



Florida Community College Institutional Program Review Procedures

A Program Review

John Winn, Commissioner

September 2004

J. David Armstrong, Jr., Chancellor

Introduction

Because academic quality is critically important, Florida's community colleges are required by law to review all academic programs at least every five years. These reviews document how individual academic programs are achieving student learning and program objectives. Institutional program reviews provide evaluation of programs by individual community colleges with the assistance of outside agencies. A major component of the reviews includes the joint meetings held between the discipline faculties of the community colleges and the neighboring universities.

Method Used in Conducting Program Review

The goal of this review is to determine what internal procedures the community colleges use when conducting institutional program reviews. It examines the program review materials that were sent to the Division of Community Colleges from the Florida community colleges. All of the 28 community colleges in Florida responded to the request and have program review procedures in place; all but three of the colleges have written procedures. Thus, the results in this study reference the materials sent by the 25 community colleges that do have written procedures.

Program Review Nationally

Nationally, program review remains relevant to the development and viability of effective programs and thus successful educational institutions. A comprehensive program review process that includes the assessment of student learning outcomes and the use of assessment results to improve programs is vital to maintaining effective programs. Guaranteeing the best academic programs supports the goal of a successful educational institution and ultimately helps to provide accountability for education at all levels.

Descriptions of the Current Processes for Level II Program Review

The **Descriptions of the Current Processes for Level II Program Review** provided by the community colleges vary considerably. However, most colleges appoint one division or office to administer the functions of program review for the entire college. Program review teams or committees are formed and trained in the necessary procedures for conducting program reviews. The individual programs or departments will then execute the procedures for the process in their respective areas.

- **Time Line for Procedures.** Twenty (20) of the 25 responding community colleges establish time lines for completion of their program review procedures.
- **Involvement of Internal and External Members.** Sixteen (16) responding community colleges indicate that both their faculty and outside advisory committees or focus groups are involved in their program review process.
- **Responsibilities of Members.** Eighteen (18) of the responding community colleges outline the responsibilities of the members serving on the program review committee or team in their program review procedures.
- **Program Review Schedule or Cycle.** Nineteen (19) of the responding community colleges develop schedules or cycles for their programs to be reviewed.
- **Substitution of External Accreditation.** Ten (10) of the responding community colleges allow an external, national or regional accreditation review to substitute for a college evaluation.

Structured Procedures

According to the *Criteria for Accreditation*¹, procedures must be developed and implemented to determine if educational goals are being achieved through academic programs. Furthermore, the evaluation results should be used to enhance student achievement and improve programs. Research attained from the program review processes and the higher education models of institutions in other states such as the Colorado, Pennsylvania, and Virginia reveals that **Structured Procedures** addressing all areas dealing with program structure and performance are necessary in reviewing programs. Those areas are **Program Profile, Student Learning Outcomes, Strengths and Weaknesses, Recommendations to Improve Programs, Future Issues, and Program Efficiency or Productivity.**

In looking at the structured procedures followed by the Florida community colleges, there is considerable consistency with those advocated by SACS and other state systems. The following chart displays the areas dealing with program structure and performance that are necessary in reviewing programs. The chart also displays the number of community colleges that address each particular area in their program review process.

¹ Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) publication, *Criteria for Accreditation*¹ (Section III: Institutional Effectiveness, 3.1, Planning and Evaluation: Educational Programs)

Program Review Procedures

Areas Addressed by Program Review Procedures	Number of Colleges Addressing Area
Has a Program Profile been developed?	23
Have Student Learning Outcomes been addressed?	20
Have the Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program been addressed?	22
Have Recommendations to Improve the Program been made?	20
Have Future Issues Affecting the Program been considered?	17
Has the Program Efficiency or Productivity been addressed?	20
Have the SACS Criteria been considered?	17

Program Profile

The first area to be addressed when reviewing a program is the development of a **Program Profile** detailing all crucial characteristics of the program. To determine program quality, such a program profile must include many descriptive aspects. Twenty-three (23) of the 25 responding community colleges with written procedures indicate in their program review materials that they require their program review teams to address some aspects of a program profile. Those aspects are Statement of Purpose of the Program, Definition, Content or Curriculum, Student Data, Faculty and Staff, Community and Workforce Needs, Facilities and Educational Equipment, and Marketing and Recruitment Efforts.

