Educational Quality Improvement
A Handbook for the Academic Audit

2013 - 2014 Cohort

Tennessee Board of Regents
August 2013
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Academic Audit: An Overview

The Academic Audit, like more traditional program reviews, is a peer review process including a self-study and a site visit by peers from outside the institution. However, the similarities end there. Unlike the traditional approach to program evaluation, this process emphasizes self-reflection and self-improvement rather than compliance with predetermined standards. The purpose of an academic audit is to encourage departments or programs to evaluate their “education quality processes” – the key faculty activities required to produce, assure, and regularly improve the quality of teaching and learning. An academic audit asks how faculty approach educational decision-making and how they organize their work, using the resources available to them and working collegially to provide a quality education in the best interests of the discipline and student learning.

I. Elements of the Academic Audit:

The Self Study:

Departments examine the following five focal areas of the educational process by asking common sense questions:

- Determining Learning Objectives
  - Have we consciously considered what students who complete our courses/program should know and be able to do
    - To prepare them for further academic success?
    - To prepare them for employment in this field?
    - To meet their abilities/responsibilities as citizens?
  - In forming and revising learning objectives, how do we use and document information gathered from
    - Employers?
    - Former students?
    - Senior institutions?
  - Do we identify and learn from best practice by evaluating student outcome goals of comparable departments in other institutions?

- Designing Curriculum and Co-curriculum
  - How do we determine what is taught, in what order, from what perspective?
  - How do we work collaboratively on curriculum design?
  - How do we decide what resources and resource materials will be used as content vehicles?
  - Do we consciously consider how the course design relates to other courses students will take as part of this program?
  - Do we consider out-of-classroom activities that could complement or be integrated into the curriculum?
  - Do we identify and learn from best practice and evaluate curricula of comparable departments in other institutions?

- Designing Teaching and Learning Methods
  - How are teaching and learning organized for students?
How do we determine what methods will be used
- To expose students to material for the first time?
- To answer questions and provide interpretation?
- To stimulate student involvement with the material?
- To provide feedback on student work?
- Do we analyze teaching and learning processes on a regular basis?
- Do we strive for coherence in the department’s curriculum and educational processes?
- Do we work collaboratively on process design?
- Do we identify and learn from best practice, evaluate teaching and learning methods of comparable departments in ours and other institutions?

Developing Student Learning Assessment
- What measures and indicators do we use to assess student learning?
- Have we defined indicators or measures of achievement based upon our stated learning objectives?
- Do we assess performance only at the end of the course/program or do we compare beginning and ending performance to ascertain value added?
- Who is responsible for assessment?
- Do we work collaboratively on assessment design, implementation, and analysis?
- Do we base decisions on facts?
- Do we identify and learn from best practice, evaluate assessment practices of comparable departments in ours and other institutions?

Assuring Implementation of Quality Education
- Are we organized to ensure that our mutual departmental objectives and priorities are implemented consistently?
- How do we assure ourselves that content is delivered as intended, that teaching and learning processes are being implemented appropriately and consistently, that assessments are conducted as planned and the results used effectively?
- Do we work collaboratively to implement improvement initiatives?
- Do we identify and learn from best practice, evaluate quality assurance practices of comparable departments in ours and other institutions?

NOTE: If your program answers, “NO” to any of the above guiding questions, consider making those areas the focus of Initiatives for Improvement

Undergraduate programs write a self-study report with a maximum of 20 pages for first time self-study reports, 25 for second and ensuing self-study reports). Graduate programs may add additional pages as needed to address Performance Funding criteria 6 - 13:
- Describing the current state of their efforts to improve student learning and the academic quality of their programs
- Describing their strengths and weaknesses in the five focal areas
- Citing and briefly describing documentation supporting exemplary practices and other evidence of quality improvement. Note: up to 10 additional pages of
Appendices are permitted; links to online support materials in addition to the ten Appendix pages are permitted as well
  o Describing potential initiatives to address practices that need improvement
  o Describing implementation plans for improvement initiatives with the highest priority (Matrix of Improvement Initiatives)

