Annual Curriculum Review & Curriculum Improvement Plan Operating Guidelines

Effective: July 6, 2021

Responsible University Officer: Erik Nelson, Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs

Responsible Department: Academic Affairs Unit, School of Professional Studies
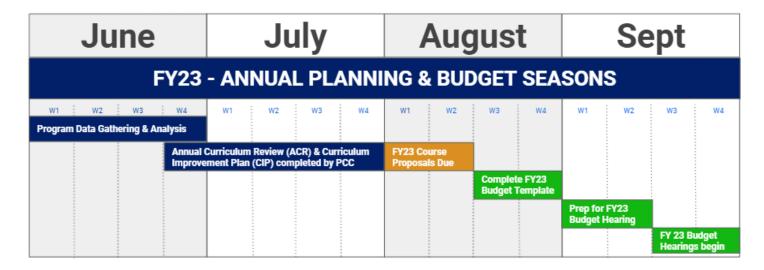
Overview

In preparation for fiscal year strategic planning and the budget cycle, academic programs at SPS conduct an Annual Curriculum Review (ACR) — a comprehensive review of overall curriculum effectiveness in achieving the program's stated purpose as well as its alignment with current trends and market needs. Program Curriculum Committees (PCC) are the faculty body responsible for completing the ACR and developing a Curriculum Improvement Plan (CIP) designed to enhance the quality and the rigor of the program and better prepare students to move their careers, communities and industries forward.

Purpose

To continually improve curriculum in support of maintaining the excellence of distinguished programs and formulating strategies for achieving eminence in programs that are not currently judged as distinguished.

Timing

The PCC should complete the ACR before the end of the fiscal year and develop the CIP no later than the fourth week in July. Programs will then prepare Course Proposals for the entire fiscal year ahead and submit them for approval to the Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

Annual Curriculum Review (ACR)

During the ACR, the PCC reviews a wide array of qualitative and quantitative data, including input from various stakeholders (students, alumni, industry experts, hiring companies). The PCC assesses the effectiveness of the program curriculum in achieving the program's stated purpose, its alignment with disciplinary and market trends, and current as well as predicted future employer hiring needs.

Data Inputs

1. **Qualitative Stakeholder Input -** multiple sources via survey, interviews, focus group
   a. **Faculty** Qualitative Input
      i. What are the current debates in the field and how well does the program's curriculum address these?
      ii. Where is the field likely to be five or ten years from now?
      iii. What content should be included in required core courses that all students must take to earn the program's degree?
      iv. What improvements should be considered to ensure that the program maintains and/or improves its standing in the field in light of the challenges presented.
   b. **Students** Qualitative Input
      i. Course Evaluations
      ii. Focus Groups
      iii. Satisfaction surveys and/or program exit surveys
   c. **Alumni** Qualitative Input - include alumni at different points of career experience and years post-graduate
   d. **Employer** Qualitative Input (ie: Employer Advisory Boards)
2. **Quantitative Program- & Course-level Data**
   a. Program Retention & Completion Rates
   b. Course enrollment data - trend and comparison versus benchmarks
3. **Student Performance Data**
   a. Average Course grades
   b. Program-level Direct Qualitative Assessment Methods
      i. Quality of Capstone Projects
      ii. Thesis or writing sample quality
      iii. Oral presentation skills
      iv. Pass rate on qualifying exams
4. **Student Career Outcomes** - as indicated by surveys and other sources
   a. Post-graduation placement rates
   b. Representative roles and responsibilities
5. **Competitive Programs** - course offerings of market leading peer programs

Curriculum Improvement Plan (CIP)

After completing the ACR, the PCC develops the CIP. There are three key components to the CIP:

1. Curriculum SWOT Analysis Framework & Template - [Template Curriculum SWOT Analysis](#)
2. Curriculum Improvement Narrative - [TEMPLATE Curriculum Improvement Narrative](#)
3. Course Proposals Worksheet - [TEMPLATE Course Proposals Worksheet](#)

1. SWOT Analysis Framework

A SWOT Analysis is a method for assessing and organizing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of a business model, its products, services, and/or team(s).

