

EXTERNAL REVIEW BACKGROUND AND EXPECTATIONS

External peer review offers objective qualitative feedback from respected colleagues as part of the Academic Program Review process. A reviewer must be able to apply professional standards of evaluation consistent with the goals, expectations, and educational context of the University, as well as the standards of the program under review.

Each program under review must provide external reviewer(s) with a base of relevant information concerning the program. In addition to the current draft of the program's Academic Program Review, common requests for information include:

- current or recent course syllabi,
- representative examples of course materials (e.g., exams, assignments),
- the program's student assessment and learning outcomes plan,
- evidence of student learning,
- the current course catalog,
- the previous APR report (if applicable),
- and any other materials that will provide an adequate stock of resources from which to assess the program.

External Reviewers may conduct visits on-site or virtually, where appropriate. Both types of visits provide the opportunity for the reviewer to evaluate the program in an applied manner that cannot be achieved to the same degree through document review. When a reviewer is visiting SU, the program should plan activities such as:

- individual and/or group meetings with all program faculty (including part-time, if possible);
- meetings with any office personnel or faculty that manage day-to-day operations of the program;
- meetings with the faculty of collaborative programs (e.g., those with shared students as majors/minors);
- meetings with academic advisors;
- meetings with representatives from the Dean's Office;
- meetings with students and student groups, if applicable;
- visitations to representative classes of both lower and upper-division course offerings;
- the opportunity to review program resources (facilities, equipment, research, etc.); and
- the opportunity to examine additional documentation that may not have been included in the pre-visit information packet, but are deemed relevant by a reviewer and/or the program.

A reviewer should attempt to affirm the strengths and weaknesses of the program, validate the evidence addressing student learning outcomes, critically evaluate program capabilities and resource needs, and address the issue of academic rigor. A reviewer should also evaluate the overall quality of the educational experience for program graduates. Within a month of the visit, a written report detailing the reviewer's conclusions must be submitted by the reviewer or review team to the Department Chair/Program Director, UARA (Aaron Prebenda; amprebenda@salisbury.edu), and the Dean's Office. **This report is an essential supporting document and a critical resource for future planning.** See below for the External Review Guidelines.

GUIDELINES

1. *Who:* One or two faculty members from peer programs and institutions prepared to apply professional standards of evaluation to support Salisbury University's Academic Program Review.
2. *What:* review of program resources, faculty, research, teaching and other outputs measured against student learning outcomes and goals.
3. *When:* fall or winter of the academic year of program review (e.g. for 2025-2026 APR year, an external reviewer should visit during the fall of 2025 or early spring of 2026).
4. *Where:* Salisbury University's campus and/or, where appropriate, remotely.
5. *Why:* see background and expectations above.
6. *How:* budget for \$1,000-1,500 per external review for reviewer stipend (may be more or less based on remote status, travel distance, multiple programs being reviewed, etc.).

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Although the internally generated Academic Program Review report should address all aspects included in the [Standard APR Purpose & Guidelines document](#), it is expected that the external reviewer should evaluate the program using a SWOT analysis and/or based upon the merits of the following questions:

1. Goals and Objectives

- A. Are the program's mission, long-term strategic plan and vision consistent with the College/School's and the University's? Are there potential areas of conflict?
- B. What evidence is presented of the trends (enrollment, time-to-completion, degrees granted, retention) over the past seven years and their overall impact on the program?
- C. What critical changes were made as a result of the last Academic Program Review?

2. Program

- A. Are the goals and objectives of the degree program clearly defined? How well is the program achieving objectives?
- B. Are the curricula, program structure and instruction well designed and appropriate to the scholarly and creative trends in the discipline?
- C. Does the organization of the program hinder or enhance potential trends in the discipline?
- D. What strategic and annual initiatives might be pursued in order to strengthen the program?
- E. Highlight the program's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

3. Student Learning and Student Success

- A. Does the program provide evidence to indicate sufficient academic rigor as well as ongoing student learning?
 - a. What evidence indicates whether an appropriate number and variety of courses are offered?
 - i. What evidence indicates balance between breadth and specialization?
 - ii. What evidence indicates whether course offerings meet student needs?
 - b. What are the opportunities for experiential learning?
 - c. Is the evidence for student learning consistent with the program's student learning outcomes?
 - d. Is the evidence for student learning of depth and breadth to validate that the program is accomplishing its student learning objectives?
 - e. Are student learning outcomes consistent with those at comparable institutions?
 - f. What curricular and pedagogical modifications would enhance student learning?
- B. Are there efforts to diversify the student learning community? If so, are they effective?
- C. Are there other efforts to improve student success? If so, are they effective?

4. Facilities, Support and Administration

- A. Does the University show commitment to the program, its students, its faculty, and the resources necessary to ensure academic rigor?
- B. What evidence indicates the program has the appropriate expertise and staffing numbers to serve its students and accomplish its student learning outcomes?
- C. What evidence indicates that current resources, including facilities and equipment, are effectively and efficiently used, and adequate to meet student learning outcomes and goals?
- D. What evidence indicates that the library and other information resources are appropriate to support the program?
- E. Identify resource priorities that enhance the program, reallocations that restructure it, or cuts to streamline it.