

**REDESIGN OF PUBLIC INSTITUTION ACADEMIC PROGRAM APPROVAL
AND REVIEW PROCESSES**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: On October 6, 1998, the Board endorsed a plan to streamline program approval and review processes using an advisory committee of college and university representatives responsible for program approval and review. On August 22, 2000, it heard an update on the work of the Redesign Working Group. Staff reported that the group was working to draft formal recommendations to the Board; drafting procedural guidelines for implementing recommended revisions of the program review process; identifying appropriate venues for explaining the redesigned process to institutions; and developing new ways to assess program outcomes and quality. The documents presented to the Board for approval at this time result from that work. Following review of the material and consultation with the members of the Redesign Working Group, staff has further revised the form for *Requests for Approval of New Units of Instruction, Research, and Public Service at Public Institutions*. In addition, staff has developed Program Review procedures consistent with the process endorsed by the Board in June 1999, and with the requirement of *The Illinois Commitment* that by 2004 all programs will implement systematic assessment of student learning and use assessment results to improve programs. These guidelines also retain the goals of streamlining the process, allowing campuses greater flexibility, and increasing institutional accountability while continuing to execute the board's statutory responsibilities.

Action Requested: That the Board of Higher Education approve the proposed *Guidelines for Review of Existing Units of Instruction, Research, and Public Service at Public Institutions*.

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**REDESIGN OF PUBLIC INSTITUTION ACADEMIC PROGRAM APPROVAL
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Background

Quality assurance is not new to Illinois institutions of higher education. Institutions regularly undergo quality review and evaluation from regional accrediting associations, and special and professional accrediting bodies periodically review and accredit or deny accreditation for particular academic programs. In addition, some institutions conduct their own internal quality reviews, some using external reviewers.

For many years, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) has had two quality assurance requirements in place to determine and monitor quality and report on performance: Academic Program Approval and Academic Program Review. In the **Academic Program Approval** process, the Board required proposed degree programs to undergo a rigorous analysis to meet specific Board criteria in order to gain approval. In **Academic Program Review**, the Board required institutions to review all certificate and degree programs every eight years on an IBHE-mandated schedule to monitor quality, identify needed improvements, or make recommendations to boards of control for closure.

In February 1999, the Board adopted *The Illinois Commitment*, a framework for focusing on the priority needs of the state and its residents. As a means of assuring quality, progress, and public accountability for this set of strategic priorities, the Board required an annual progress report on six goals, the **Institutional Results Reports**, beginning in August 1999.

By 2004, the redesigned IBHE quality assurance processes will include four integrated elements: Academic Program Approval, Assessment of Student Learning, Academic Program Review and Improvement, and Institutional Results Reports.

Redesign of Program Approval and Review Process

On October 6, 1998, the Board endorsed development of a plan to streamline program approval and review processes. The goal was to allow institutions greater flexibility in carrying out these activities, decrease redundancy in institutional, state-level and accreditation review processes, reduce paperwork and increase institutional accountability for results and improvements. Following this endorsement, staff convened a Redesign Working Group of public institution representatives to develop recommendations for redesigning the program approval process for the approval of on- and off-campus programs offered by public institutions.

On June 8, 1999, based on the recommendations of a Redesign Working Group, the Board took the following actions to revise the Academic Program Approval:

- (1) Adopted a new definition for programs to be included in the Board of Higher Education Inventory;

- (2) Allowed additional flexibility for institutions to change the emphasis of a program through a “reasonable and moderate extension;”
- (3) Endorsed proposed changes to the program approval process for public universities;
- (4) Adopted changes to off-campus approval policies for both public and independent institutions; and,
- (5) Delegated approval for certificate programs and temporary approval of certain other programs to the Illinois Community College Board.

The Board received an update on the work of the Redesign Working Group on August 22, 2000. Staff reported that the group was drafting procedural guidelines for implementing recommended revisions of the program review process; identifying appropriate venues for explaining the redesigned process to institutions; and developing new ways to assess program outcomes and quality. The documents presented to the Board for approval result from that work.

