WKU Guide for Academic Program Review Committees-2026

(rev. 1/16/26)

This document collates information from other documents and provides relevant information to assist Review Committees with the APR Process for Non-Accredited Programs. ***The WKU APR Website*** *provides many more details about the process. The* ***APR Review Committee Resources web page*** *consolidates materials that will be particularly relevant to the committee.*

General Purpose of APR

The Academic Program Review (APR) process is an essential part of WKU's ongoing efforts to ensure the educational mission is being met through the delivery of academic programs. While the work of the academic department can be a consideration in the process, the primary goal of the APR is to evaluate the quality of WKU's undergraduate and graduate educational *programs* and provide faculty and staff the opportunity to reflect upon the content of their programs, curricular delivery and research through an evaluation of academic program planning and effectiveness. The Academic Program Review is intended to:

1. Assess the quality and effectiveness of academic programs.
2. Identify program strengths and opportunities for improvement.
3. Encourage accomplishment of both short- and long-term goals and objectives.
4. Establish program action plans and strategies for continuous improvement.
5. Ensure that current and proposed degree programs are aligned with WKU and CPE strategic priorities, mission, and purpose.
6. Utilize the information collected through the APR process to inform planning and priorities at the university level.

The overall APR process involves 5 steps (detailed here)

1. Initiation of Program Review by Dean
2. Self-Study Report written by program faculty
3. Review Committee Participation and Visit (detailed below)
4. College Discussion with Program Faculty and Dean's Final Summary of Review
5. Completion of the Review with Dean's Final Summary

Constitution of Review Committee

The Review Committee is appointed and convened by the dean, who shares the program's self-study with the committee.

The committee is typically comprised of:

1. Two members external to WKU; and
2. Two or more WKU faculty members who are external to the academic program being reviewed. This means they are not in the same department that houses the academic program and are not actively involved (e.g., teaching, executive committee, advising) in the program. Most of the Review Committee should be tenure-track faculty. Academic

staff, including research and pedagogical faculty, may be members of a Review Committee but should not comprise a majority.

The dean selects the chair of the committee from among the appointed external members.

Work of the Review Committee
After a careful review of the program's self-study and a site visit, the committee provides valuable outside perspectives based on, in the case of reviewers external to WKU, best practices in the academic discipline, and in the case of reviewers internal to WKU, the work and mission of the institution. Aside from those differing perspectives, there is no real difference in participation by WKU and non-WKU members. Each committee will determine specific roles/responsibilities for each member before they arrive on campus.

Ultimately, the Review Committee uses the WKU Guide for APR Committees, Self-Study Reports provided by program, Review Committee Checklist (undergraduate or graduate), and Review Committee Report Template, responding to the italicized directions in each section to generate a Review Committee report. Most Review Committee reports are brief, 3-10 pages. The Review Committee report must be written and include the following:

1. A summary of the activities of the Review Committee and materials reviewed,
2. An evaluation of the strengths and areas for improvement) of the program,
3. Advice to the program, dean, and/or provost for improving the program,
4. Recommendations for future directions, and
5. Specifications for any necessary follow-up action.

The Review Committee report is submitted to the dean. The dean sends the report to the program faculty to review for errors of fact and may request a response to any major issues.

Leadership Roles and Responsibilities
The Review Committee Chair (RCC) schedules a planning meeting at least five days before the site visit (to confirm operational roles and responsibilities of members, share cell numbers, etc.), sets individual meeting *agendas* on campus, runs site visit meetings, makes any specific assignments to Review Committee members, oversees the process, produces the report, gets feedback from the committee, and submits the final report to the dean. See also Academic Program Review Roles and Responsibilities - Non-Accredited Programs

