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NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

Academic Program Review Handbook



Effective Academic Year 2023-2024

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Introduction

Academic program review (APR) enables degree program faculty and leadership to reflect, self-assess, and plan in order to improve. Further, the APR process provides an invaluable vehicle for communicating program goals and needs to university administration. This communication flow enables the setting of budget priorities in order to leverage resources and achieve each respective academic program vision as it also serves to fulfill college and university strategic goals.

Per SFA policy 02-202, "Academic Program Review," all degree programs must undergo evaluation annually and all graduate degree programs are also required to submit decennial evaluations. **An academic program is considered a structured grouping of course work designed to meet educational objectives leading to a baccalaureate, master, or doctoral degree.** The academic program may include course work which supports minors or official university-awarded certificates. The policy supports the essential APR process for decennial reaffirmation of Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) university accreditation and complies with Texas Administrative Code requirements managed by Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

Formative and summative assessments are necessary for an academic program to demonstrate continuous improvement in teaching, student success, program growth, and other objectives such as scholarly/creative output. Regular, annual evaluation of program needs and progress is appropriate coordination to ensure budget considerations are timely and effective. The annual evaluations also support the required SACSCOC 5th year interim report on academic programs, which feeds into the decennial reaffirmation process. The follow phases serve to consistently support and enhance academic programs:

1. Annual check-up (all degree programs)
2. Ten-year cumulative report with a full self-study, external review, and institutional response (graduate degree programs only)

Academic Program Review (APR)

Self-Study Schedule and Contents Overview



◆ 10 Year - Cumulative Review¹

- **Written submission including:**
 - Self-study
 - Program Faculty Feedback Summary
 - External Review Results
- **Administrative Interaction and Written Response Provided**
- **Action plan developed by:**
(Program/Unit, College, and Provost's office)

◆ 1 Year - Annual Check-up²

- **Primarily verbal discussion**
- **Only written response required presents faculty feedback summary for trends and action plans**
- **Administrative Interaction and Oral Response Provided**

Each Process Discusses/Documents:

*Key Metric Trends	*Program and Learning Outcomes	*Each Academic Degree Program	*Faculty Perceptions/Analyses
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¹ Graduate degree programs only; uses THECB response and review forms.

² Academic degree programs at each level are involved (both undergraduate and graduate).
Prompts provided by the Office of the Provost.

September 2022

Definitions related to Academic Program Review:

Academic programs are considered a structured grouping of course work designed to meet educational objectives leading to a specific baccalaureate, master, or doctoral degree. The academic program may include course work which supports minors or official university-awarded certificates.

Academic units are the organized academic administrative groups (e.g., departments, divisions, schools) which directly manage the instruction, coordination, and delivery of course work for one or more academic programs.

Academic unit heads are the academic leaders (e.g., chairs, directors) assigned to administer the responsibilities of an academic unit.

Core objectives (COs), as prescribed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), are critical thinking skills, communication skills, empirical and quantitative skills, teamwork, personal responsibility and social responsibility.

Program learning outcomes (PLOs) are the knowledge, skills, and abilities students are expected to demonstrate upon completion of an academic degree program. The PLOs may also be referenced as "student learning outcomes" for an academic program by external agencies such as SACSCOC and THECB.

Links to SACSCOC and THECB documentation are located in the Appendix A reference listings.

See Appendix B for SACSCOC Notes and Excerpts.

Annual Checkup

All Academic Programs

Faculty involvement in the program review process is essential and required by SACSCOC. As many academic program faculty as possible must contribute and be involved in the evaluation and feedback.