In the interim, staff has been working with the Academic Leadership on developing guidelines and next steps to implement *The Illinois Commitment* Goal 5 requirement that, “By 2004, all academic programs will systematically assess student learning and use assessment results to improve programs.” In the current draft paper, *Putting Students First: Assessing Mastery of Student Learning*, assessment of student learning is defined as: “the systematic (at different points throughout the program) determination of what students know and are able to do as a result of completing a unique program of study; this assessment should include multiple qualitative and quantitative measures of student learning, including end-of-program evaluation; these assessment results must, then, be used to improve the quality of curriculum, teaching, and student learning.” The purposes of the paper are to: provide the history, context, and Board definition of “systematic assessment of student learning;” highlight the evidence needed for program review; and provide the framework for a summer workshop for Deans, Department Chairs, and faculty assessment leaders.

Following review of the material and consultation with the members of the Redesign Working Group, staff has further revised the previous application for *Public University Requests for Approval of New Units of Instruction, Research, and Public Service and Administration*. In addition, it has developed *Program Review Guidelines* that are consistent with the Board’s desire to streamline the process, allow campuses greater flexibility, and increase institutional accountability.

Requests for Approval of New On- and Off-Campus Units of Instruction, Research, and Public Service at Public Institutions

The revisions to the application for *Requests for Approval of New Units of Instruction, Research, and Public Service at Public Institutions* are primarily editorial. The application maintains emphasis on program outputs and their assessment, but it adds back a question eliminated in the 1999 revisions to the application form. The inclusion of item 12 on the form, the description of institutional resources available to develop and maintain a quality program, stems from the conclusion of staff and members of the Redesign Working Group that the earlier revision went too far in eliminating input information about components critical to offering a quality program. While the evidence and emphasis continues to be on the results a program expects to achieve and the assessment processes to determine if those outcomes have been achieved, it is, nonetheless, necessary when examining a program for approval, to gather basic information about such program components as faculty qualifications, support staff, library and related resources, equipment and facilities.

In addition, the assessment sections of the application were revised to more clearly distinguish program assessment or review from assessment of student learning. This early emphasis on assessment of student learning directly links to redesigned program review and its philosophical basis of continuous improvement: a clear focus is placed on applying the results of program and student learning assessment to program improvement. That is, in the application for a new program, the program/unit must demonstrate existence of and commitment to a “formal feedback/improvement mechanism” and show how the results of this mechanism will be used to improve curriculum, instruction, and learning.

Guidelines for Existing Program Review at Public Institutions

The Board’s enabling legislation states that “*the Board of Higher Education is authorized to review, periodically, all existing programs of instruction, research, and public service at the state universities and colleges and to advise the appropriate board of control if the contribution of each program is not educationally and economically justified*” (110 ILCS 205/Section 7, Board of Higher Education Act).

Consistent with the Board’s statutory authority, Program Review Guidelines were developed to assist institutions in implementing the redesigned review processes and to include assessment of student learning consistent with the requirement included in Goal 5 of *The Illinois Commitment*. While the proposed guidelines for program review go far beyond assessment of student learning per se, the latter is the nexus between the program approval and review processes.

These guidelines were developed on the assumption that primary responsibility for quality academic programs and their review rests with institutions; the institutions also have a responsibility to be accountable to the public through a report to the Board of Higher Education in the discharge of its statutory obligations. In order to follow the Board’s 1998 charge to streamline its quality assurance processes, it was determined that institutions should not be required to undertake redundant review processes, i.e., findings and recommendations from reviews by specialized accreditors, as well as existing internal program reviews, could be submitted for the Board’s consideration, replacing the separate Board-mandated review and schedule. In return, institutions bear responsibility for determining the specific schedule and process that best meets their respective needs. Institutions also must designate and place in priority order for review programs in difficulty, and take appropriate actions to remedy problems revealed by the review process.

