The American University of Kurdistan
Policy of Academic Program Review

Policy Number: <u>AS014</u>
Effective Date: June 15, 2021

CONTENT

I.   INTRODUCTION

a. **Authority**: The Board of Trustees (herein referred to as "Board") at The American University of Kurdistan (herein referred to as "AUK" or "University") is authorized to establish rules and regulations to govern and operate the University and its programs.

b. **Purpose**: The purpose of the Academic Program Review (APR) at AUK is to enhance the quality of academic degree programs through a focused, in-depth self-study completed by faculty. The APR is intended to be meaningful, manageable, flexible, and collaborative.

c. **Scope**: This policy applies to all academic degree programs at AUK.

II.   ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Responsible Executive**: Provost

b. **Responsible Administrator**: Deans and/or Department Chairs

c. **Responsible Office**: Office of Provost

d. **Policy Contact:** Office of Provost

III. DEFINTION

The Academic Program Review (APR) is a continuous, collaborative process. Essential elements of the APR include the assessment of the curriculum, modalities of instruction, pedagogical approaches, student learning outcomes, program objectives, recruitment and retention, employment rates of graduates, community engagements/collaborations, and program sustainability. Reflections and recommendations are based upon the analysis of data from program and course learning outcomes, surveys, focus groups, and other engagements with a variety of stakeholders. The process of reflecting upon and using data to inform discussions and actions contributes to decision making and continuous program improvement. The review process strengthens connections between the program, the College, the University, alumni, and the community (public and private sectors). Varying roles and responsibilities are shared among program faculty, administrators, internal reviewers (college and university committees), and external stakeholders and consultants.

IV. POLICY STATEMENT

The Academic Program Review Process comprises the Program Self-Study, Review Committee, Review-Report, and Wrap-Up Meeting. It is an opportunity to evaluate and improve AUK's academic degree programs based on data, collaborative analysis, student learning assessment outcomes, and feedback from external reviewer(s) and stakeholders. Although the constant aim is to collect data and solicit feedback to improve the academic programs, the Academic Program Review process further engages faculty in evidence-based analysis resulting in the formulation of recommendations for program improvement.

V. POLICY PRINCIPLES

Following are some general principles for the review process:

a. Academic program faculty must be involved in the review process in accordance with the rules of faculty governance under which that academic program and College operate. Because the usefulness of the review process and the validity of its results are greatly enhanced by the broadest possible involvement of the academic program faculty, they should be encouraged to participate in all aspects of the review. This should include planning and preparing the self-study report, identifying potential reviewers, providing information to the review team through interviews and surveys, and responding to recommendations in the Final Report.

b. The process should be broadly participatory involving faculty, students, staff administrators, and relevant community constituents.

c. Stakeholders such as current students, alumni, employers, and other constituents must be included in the provision of feedback.

d. The APR should provide a framework for excellence; an opportunity to explore, enhance, and integrate student learning and faculty teaching, service and scholarly efforts into the unit's mission and goals.

e. The process should facilitate short-term and long-term strategic planning in areas such as curricula development, faculty/staff hiring/workload and research foci as per best practices in academia and the discipline of that program.

    f.   The APR provides the opportunity for the University to account for its use of resources and facilitate relationships with its various constituencies.

    g.   People involved who are actively engaged and familiar with an academic unit may best be able to assess strengths and challenges of its programs. However, it is vital to the effectiveness of the APR process that individuals involved be free of conflicts that might compromise or be perceived to compromise critical objectivity.

    h.   Peer review is necessary for a successful program review. Faculty peer-review committees are utilized to ensure consistency of quality across academic levels and to encourage accountability in the action planning process.

    i.   In some cases, the standards of national accrediting bodies may stipulate different standards for assessment. In those cases, deans will review any differences with the provost and find compromises as appropriate.

    j.   The review process is designed to be transparent and inclusive, and to provide opportunities for substantive input from a range of internal and external stakeholders.

VI.   POLICY PROCEDURES

Step 1: Academic Program Self-Study

The Academic Program Self-Study is an opportunity for program faculty to review and analyze the educational effectiveness of the program through data and evidence. The self-study narrative should be no more than 40 pages and identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and make recommendations to address those identified challenges. Upon completion, the Department Chair submits the Self-Study to the Office of the Provost.

Programs already pursuing program-level accreditation will be permitted to use the template versions provided by the relevant accrediting body when preparing the self-study report for the Academic Program Review.