Student Learning Outcomes

One of the most important aspects of program review is **Student Learning Outcomes** and many of the community colleges place their strongest emphasis in this area. Twenty (20) of the 25 responding community colleges include a section on student learning outcomes in their program review material that the review teams address when conducting their internal program reviews.

- **Are student learning outcomes identified and how are they identified?** Nineteen (19) of the 20 responding colleges indicate that their review teams are required to determine if student learning outcomes are identified and how they are identified.
- **What assessments are used to measure progress on student learning outcomes?** Eighteen (18) of the community colleges include information on the assessments that they use to measure progress on student learning outcomes.
- **What constitutes success on measures?** Fourteen (14) of the community colleges mention specific indicators as constituting success on measures and require their review committees to consider these indicators when conducting program review activities.
- **Are assessment results of student learning outcomes used to improve programs?** Fourteen (14) of the community colleges indicate that their review teams are required to verify that assessment results of student outcomes are used to improve programs.

Program Strengths and Weaknesses

Program Strengths and Weaknesses become apparent after discovering the results from assessment activities. Twenty-two (22) of the 25 responding community colleges indicate that their review committees are required to emphasize the importance of identifying program strengths and weaknesses. Seventeen (17) of those 22 colleges require internal and external sources in determining program strengths and weaknesses. Sixteen (16) of the colleges require their review teams to confirm that the strengths and weaknesses identified are used to make changes for improvement. All 22 colleges state that the satisfaction of students, graduates, faculty, and employers must be measured during the review process. Nine (9) of those 22 colleges that measure satisfaction state that they survey all four of these groups and six of the 22 measure three of these groups. Fifteen (15) of the 22 community colleges state that they require the results from these surveys be used to initiate reform and modification of program content and curriculum.

Recommendations to Improve Programs

Suggestions or recommendations for improvement may be possible remedies for any concerns with programs that may have been exposed during the survey process. Twenty (20) of the 25 responding colleges require the review teams to address **Recommendations to Improve Programs**.

- **Is an action plan for improvement developed?** Eighteen (18) of those 20 community colleges that use recommendations as a means of improving programs state that they require the development of an action plan for program improvement.
- **Are outcome assessment results used to improve programs?** Sixteen (16) of the 20 community colleges require their review teams to make certain that the outcome assessment results are used to improve programs.
- **Are strategies for improvement based on student and employer follow-up?** Twelve (12) of the 20 community colleges state that their strategies for improvement are based on student and employer follow-up.
- **Are the changes made relevant to labor market demands?** Fifteen (15) of the 20 colleges stress that any changes that are made are relevant to labor market demands.
- **Do advisory committees provide input on major modification to program curriculum?** Sixteen (16) of the 20 colleges require their review teams to seek input from advisory committees on major modification of program curriculum.
- **Is there a follow-up of strategies for change?** Fourteen (14) of the 20 colleges require their review teams to conduct follow-up procedures related to their strategies for change.
- **Do program review committees recommend expansion or deletion?** Fourteen (14) of the 20 colleges request that their review committees consider recommendations made at the conclusion of review activities for future actions to programs.

**Future Issues
Affecting Programs**

When considering recommendations for program improvement, 17 of the 25 responding community colleges require their review teams to consider **Future Issues Affecting Programs**. Fifteen (15) of those 17 colleges ask the review committees to be certain that future curricular changes or revisions are addressed. Sixteen (16) of the 17 colleges consider the market trends within a given program area during the review process. Sixteen (16) of the 17 colleges consider equipment, space and faculty needs for future growth. Sixteen (16) of the 17 colleges require their review teams to consider the future plans and the long-term viability of a program.

