Annual Curriculum Review &
Curriculum Improvement Plan Operating Guidelines

Effective: July 6, 2021 - Updated May 3, 2023
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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 June. Programs will then prepare Course Proposals for the entire fiscal year ahead and notify the Senior Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and the Associate Deans of Graduate Programs or Continuing Education for discussion and approval.

May				June				July				August			
ANNUAL PLANNING & BUDGET SEASONS															
W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4	W1	W2	W3	W4
	Data Gathering & Analysis														
				Annual Curriculum Review (ACR) & Curriculum Improvement Plan (CIP) completed by PCC											
								Review, Discussion & Approval of Curriculum Improvement Plans							
												Budget Planning Cycle Begins			

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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- and 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

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Curriculum Improvement Plan (CIP)

After completing the Annual Curriculum Review, the PCC develops the Curriculum Improvement Plan. There are three key components to the CIP; which will be provided to each program in the *ACR Resources & Templates* folder for completion:

1. Curriculum SWOT Analysis - [Curriculum SWOT Analysis Template](#)
2. Curriculum Improvement Narrative - [Curriculum Improvement Narrative Template](#)
3. Course Proposals Worksheet - Pre-populated course inventory provided in each program's *ACR Resources & Templates* folder

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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). PCCs 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

- Each program fills out their worksheet with proposed courses to add, modify, or retire as part of the Curriculum Improvement Plan for the fiscal year ahead.
- Once
- and notifies Academic Affairs through Zendesk ticket via *Curriculum and Course Development Projects* pathway

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Figure 1: *Curriculum SWOT Analysis Framework*

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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?

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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?

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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?

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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

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(The E X T E R N A L label appears to the left of the Opportunities/Threats row.)

Figure 2: *Course Proposals Worksheet*

Program fills out these columns							
Program Code	Course Number	Course Name	Modality	Program Course Type	Course Project Proposal Type *if you will not change anything, please choose No Action from drop-down*	Proposed development timing for course project	Proposed Course Instructional Term
WMGT	0D01PS	Path to Preparation	Async Online	Required/Core	No Action		
WMGT	5000PS	FOUNDATIONS OF WEALTH MANAGEMENT	Async Online	Required/Core	Existing Course Redesign	Summer 2023	Fall 2023
WMGT	5100PS	THE WEALTH MANAGEMENT LANDSCAPE	Async Online	Required/Core	Existing Course Redesign	Summer 2023	Fall 2023
WMGT	5200PS	FINANCIAL PSYCHOLOGY	Async Online	Required/Core	No Action		
WMGT	5300PS	INVESTMENT PLANNING	Async Online	Required/Core	No Action		
WMGT	5400PS	TAX PLANNING	Async Online	Required/Core	No Action		
WMGT	5500PS	RETIREMENT PLANNING AND INSURANCE	Async Online	Required/Core	No Action		
WMGT	5600PS	Communication and the Client Experience	Async Online	Required/Core	No Action		