



## **Academic Program Review Guidelines Manual for Department Chairs 2026-27 Review Cycle**

This Guidelines Manual details the policies, timelines, roles, and templates associated with the Academic Program Review (APR) process for programs undergoing review in 2026–27. The manual is intended to be used alongside the APR Companion Guide, which offers a more concise overview of the process for department chairs. All APR materials, including the APR Companion Guide, are available on the [APR website](#).

### **Purpose of Academic Program Review**

APR is a faculty-driven process that provides a cyclical, comprehensive assessment of an academic program's strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement.

The primary focus of a program review considers factors associated with achieving and maintaining high quality degree programs. In addition, the review takes into account related departmental/program factors (e.g., climate, facilities, technology, staffing, advising).

With more than 200 academic options available, including concentrations within majors, the individualized degree program, and certificate options, APR provides a program, school or college, and the university with an evidence-based foundation to support decision making and to enhance academic excellence.

The value of the APR rests on its process, its outcomes, and its usefulness. Because the process and outcomes are developed for purposes of improving educational opportunities, curriculum quality, and program relevance, it is essential that the university make appropriate use of the results.

The results of a program review are reported to the Provost, Vice Provost, deans, chair, and the program's faculty members. In addition, the results may be made available to university committees involved in planning, assessment, and budgeting processes. Among the individuals and groups involved in APR are the following:

- Provost and Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Vice Provost
- Executive Director of Academic Effectiveness
- Academic Program Review Committee
- APR subcommittee(s)
- Dean of the program's school/college
- Chair and faculty

- Program staff
- Office of Graduate Studies, as appropriate
- Undergraduate and/or graduate students in the program
- External reviewer
- The university’s board of trustees
- Other key stakeholders, as appropriate

**Accreditation and Accountability**

APR is a core component of MSU Denver’s compliance with the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), specifically Criterion 3: Teaching and Learning for Student Success, Core Component 3.F. Program review also supports state accountability and internal planning and budgeting processes.

**Definition of a Program**

For the purposes of APR, a program is an academic unit with a defined, credit-bearing curriculum governed by institutional and accreditation standards. All undergraduate and graduate majors, minors, and certificates are included in APR.

**Program Review Process**

All academic programs follow a permanent, seven-year review cycle. A full review occurs during year seven and is followed by a six-year interim period focused on goal setting and progress reporting.

Using the Department of Accounting as an example, the table below outlines the program review cycle. Departments containing multiple programs (graduate programs included) are reviewed on the same seven-year schedule.

APR 7-Year Schedule for Accounting							
2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33	2033-34
Program Review	← 6-year interim, divided into three 2-year cycles →						Program Review
	Program Progress Reporting Cycle A		Program Progress Reporting Cycle B		Program Progress Reporting Cycle C		
	Year 1 A - 1	Year 2 A - 2	Year 1 B - 1	Year 2 B - 2	Year 1 C - 1	Year 2 C - 2	

**Program Review (Year 7)**

By engaging in program review, programs receive a comprehensive assessment of the program’s strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement on a continual basis, and results assist the program with making data-driven decisions in order to deliver useful, high-value degree options to MSU Denver students. There are several key areas of focus during a program review, including assessment, curriculum, faculty, students and student satisfaction, online presence (media), and resources.

A program review includes several phases:

- The development of a self-study narrative by the program chair.
- The analysis of data, which is collected cross-departmentally.

- A two-day site visit from an external reviewer.
- A series of meetings involving the individuals and groups listed on page 1
- The preparation of a findings report which is created by the Academic Program Review Committee.
- A final review meeting to discuss the outcome of the program review with the Provost, Vice Provost, dean, Executive Director of Academic Effectiveness, and the co-chairs of the Academic Program Review Committee.
- The preparation of an executive summary of the program review, which is presented to the university's board of trustees.

Program reviews begin at the start of the fall semester and conclude by the end of the following spring semester. On average, approximately six programs/departments are reviewed concurrently during each program review cycle. The schedule for all programs can be found on the [Academic Program Review](#) website.