Strengths & Weaknesses are internal to the organization
- Things your team has some control over and can change or impact.

Opportunities & Threats are external to the organization
- Things happening outside your organization in the larger market. Your team can't change these.
- Take advantage of Opportunities/Protect against Threats.

A SWOT Analysis Diagram organizes the findings into a two-by-two grid with one quadrant dedicated to each area (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). Program Curriculum Committees can use questions posed in the Curriculum SWOT Analysis Framework (Figure 1) to guide them and provide a filled-out grid or accompanying narrative as part of the CIP. See *Figure 1.*

2. Curriculum Improvement Narrative

- Summary of the current state of the curriculum and key findings from ACR & SWOT Analysis
- Broad recommendations for curricular improvements
- Include most urgent priorities, including risks associated with not addressing them
  - ie: closing a curriculum gap vs the competition; developing a course to address a new area that would prepare students with in-demand skills; etc.
- Outline any additional areas of recommendation for program developments
  - ie: new tracks; additional credentials; CPAs; etc.)
- Illustrates how these improvements correspond to Program Learning Outcomes

3. Course Proposals Worksheet

- Program submits to Academic Affairs Senior Associate Dean
- Proposed courses to add, modify, or retire as part of the Curriculum Improvement Plan for the fiscal year ahead.

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Figure 1: *Curriculum SWOT Analysis Framework*

I N T E R N A L	**Strengths** What is particularly effective about the program's curriculum? What does your program curriculum do better than any other? Which courses are most effective and what makes them so effective? (consider input from faculty, students, alumni, employers) Can these elements be reapplied to other courses? What unique assets or resources can your program leverage to further strengthen the curriculum?	**Weaknesses** What weaknesses exist in the program's curriculum? What is the most effective way to address these? Most efficient way? Are there aspects of students' experience with the overall program curriculum that need to be improved? (i.e. blend of required courses & electives, sequencing, prerequisites, pre-program preparation, etc.) What courses are ineffective or less effective than others in the program? Why? What curricular changes would allow the program to better meet its stated purpose? What resources or capabilities are hindering the program from achieving its curricular goals?
E X T E R N A L	**Opportunities** What are gaps in the program's curriculum versus the competition? What strengths of your competition represent an opportunity for your program to explore? What market opportunities are not being addressed by your program or the competition? How can the program leverage its strengths in the market in a new or different way? What trends can the program capitalize on? What unmet opportunities do employers believe need to be addressed?	**Threats** What curricular-related things are competitors doing well that may threaten your program? What current conditions threaten the health of the program's curriculum or courses? What trends might jeopardize the effectiveness of the program's curriculum ? What weaknesses do your competitors have that could threaten your business

Figure 2: *TEMPLATE Course Proposals Worksheet*

Curriculum Improvement Plan: Course Proposals Worksheet

Program Name:	
Fiscal Year:	Remaining FY22 & FY23
Date Completed:	

Please use this worksheet to indicate which courses the program would like to add, modify or retire as part of your Curriculum Improvement Plan for the coming year.
1. Add entirely new courses to the blank rows at the top of the worksheet.
2. For existing courses that have been pre-populated into the worksheet, please select the appropriate "Proposal Type" in column F and enter the information for each data field.
3. For each course proposal, please enter as much information as possible.

Course Name	Course Number (enter "New" if Entirely New)	Date First Offered	Date Last Offered	Course Status	Proposal Type	Program Course Type	Modality	Proposed Development Cycle (this CIP only)	Proposed 1st Semester of Instructional Delivery "This CIP Only	Name of Proposed Faculty to Develop & Teach	Proposed Faculty's Employee Status	Data-based Rationale for Course Proposal