Table of Contents for the Program Self-Study

   I.   Introduction/Context

    a.   Internal and External Context

    b.   History of the Program (with an emphasis on recent history)

    c.   Mission Statement

  II.   Disposition of Last Program Review Narrative Prioritized Recommendations and Plans

 III.   Evidence-Based Analysis of Program Quality

    a.   Student Profile

    b.   Curriculum and Learning Environment

    c.   Student Learning, Assessment, and Success

    d.   Faculty Quality and Qualifications

 IV.   Evidence-Based Analysis of Program Viability

POLICY- Academic Program Review

   a.   Demand for the Program

   b.   Allocation of Resources and need for additional resources

   V.   Summary & Plans

   a.   Summary of Analysis

b.Plans including multi-year student learning assessment plan

Appendices

- Curriculum Map

- List of Faculty Research and Scholarship

- Program Strategic Plan and Updates

- Syllabi for previous two years

Additional Resources to be cited and used in Program Self-Study

- Previous Academic Program Review documents

- Program Student Handbook

- Faculty Meeting Minutes

- Latest Departmental/College Strategic Plan

- University's Strategic Plan

- Annual Student Learning Assessment Reports

- Program Mission Statement

- Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

- Curriculum Map

- Course Descriptions

- List of Faculty Research and Scholarship

- Exit Interviews or Exit Surveys; Alumni Surveys; Employer Surveys as available

Step 2: Review Committee

The Committee reviews the Academic Program Self-Study including the appendices. The goal of the Committee's review is to ensure objectivity of the program review process, determine how the program compares to other similarly situated programs, and identify commendations as well as make recommendations for improvement.

Process

1. Department Chair submits completed Academic Program Self-Study to the Office of the Provost, who reviews it for structural completeness (not substantive adequacy, just verifying that all sections are filled in and all appendices are included). If there

are omissions, the report goes back to the Department for resubmission within 14 days.

2. The Review Committee includes at least one internal and at least two external members. The Review Committee Chair is generally an AUK faculty member experienced in AUK review processes, appointed by the Provost. The Dean, Department Chair and program faculty compile an annotated list of suggested external-to-the-university reviewers with discipline-appropriate expertise. The Provost selects from the list and invites the external-to-the-university reviewers. If none of the names suggested are acceptable to the Provost, s/he provides a brief explanation as to why the candidates are not acceptable and tasks the Dean, Department Chair, and program faculty with expanding the list until mutually acceptable external-to-the-university reviewers are selected. The Provost may choose an external reviewer not from the list if a mutually acceptable name is not identified in a timely manner. The AUK faculty members on the Review Committee are appointed by the Provost, and typically include one faculty member experienced in program review. The qualifications for participation on the Review Committee include:

a. Senior academic leadership and/or highest degree in the relevant discipline (for external-to-the-university reviewers),

b. Experience in conducting academic program reviews (for external-to-the-university reviewers),

c. No conflict of interest.

3. The Provost forwards the Program Self-Study to the Review Committee members who review the contents and identify any questions.

4. The Review Committee holds meetings/conference calls to review Guidelines, the Self-Study, outline any questions related to the tasks, and establish a timeline

5. The Review Committee meets with stakeholders (students, faculty, alumni, employers, program leadership) as needed to clarify issues that arose in the document review.

6. The review committee maintains a record of all meetings related to the review.

7. All discussions related to the program review must be conducted during meetings scheduled and documented in the review report.

8. The Review Committee prepares its Report as outlined below. The Report should reflect the opinions of all reviewers.

9. The Review Committee Chair delivers the draft review report to the Department Chair, Dean, and Provost who review for completeness.

10. If there are omissions, the document is sent back to the Review Committee (with copy to Dean, Department Chair, and Provost) for completion and resubmission within 14 days.

11. The Program Chair circulates the draft of the Report among current departmental faculty for comments and corrections and sends factual corrections within 14 days.

12. A meeting/conference call may be scheduled by the Department Chair and Review Committee, if necessary, to review findings/factual clarifications; the Review Committee makes corrections at its discretion.

13. Once complete, the Review Committee Chair submits the Final Report to the Department Chair, Dean, and Provost.

14. The Provost schedules the Wrap-Up Meeting.

15. Review Progress Check: The Review Committee Chair is tasked with notifying the Provost if the timeline for completion is unexpectedly altered. At any point in the Review, the Program Chair, Dean, Review Committee Chair or Provost may request a process check to address questions or concerns about the review process. In rare circumstances of material irregularities, the process may be suspended until the irregularities have been addressed.

