# External Review Background and Expectations

External peer review provides the opportunity to obtain an objective qualitative assessment from respected colleagues. 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 identified by the program under review.

Each program under review must provide an external reviewer with a base of relevant information concerning the program. In addition to the current draft of the program’s internally generated Academic Program Review report, the external reviewer can also request relevant information and documentation. Common requests are for:

* 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.

An on-site or virtual remote visit provides the opportunity for the reviewer to evaluate the program in an applied manner that cannot be achieved to the same degree through a rigorous review of supporting documentation. 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 faculty if possible);
* meetings with any administrative assistants, other office personnel, or faculty leaders that help in the day-to-day operations of the program;
* meetings with the faculty of collaborative programs (e.g., those that frequently have shared students as majors/minors);
* meetings with academic advisors (first-year students are advised by the [Academic Advising Center](https://www.salisbury.edu/academic-offices/advising-center/) staff; sophomores, juniors, and seniors are advised by either or both [Academic Advising Center](https://www.salisbury.edu/academic-offices/advising-center/) staff and departmental faculty);
* meetings with representatives from the Dean’s Office;
* meetings with students (diverse representation) and student groups, if applicable;
* visitations to representative classes of both lower and upper-division course offerings;
* the opportunity to review program resources (e.g., library holdings, technology, supplies, classrooms, labs, office space, studio space); 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](mailto:amprebenda@salisbury.edu)), and the Dean’s Office. This report is an essential supporting document and a critical resource for future planning. See [below](#_External_Review_Guidelines) for the External Review Guidelines.

# External Review Guidelines

Although the internally generated Academic Program Review report should address all aspects included in the [Standard APR Purpose & Guidelines document](https://www.salisbury.edu/administration/academic-affairs/university-analysis-reporting-and-assessment/_files/APR-PurposeAndGuidelines.pdf), it is expected that the external reviewer should evaluate the program using a SWAT analysis and/or based upon the merits of the following questions:

1. Goals and Objectives
2. Are the program’s mission, long-term strategic plan and vision consistent with the College/School’s and the University’s? Whether in statements of affirmation or in practice, are there potential areas of conflict?
3. What evidence indicates a sufficient understanding of the trends over the past seven years and their overall impact on the program?
4. What critical changes were made as a result of the last Academic Program Review?
5. Program
6. Are the goals and objectives of the degree program clearly defined? How well is the program achieving those objectives?
7. Are the curricula, program structure and instruction well designed and appropriate to the scholarly and creative trends in the discipline?
8. Does the organization of the program hinder or enhance potential trends in the discipline?
9. What strategic and annual initiatives, complete with appropriate milestones, might be pursued in order to strengthen the program?
10. Highlight the program’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
11. Student Learning and Student Success
12. Does the program provide adequate evidence to indicate sufficient academic rigor as well as ongoing student learning?
    1. What evidence indicates whether a sufficient number and variety of courses are offered?
       1. What evidence indicates whether there is an appropriate balance between breadth and specialization?
       2. What evidence indicates whether course offerings meet student needs?
    2. If appropriate, evaluate the opportunities for experiential learning (e.g., research, assistantships, internships, service learning).
    3. Is the evidence for student learning consistent with the program’s student learning outcomes?
    4. Is the evidence for student learning of significant depth and breadth to validate that the program is accomplishing its student learning objectives?
    5. Are student learning outcomes consistent with those at comparable institutions?
    6. What curricular and pedagogical modifications would enhance student learning?
13. Are there efforts to diversify the student learning community? If so, are they effective?
14. Are there other efforts to improve student success (e.g., retention, graduation, as well as other non-curricular aspects such as tutoring, study skill development, etc.)? If so, are they effective?
15. Facilities, Support and Administration
16. Does the University demonstrate sufficient commitment to the program, its students, its faculty, and the resources necessary to ensure academic rigor?
17. What evidence indicates that current resources are both effectively and efficiently used?
18. What evidence indicates whether the program has the appropriate expertise and staffing numbers to serve its students and accomplish its student learning outcomes?
19. What evidence indicates whether classrooms and/or labs are adequately structured and equipped to meet the curricular and student learning outcomes?
20. What evidence indicates whether library and other information resources (including information technology) are appropriate to support the program?
21. Identify a priority of resources to enhance the program, reallocations to restructure the program, or cuts to streamline efficiencies.