Two elements of the proposed Program Review Guidelines need to be emphasized. First, the text makes provision for institutions to temporarily suspend the enrollment of programs identified as requiring attention sufficient to warrant such action. These programs will report to the Board every three years until the situation is resolved. Second, the guidelines allow the institution to determine the program review process that best meets its unique needs, including the use of results from current specialized accreditation reviews, review committees, and other appropriate reviews. To be considered current, a review must be no more than two years old.

The Program Review Guidelines are appended to this agenda item.

A Comparison of Historical and Redesigned Quality Assurance Processes

For the purposes of highlighting the comparison between the historical and redesigned Program Approval and Program Review processes, the following table is provided.

Comparison of Historical and Redesigned Quality Assurance Processes

Historical Program Approval	Redesigned Program Approval, 1999
Once yearly through RAMP process	Anytime, except when new state funds are required (RAMP)
No recognition of accreditation processes	Adds reporting requirements where accreditation and licensure are linked
Focused on inputs (predictors of quality) not outcomes (proof of quality)	Sharpens focus on assessment of student learning; clearly aligns program approval and curricular outcomes with program review and instructional improvement; permits closer connections between approval and <i>Illinois Commitment</i> goals, assessment of student learning, and Results Reports
Centralized approval authority at IBHE	Delegates approval for certificates to ICCB and other limited approval authorities; provides institutions flexibility for reasonable and moderate extensions of programs
Slow and cumbersome approval process	Streamlines paperwork, approval speed, and institution's ability to respond to workforce needs
Historical Old Program Review	Redesigned Program Review, April 2002
State-determined review schedule	Institution-determined review schedule
State-developed analysis of discipline data	Institutional analysis using web-accessible data
No coordination with accreditation studies/reporting	May substitute findings from specialized accreditation, external or institutional reviews
Lengthy review and report process, findings	Brief report—findings; evidence of student learning outcomes; actions since last review; recommendations; actions to be taken
Static reporting process with limited flexibility	Continuous improvement review and reporting process
Emphasis on program justification, state-determined	Emphasis on developmental approach, program improvement; institution identifies problem programs & solutions
Reviewed once every eight years	Reviewed at least once every eight years; New programs, three years, then eight-year cycle; Professional Licensure programs, three-year cycle until accreditation; Flagged programs, three years
Centralized controls	Increased responsibility & accountability for academic quality to programs and institutions
No opportunity for voluntary suspension	Institution-determined temporary enrollment suspension, notification, and report, non-punitive
Input and resource focus	Student learning and outcomes focus
Separate and blunt improvement process	Integrated, discrete and nimble improvement process directly connecting to three other Board quality assurance and public accountability processes

Advantages of New Quality Processes

The Board's historical quality assurance processes of Program Approval and Program Review have been tested and proven; however, they were more static in nature than the redesigned processes that are more developmental in nature and operate on the underlying philosophy of continuous quality improvement. Program Approval and Program Review have been redesigned in the following key ways:

- Focuses attention and effort on improving student learning, curriculum, and instruction;
- Focuses public accountability for quality to academic programs and institutions;
- Places assessment of student learning on every academic program as a key quality assurance element;
- Builds on existing institutional processes, capacity, and mission;
- Moves from a justification to an improvement model;
- Streamlines and focuses the processes, reducing paperwork;
- Integrates historical processes into a comprehensive IBHE quality assurance and public accountability program which also includes Assessment of Student Learning and Institutional Results Reports, two elements which emanated from the Board's 1999 strategic plan, *The Illinois Commitment*; and,
- Meets the statutory obligations of the Board of Higher Education.

The advantages of the redesigned processes accrue benefits to students, institutions, and the Board. For students, the redesign places their learning and achievement as the top priority of the state and each academic program. The improvement and accountability framework emphasizes the program's responsibility and accountability for student knowledge, competence and skills. Students should have more confidence that their educational experience has prepared them for success in the workplace and for further study.