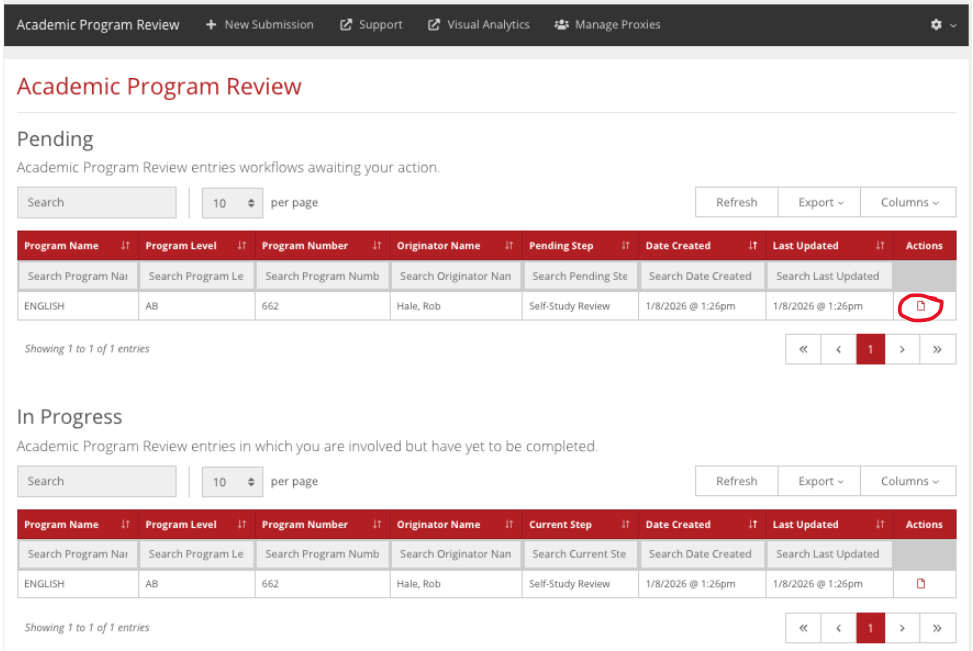
Department Chairs coordinates the visit--communicating with committee members, managing logistics, and arranging meeting participants and locations.

Rough Chronology of the Review Committee's Work

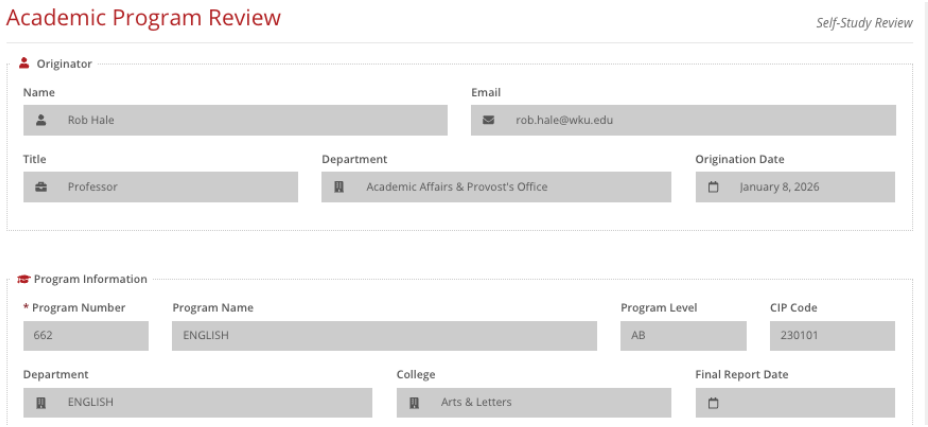
1. Dean/department chair recruit reviewers, and reviewers agree to serve.
2. Receive charge from college dean briefly outlining committee's role.
3. Work with department chair to finalize the visit date.
4. External to WKU Reviewers only: complete initial paperwork (W-9), etc. to facilitate payment and reimbursement. Jessica.Dunnegan@wku.edu is the contact.
5. External to WKU Reviewers only: Make travel arrangements—consult with department chairs before finalizing plans/booking flights.
6. Assistant Provost Rheanna Plemons sends information about affiliate email account to enable access to APR Workflow system and schedules Zoom training on APR process
7. View program's self-study in WKU's Workflow System.
8. Receive Zoom Training on APR Process from Provost's Office (Plemons/Hale).
9. Carefully review the self-study and supporting materials before the visit.
10. Use the appropriate checklist (undergraduate or graduate) to ensure self-study completeness and to identify areas of further investigation.
11. Generate questions about the program for each constituent meeting (dean, department chair, program coordinator, faculty, students, alumni/external constituents).
12. RC Chair schedules a quick Zoom meeting with the full Review Committee to get organized at least five days before coming to campus; ensure that each committee member's role is clear.
13. Meet with review committee after the dinner with the department chair and program coordinator.
14. Participate in the site visit to supplement information from the self-study.
15. Review Checklist (undergraduate or graduate)to ensure all areas covered in report or at site visit.
16. Develop a draft/outline of the Review Committee Report Template.
17. Hold Final Session with stakeholders to present preliminary findings—all committee members should participate.
18. Collaborate with RCC on completing the final written report—due one week after site visit.
19. Submit final Review Committee Report and Checklist to Dean (RCC) in Workflow system.