Step 3: Review Committee Report

The Review Committee Report generally reflects on the adequacy of the data and analysis presented in the Program Self-Study and is supplemented with data and information gathered during the review process. The document is prepared by the Review Committee with the participation of all members including the external-to-the-university reviewer. The external-to-the-university member may submit a separate report to be included in the record if s/he is unable to take part in the drafting of the report. All members have the option of providing additional/dissenting comments in a separate document. Recommendations, where appropriate, should be made at the end of each section.

I. Introduction/Context
   Complete and accurate? Is the mission statement updated and appropriate?

II. Disposition of Last Program Review

III. Have all of the recommendations from the last Program Review Cycle been thoroughly addressed?

IV. Evidence-Based Analysis of the Program's Quality
   Complete and accurate? Were appropriate data and analytics used? Did the program draw appropriate conclusions from student profile data? Were student learning assessments properly and timely completed? Did the program close the loop on studentlearning assessment recommendations? Did stakeholder meetings confirm the ProgramReview Narrative's analysis?

V. Evidence-Based Analysis of Program Viability
   Complete and accurate? Has the program developed an appropriate recruitment planbased on trends, demographics, competitor analysis? Are resources allocated effectively?

VI. Summary & Plans
   Did the program make appropriate recommendations for addressing weaknesses, building on strengths, responding to opportunities, and (re)allocating resources based onthe evidence and analysis presented? Does the Program Review Narrative include at least an outline for a multi-year (minimum 2 years) student learning assessment plan?

VII. Review of Program Review Narrative Appendices: Are these complete and accurate?

VIII. Appendices to Review Report: External-to-the-university reviewer CV; list of meetings (stakeholders, dates) conducted by the review committee during the review.

Additional Instructions for the **External-to-the-University Reviewer**

1. Review the Self-Study paying *special* attention to the discipline-specific parts, i.e., curriculum, instruction, faculty qualifications, and plans (especially Sections III and V), as well as appropriate international trends and best practices.

2. External-to-the-university reviewers should participate in the drafting of the Review Committee Report. In the event they are unable to participate or have additional comments, external-to-the-university members may submit a separate report to be included in the record. In the case of a site visit, the external-to-the-university draft report should be submitted before departure from Kurdistan.

3. Provide CV.

Step 4: Wrap-Up Meeting with Administration

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss and prioritize recommendations.

a. Participants: President, Provost, Dean, Department Chair, Review Committee Chair.

b. Goal: Prioritized List of Recommendations and Plans, jointly approved by Administration and Program.

c. Preparation: Program Chair may draft a list of Prioritized Recommendations based on the Program Self-Study and Review Committee Report. Participants should review the documents and the list of Prioritized Recommendations ahead of time and be prepared to discuss and agree upon priorities and plans for the program for the coming 3-5 years.

d. Outcome: Prioritized Recommendations and Multi-Year Plan, including budgetary recommendations and Wrap-Up Memo, written by the Program Chair based on Wrap-Up Meeting, which is reviewed and finalized by the Dean becomes the baseline for the next Program Review.

VII.   TARGET TIMELINE FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW

Normally the entire Academic Program Review process, including any unexpected delays, will be completed by May 15th.

- August: Data needs are identified and the data collection begins.

- September: Initial meetings with Provost and Coordinator of Institutional Effectiveness to discuss process, participants, and finalize timeline.

- End of September: Initial faculty meeting to review data and determine time table for analysis.

- October: Department Chair provides Provost with list of potential external-to-the-university reviewers. Stakeholder meetings are scheduled as necessary with students, faculty, employers, alumni, etc.

- November: Review committee appointed, including external participants. Committee establishes its timeline and schedule for the review process with a target of completing the review report by March.

- January: Submission of Self-Study to Provost.

- February: The Office of the Provost sends Self Study to Review Committee.

- February: Review Committee members meet and finalize timeline

- March: The Review Committee's Report is finished.

- April: Wrap-up session held focusing on the Prioritized Recommendations and Multi-Year Plan.

VIII.   POLICY HISTORY

a.   **Approved by**: Board of Trustees

b.   **Adopted**: June 14, 2021

c.   **Amended:** December 15, 2024