**The Peer Review:**
- Auditors are volunteers (primarily faculty) who receive training on education quality processes and audit methodology.
- Audit teams (2-4 members) will most likely come from other TBR institutions but may come from other public and private institutions including outside higher education as long as each auditor participates in a formal training experience.
- All departments are given the opportunity to nominate up to two peers for service on the academic auditor review team.
- Because the auditors focus on quality processes, they do not have to come from the academic discipline of the department being audited though TBR strives to have at least one faculty from the discipline or a closely aligned discipline on each auditor team.
- Audit visits are typically one day.
- Auditors meet with departmental leadership, faculty, students and other stakeholders.
- Auditors ask questions similar to the self-study questions cited above.
- Auditors write a report:
  o highlighting examples of exemplary practice,
  o noting areas for improvement,
  o evaluating a department’s approach to educational quality practices, and
  o if the program is being evaluated for Performance Funding purposes, the report specifically addresses any “Not Met” cited on the Performance Funding Summary Sheet.

II. **Principles of the Academic Audit:** While there is no “hidden agenda” and no “right way” to approach the Academic Audit process, the Academic Audit openly advocates the following underlying quality principles as foundations of good educational practice.

- **Define quality in terms of outcomes**
  o Learning outcomes should pertain to what is or will become important for the department’s students.
  o Student learning, not teaching per se, is what ultimately matters.

- **Focus on process**
  o Departments should analyze how teachers teach, how students learn, and how to best approach learning assessment.
  o Departments should study their discipline’s literature and collect data on what works well and what doesn’t.
  o Experimentation with active learning should be encouraged.
  o Faculty should be encouraged to share and adopt their colleague’s successful teaching innovations.
- **Work collaboratively**
  - Teamwork and consensus lead to total faculty ownership of and responsibility for all aspects of the curriculum and make everyone accountable for the success of students.
  - Dialogue and collaboration should be encouraged over territoriality and the “lone wolf” approach.

- **Base decisions on evidence**
  - Departments should collect data to find out what students need and how students perform.
  - Data should be analyzed and findings incorporated in the design of curricula, learning processes, and assessment methods.

- **Strive for coherence**
  - Courses should build upon one another to provide necessary breadth and depth.
  - Assessment should be aligned with learning objectives.

- **Learn from best practice**
  - Faculty should seek out good practices in comparable departments and institutions and adapt the best to their own circumstances.
  - Faculty should share best practices and help “raise the bar” for their department.

- **Make continuous improvement a priority**
  - Departments should continually and consciously strive to improve teaching and learning.

Based upon *Education Quality Improvement: A Handbook for Departments* by Dr. William Massy, Professor emeritus of education and business administration at Stanford University and president of the Jackson Hole Higher Education Group.
**Annual Timeline for the Academic Audit 2013 - 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
<th>Date/Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning and Self-study activities for 2013 - 2014 Cohort programs</td>
<td>Academic Audit Coordinators, program leaders and TBR</td>
<td>Summer &amp; Fall 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Names of additional programs to be added to 2013 - 14 Academic Audit Cohort due to TBR</td>
<td>From each campus as applicable</td>
<td>Friday, September 20, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call for Auditors and Team Leaders</td>
<td>Experienced and new</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRAINING SESSIONS for current Self-study Teams, future Self-study Teams &amp; prospective Auditors</td>
<td>Regional Sessions are organized by TBR Academic Affairs and hosted regionally</td>
<td>September 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation by each Self-study Team for auditors* &amp; academic auditor team site visit date due to TBR</td>
<td>AA Campus Coordinator informs TBR Academic Affairs</td>
<td>Friday, November 1, 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formation of Auditor Teams and identification of Team Leaders</td>
<td>Organized by TBR Academic Affairs</td>
<td>November 2013 forward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Study Reports Due to TBR</td>
<td>Electronic submission in one PDF file</td>
<td>Friday, January 31, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Auditor Teams and Team Leaders finalized</td>
<td>Organized by TBR Academic Affairs</td>
<td>February 14, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Auditor Training for Team Members, Team Leaders, and the following year’s Self-study Leaders</td>
<td>Regional Sessions are organized by TBR Academic Affairs and hosted regionally</td>
<td>February 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Auditor Team campus visits</td>
<td>Arrangements made by Auditor Team Leader and AA Campus Coordinator</td>
<td>March 17 - April 18, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Auditor Team Report to TBR</td>
<td>By Auditor Team Leader</td>
<td>May 16, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Auditor Team Report Submitted to Chief Academic Officer</td>
<td>By TBR</td>
<td>June 16, 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program improvement activities</td>
<td>Implemented by program</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*A program undergoing the Academic Audit may nominate up to two Auditors for its Academic Auditor Team*
Guidance Notes for Self-Studies
Updated 8/2014

