



ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW GUIDELINES

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1. Introduction

In Spring 2024, New Jersey City University (NJCU) published a refreshed mission, the product of a process which engaged multiple stakeholders and reaffirmed the institution’s historic commitment to equity-driven and transformative education:

New Jersey City University empowers its students through a highly accessible, equity-driven, and transformative education. An NJCU education focuses on students' personal, professional, and civic development to facilitate their socio-economic mobility. We uplift our diverse community of students, including historically underserved and underrepresented, first-generation, and adult learners.

Building on this refreshed mission, NJCU launched an integrated, three-part strategic plan comprising its first Academic Master Plan, Strategic Enrollment Plan, and Community Engagement and Student Development Plan. These plans are built upon four foundational pillars:

- A. Student Success & Retention (SP1)
- B. Community Engagement (SP2)
- C. Culture of Continuous Improvement (SP3)
- D. Financial Stewardship & Responsibility (SP4)

To support the refreshed mission and strategic priorities, NJCU has updated its Academic Program Review (APR) policies. These updates emphasize the assessment of student learning outcomes (SP1 and SP3) and integrating the results into program-level decision-making.

The updated policies also clarify the roles and responsibilities of Deans and the Provost’s Office in ensuring the implementation of the APR process. Deans guide departments through the APR process. The Provost’s Office oversees the APR process, ensures compliance with timelines, provides administrative support, and monitors the alignment of reviews with NJCU’s strategic goals.

1.1. Purpose of Program Review

The APR process supports the improvement of academic programs and departments at NJCU. It is a collaborative process that engages faculty, deans, administrators, and the external community to examine the past, present, and future of each academic department or program. For the purposes of this document, program review refers to a holistic examination of all curricular offerings within

a department, which includes majors, minors, and certificate programs. Programs with specialized accreditation submit accreditation material in lieu of institutional program review. If some but not all of a department's programs are accredited, only non-accredited programs are subject to program review. If a department's only non-accredited program is a minor program, it is exempt from program review.

The program review process provides a framework to assist departments and deans in fulfilling NJCU's mission and advancing its four strategic pillars.

A. Student Success & Retention (SP1):

- Evaluate the effectiveness of instructional practices in supporting student learning.
- Analyze student achievement data to identify strengths and opportunities for growth.
- Ensure programs align with student needs and prepare graduates for success.

B. Community Engagement (SP2):

- Strengthening connections between academic programs and community partnerships.
- Highlight ways departments contribute to local and regional communities.
- Encourage programs to leverage expertise to address societal challenges and foster civic responsibility.

C. Culture of Continuous Improvement (SP3):

- Assess how each department contributes to the University's success and mission.
- Evaluate the alignment of curriculum with disciplinary trends, workforce demands, and societal needs.
- Foster critical reflection to identify program strengths and areas for improvement.
- Document faculty expertise, contributions to the field, and engagement in scholarship and professional development.

D. Financial Stewardship & Responsibility (SP4):

- Analyze resource needs, which include human, financial, and material resources, to sustain and enhance program quality.
- Refine program goals and objectives to ensure alignment with NJCU's strategic direction.
- Evaluate program efficiency and effectiveness to inform resource allocation decisions.

1.2 Program Review Cycle and Timeline

- Cycle Duration: Each academic program undergoes a comprehensive review every five years. If a program is accredited, accreditation reports, action plans, etc., will be submitted and reviewed in lieu of institutional program review.

- Regular Updates: Departments submit yearly reports to their dean highlighting progress on action plans, assessment results, and significant changes.

1.3 Participants in Academic Program Review

APR engages faculty and staff of an academic department, with a focus on each degree program, as well as (where appropriate), students, alumni, community stakeholders, and employers.