**Program Efficiency
or Productivity**

Twenty (20) of the 25 responding community colleges state that the review teams must address the issue of **Program Efficiency or Productivity** by including program costs. Thirteen (13) of those 20 community colleges indicate that they require the review teams to address the issue of tying the college budget to program outputs. Fifteen (15) colleges require the review teams to address the cost-effective management or the efficient use of resources for a program. Twelve (12) colleges address the comparison of program results to program objectives. Eleven (11) colleges consider the college's pursuit of grant opportunities.

SACS Criteria

Also studied in this review, are the approaches that the colleges use to address the **Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Criteria** when reviewing programs. SACS includes their approach to program review or the planning, evaluation and improvement of educational programs as a crucial element in their philosophy of institutional effectiveness. The expectation is that successful institutions will develop and implement a systematic process of planning, evaluation, and improvement. Seventeen (17) of the 25 responding community colleges state that they require their review teams to address SACS accreditation criteria when conducting their program review activities. Some colleges briefly mention SACS accreditation while others elaborate on the college's application of SACS criteria to their program review activities.

- **Defined Purpose Linked to the College's Mission.** Six (6) of the 17 community colleges that address SACS criteria in their program review materials indicate that they require their review committees to determine if programs have a clearly defined purpose linked to the college's mission.
- **Educational Goals Support Purpose of Institutional Units.** Five (5) of those 17 colleges require their review committees to determine if the educational goals of the programs are formulated to support the purpose of each unit of the institution.
- **Implementation of Procedures to Meet Objectives.** Six (6) of the 17 colleges require their review teams to determine if the colleges have developed and implemented procedures to evaluate the extent to which the educational goals are being achieved.

- **Evaluation Results Used to Improve Programs and Services.** Five (5) of the 17 colleges require their program review teams to determine if the results of the evaluations are being used to improve programs and services.
- **Continuous Learning and Improvement Cycle.** Six (6) of the 17 community colleges that specifically addressed the SACS criteria mention an emphasis on a continuous learning and improvement cycle that permeates every aspect of their institutional environment.

Recommendations

Finally, **Recommendations** are made for the purposes of establishing and maintaining an effective program review process. Based upon the information submitted, the DCCWE recommends the following components be included in each institution's program review process.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that all community colleges develop and maintain a comprehensive system for program review providing planning, assessment and improvement through formal structured procedures for the purpose of evaluating all institutional programs on a regular, scheduled time cycle.
2. To fully validate the existence of program review activities, it is recommended that all community colleges document their formal structured procedures for program review.
3. In order to guarantee the quality and effectiveness of institutional programs, it is recommended that all community colleges address SACS criteria in their written policies for reviewing educational programs.
4. It is recommended that all community colleges place an emphasis on student learning outcomes when conducting their program review activities in order to attain the highest student achievement.
5. To establish a continuous learning and improvement cycle, it is recommended that all community colleges document what was done to address a deficiency identified by assessment activities, thereby demonstrating actual use of assessment results to improve programs.
6. In order to promote an inclusive academic environment surrounding the entire college, community colleges should encourage all faculty, administrators and staff to participate in program review activities, resulting in a program review process that permeates all areas of the institution.
7. It is recommended that all program reviews include the following: Program Profile, Student Learning Outcomes, Strengths and Weaknesses, Recommendations to Improve Programs, Future Issues, and Program Efficiency or Productivity.

For an in-depth analysis, see full document, entitled "Institutional Internal Processes for Level II Review." For more information, please contact Dr. Patricia Windham via e-mail at Pat.Windham@fldoe.org or via telephone at (850) 245-9482.

Office of the Chancellor
Florida Community Colleges and Workforce Education
Florida Department of Education
325 W. Gaines Street, Room 1314
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400
(850) 245-0407
www.flboe.org/cc