Accessing the Self-Study Materials

1. Log in to the WKU Non-Accredited APR Workflow: https://app.wku.edu/workflow/non-acc-apr/
2. Use your WKU affiliate email address. Recall, it will be your first and last name with a -aff after your last name (i.e. big.red-aff@wku.edu). Note: you may be prompted to use Authenticator when you log in to the systems, but the prompt will explain that process.
3. After you successfully log in, you will arrive at a screen that looks something like this:



4. Click the document icon in the Actions column to access the self-study materials for the appropriate program—note some committees are reviewing multiple programs.
5. You will arrive at a screen that looks something like this at the top:



6. Scroll down the page to access the self-study documents, including the self-study report, Visual Analytics Data, Assurance of Student Learning documents, and other optional information. It will look something like this:

Program Documents

Please upload your APR Self Study, Visual Analytics Data Set, ASL Documents, and Optional Supporting Documents.

* APR Self Study

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* Visual Analytics Data Set

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* Assurance of Student Learning Documents (Minimum of 3)

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Additional Supporting Documents (Optional)

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To access each document, simply click on the download buttons in the Actions column. The documents will land in your downloads folder to open and review. Note: any pdf files will open in the browser as well.

Preparing for and Managing the Site Visit and Constituency Sessions

- For each encounter/meeting, each committee member should prepare questions and the committee should develop a plan to ensure balanced participation by all members.
- For each constituency/audience (dean, chair, program faculty, students, alumni/community partners), the committee should develop a mix of general questions and especially specific questions arising from their review of the self-study.
- Close each meeting with a final opportunity for feedback, "Is there anything else you think we should know that would help us as we prepare to provide constructive feedback to your program?"
- The Review Committee Chair should run each meeting, monitor the time (with assistance from another committee member), and strive to give all participants a chance to participate. At each venue, members should briefly introduce themselves. To keep the process aboveboard, review **committee members should not communicate with constituencies outside the process** except for logistical matters; confidentiality is particularly important for members internal to WKU.

Site visits will typically have 9 components and approximate this sample itinerary (not necessarily in order):

1. Dinner with Review Committee and Department Chair—Typically, this informal gathering occurs the day before the actual visit and allows members to become acquainted and to meet the department chair and possibly the program coordinator. This dinner provides opportunities to question the department chair about the program and to clarify general expectations of the site visit. Committee members can begin organizing/prioritizing questions for the different constituencies they will meet.
2. Tour of the facilities—Typically, the department chair will give a tour of the program's building/labs/studios. For some disciplines, facilities will be more important than others. Members should feel free to ask any questions about the physical plant.
3. Meet with Department Chair and Dean—Generally, the chair and dean will share their impressions of the program's strengths and areas for improvement, any concerns about the program, and ideas to improve the program. Committee members will ask questions about the program and get clarification on any issues/ambiguities that arose in the self-study.
4. Meet with Program Faculty and Relevant Staff—This is likely the first meeting that the RCC will need to fully run, so being organized and in command will be helpful. Faculty don't regularly participate in APR, so reminding them of the purpose will be useful. The RCC should encourage broad participation and try to move to other colleagues if one or two people dominate. This meeting should ultimately provide a fuller sense of the faculty and staff's work in the department. It might help break the ice to ask a question about something particularly impressive learned from the self-study. Of course, committees will seek clarity about ideas/topics/issues that arose while reading the self-study.