- Department Chairs:
 - Lead the self-study process and coordinate faculty participation.
 - Ensure alignment of program objectives with NJCU's mission and strategic goals.
 - Oversee the assessment of student learning outcomes and the implementation of action plans.
- Faculty Members:
 - Engage in the self-study and assessment processes.
 - Contribute to the development and revision of curricula based on assessment findings.
 - Participate in discussions regarding program improvements and resource needs.
- Deans and Associate Deans. Full responsibilities are detailed in the document entitled, “Academic Program Review Guidelines for Academic Deans”. Core duties include:
 - Direct and guide departments throughout the review process.
 - Review self-study reports and facilitate external evaluations.
 - Ensure that program reviews align with university strategic priorities.
 - Ensure that departments conduct assessments of student learning outcomes every semester and use results to inform program improvements.
- Office of the Provost:
 - Design and maintain the Academic Program Review (APR) process.
 - Review self-studies and action plans submitted by Deans, providing feedback and final approval.
 - Ensure submitted program reviews are consistent with NJCU’s mission and strategic goal.
 - Ensure that Deans direct timely, meaningful program reviews and use assessment results to guide improvement.

- Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE):
 - Supply data to support the self-study process.
 - Offer training on assessment methodologies and best practices.

1.4 Integration with Strategic Planning

Program reviews address how programs contribute to NJCU's four strategic pillars, focusing on how they align with goals in the Academic Master Plan (AMP). Findings from program reviews inform decisions on resource distribution, faculty hiring, and professional development opportunities.

2. Self-Study Guidance for Departments

To ensure a thorough review, departments must include the following sections in their self-study document:

2.1 Executive Summary:

- a. Summarize findings, including strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.
- b. Highlight accomplishments and priorities for the next review cycle.

2.2. Mission and Goals:

- a. State the department's mission and explain its alignment with NJCU's mission and AMP goals.

2.3 Academic Programs:

- a. Provide an overview of all programs offered by the department, which includes majors, minors, and certificate programs.
- b. Provide a labor market analysis for each degree program.
 - i. Determine the Classification of Instructions (CIP) code for each degree program.
 - ii. Use the Federal Government's CIP-to-SOC Crosswalk¹ to find the corresponding Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes.
 - iii. Use NJ's Department of Labor tools² to analyze labor demand by inserting the relevant SOC code. Attach the results as an appendix.

- iv. For SOC codes with poor labor market demand, detail plans to improve career readiness of graduates from the relevant degree programs in a more diverse range of careers, e.g., partnering on second degree, internships, etc.
- c. Document how each program outcome aligns with AMP goals. Departments must address all applicable goals. If alignment is lacking, develop actionable plans with timelines and steps to achieve alignment, including the revision of program outcomes to align with AMP goals.
- d. Include a curriculum map in the appendix, showing how courses support the attainment of learning outcomes at introductory, reinforcement, and mastery levels.
- e. Conduct a thorough evaluation of the department's transfer-friendliness. Compare NJCU's programs to those at peer and aspirational institutions. Develop strategies and plans to ensure NJCU is the most transfer-friendly option within its peer group.
- f. Detail any initiatives related to the awarding of prior learning credits. Create actionable plans to develop or expand opportunities for awarding such credits. This plan should include timelines and specific steps for implementation.
- g. Detail how curriculum is shared with other departments. Evaluate additional opportunities to share courses with other NJCU programs. If peer institutions integrate shared curriculum in ways that the department does not, analyze the practices and adopt similar approaches where applicable.
- h. Compare program requirements to peer institutions. Ensure that program requirements at NJCU are no more stringent than those at peer institutions unless a clear and compelling justification is provided. Identify opportunities for curricular adjustments to enhance accessibility, relevance, and competitiveness while maintaining academic rigor.