A. Annual (one-year) review contents:

1. Written submission of program faculty feedback (summary of perceptions and analyses)
2. Verbal discussion of the academic degree program(s) with executive leadership
3. Provost's office oral response to program leadership

B. Annual program review steps:

1. Academic unit head and/or designated program coordinator review response prompts.
2. Academic unit head and/or designated program coordinator determine method of collecting faculty feedback for summary of responses.
3. Faculty provide perceptions and analyses of data and information for response prompts.
4. Academic unit head and/or designated program evaluate faculty feedback and submit summary into the university assessment monitoring system.
5. Academic unit head and dean review faculty summary for consideration of actions.
6. The Provost, Associate Provost for Curriculum and Instruction, graduate dean (as applicable), college dean, academic unit head, and program coordinator(s) meet the following year to discuss status of the program, faculty feedback, and actions needed. The interaction and discussions serve as the response from the Provost's Office to annual review of undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

C. Supportive data and response prompts

- Certain supportive data and information are required for program review and determined by the Office of the Provost.
- Institutionally required data is published online with annual updates. The Office of the Provost maintains a link on the [program review webpage](#) to the latest available institutional data.
- Annual reviews only require use of institutionally provided information. As appropriate for individual academic degree programs, other supportive data may also be included.
- Specific annual prompts and PLOs are available in the university assessment monitoring system where discussion and documentation of longitudinal trends, annual progress and action plans should be entered for the following topics:
 1. PLO attainment (undergraduate programs should include reference to core objectives) and plans
 2. Student achievement and headcount enrollment
 3. Students and faculty (program/unit-specific) demographics; recruitment and retention considerations
 4. Instructional salary cost per SCH and student-faculty ratio (SFR)
 5. Degree program impact to the university mission and the state (meaningful and sustained enrollment; institutional reputation; job development/quality of living; other impact topics).
 6. Overall challenges and opportunities related to the degree program

Decennial (ten-year) Review **Graduate-level Academic Programs Only**

The preparation of materials for a program review must be an inclusive process, involving all continuing faculty in the program to the extent possible. This is a SACSCOC requirement and is essential.

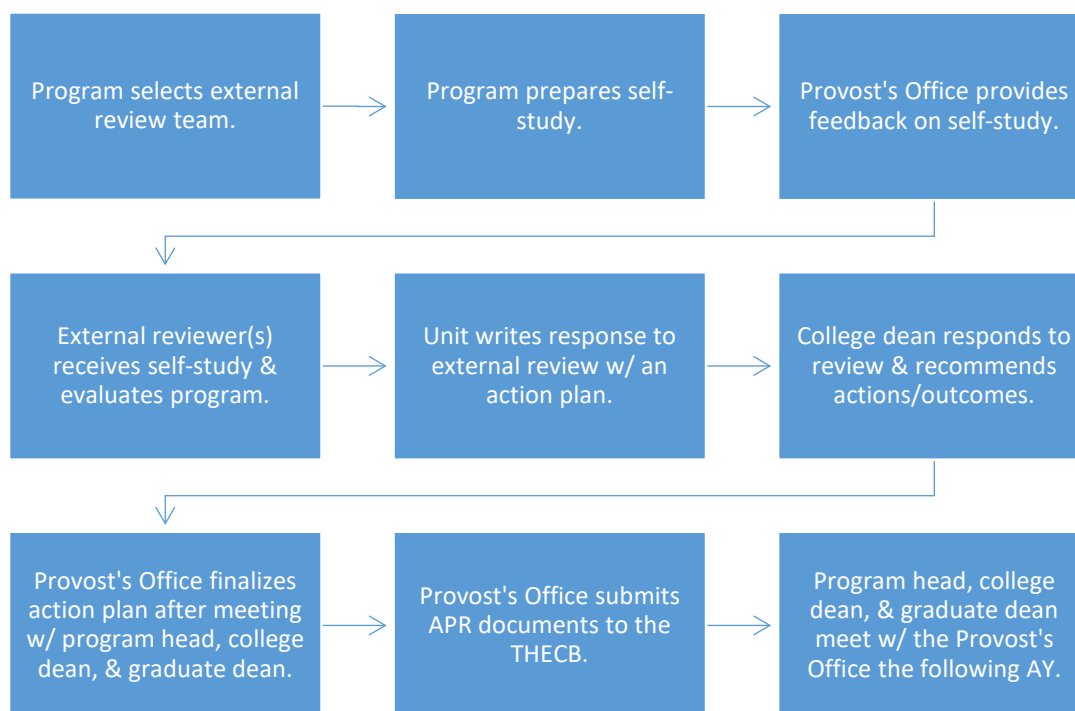
A. Decennial (ten-year) review contents:

1. Self-study of academic degree program(s), including faculty feedback summary of perceptions and analyses. External review of the academic degree program(s). You may wish to refer to the THECB template for the external review [HERE](#).
2. Institutional response to the external review's recommendations, including an *action plan* devised by the program, the college dean, and the Provost's Office. You may wish to refer to the THECB template for the institutional response [HERE](#).