5. Meet with Students—For some programs, the challenge will be drawing students out; for others, it will be managing loads of participation. This is your opportunity to learn about student's perceptions of the program, the curriculum, the pedagogy, advising, and career preparation, in particular. A mix of general and specific questions will be fruitful. Department Chair should not attend this meeting.
6. Meet with Community/Industry Partners, Alumni, and other Industry Groups—Sometimes, this will be a lunch meeting and so will likely be more informal. Having a set of general questions ready for each committee member to ask will likely be productive. Depending on the size of the group, two or three conversations may occur simultaneously, so committee members might debrief later to synthesize what they learned. Questions about program reputation, career prep, community partnerships, and alumni relations are a few topics that might arise. *Note: sometimes this session will occur via Zoom, and sometimes department chairs will ask committees to hold these meetings on an evening before the site visit since many stakeholders may not be available during the workday*. Department Chair should not attend this meeting.
7. Check-in with Department Chair—Before the committee sequesters themselves to deliberate, to construct the outline of their report (strengths and areas for improvement, advice, and suggestions), this brief meeting provides a chance to clear up inconsistencies heard during the visit or expectations about the committee's work.
8. Review Committee Work Session—The primary purposes of this session are to review the checklist to make sure all areas covered (undergraduate or graduate) and draft/outline the Review Committee Report Template. For the Committee Report, divide up the sections by member to briefly outline/draft, and then work together to revise for completeness. Include enough information on the draft/outline so that the committee has enough information to report to the program faculty, chair, dean, and Provost at the Final Session and for the RCC to write the full report within a week of the site visit. Please be candid and honest but diplomatic in your recommendations/observations. The goal of the draft report/outline is to help programs become even better than they already are—strive to be constructive.
9. Final Session—Hopefully, this meeting will be well-attended; the chair, program coordinator, faculty, dean, associate dean, Provost, and other administrators will likely attend. Again, the Review Committee Chair will run this meeting, but it's a good idea to have each committee member participate to make the meeting more engaging. The goal of the meeting is to provide preliminary feedback that will help programs become even better than they already are. A likely (but not required) agenda for this meeting might be
    a. Welcome to the session by the department chair who hands off meeting to Review Committee Chair
    b. Brief introduction of committee members
    c. General thanks for the interactions, general characterization of the visit (hopefully, it was positive), parts of the visit that were particularly helpful
    d. Overview of the preliminary strengths and areas for improvement—it's particularly important to provide some affirmations of the good work that is already happening and not simply catalog problems

e. Advice to the program, faculty, dean, and/or Provost on what could be improved, as well as recommendations for future directions
f. General assessment of the future of the department—is the program on a good trajectory, are the things that give you pause about the program's future, and critical issues that should be addressed on a particular timeline
g. Opportunity for participants to ask committee clarifying questions
h. Mention that dean will receive the final written report within a week; final thanks for the interactions and hospitality

Sample Questions to consider and adapt (in no particular order) for each meeting

These are *starter questions* to get members thinking about what they might ask to various groups. The aim is to elicit additional information to help provide better feedback to the program, affirming some good things they are doing and delivering suggestions for improvement. The best questions will likely arise from each member's reading of the self-study.