2.4 Student Success-Retention and Graduation:

- a. Analyze assessment results to determine if students are meeting the expected attainment levels of programmatic learning outcomes. For areas where students are not meeting expectations, detail actionable and evidence-based plans to improve student learning outcomes. Examples may include curriculum revisions, enhanced support services, or targeted faculty training.
- b. Examine D/F/W rates to identify trends that may indicate potential curriculum design issues, sequencing problems, or instructional challenges. Provide specific recommendations to address these issues, such as adjustments to course prerequisites, enhanced support for students in challenging courses, or professional development for

faculty. If there is a statistically significant variation in the grades awarded across multiple sections of the same course, detail plans for investigating and addressing this variation.

- c. Analyze course policies, paying special attention to policies on late work and attendance. Are these policies consistent across all courses? Are they aligned with disciplinary norms? If inconsistencies are identified, develop a timeline and action plan to address these issues
- d. Document and evaluate the department's role in supporting student success through advising, mentoring, and professional preparation. Highlight specific initiatives, such as internship opportunities, career workshops, or partnerships with employers, and provide recommendations for enhancement where needed.
- e. Evaluate data on retention and graduation rates, benchmarking against both internal goals and external standards provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE). Provide action plans and timelines to improve retention and graduation rates.

2.5 Enrollment - Recruitment

- a. Details efforts to recruit new students, paying special attention to distinguish efforts to recruit readmits, transfers, and, if applicable, graduate students.
- b. Evaluate strategies used to connect with underrepresented and underserved populations. Highlight specific partnerships with community organizations, schools, or other stakeholders that support these efforts.
- c. Provide action plans and timelines to increase new student enrollment.

2.6 Faculty-Teaching:

- a. Provide a list of full-time and adjunct faculty and detail their credentials. Include faculty from outside the department who regularly teach.
- b. Map faculty expertise to ability to teach program learning outcomes at the various attainment level.
- c. With reference to assessment results, evaluate whether faculty expertise is sufficient to teach all program learning outcomes at all attainment levels.
- d. If any gaps exist, 1) assess whether faculty from other departments have sufficient expertise to teach the learning outcomes at the relevant attainment level, and 2) consider whether the gap may be addressed through training existing faculty in the department or other departments.

- e. Detail the relationships that have been sought with graduate programs, community colleges, and other relevant stakeholders to identify qualified adjunct instructors. If no relationships have been pursued, develop a timeline and action plan for pursuing such relationships.
- f. Detail professional development (PD) and training opportunities faculty have engaged in to improve their teaching practices. Provide specific examples.
- g. Details initiatives to improve the quality of online instruction. Include any relevant training programs, certifications in online pedagogy, etc.
- h. Detail ways that faculty are supported in improving their teaching, focusing on initiatives that directly enhance student learning outcomes.
- i. Detail specific ways that adjunct instructors are supported. Include plans for class observations and ways feedback is provided to instructors.
- j. Analyze whether full-time faculty teach a full-time load and identify strategies to reduce the use of release-time.

2.7 Faculty-Research:

- a. Detail the extent of scholarship in the department. (Examples should be provided.)
- b. Detail how students are integrated into faculty research projects. Provide specific examples of student-led or collaborative research and their outcomes, such as publications, presentations, or awards.
- c. Explain how faculty scholarship has been integrated into the curriculum.
- d. Detail how the department collaborates with other units on campus on research. What are the effects of these collaborations?
- e. Details the department's interest in and success with obtaining external research grants. What are future plans in this area?
- f. Does the department have affiliations with outside organizations? What is their impact?

2.8 Resources and Infrastructure:

- a. Evaluate department expenditures. Identify trends and discuss how they impact departmental priorities and goals.

- b. Evaluate the historical fill rates of courses. Provide an action plan and timeline to address courses with low fill rates, including opportunities for curriculum reform, shared curriculum, etc.
- c. Outline projected expenses for the next five years, including anticipated requests for additional personnel, equipment, etc.
- d. Detail the department's efforts to secure external funding through grants and partnerships. Highlight successes, challenges, and plans to enhance efforts in this area.
- e. Analyze existing physical resources, such as space, library holdings, technology, and equipment. Discuss how well these resources meet current program needs and identify gaps or opportunities for improvement.
- f. Review existing support staff resources and evaluate their effectiveness in facilitating departmental goals. Provide recommendations for adjustments, if needed.
- g. Identify specific revenue needs to achieve departmental plans and goals and outline actionable steps to secure these funds. Ensure alignment with institutional priorities and strategic plans.