The self-study should be organized into the four sections listed below. We have set the length of
the self-study at a maximum of 20 single-spaced pages of 12 point type plus up to 10 appendix
pages for undergraduate programs. For undergraduate programs undergoing the academic audit
process a second time and thus reporting activities on Improvement Initiatives and
Recommendations, the maximum self-study report length is 25 pages. In addition to making the
auditors’ task easier, the page limit places a premium on crisp, clear communication. Below, we
elaborate on what should be included in each section and why. The self-study report including
appendices should be submitted to TBR as one document in a single Adobe PDF file.

1. **Introduction** [One to two page summary]

   Begin this section with a few paragraphs in which you introduce the reader to your program.
   This will include such elements as an overview of current student demographics, the role and
   scope of the program, a very brief history if applicable to an understanding of the program’s
   current status, etc. If your program is structured as a cohort program or if it includes a block
   scheduling option, please so state in your Introduction. Include in your Introduction a description
   of how the program conducted its self-study process. Not only will this introduction be helpful to
   the peer auditors, but it can also serve faculty team members as the first step in the process of
   widening their focal lens beyond the classroom toward a more holistic view of the program and
   its students.

2. **Overall Performance** [About 3 pages not counting any appendices]

   Begin this section with a summary assessment of your unit’s education quality and how you
   work together as a faculty to improve quality. The Academic Auditor Team will ask about the
   logic and evidence behind your assessment, but it will not collect additional evidence nor
   substitute its judgment about education quality for yours. Your objective is to convince the
   auditors that the statement is insightful, not necessarily that you deliver exemplary education
   quality. For example, candid descriptions of weakness, supported by evidence, will be received
   better than unsupported or puffed-up claims of excellence. Also include a description of how the
   academic audit self-study process was conducted – how faculty were engaged, how stakeholders
   were involved, how the report was written, etc. This section functions as an “executive
   summary” or “abstract” of the detailed report that follows.

3. **Performance by Focal Area** [About 2 or 3 pages per focal area]

   Here you reflect on your performance in each of the five essential focal areas. For reference,
   the five focal areas common to undergraduate and graduate programs are: (1) Learning
   Objectives; (2) Curriculum and Co-Curriculum; (3) Teaching and Learning; (4) Student Learning
   Assessment; and (5) Quality Assurance. We suggest that your team discussions proceed back and
   forth among the focal areas and sub-questions as a means of gaining insight regarding the
   interconnectedness of the focal areas and your unit’s strengths and weaknesses in applying the
quality principles to these focal areas. This section represents the heart of your self-study report and provides groundwork for consideration of improvement initiatives. NOTE: Performance Funding graduate programs will have an extended Part 3 in order to discuss additional Criteria 6 – 13 on the Graduate Performance Funding Summary Sheet [see Addendum for Graduate Programs]

Please provide the following for each focal area:

- A short narrative that describes your department’s quality processes as they pertain to the focal area. The list of questions developed by Bill Kirkwood and Cynthia Burnley from ETSU entitled Academic Audit Focal Areas: Questions for Faculty Discussion (page 11 – 12), is useful starting point for your reflections.