### Program Progress Reporting (Interim Years 1-6)

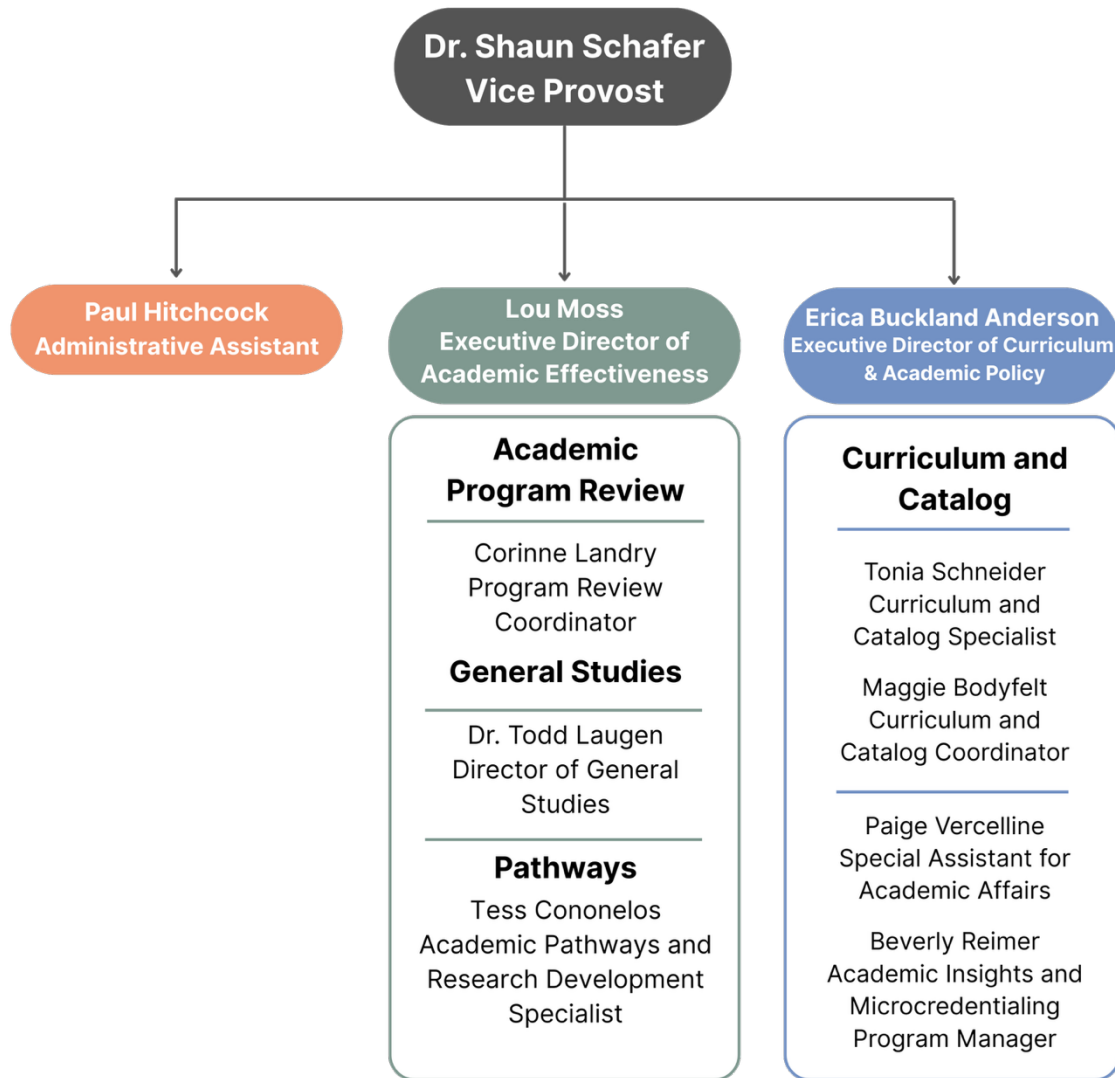
Over the six-year interim between each program review, the program participates in a cyclical program improvement process where goals or objectives are set by the program for each major, and the chair documents progress on a semesterly basis.