3. External Review

External review is designed to provide unbiased, expert feedback on the department/program and its contribution to its field as evidenced by faculty teaching, scholarship, and service, and by student learning.

3.1 Selection of Reviewer

The external reviewer is selected by the Dean in consultation with the department. The reviewer or reviewers should be selected as appropriate to the program. Members of academic, industry, and external stakeholders should be considered. Reviewers should have experience conducting similar reviews. Departments/programs should submit the following information on each nominee:

- a. Name, title, department, and institution
- b. Contact information including mailing address, email, and telephone
- c. Current curriculum vitae
- d. Summary of area of teaching, scholarship and contribution to the field
- e. Affirmation from nominee of interest in and availability to serve and of the absence of any potential conflict of interest

In addition, reviewers must not have a conflict of interest or appearance of a conflict of interest with NJCU. NJCU uses the criteria of the Academic Issues Committee (AIC) of the New Jersey Presidents' Counsel to determine conflict of interest. Per the AIC Manual, a conflict of interest exists if the reviewer:

- Is a current employee, student, member of the Board of Trustees, Foundation Board, or consultant to NJCU. Or, is a *former* employee, student, member of the Board of Trustees, Foundation Board, or consultant to NJCU whose relationship ended less than five years prior.
- Is a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of a current employee, student, member of the Board of Trustees, Foundation Board, or consultant to NJCU. Or, is a spouse, parent, child, or sibling of a *former* employee, student, member of the Board of Trustees, Foundation Board, or consultant to NJCU whose relationship ended less than five years prior.
- Is pursuing employment or being considered for employment by NJCU.
- Has a personal or professional relationship with NJCU that could compromise objectivity.
- Has a competitive relationship with NJCU that could compromise objectivity.

3.2 Site Visit

Reviewers will engage in a one- to two-day site visit to meet with faculty, students, staff, administrators, and other relevant constituents. The visit will occur after the reviewer has received the self-study document. Funds to cover site visit expenses will be allocated from the Office of the Provost. A tentative budget should be approved by the Office of Provost before the site visit.

3.3 Guidelines for Reviewer Report

Following the site visit, reviewers will submit his or her report to the dean and department. The reviewer also has the option of providing a separate, confidential brief, to the dean.

The reviewer's report should address the following:

- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to the department
- Expertise of faculty and contribution to the field
- Relevance of curriculum to the field and appropriateness of instructional methods
- Retention and graduation rates
- Department resources
- Department plans for future

4. Response to Reviewer's Report

The department provides a written response on the external reviewer's report. This response is forwarded to the Dean. The response should be brief. It should describe any areas of disagreement, and/or indicate activities underway to address any identified needs. If there are no disagreements or activities on which to report, it should simply provide a response indicating it accepts the reviewer's report.

5. Action Plan

Upon review of the self-study, the external reviewer's report, and the response, the Dean develops written feedback to the department/program. The feedback is intended to assist the faculty in developing an action plan to capitalize on opportunities and address areas of weakness. As appropriate, the Dean can meet with faculty prior to crafting his or her feedback. The plan will include specific timelines and measures of success for action items. The final plan must be approved by the Dean and Provost.

6. Final Approval

Upon receipt of the program review package (self-study, external reviewer's curriculum vitae, external reviewer's report, departmental/program response, and Dean's feedback) and discussion with the Dean, the Provost's Office provides comment.

7. Status Reports

The department submits one-year status reports to its Dean regarding implementation of the action plan. The reports should include data related to the success of implementation and attainment of desired outcomes. The Dean may provide additional guidance on elements for the status reports.