- Write the narrative in whatever form works for you—for example, it is not necessary to call out the questions as separate sub-headings.

- Evaluate your quality processes in each focal area in light of the seven quality principles discussed on pages 5 and 6 wherever applicable. The quality principles should be integrated into your discussions of the focal areas not treated as separate areas to address.

- **Important note:** If your department or program is participating in the Academic Audit process as a means of fulfilling a requirement in Tennessee’s Performance Funding Program, please pay particular attention to the additional criteria on the Academic Audit Summary Sheet. Your onsite review team will be asked to judge if the department has either Met or Not Met these criteria.

- If your exploration of a focal area reveals weaknesses or opportunities for improvement in that focal area, say so in your report. The purpose of the self-study is to identify successes and areas for improvement. You do not have to find that all is well in each focal area.

4. **Potential Recommendations and Associated Initiatives** [The description of each initiative should not exceed 1 page.]

Now the focus becomes strictly formative. Having assessed your overall performance and your education quality processes, you are asked to formulate some specific initiatives for improvement. If you have identified a specific, significant weakness in a focal area, you MUST indicate how you plan to correct the weakness. If you see an opportunity to improve on already good performance in a focal area, you MAY present an idea for achieving this improvement. The goal is to sketch out actions that would have a strong positive impact on education quality.

As you describe initiatives, please demonstrate that you:

- Clearly state what needs to be accomplished and why.
- Outline the tasks required to accomplish the objective(s).
- Indicate how you will gauge whether the initiative is being implemented as planned.
- Demonstrate that your unit is capable of carrying out the initiative, especially in light of other demands on your time and resources. If you need additional support to accomplish the initiative, say so.
• Identify performance indicators and measures that will substantiate your progress.

In short, you should provide enough information to demonstrate that the initiatives are well thought out and feasible. Above all, your plan should confirm the participants’ enthusiastic commitment to move forward and the department’s support of the effort.

5. Matrix of Improvement Initiatives [About 1 page.]

Self-studies will conclude with detailed commitments for improvement and a structure for assessing progress. Please provide a matrix which provides the following information for each initiative discussed in section 4 that is being put forward as a formal Initiative for Improvement by the department/program. It is important that the self-study be clear in this section as the review team will work from these details as they affirm the recommendations of the department and consider other recommendations that are merited.

1. Brief description of the Initiative for Improvement
2. Objective(s) of the initiative
3. Who will have overall responsibility for the initiative and who will participate in the implementation, assessment and use of results of the initiative
4. Performance indicator(s) *
5. Timetable

Matrix of Improvement Initiatives: Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Use of online tutorial resource to complement teaching the research paper in Composition I</td>
<td>To provide students with relevant and consistent research writing instruction that will enable them to successfully complete research paper requirements</td>
<td>Coordination will be by the Composition Program Director in collaboration with composition faculty (FT &amp; PT).</td>
<td>a) Development and implementation of research paper tutorial; b) Record of use of online tutorial by students; c) Satisfaction survey of students</td>
<td>This is a multi-year project; planning has begun in AY 2013-14. Implementation planned for Fall 2014.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Performance Indicators are often associated with quantifications and numbers in order to provide us with an objective picture of progress or achievement. Such statistical data may be very relevant to an improvement initiative that focuses on persistence of program students to graduation, for example. However, other initiatives may not be easy to quantify. For example, an
initiative to increase the level of student engagement in the program through development of co-curricular off campus field trips may be measured by responses of students in a focus group or to a survey rather than by only the number of students who participated in field trips. Discuss Performance Indicators thoroughly and conduct measurements on a regular basis.