1. What do you think are the primary strengths of the program?
2. What areas do you think the program could improve upon?
3. What makes the program distinctive or unique?
4. You say in the self-study that X happens (summarize that section); could you say about more about how that actually works on the ground?
5. You mention that you have started a new student recruitment effort [insert other new initiative] this year. What are the preliminary results of that effort? Have you made alterations based on the experience?
6. Your program already seems very good. Are their supports, resources, staffing that you haven't mentioned in the self-study that you think could make a significant contribution to the quality of your program and/or to student success.
7. You mention a need for additional staffing in your report, which is understandable. Are there other ways work could be reorganized to make workload more manageable? Would using part-time faculty or part-time staff help make workload more manageable?
8. What types of research/creative activity support is available to you as faculty? Is it sufficient. Given budget realities, what additional support would be helpful.
9. What research/creative work in the program seems most impactful? Explain.
10. Describe your experience with advising at WKU (for students and alumni). What worked well? What would make it better?
11. What were some classroom/lab/studio experiences that were particularly powerful in your program? That helped you learn better or more?
12. What types of classes do you think work particularly well or less well in this program?
13. How would you characterize the department's contribution to diversity, equity, and inclusion? Should it be a greater priority, a lesser priority? Why?
14. Do you feel that the program faculty and curriculum adequately prepared you for a career? Were there other activities/workshops that the program organized to help you prepare for the job market? What other activities would have been helpful?
15. What reputation does the program have at the university? in the community? Why do you think that's the case? What could the program do to improve their reputation?

16. What other things do you think the committee should know about the program that would help us provide constructive feedback?

General Suggestions on Managing the Site Visit

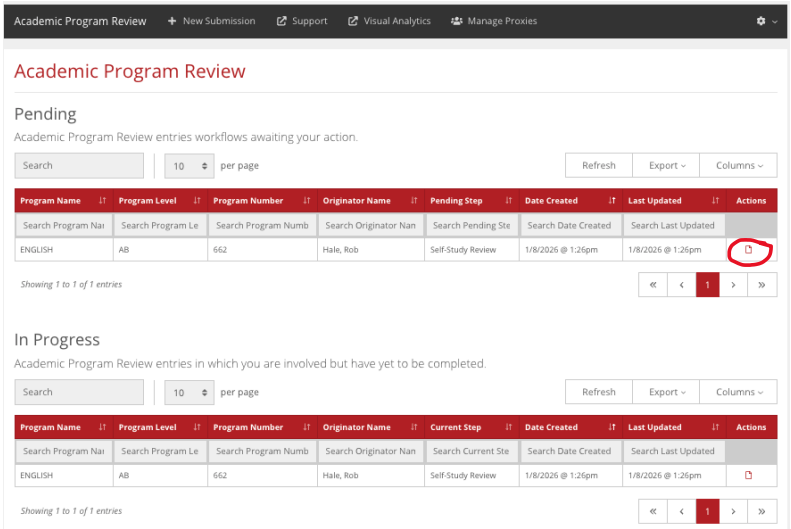
Whatever questions constituents ask or comments they make, please strive to be constructive. Sometimes, some constituencies might take a negative turn; certainly, listen to any concerns, but try to turn the conversation in a productive direction. Work together as a Review Committee to keep conversations going in useful and constructive ways. If constituents ask difficult questions, be candid, but don't reveal your findings/recommendations until the end of the visit, after you have completed your constituent visits and drafted your report. It's okay to say, "we're not sure yet; we're still gathering information before we draw any conclusions."

After the Site Visit

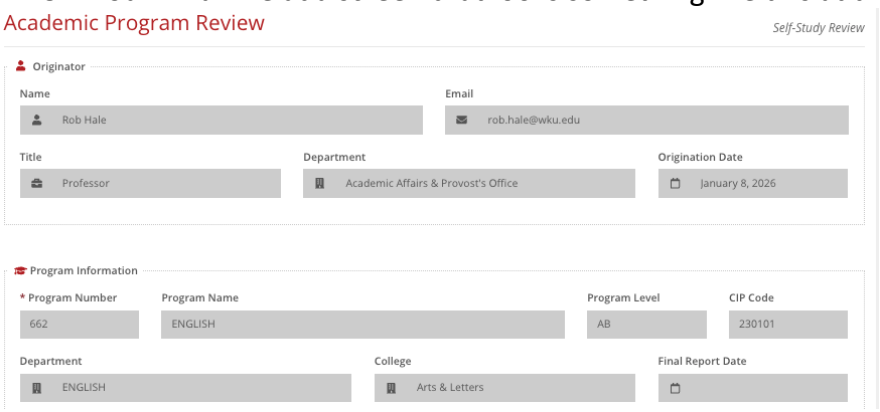
The RCC is responsible for finishing the final draft of the committee report within a week of the site visit. All members of the Review Committee should assist the RCC and answer any questions to help with completion of the report.

