



**Graduate
School**

A&M-COMMERCE



Graduate School

Academic Program Review Guidelines

Revised September 2022

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Graduate Program Review Guidelines

Introduction

Periodic reviews are mandated by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools for purposes of auditing program quality, effectiveness and for continuous improvement and by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to assess program quality, productivity, and effectiveness (see document entitled [Texas Administrative Code](#)). While the focus of these required reviews differ somewhat, satisfying both organizations with a single review is possible and efficient. These reviews also serve as program specific strategic planning documents for the period until the next program review (10 years). Program reviews are formative in nature, include peer review, and are conducted by representatives of the academic unit, college and/or administration. More specifically, a systematic and scheduled graduate program review:

- a. provides reliable critical information for assessing areas of strengths and limitations of the program, its alignment with the values, vision of the University, and contribution to the accomplishment of the University's mission;
- b. assists in the development of strategies to continuously improve the program;
- c. includes measurable criteria to assess progress toward established goals and directions for the future;
- d. demonstrates meaningful comparisons with discipline-specific standards, peer institutions, and related departments within the university; and
- e. supplies baseline quantitative and qualitative data for the department and University to make well-informed decisions for program success and budget considerations.

Graduate School Program Review Team

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Administrative Team

The Administrative Team for graduate program reviews consists of the College Dean/Director of School, Dean of the Graduate School, Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Academic Program Review Process

Each graduate academic program is reviewed on a ten-year review cycle. The process begins with an introductory meeting between the Graduate School Program Review Team and the Departmental Program Review Team to convey expectations and provide tools to prepare for

the review. The Graduate School will provide data specified in the program review format prior to beginning the review process.

The review process includes completion of a program review, an external review site visit, a reviewer's final report, a university response, and status reports documenting actions and results. If the graduate program has a corresponding undergraduate program, the graduate and undergraduate program reviews are combined and conducted jointly.

Departmental Program Review Team

A self-study committee, appointed by the Department Head/Director of School with input from the College Dean/Director of School and Dean of the Graduate School, prepares and submits a self-study report by the designated date of the academic year to the Graduate School. The report will use the Graduate Academic Program Review template, which, was developed in accordance with the [Texas Administration Code](#).

Selecting Reviewers

With input from the Department Head/Director of School, and the Dean of the Graduate School will appoint a review committee, which will include external reviewers with subject matter expertise who are employed by institutions of higher education. External reviewers must be part of a program that is nationally recognized for excellence, and must affirm that they have no conflict of interest related to the program under review. The Department Head/Director of School will submit the *Suggested Reviewers List* identifying potential reviewers: Doctoral program reviews must have two reviewers outside of Texas and the master's/specialist program reviews must have a minimum of one reviewer outside of the university. Combined doctoral and master's/specialist programs reviews must have a minimum of two reviewers outside of Texas.

- Submit six names & contact information for out-of-state , two will be selected
- Provide three names & contact information for internal (A&M-Commerce), one will be selected

Review Dates

Approximately one year prior to review the Department Head/Director of School is notified by the Graduate School of their program(s) requiring a review for the next academic year. During early fall an initial meeting is scheduled to discuss the program review process. Subsequent meetings may be scheduled to discuss revisions to the program review draft as needed. Reviews are held in the spring semester of the academic year.

On-Site Visit

Master's/specialist program reviews may hold their review by Zoom meetings. Program reviews with a doctoral program must have an on-site review.

For on-site reviews, external reviewers arrive in Commerce on the evening prior to Day 1 and depart the afternoon of Day 2. As shown on the *sample on-site visit agenda*, the

site visit consists of an initial meeting for an overview of the University and program, various interviews and meetings with the Department Head/Director of School, faculty and students, and a tour of department/program facilities. Reviewers may request to meet with additional individual(s) as necessary.

Program Review

The Departmental Program Review Team prepares a descriptive and evaluative self-study prior to the on-site review. This study provides basic information about the program and includes an assessment of the qualities, productivity, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges to the program. This self-study is the department's opportunity for self-evaluation.

The *Graduate Academic Program Review* template will provide a format for the self-study, and includes key elements required by THECB and university data regarding the program(s) under review. A copy of the previous program review will be available.

Departments are encouraged to commit themselves to specific, long-range planning in the self-study. The program review not only assesses the current program(s) status but also is future-oriented and directed toward improvement.

The department will gain approval of the review from the Dean of the College and will forward to the Dean of the Graduate School for final approval. The Graduate School will provide all program review documents to the Program Reviewers.

Reviewers Report

Using the *Academic Program Reviewer's Report* template, the review team will submit a written assessment, commendations and recommendations for improvement of the academic program under review. Recommended areas of the academic program to be reviewed and guidelines for the reviewers are outlined in the *Reviewers Guidelines for Academic Program Reviews*.

On the second day of the site visit, an exit meeting with the Program Reviewers, Departmental Review Team, Department Head/Director of School, College Dean/Director of School, Director of Institutional Effectiveness, Dean of the Graduate School, and the Provost will convene to discuss the initial findings and recommendations of the review team. The final program reviewer's report is due approximately two (2) weeks after the site visit.

University Response (see *University Response Guidelines*)

Upon consultation with the College Dean/Director of School, the Department Head/Director of School submits a university response to the Dean of the Graduate School through the College Dean/Director of School. The response must include actions planned to address the external review team's report findings. The approved university response is included in the documents uploaded to THECB.

Post Review Reporting

The feedback from THECB is shared with the Department Head/Director of School and Administrative Team to determine issues, if any, which may need to be resolved.

Approximately one year after the program review, a meeting will be held to discuss the status of the University responses with Department Head, College Dean/Director of School, and the Graduate Dean.

Responsibilities

Graduate School Program Review Team

- Provides support and guidance to departments and programs undergoing review
- Assists with scheduling annual program reviews
- Coordinates introductory meetings to initiate review process
- Extends formal invitation to potential reviewers
- Creates site visit agenda
- Compiles most of the data and generates most of the data charts to be included in program review
- Reserves review team lodging
- Processes review team reimbursements
- Provides requested resources for review team
- Reviews, formats, and provides input on review documents
- Maintains all official review files
- Tracks and distributes review documents
- Uploads review documents to THECB website

Department

- Departmental Program Review Team
 - The principal effort and responsibility for the program review resides with the Departmental Program Review Team.
- Department Head/Director of School
 - Provides list of potential review dates
 - Provides list of peer institutions
 - Provides list of potential external reviewers

Administrative Team

- Plays a major role in the program review process by providing a University perspective for review teams and programs undergoing review.

External Review Team

- Contacts other members of the team before arrival to A&M-Commerce to discuss roles and responsibilities

- Participates in the on-site visit
- Ensures the integrity of the academic program review
- Conducts an evaluation and gives an assessment of the academic program
- Provides preliminary draft and final report of findings

Resources

[Graduate and Corresponding Undergraduate Program Reviews](#) website contains all of the following forms and information resources

- Academic Graduate Program Review Template (Sample)
- Academic Program Reviewers Report Template
- Principles of Good Practice for Academic Degree and Certificate Programs and Credit Hour Courses Offered at a Distance
- Reviewers Guidelines for Academic Program Reviews
- Sample On-Site Visit Agenda
- Suggested Reviewers List
- Texas Administrative Code
- University Response Guidelines
- University Strategic Plan