6. **Follow-up of Previous Academic Audit** [Only for programs undergoing the academic audit process for the second and subsequent times. Not to exceed 5 pages. NOTE: these are in addition to the 20 page limit on the self-study report]

   This section of the self-study reflects upon two outcomes of the prior academic audit process: 1) Initiatives for Improvement that were generated by the program itself; and 2) Recommendations by the Academic Auditor Team. The expectation is that the program will have acted in a number of ways to advance improvement in these areas. Thus, a brief discussion of the process that the program followed to develop and enact its action plan is appropriate here.

   It is expected that the Initiatives for Improvement that were generated by the program itself have been implemented and that progress on each initiative has been tracked. Further, it is expected that the results of those implementations have been considered and used to further improvement in the program. Include evidence of how the use of results from each initiative has contributed to quality improvement. If an initiative has spawned addition improvement activities, cite those as outcomes of the initial Initiative for Improvement. If the program has a detailed summary report for each initiative or a series of annual reports for each initiative, these do not need to be reiterated in the self-study report. Rather, those reports including evidence of progress towards or accomplishment of the initiative objective(s) should be included as appendices. However, a brief narrative describing the process followed by the program to initiate and follow through with its initiatives should be included in the self-study as well as a summary of the effectiveness of the initiatives.

   Regarding Academic Auditor Team Recommendations, the self-study report should address how each recommendation was considered by the faculty. If a recommendation was not pursued, then include a brief explanation why it was not pursued. If it were pursued as written or pursued in a modified manner, a similar narrative about its inception, follow-through and effectiveness should be included in this section of the self-study. As with Initiatives for Improvement, if the program maintained detailed annual, periodic or summary reports regarding the implementation of a Recommendation, these reports including evidence of progress towards implementation or accomplishment of the recommendation should be provided in the Appendix.
Common Academic Audit Focal Areas: Questions for Faculty Discussion
Updated 8/13

The following questions are designed to help faculty examine the processes by which you are pursuing your goals for student learning in a program of study. Although most of these questions seem to call for “yes” or “no” answers, they are meant to prompt wider discussions.

- If you answer “yes” to a question, your self-study should briefly describe the “who, what, when, where, and how” of that answer. Ask follow-up questions of yourselves such as
  - In what ways?”
  - Are our approaches effective?”
  - How do we know that our approaches are effective?
  - How can we demonstrate that our approaches are effective?
  - How can we improve upon what we do now?

- If you answer “no,” the self-study should discuss whether you wish to improve in this regard and how you plan to do so.

You should be prepared to provide more details or examples when the Auditor team visits.

Note: Some of the questions below are modified versions of those in The Jackson Hole Higher Education Group, Inc. (July 24, 2004). The Tennessee Board of Regents Academic Audit Project: Guidance Notes for Self Studies.

Focal Area 1: Learning Objectives

► Have we explicitly defined what we want students who complete our program to know and be able to do? (e.g., as employees, as graduate students, as citizens)
► Do we work collaboratively to define program learning objectives, or is the task delegated to one or a few individuals?
► Do we consult sources beyond our own faculty when defining program learning objectives? (e.g., employers, students or graduates, comparable programs in other institutions, professional associations)
► Do we communicate program learning objectives to students, employers or other stakeholders?
► Do we periodically review program learning objectives to see how they might be improved?
► (See also questions in the remaining focal areas on how we use program learning objectives.)
Academic Audit Focal Areas: Questions for Faculty Discussion (continued)

Focal Area 2: Curriculum and Co-curriculum

► Do we consciously design the curriculum and co-curriculum to achieve program learning objectives?
► Do we work collaboratively to design the curriculum and co-curriculum, or do they reflect our individual preferences or decisions?
► Do we consider out-of-classroom activities (co-curricular activities) that could complement or be integrated into the curriculum?
► Do we consult sources beyond our own faculty when designing the curriculum and co-curriculum? (e.g., employers, students or graduates, comparable programs in other institutions, professional associations)
► Do we clearly communicate curricular and co-curricular requirements and the reasoning behind these requirements to students?
► Do we periodically review the curriculum and co-curriculum to see how they might be improved?