### The Academic Program Review Committee (APRC)

The APRC is comprised of eight full-time faculty members representing the Colleges of Aerospace, Computing, Engineering and Design, Business, Health and Human Sciences, Letters, Arts and Sciences, and the Schools of Education and Hospitality. Committee membership is managed by the Office of Curriculum, Academic Effectiveness, and Policy Development. The 2026-27 committee roster can be found on the APR website.

## Organizational Chart for Curriculum, Academic Effectiveness, and Policy Development (CAEPD)



### Programs Undergoing Program Review 2026-27

Beginning on page 6, you will find a comprehensive overview of the review process, including the timeline, key due dates, roles and responsibilities, and report templates. As outlined in the “Program Review Process Timeline” (pg.6), one of the first steps is for the chair to develop the program’s self-study narrative. The self-study narrative, together with data provided by the Office of CAEPD, is shared with the external reviewer and serves as the foundation for discussions about the direction and focus of the review.

Programs scheduled for review in 2026-27:

- Accounting
- Computer Information Systems and Business Analytics
- Economics
- Finance

- Management
- Marketing
- MBA

### **Timeline, Responsibilities, and Report Template**

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### I. Program Review Process Timeline

Below is a table of regular program review activity, beginning in Summer 2026, with associated deadlines.

Activity	Timing
Program data distributed to chair by CAEPD	June 2026
APRC reconvenes with weekly standing meetings	August 2026
Self-study narrative and reviewer approval form due from chair (more detail on pgs. 8-10)	August 14, 2026
Site visit dates finalized (chair and APR coordinator mutually decide)	September 2026
External reviewer site visit (on a Monday/Tuesday, two full days required)	September–December 2026
Meeting with the APRC and program faculty	October 2026–February 2027
APRC report is finalized	March 2027
Roundtable with chair presentation and findings discussion	January–March 2027
Executive summary to board of trustees	June 2027
One-year follow up from dean detailing changes since review	June 2028

### II. Responsibilities for Program Review Process

Time	Chair	Dean	Academic Affairs	APRC
<b>Spring-Summer 2026</b>	Select external reviewer for dean and AA approval. Submit request form (found on APR website) by <b>August 14</b> .	Approve external reviewer approval request initiated by chair via Dynamic Forms.	Approve external reviewer via Dynamic Forms. Notify chair.	
	Develop a self-study narrative; upload narrative and supplemental materials (more info below) by <b>August 14</b> to SP.		APR coordinator to collect self-study narrative and supplemental materials from chair.	
<b>Fall 2026</b>	Determine site visit dates by working with APR coordinator to confirm schedule availability for Provost, dean and APRC.		APR coordinator will initiate the site visit itinerary by scheduling external reviewer meetings with the Provost, dean, and APRC.	Review self-study narrative and program materials.
	Using agreed upon visit dates, create a			

	visit itinerary (two full days, Monday and Tuesday).		APR coordinator will coordinate travel arrangements.	
	Facilitate site visit. Chair serves as the host of the visit.	Meet with external reviewer during site visit (afternoon on both days).		Develop external reviewer meeting questions.
<b>Fall 2026- Spring 2027</b>	Host faculty meeting with APRC.			Develop questions for meeting between faculty and APRC.
	Respond to faculty discussion questions.			
<b>Spring 2027</b>	Present at roundtable meeting with Provost, Vice-Provost, dean, executive director, APRC co-chairs.	Attend roundtable. Assist chair with answering questions.	APR coordinator to arrange roundtable and supply chair with APRC questions ahead of meeting.	Co-chairs develop chair questions for roundtable.
				Co-chairs finalize committee report.
<b>June 2027</b>	Attend board meeting; provide clarification, if needed.	Attend board meeting; provide clarification, if needed.	Present findings to the board.	
<b>May 2028</b>	Assist dean with completing a 1-year follow up on progress post-review.	Provide a 1-year follow-up to executive director for use in board updates.	Provide the board with individual 1-year follow-ups for all CBUS programs.	
<b>Fall 2027- Spring 2033</b> (six-year interim process)	Resume 2-Year Program Progress reporting: (Cycle A, Fall 2027-Spring 2029)	Review/approve goals set by chair in 2-Year Program Progress reports.	Manage 2-Year Reporting process.	