B. Decennial program review steps:

1. External reviewers are selected. Doctoral programs must include a site visit. A site visit is preferable for master programs, but is not required.
2. The academic unit head designates or confirms the academic program coordinator.
3. The designated academic program coordinator prepares the self-study (including faculty feedback summary) and submits it to the Provost's Office for initial review.
4. The Provost's Office provides feedback on the self-study, which the program leadership takes into account.
5. The academic unit head (or designated academic program coordinator) head submits the self-study to the external review team.
6. The external review team submits the external review to the academic program coordinator, academic unit head, the college dean, and the Provost's Office.
7. The academic program coordinator drafts a response to the external review and includes an action plan. The academic unit head reviews and provides to the dean.
8. The college dean provides feedback on the external review and the program's action plan.
9. The Provost, Associate Provost for Curriculum and Instruction, graduate dean, college dean, and academic unit head and/or program coordinator meet to finalize the response and action plan.
10. The finalized institutional response is signed by the Provost, Associate Provost for Curriculum and Instruction, graduate dean, college dean, and the academic unit and/or program coordinator.
11. The Associate Provost for Curriculum and Instruction submits all decennial program review contents to the THECB as required.
12. The Provost, Associate Provost for Curriculum and Instruction, graduate dean, college dean, an academic unit head and/or program coordinator meet the following year during the annual review process to discuss progress towards the program's action plan and determine whether any additional steps need to be taken.

Decennial program review summary



A general timeline template for the decennial APR process is included in Appendix B.

The specific academic programs scheduled for decennial review is maintained on the Office of the Provost [website](#).

C. The Decennial Self-Study (Graduate programs only)

The centerpiece of APR is the self-study. The primary focus of the self-study is the academic program's strategic plan and progress toward achieving its program and learning goals, as well as additional steps that need to be taken to ensure continuous improvement. The narrative should evaluate and describe the academic program contributions to the university's mission and strategic vision, as well as the mission and strategic vision of the college in which the program resides. The self-study provides an opportunity for faculty within the program to think through critical issues that influence progress toward academic program goals in a systematic way. The self-study must be developed by a committee composed of faculty within the academic unit and appointed by the academic unit head. All of the required elements noted in the APR Handbook must be included.

The review packet narrative should be about 20 pages in length per program (double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1" margins); the appendices are not included in the page count. Each degree program administered by the academic program unit should have its own narrative (around 20 pages per program; e.g., the BFA in Art and the BA in Art should have separate narratives of approximately 20 pages each). Narratives can be longer provided unnecessary repetition is avoided.

Narrative Outline of the Self-Study

1. Title Page with List of Participants and Authors (not included in page count).
2. Table of Contents (not included in page count).
3. Program Overview, including the program's mission and goals, the overall role of the program, program learning outcomes (by academic program), the faculty characteristics for the program, and the student characteristics for the program. Complete the table below and provide contextual narrative for each topic.

Program Enrollment (current and 3 year trend)	(Headcount)
Number of Degrees Per Year (Definition: Rolling 3 year average of the number of degrees awarded per academic year)	(Number of degrees)
Graduation Rates (Definition: Rolling 3 year average of the percent of 1st year graduate students who graduated within 10 years)	(Percentage)
Average Time to Degree (Definition: Rolling 3 year average of the registered time to degree of 1st year graduate students)	(Number of years; one decimal place)
Employment Profile in field within one year of graduation (Definition: Percentage of the last three years of graduates employed, still seeking, and unknown)	(Percentage)
Admissions Criteria (Definition: Description of admission factors)	(List of criteria)
Percentage of Full-time Students (FTS) (Definition: FTS/ number of students enrolled or last 3 fall semesters)	(Percentage FTS)