Focal Area 3: Teaching and Learning Methods

► Do we consciously consider program and course learning objectives when deciding which teaching methods we will use in our courses?
► Do we discuss our teaching practices with each other and work collaboratively to improve teaching and learning, or is teaching primarily an individual responsibility?
► Do we consult sources beyond our own faculty when selecting our teaching practices? (e.g., employers, students or graduates, comparable programs in other institutions, professional associations)
► Do we identify best practices in teaching and use this information to improve our teaching?
► Do we periodically review our teaching methods to see how they might be improved?
Academic Audit Focal Areas: Questions for Faculty Discussion (continued)

Focal Area 4: Student Learning Assessment

- Are we measuring the degree to which our students are achieving program learning objectives?
- Do we work collaboratively to develop and implement assessments of program learning objectives, or are these tasks delegated to one or a few individuals?
- Do we consult sources beyond our own faculty when designing assessments of program learning objectives? (e.g., employers, students or graduates, comparable programs in other institutions, professional associations)
- Do we discuss assessment data and use our findings to improve our curriculum, co-curriculum and teaching practices?
- Do we identify best practices in assessment of program learning objectives and use this information to improve our assessments?
- Do we periodically review our assessment methods to see how they might be improved?

Focal Area 5: Quality Assurance

- How do we assure ourselves that each course in the curriculum addresses agreed upon content, that sound teaching practices are carried out appropriately and consistently, that assessments are conducted as planned, and that agreed upon plans to improve courses or the program as a whole are implemented by those responsible?
- How do we assure ourselves that other faculty activities affecting students, such as academic advisement, are being performed appropriately and consistently?
- Do we provide meaningful, timely feedback and recognition to faculty regarding how they are performing work related to the curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment, and other practices affecting students?
- Do we identify best practices in quality assurance and use this information to improve how we assure that the work of the program is performed appropriately and consistently?
- Do we periodically review our quality assurance practices to see how they might be improved?
Academic Audit Focal Areas Common to Undergraduate & Graduate Programs
Sources of Evidence
Updated 8/10

Learning Objectives
- Student demographics: Major and/or educational objective; age; gender; GPA and/or results of placement tests
- Enrolled student surveys (institutional or targeted) or interviews
- Alumni/graduate surveys (institutional or targeted) or interviews
- Employer surveys (institutional or targeted) or interviews
- Advisory board/committee meeting minutes
- Feedback from faculty teaching courses for which yours are pre-requisites
- Peer feedback from senior/graduate institutions
- Competencies/outcomes (syllabi) of senior/graduate programs in your discipline
- National standards for your discipline: competencies, outcomes
- Syllabi

Curriculum and Co-curriculum
- Departmental/institutional policies for curriculum development
- Minutes/notes from faculty meetings, curriculum development/textbook selection committees, etc.
- Curricula from peer programs in the discipline and from senior/graduate programs
- National standards for curriculum in your discipline
- Feedback from stakeholders (students, graduates, employers, advisory boards)
- Documentation of curriculum revision (course inventory forms)
- Syllabi

Teaching and Learning Methods
- Current research/literature on effective teaching methodology in the discipline
- Minutes/notes from faculty meetings
- Feedback from stakeholders (students, graduates, employers, advisory boards)
- Learning styles inventory assessments
- Evaluations by students; supervisors
- End of course surveys
- Peer mentoring; classroom observations
- Annual personal goals and objectives
- Course analysis documents
- Assessments of student success in different instructional settings (web vs. traditional); other types of student success analysis – withdrawal rates, grade distribution, success in subsequent courses
- Professional development (internal or external); disciplinary or pedagogical
- Ongoing professional memberships
Academic Audit Focal Areas Common to Undergraduate & Graduate Programs
Sources of Evidence (continued)