### **III. External Reviewer Selection**

The role of the external reviewer is to evaluate the quality of the program(s) in the following areas: Curriculum, Assessment, Faculty, Students and Student Satisfaction, Resources, and Online Presence (media). The ideal reviewer is up to date on curriculum discussions and debates within the discipline. They understand that curriculum can be structured in a variety of ways, all of which can be effective, in addition to understanding a wide range of issues related to faculty roles and resource allocation. The program should select an objective reviewer who has no previous ties, either professional or personal, with the university or individual faculty members. Reviewers may not conduct more than one program review of a single program.

The reviewer approval request form is due by **August 14**. The form can be found on the [APR website](#).

The following are criteria to consider when selecting a potential reviewer.

The external reviewer:

- Does not currently and has not previously worked at MSU Denver.
- Has served as a reviewer for other institutions' programs or has evaluated other programs.
- Has been active in educational and professional organizations aligned with the discipline.
- Has related work experience and exposure to different types of programs.
- Has experience at an institution similar to MSU Denver's in terms of mission and vision.

If you are uncertain as to whether a candidate is eligible to serve as a reviewer, please reach out to the Executive Director of Academic Effectiveness for added clarification.

### **IV. External Reviewer Site Visit**

After the external reviewer has been approved by the dean and the Executive Director of Academic Effectiveness, the chair will contact the reviewer to determine general availability for the visit, which is two full days of meetings, preferably on a Monday and Tuesday. Prior to confirmation, dates must be cleared with the APR coordinator to avoid scheduling overlap with other programs undergoing a review, and to verify the availability of the individuals and groups listed on page 1. The external reviewer is required to attend meetings over the course of two full days (approximately 16 hours). The APR coordinator will initiate a draft of the site visit itinerary, scheduling meetings with the Provost, dean, and the APRC. The chair will schedule the remainder of the itinerary for the site visit.

The chair will ensure that the external reviewer has a clear understanding of the conditions of the job, which primarily consists of 2 full days of meetings, and the timely delivery of a findings report evaluating the six main areas of focus outlined above.

#### **Example Site Visit Itinerary**

The chair serves as host to the reviewer for the duration of the 2-day visit. The APR coordinator initiates development of the itinerary by scheduling required meetings with the APRC, Provost, and deans. From there, the chair organizes the remainder of the reviewer's itinerary.

An ideal itinerary includes meetings/observations with the following:

- Dean and associate deans at the end of day one, and end of day two
- Associate vice president in Graduate Studies, if applicable
- Provost
- Students in the program
- Classroom observations
- Alumni, where available
- Program faculty members, staff, advisors, and other relevant stakeholders
- Program faculty members and staff from related programs, if applicable
- Advisory council, if applicable
- APRC

An external reviewer’s itinerary should include any meetings essential to a fully informed campus visit. Chairs should add any additional meetings necessary to create the most comprehensive visit possible.

Example itinerary:

<b>Program/Department:</b> Accounting		
<b>External Reviewer:</b> Dr. Cat Tooth		
<b>Visit Dates:</b> October 12-13, 2026		
<b>Monday, October 12<sup>th</sup></b>		<b>Location</b>
8:00-8:30	Coffee in hotel lobby; walk to department building	Meetings and locations determined by chair, with the exception of the APRC, provost, and dean meetings.
8:30-9:30	Tour facilities with chair	
9:45-10:45	Meet with faculty	
11:00-12:15	Classroom observation	
12:15-1:15	Lunch	
1:30-2:30	Meet with students	
2:30-3:00	Break	
3:00-4:00	Meet with dean (1 of 2)	
4:00-5:00	Meet with AVP of Graduate Studies	
<b>Tuesday, October 13<sup>th</sup></b>		<b>Location</b>
8:00-9:15	Coffee with faculty and staff	Meetings and locations determined by chair, with the exception of the APRC, provost, and dean meetings.
9:30-10:45	Classroom observation	
11:00-12:00	Meeting with Academic Program Review Committee	
12:00-1:00	Lunch	
1:00-2:00	Meeting with provost	
2:15-3:15	Meet with students	
3:30-4:30	Meet with dean (2 of 2, exit meeting)	
4:30	Depart to airport	