Number of Core Faculty (Definition: Number of core faculty in the prior year. Core Faculty: Full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty who teach 50 percent or more in the graduate program or other individuals integral to the graduate program who can direct thesis/dissertation research.)	(Number)
Student-Core Faculty Ratio (Definition: Rolling 3 year average of full time students to average of core faculty ratio)	(Ratio – Number:1)
Core Faculty Publications (Definition: Rolling 3 year average of the number of publications issued per core faculty member)	(Number)
Core Faculty External Grants (Definition: Rolling 3 year average of core faculty member receiving external funds, external funds per faculty, and total external funds per program per academic year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ave. # of core faculty receiving external grants: # • Ave. external funds per faculty: \$ X • Total external funds per program per academic year: \$ X
Faculty Teaching Load (Definition: total number of SCH taught per academic year by core faculty divided by number of core faculty member)	(Number of SCH per core faculty instructional full-time faculty equivalent (FTSE))
Faculty Demographics (Definition: core faculty by ethnicity & gender)	(Headcount by reported race/ethnicity)
Student Demographics (Definition: enrollment headcount by ethnicity & gender during the prior year)	(Headcount by reported race/ethnicity)
Student Publications/Presentations (Definition: Rolling 3 year average for the number of student publications per year by FTE students)	Average number of student publications presentation per full-time student equivalent
Date of Last External Review	(Date)
External Program Accreditation	(Name of discipline specific accreditation, if applicable)

4. Description of Program (undergraduate and/or graduate), including each available degree, major, minor, and certificate, in comparison to peer programs.
5. Program Contribution to the Mission and Goals of the University and College, with a summary of the impact of the program on the college and university and an explanation of the degree to which it is mission critical.
6. A Description of Facilities and Equipment

7. Finances and Resources of the Program

Average Institutional Financial Support Provided (Definition: For those receiving financial support, the average monetary institutional support provided per full-time graduate student for the prior year from assistantships, scholarships, stipend, grants, and fellowships – does not include tuition or benefits)	(Number)
Percentage Full-Time Students with Institutional Financial Report (Definition: The number of FTS with at least \$1,000 of annual support/the number of FTS)	(Percentage)

8. Organizational Structure and Administration of the Program

The following narrative requirements must be presented separately for each graduate degree program:

- The **Strengths of the Program**, addressing the quality of faculty research/scholarship/creative work, instruction, and service, as well as the program's sustainability with regard to enrollments, graduates, and future resources.
- **The Weaknesses of the Program**, addressing the quality of faculty research/scholarship/creative work, instruction, and service, as well as the program's sustainability with regard to enrollments, graduates, and future resources.
- **Internal/External Opportunities Available to the Program**, with a description of how they can improve and develop the program and further the mission and goals of the university and the college.
- **Threats or Challenges Facing the Program**, with a description of how they affect the program's mission, goals, and future plans.
- **Future Plans of the Program**: Describe how they relate to the mission and goals of the academic department, college, and university, and the resources necessary to achieve them.
- **Supportive data and trends**: Include summary of annual faculty feedback (reported from university assessment monitoring system). Utilize data designated by the Office of the Provost from annual prompts as well as any other required metrics appropriate for the program as specified by [Texas Education Code 5.52](#) for master's and doctoral programs (Appendix B).

D. Supportive data and response prompts

- Certain supportive data and information are required for program review and determined by the Office of the Provost.
- Institutionally required data is published online with annual updates. The Office of the Provost maintains a link on the [program review webpage](#) to the latest available institutional data.
- In addition to the institutionally required information, individual academic degree programs may also include other supportive data as appropriate. Decennial reviews of graduate programs must further include any additional data as required by [Texas Education Code 5.52](#).
- Annual program review checkup results should be referenced and used as supportive evidence of continuous improvement and planning. The required annual summaries are available in the university assessment monitoring system for reference and use with the self-study materials submitted.
- **All required data must be completed even if an accrediting report is submitted in lieu of the APR report.***

*** Per SFA Policy 02-202: If approval is granted to substitute an accreditation report for and the external review requirement, any information required by the APR Handbook and not already included in the accreditation review must be submitted to the Provost and executive vice president for academic affairs with the external accreditation report.**

E. Decennial External Review (Graduate programs only)

An external review team analyzes the academic program self-study and conducts interviews during the site visit, if applicable. The goals of the external review team include:

1. Assessing the appropriateness of the academic program goals contributing to the university and the college strategic goals, and the degree to which the academic program has achieved its determined program and learning goals;
2. Identifying strengths and weaknesses of the academic degree programs;
3. Providing recommendations for quality improvement.