For institutions, the redesigned and streamlined processes will provide more flexibility in responding to state needs for new programs and greater ability to maximize existing resources. Eliminating redundancy in the processes and paperwork will allow institutions to recapture time that can be redeployed to a more targeted, meaningful quality and accountability effort. The key elements ensure program faculty engagement and agreement on the expected student learning outcomes, in addition to the systematic assessment of student learning for the purpose of ongoing improvement in curriculum, instruction, and learning. This design will contribute to a dynamic and coherent curriculum with appropriate instruction and assessment.

For the Board, redesigning its quality and accountability processes, in cooperation with the institutions, has increased the trust between the two partners. These redesigned processes help focus Board efforts on students, their preparation, their learning, and their success in higher education and the workplace. In addition, allowing reviews and findings from specialized accreditors and other external and internal peers provides an increased depth and breadth of expertise and evaluation. The most important benefit to the Board and, therefore, to the public, will be the evidence provided about student achievement of the expected learning outcomes--and the knowledge that all programs and faculty in the state of Illinois are involved in an integrated quality assurance and continuous improvement effort for the purpose of improving learning for Illinois students.

The Board approved the redesigned process for Academic Program Approval at its June 8, 1999, meeting. This approval met the statutory obligations of the Board's enabling legislation and the rules implementing Section 7 and authorized by Section 9.05 of the Board of

Higher Education Act [110 ILCS 205/7 and 9.05]. This agenda item highlights minor modifications to the Program Approval application form, but does not require Board approval.

The proposed *Guidelines for Review of Existing Units of Instruction, Research, and Public Service at Public Institutions* are consistent with the Board's statutory obligation "to review, periodically, all existing programs of instruction, research, and public service at the state universities and colleges, and to advise the appropriate board of control if the contribution of each program is not educationally and economically justified" (110 ILCS 205/7).

Recommendation

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolution:

That the Board of Higher Education approves the proposed "Guidelines for Review of Existing Units of Instruction, Research, and Public Service at Public Institutions."

**GUIDELINES FOR REVIEW OF EXISTING
UNITS OF INSTRUCTION, RESEARCH, AND PUBLIC SERVICE
AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS**

A. Major Assumptions

1. That primary responsibility for quality and, therefore, review of existing academic programs resides with the institutions and will be carried out in a manner compatible with institutional academic planning/review mechanisms and guidelines promulgated by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). Each institution will determine the program review process that best meets its unique needs (e.g., specialized accreditation reviews, review committees, use of external reviewers, etc.). This process will be consistent with IBHE guidelines. To avoid redundancy, institutions have the discretion to use current findings from specialized program accreditations and other reviews as the basis of the program review process. To be current, a review must be no more than two years old.
2. That academic program review is a critical and constructive process whose essential elements are documentation of learning outcomes and identification of actions for program improvement.
3. That IBHE, occasionally, may call for a review of programs on a statewide basis for the purpose of addressing matters of statewide priority, e.g., high-demand fields, disciplines undergoing substantial change, etc.
4. That increased institutional control over the review process entails increased institutional accountability.
5. That institutions are responsible to identify and review programs targeted for priority evaluation and take appropriate action to remedy problems revealed by the review process (e.g., improvement, suspension, or closure).
6. That *“the Board of Higher Education is authorized to review, periodically, all existing programs of instruction, research, and public service at the state universities and colleges and to advise the appropriate board of control if the contribution of each program is not educationally and economically justified.”* (110 ILCS 205/Board of Higher Education Act, Section 7)

B. Program Review Schedule

Eight-year Cycle

1. Institutional program review will occur on an eight-year cycle, with the institution determining the schedule for individual programs. Since eight years is considered the maximum time period for reviewing an individual program, some programs may be reviewed more than once within this cycle.
2. As part of the review process, institutions will prioritize flagged programs due to quality, viability, and/or other concerns.