*Example only. Adjust based on the needs of the program/department.*

### External Reviewer Travel Arrangements and Payment

The Office of CAEPD provides payment for the approved travel expenses and work provided. After the visit date is set, the APR coordinator will work directly with the reviewer to arrange travel and collect the forms necessary for payment. The program is not responsible for collecting or processing any paperwork or forms related to reviewer travel and payment.

The reviewer will receive a \$1,500 payment from the Office of CAEPD for conducting the review and preparing a report, which is due within 30 calendar days following the visit. The external reviewer will not be paid until the Office of CAEPD has received the reviewer's report. If the report is received between 31 and 45 days following the visit, payment is reduced to \$1,200. If the report is received between 46 and 60 days following the visit, payment is reduced to \$750. The purpose of a reduction in payment is to encourage timely completion of the report, which helps the APRC avoid a bottleneck in workflow during the concurrent review of programs. The Office of CAEPD will process all necessary paperwork for payment in accordance with university policy.

#### **V. Materials to be Supplied by the Chair**

Chairs, with help from faculty members, will supply the following materials to the APR coordinator by **August 14<sup>th</sup>**:

- Up-to-date curriculum vitae for all full-time faculty
- Strategic plan for the program/department
- Program review self-study narrative (template and details below)
- Program marketing materials
- Advising checklists/plans

Materials should be uploaded to the "Year 7 Program Review 2026-2027" SharePoint subfolder, located within the department or program's [Academic Program Review Records and Reporting](#) main folder.

#### **VI. Program Review Self-Study Narrative Template**

Chairs, with help from program faculty members, use a template to prepare a self-study narrative that explicitly addresses six key areas including assessment, curriculum, faculty, students and student satisfaction, online presence (media), and resources. The APRC's final report is organized by the same categories as the self-study narrative.

The template for the self-study narrative is available on the [APR website](#).

#### **VII. Dissemination of Information to the External Reviewer**

Information about the program will be sent from the APR coordinator to the external reviewer at least two weeks prior to the reviewer's visit. Among the items included are the materials submitted by the chair (listed in section V), payment forms required by Accounting Services, and program data and previous program review reports from the Office of CAEPD.

#### **VIII. Committee Meeting with Program Faculty**

Part of the review process includes an interview of faculty and staff involved with the program by the APRC. All tenured/tenure-track faculty members should attend, if possible. The program may want Cat II and affiliate faculty to attend as well. Additionally, program staff are invited to attend this meeting.

Approximately one week prior to the faculty discussion, the APR coordinator will send written questions to the chair, who should disseminate the information among faculty members. The questions and their responses serve as the agenda for the meeting. With exception to the

request of an itemized list of resources needed, written responses are not necessary.

### **IX. APRC Report (Spring)**

Approximately six weeks after the faculty meeting, the committee issues a report summarizing program strengths, along with challenges and recommendations in the key areas outlined in the self-study narrative template.

### **X. Final Meeting: Roundtable Discussion with Chair (Spring)**

After the APRC issues its report, the chair, provost, dean, executive director, and the APRC co-chairs meet to discuss the program review reports from the external reviewer and the APRC. Prior to that meeting, the APRC prepares a memo identifying the important issues to be discussed.

### **XI. Executive Summary (June 2027)**

The executive summary presented to the board of trustees contains the most important information from the APRC and external reviewer's reports.

### **XII. 1-Year Follow-up Report (June 2028)**

One year after the roundtable discussion, the APRC will request a 1-year follow-up response from the dean and chair summarizing actions taken since the program review was completed. This brief statement should indicate how concerns have been addressed, whether recommendations have been followed and if any new issues have arisen. This response, along with information received from the chair during Cycle A of progress reporting, will be integrated into an update report on all programs reviewed during 2026-27 and presented to the board of trustees.

Questions? Please reach out to one of the contacts listed below. Thank you.

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