Student Learning Assessment

- Documentation of key learning quality indicators
- Feedback from stakeholders (students, graduates, employers, advisory boards)
- Minutes/notes from faculty meetings
- Pre-and-post tests
- Exit testing through departmental/programmatic final assessment (national, collaborative or local instruments)
- Foundation testing such as your institution’s General Education assessment instrument
- Student portfolios, capstone course projects, coop or internship supervisor evaluations
- Test item analysis
- Test/assessment bank or library
- Job placement rates
- Acceptance into senior institution or graduate programs
- Success (GPA/retention) in senior institution or graduate programs

Quality Assurance

- Institutional effectiveness program and practices
- Institutional facilities and services (e.g. library, learning center) that support your program’s effectiveness and student learning
- Online learning support structure and professional growth programs
- Departmental/institutional policies that support collaboration, assessment, professional development
- Institutional practices for hiring and evaluating faculty and staff
- Assessment plans, review schedules, meeting calendars, etc.
- Benchmarking for national comparison (NSSE/CCSSE, NCCBP, etc.)
- Regularly published and shared information about progress on improvement initiatives
- Documentation of use of results
Preparation for Onsite Visit

After the self-study report is submitted to the TBR office at the end of January, the next major Academic Audit activity is the onsite visit by the Academic Auditor Team. While the Academic Audit Campus Coordinator serves as the point person for the Academic Auditor Team Leader with regards to making preparations, the program lead and faculty should be engaged and consulted in the construct and scheduling of the site visit agenda.

The following notes represent suggested activities prior to the onsite visit and a general timeline for completing these activities. Questions regarding these steps should be addressed to the TBR Office of Academic Affairs or your institution’s Academic Audit Campus Coordinator. TBR staff and Academic Audit Campus Coordinators will work with Academic Auditor Team members to ensure proper preparation and receipt of appropriate materials. Regional Academic Auditor Training sessions will be offered in February 2014. New Academic Auditors are required to attend one of these sessions.

1. **Recommendation of Auditors and Setting of Review Date.** Each campus should submit the names of faculty members from other TBR institutions that would be particularly suited to serve on the onsite audit review team(s) in April. Each program may select up to two faculty, administrators or professionals in the discipline that they would like to have on the audit team. These nominations should be submitted to TBR by no later than November 1, 2013 with a brief description of the nominees’ academic credentials. Please also provide contact information (email and phone number) so that they can be included in academic auditor training sessions in early February. At this same time, each program/department that is being audited should put forward a proposed date (between March 17 and April 18, 2014) on which the onsite visit will take place.

2. **Tentative Academic Audit Schedule.** Each campus should submit a tentative Academic Audit Onsite Visit Schedule when the self-study document is submitted to TBR. For the current year, this due date is set for January 31, 2014. In addition to the date for the campus visit and the planned agenda, this tentative schedule should include information about hotel accommodations and contact information for the designated Campus Contact.

3. **Assignment of Team Leaders and Teams.** TBR will work (along with the Audit Coordinators) to assign the visiting team leaders and teams for each program’s Academic Audit onsite visit. TBR will pay for travel costs and any necessary hotel accommodations for the team members. Any meals, refreshments, and other costs will be provided and paid for by the host campus during the Academic Audit onsite visit.

4. **Program Self-Study.** The self-study document will be provided to the Academic Audit Team at least four weeks prior to the scheduled visit. This document will be emailed to the chair and team members by the TBR Office of Academic Affairs.

5. **Local Arrangements.** The team leader of the Academic Auditor Team should make contact with the designated campus contact at least three weeks prior to the scheduled
visit. This conversation should assure that both parties are aware of local arrangements, meeting rooms, tentatively scheduled meetings with faculty and students, and available work space/materials for the visiting team.