Three-year Cycle

1. Three years after implementation of a new program, *a progress report* will be provided to IBHE. Programs not making progress towards achieving objectives stated in the original request for approval will submit a plan for improvement.
2. Programs in which state licensure requires specialized accreditation for students to obtain professional licensure, but which have not yet achieved accreditation, will undergo full review and report to IBHE every three years until accreditation is achieved.
3. Programs flagged for attention or improvement by the institution will report every three years until the situation is corrected or resolved.
4. Programs with institution-determined temporary suspensions of enrollment will inform IBHE of the program's status every three years until the situation is corrected.

C. Program Review Components

While the institution is responsible for developing its unique program review procedures, it is expected that those processes will include the following components:

1. A statement of program goals and intended learning outcomes.
2. An end- or near-end-of-program assessment of student learning, in addition to course-by-course assessment.
3. Multiple performance measures, if necessary, that reflect the uniqueness of academic programs and disciplines.
4. Feedback from key stakeholders (current students, alumni, employers, graduate schools, etc.).
5. Evidence of a formal feedback/improvement mechanism, i.e., that the program/unit has a regular review process in place, and that the results of this review process are used to improve curriculum, instruction, and learning.
6. Findings and recommendations for improvement, suspension, or closure.

D. Reporting Process

1. Institutions will report on the outcomes of the program reviews in a "Summary of Annual Program Review Process," to be appended to annual Results Reports.
2. Three years after implementation of a new program, a progress report will be provided to IBHE.
3. Programs requiring specialized accreditation for students to sit for professional licensure, but which have not yet achieved accreditation, will provide a report every three years until accreditation is achieved.

4. Programs flagged for priority review by the institution for improvement require a short interim report, which may be submitted to IBHE three years after being flagged and must address actions taken since the last program review. This report should not be submitted as part of the annual Results Report. Interim reports on flagged programs should:
 - (a) Delineate actions taken to resolve the issues or improve the program;
 - (b) Identify areas for further action or improvement; and,
 - (c) Describe how the program will be monitored to ensure continued improvement until the next review.
5. Upon notification by letter to the Board of Higher Education by the President/Chancellor, a college or university may:
 - (a) Suspend enrollment in a program for a period not to exceed three years, for any reason;
 - (b) The enrollment-suspension notification shall include an explanation of the reasons for the action and a brief remediation plan;
 - (c) Reinstate a suspended program through a letter of notification to the Board;
 - (d) Institutions will submit a brief progress report every three years until the situation is resolved; and,
 - (e) The Board of Higher Education will consider a program terminated if no progress report or reinstatement notice is received within the three-year period.
6. Summary reports shall include:
 - (a) Description and assessment of any major changes in the program/disciplinary context e.g., (1) in the discipline or field; (2) student demand; (3) societal need; (4) institutional context for offering the degree; (5) other elements appropriate to the discipline in question; and (6) other;
 - (b) Major findings and recommendations, including evidence of student learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement;
 - (c) Actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes; and,
 - (d) Actions to be taken as a result of this review, including changes in instructional resources and practices, curriculum, and assessment of student learning.

PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

1. **Reporting Institution** _____
2. **Program Reviewed** _____
3. **Date** _____
4. **Contact Person** _____
 - 4.1. **Telephone** _____
 - 4.2. **E-mail** _____
 - 4.3. **Fax** _____
5. **Major Findings and Recommendations**
 - 5.1 Description and assessment of any major changes in the program [e.g., (a) changes in the overall discipline or field; (b) student demand; (c) societal need; (d) institutional context for offering the degree; (e) other elements appropriate to the discipline in question; and (f) other].
 - 5.2 Description of major findings and recommendations, including evidence of learning outcomes and identification of opportunities for program improvement;
 - 5.3 Description of actions taken since the last review, including instructional resources and practices, and curricular changes; and
 - 5.4 Description of actions taken as a result of this review, including instructional resource and practices, and curricular changes.
6. **Outcome**
 - 6.1 Decision:
_____ Program in Good Standing
_____ Program flagged for Priority Review
_____ Program Enrollment Suspended
 - 6.2 Explanation