressing the core criteria.

Process

1. Each Program shall be reviewed on a regular cycle. Ordinarily, the length of time between reviews may be no more than five to seven years, but campus procedures may establish the circumstances under which exceptions to this timeframe may be granted.
2. Each Program review shall be conducted with the participation of Program faculty members.
3. Each Program review shall consist, minimally, of the following written documents: a Program self-assessment, the external reviewers' report, a Program response to the reviewers' report, and an action plan based on the review. These written documents will be submitted to the Dean. Faculty within the Program will receive copies of all documents.
4. Each Program shall be reviewed by a team of no fewer than two external reviewers from outside the campus (one reviewer may be from another campus within the University system). The Dean, in consultation with the Program chair and faculty members, will choose the external reviewers. The campus procedures shall stipulate the questions to be addressed by the external reviewers.
5. The Dean will review and comment on the written reports. The Dean's comments will be distributed to all Program faculty, who may prepare a written response to his/her comments. The Dean will forward the Program self-assessment, external reviewers' report, Program response to the reviewers' report, and his/her comments with faculty responses, if any, to the Provost. Prior to accepting the review, the Provost will meet with the Program chair and the Dean to discuss the review and action plan.

6. The Provost of each campus shall forward to the President's office annually an executive summary of the Program reviews conducted. The summaries shall be submitted no later than June 30th. The documents comprising a review shall not, as a general matter, be circulated beyond the campus.

Core criteria and related questions

1. **Programs shall ensure that their goals and objectives are linked to the campus mission and strategic priorities.**

The Program should evaluate its purpose and planning in light of the campus mission and strategic priorities. The review should answer the following questions:

- What is the Program's mission and is it clearly aligned with the campus mission and direction?
- How does the Program's mission relate to curriculum; enrollments; faculty teaching, research/professional/creative activity, and outreach? Is it aligned with the campus strategic priorities?

2. **Programs shall ensure that curriculum is relevant, rigorous, current and coherent.**

The need to provide a high quality education for students should be the primary consideration when evaluating the relevancy, currency, and coherence of curricula. Evaluation of the curriculum should reflect an awareness of changing knowledge, trends in the discipline, and the professional context for curriculum. The review should answer the following questions:

- How does the Program determine curricular content? How does the curriculum relate to current existing standards, if any, of the discipline?
- What internal or external measures of review are employed to ensure that the curriculum is relevant and up-to-date?
- Are the curricular offerings structured in a logical, sequential and coherent manner? Is there an appropriate balance between breadth and depth?
- If consistent with the Program mission, does the curriculum adequately prepare students for further study or employment?
- In what way does the Program contribute to the education of students in terms of general knowledge, critical thinking capacity and other essential cognitive skills?

3. **Programs shall ensure faculty quality and productivity.**

Programs shall ensure that faculty possess the expertise to assure effective curriculum development, instructional design and delivery, and evaluation of outcomes. Faculty should exhibit awareness of trends in the discipline and the professional field as appropriate. Collectively, faculty should be involved in teaching, research/ professional/creative activity, and public service/academic outreach as appropriate to the mission and regional context of the campus. The review should answer the following questions:

- Do faculty possess the appropriate background, experience and credentials?
- Are faculty current in relation to the knowledge base and content of the discipline and curricular offerings?

- Are the Program expectations for faculty involvement in teaching, research/professional/creative activity, and public service/academic outreach activities appropriate; and how are these expectations met? Are these expectations consistent with program policies regarding teaching assignments, merit allocations, and other aspects of faculty roles and rewards?
- In what ways does the Program foster professional development and growth of faculty?
- In what ways does the Program faculty lend its professional expertise – as expressed through teaching and research, scholarly and creative activity – to off-campus constituencies?

4. Programs shall ensure teaching/learning environments that facilitate student success.

Programs shall provide learning environments that promote student success. Students are expected to learn both content and skills appropriate to the discipline. The program should indicate clear expectations for student learning outcomes. The teaching/learning environment should be accessible to all students, should include a variety of instructional methodologies, and should provide timely feedback to students. The review should answer the following questions:

- To what extent does the Program have articulated learning outcomes (content and skills) for students? By what means are these outcomes measured? Are they achieved by most students?
- How is assessment of student learning outcomes used in reviewing or evaluating Program curriculum and faculty?
- In what ways does the Program evaluate student success following graduation and the Programs' contribution to that success?
- What is the role of the core faculty in teaching lower division, upper division and graduate courses? What is the rationale for these assignments?

5. Programs shall ensure that resources are used wisely.

Programs shall ensure that the resources available are used to meet Program goals and objectives, and as appropriate, engage in use of innovation to enhance resources; should engage in both intra- and inter-campus collaboration; and should demonstrate a commitment to effective and efficient use of resources. The review should answer the following questions:

- What process does the Program use to allocate resources?
- In what ways does the Program maximize the use of its human resources?
- In what ways does the Program maximize the use of material resources such as space, equipment, operating funds, etc.?