Note: Master's and doctoral programs in the same discipline (as defined by [Texas Education Code 5.52.c.7-8](#)) are reviewed simultaneously using the same self-study materials and reviewers. If a bachelor level academic degree program is also optionally reviewed with the same external review process, the external reviews should separately address graduate programs in a unique report section.

Qualifications for External Reviewers:

1. External reviewers must be nationally recognized experts in the academic field.
2. They must be senior faculty at institutions comparable to SFA.
3. They must have significant administrative, curricular, and program-review experience.
4. They must be employed by an institution of higher education outside Texas.
5. Ideally, reviewers will be from an institution accredited by SACSCOC.
6. They cannot have a conflict of interest that could bias their judgment (e.g. SFA alumni, former students, or employees of SFA; or formal collaborators with faculty in the program).
7. Each doctoral program must have at least two reviewers, and they must conduct an onsite review, as well as prepare an external report.
8. Each master's program must have at least one reviewer, who must prepare an external report; an onsite visit is optional.

Faculty members of the academic program nominate three individuals from comparable institutions of higher education to serve as possible external reviewers and submit to the college dean each reviewer's curriculum vitae as well as a disclosure statement of any known affiliations between the proposed reviewers and SFA (i.e., nature of the relationship, any potential conflicts of interest, etc.). The dean then selects at least one person from the three nominated. Preference is given to nominees from colleges and universities accredited by SACSCOC.

External Review Onsite Visit

All doctoral programs must undergo a site visit as part of the external review. On the site visit, the external review team spends up to two days on campus discussing the self-study and related information with administrators, faculty, staff, students, and others related to the program. Required meetings include:

1. An initial meeting with the Provost's Office, Office of Institutional Research, Office of Institutional Effectiveness, graduate dean, college dean, academic unit head, and, where appropriate, program coordinators;
2. A meeting with program faculty;
3. A meeting with graduate students of the program and, as appropriate, undergraduate students.
4. Unscheduled time for the review team to formulate initial recommendations;
5. An exit meeting with the Provost's Office, Office of Institutional Research, Office of Institutional Effectiveness, graduate dean, college dean, academic unit head, and, where appropriate, program coordinators.

External Review Report

The external review team shall prepare an external review report that includes:

1. A general assessment of the program (students, faculty, curriculum, etc.).
2. An evaluation of the appropriateness of the program learning outcomes to the:
 - a. SFA strategic plan and
 - b. Respective academic college and unit strategic plan
3. Attainment/progression of program learning outcomes
4. A description of significant strengths and weaknesses of the program. Including concepts related reducing student debt and the SFA Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is encouraged.
5. A prioritized set of recommended strategies for future improvements, which should address critical issues and include rationales for the strategies recommended for improvement.

The external review report should be at least 10 pages, but not more than 20 (double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1" margins).

The [THECB Graduate Program External Review form](#) format may be used to prepare the required elements of the External Review Report.

F. Institutional Response

After the external review report is received, the academic unit shall draft a response to the review that includes an evaluation of the main findings of the review, a response to each of the review team's recommendations, and an action plan detailing the unit's proposed strategies and timeline to address the review team's recommendations.

The college dean will then provide feedback on the unit's action plan in light of the external review report's recommendations.

The academic unit head, college dean, graduate dean, Associate Provost for Curriculum and Instruction, Provost, and, where appropriate, program coordinator will meet to finalize the response and action plan. The final response and action plan will be signed by the above officials.

The [THECB Graduate Program Institutional Response form](#) format may be used to prepare the required elements of the External Review Report.

G. External Submission of the Decennial Academic Program Review

All decennial academic program review materials, including the self-study, external review report, and institutional response, will be submitted to the THECB by the associate Provost for Curriculum and Instruction.