Submitting the Final Report (only the Review Committee chair can submit the report)

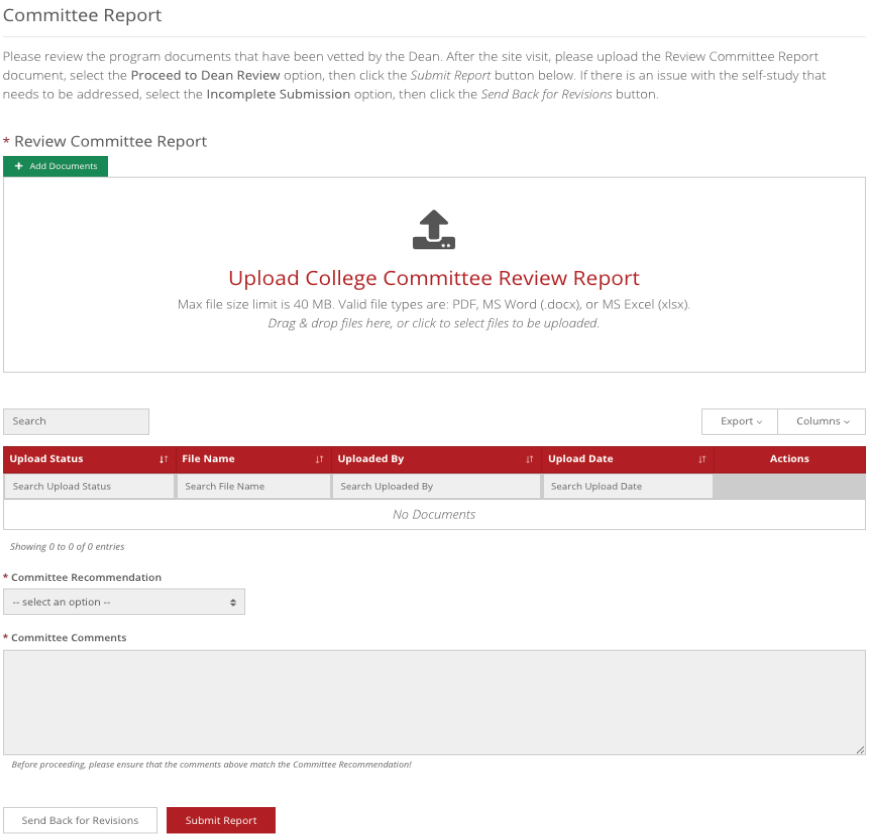
1. Before you begin, make sure that you have saved the Final Committee Report and the final checklist (as a Word or pdf and labeled it with this nomenclature on your PC: Program Name-Level [UG or GR]-WKU Ref #-Department-College-Self-Study-current academic year (i.e., English-UG-662-ENGL-PCAL-Committee Report-2025-26)
2. Log in to the Workflow platform at https://app.wku.edu/workflow/non-acc-apr/ using your WKU **affiliate** email address. Note: you may again be prompted to use Authenticator when you log in to the systems, but the prompt will explain that process.
3. After you successfully log in, you will arrive at a screen that looks something like this:



4. Click the document icon in the Actions column to access the self-study materials for the appropriate program—note some committees are reviewing multiple programs (i.e., graduate and undergraduate) so double-check that you select the correct program.
5. You will arrive at a screen that looks something like this at the top:



6. Scroll all the way down until you get to the Committee Report section. It will look something like this.



7. Drag and Drop or Click and Select to add the committee report to the workflow. If you are ready to submit (99.99% of cases), select Proceed to Dean Review from the drop down, add a brief comment, and press Submit Report. You will receive a success message.