Appendix A: References and Supportive Documents

Hanover Research. (2012). Best practices in academic program review.

https://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/hanoverresearch_bestpractices_programreview.pdf.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. (2020). The principles of accreditation: Foundations for quality enhancement. Standards 7.1 & 8.1-8.2a.

<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/2018-POA-Resource-Manual.pdf>

Stephen F. Austin State University. (2022). Policy manual. University policy [02-202](#), Academic program review. <https://www.sfasu.edu/docs/hops/02-202.pdf>

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2022). Best Practices for Graduate Program Reviews-Online Included.

<https://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/agency-publication/guidelines-manuals/best-practices-for-graduate-program-reviews-online-included/>

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2020). Graduate Program External Review Form. See Templates on:

<https://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/agency-publication/blank-forms-templates/graduate-program-external-review-form/>

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2020). Graduate Program Institutional Response Form.

<https://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/agency-publication/blank-forms-templates/graduate-program-institutional-response-form/>

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2018). Texas Administrative Code. Title 19, Chapter 5, Subchapter C, Rule 5.52, Review of existing degree programs.

[https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=1&ch=5&rl=52](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=1&ch=5&rl=52).

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2021). Texas Administrative Code. Title 19, Chapter 4, Subchapter B, Rule 4.30, Institutional Assessment and Reporting.

[https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=1&ch=4&rl=30](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=1&ch=4&rl=30)

Appendix B: SACSCOC Notes and Excerpts

SFA Academic Program Review Note Section 7:

SACSCOC Core Requirement 7.1 centers on the university's mission. Note that SFA's mission states that the university is "dedicated to excellence in teaching, research, scholarship, creative work, and service." Therefore, at a minimum, each academic program must maintain and regularly assess program goals that set measurable outcomes for these activities. The assessment of academic program goals must be included in the APR, and the program's progress towards those goals should be a major focus of its self-study.

SECTION 7: Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

- 7.1 The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission.**
(Institutional planning) [CR]

SFA Academic Program Review Note Section 8:

SACSCOC Core Requirement 8.1 and Standard 8.2.a center on student learning and success. Outcomes and achievements for students in each academic program are vital to the mission of the university. Each academic program must maintain and regularly assess program learning outcomes (PLOs) demonstrate actions toward the improvement of student learning. Documentation and assessment of PLOs must be included in the APR, and the program's progress towards them must be addressed in its self-study.

SECTION 8: Student Achievement

- 8.1 The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution uses multiple measures to document student success.**
(Student achievement) [CR]

Rationale and Notes

Student learning and student success are at the core of the mission of all institutions of higher learning. Effective institutions focus on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning and support student learning outcomes for its educational programs. To meet the goals of educational programs, an institution provides appropriate academic and student services to support student success.

- 8.2 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:**
- a. **Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.**
(Student outcomes: educational programs)

Appendix C: 10-year APR Timeline

Decennial APR General Timeline - Checklist			
Step	Due By	Notes	Done
<i>Self-study written</i>	September-February	Use data prepared for the academic year ending in August. Current fall data is not required, but may be used if desired.	
<i>External review team selected</i>	By October 15		
<i>Self-study sent to Provost's Office</i>	By March 15		
<i>Self-study sent to external review team</i>	By April 1		
<i>External review conducts site-visit, if scheduled</i>	By May 15		
<i>External review team submits report</i>	By May 31		
<i>Program head drafts action plan in response to external review report</i>	By June 30		
<i>College dean provides written feedback on action plan</i>	By July 15		
<i>Program head, college dean, & graduate dean meet w/ Provost's Office to finalize action plan</i>	By July 31	Action plan incorporated into assessment monitoring system.	
<i>Send external review report to Assoc. Provost for Curr. and Instruction</i>	By August 1		
<i>Assoc. Provost for Curr. and Instruction submits APR materials to THECB (as applicable)</i>	By August 15	Due date established by THECB	
<i>Program head, college dean, & graduate dean meet w/ Provost's Office to review progress towards action plan</i>	By the following July 31	Results and follow-up added to assessment monitoring system.	