6. **Academic Auditor Team Communication.** The team should find time for a conference call to discuss questions surrounding division of work and any other pre-visit details. If a phone call is not possible, it is recommended that email exchange or other electronic media communication between the team members and the team leader be open and circulated to all members.

7. **Assignment of Responsibilities.** Many of the Academic Auditor Team members from the past years advised that all teams should assign a specific “focal area(s)” to each team member. This allows that team member to focus on that area when reading the self-study document and subsequently planning for questions to be asked during the site visit.

8. **Initial Meeting of the Team.** It is ideal for the team to be able to get together the evening before the visit. If this is not possible, the schedule for the site visit should remain flexible to allow a breakfast meeting of the team at the hotel prior to going to the campus for the initial meeting with campus officials, program leaders and faculty.
Suggested Academic Audit Onsite Visit Schedule

*Academic Department Name, Institution*

*Date of Visit*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Time/Attendees</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast and Team Meeting at Hotel</td>
<td>7:30am – 8:15am</td>
<td>Hotel, Room/Location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening Session &amp; Introductions</td>
<td>8:30am – 8:45am</td>
<td>ABC Bldg, Room 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty and Administrators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group Meeting #1</td>
<td>9:00am – 10:00am</td>
<td>ABC Bldg, Room 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group Meeting #2</td>
<td>10:15am – 11:00am</td>
<td>ABC Bldg, Room 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Group Meeting #3</td>
<td>11:15am – 12:15pm</td>
<td>ABC Bldg, Room 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Working Lunch</td>
<td>12:15pm – 1:30pm</td>
<td>ABC Bldg, Room 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Meeting and Work Time</td>
<td>1:30pm – 3:30pm</td>
<td>ABC Bldg, Room 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Possible time for materials review, tours, or additional meetings with faculty or students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-Time for group to discuss observations and work on reports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exit Session</td>
<td>3:30pm – 4:00pm</td>
<td>ABC Bldg, Room 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor Team</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty and Administrators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-Brief report of initial commendations, affirmations, and recommendations</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-If the performance funding summary sheet is required, a copy of that sheet must be left with the campus contact prior to departure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-Department and campus will get opportunity to respond to the written report.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Logistics Information**

**Campus Contact for Academic Audit**– Name, Position, Phone, Email

**Hotel Accommodations** – Hotel Name, Address, Phone
Academic Audit Onsite Evaluation Checklist

Institution: ____________________________________________

Program: ____________________________________________

CIP Code: ____________________________________________

Degree Level:  □ Certificate  □ Associate  □ Baccalaureate  □ Master’s □ Doctoral

Instructions for Audit Chairs and Teams

Part I: Academic Audit Visiting Team Report -- Record of Commendations, Affirmations, and Recommendations
This form must be completed by each audit review team prior to concluding the visit. The original will be forwarded to TBR but a copy must be left with the department prior to departure. All observations included on this form should be represented as commendations, affirmations, or recommendations. Please be concise in your descriptions as you will have opportunity to expand upon your justification for each item in your written report due to TBR by May 16, 2014.

Part II: Academic Audit Summary Sheet (only for use if program is being reviewed for Performance Funding purposes)
This form is only to be completed if the program review is serving as the Performance Funding review. Using the Academic Audit Summary Sheet, complete the 24 elements on the evaluation results checklist by marking “met” or “not met”. This exercise must be completed and signed by the team prior to the Exit Session [see complete directions on the form]. The original will be left with the department prior to departure but a copy must be forwarded to TBR with the Visiting Team Report.

Part III: Narrative Evaluation and Written Report
The Audit Chair and Team will use their evaluations indicated on the Audit Visiting Team Report and Academic Audit Summary Sheet (if used for Performance Funding purposes) as the basis of a written report. Summarized findings from the self-study report and onsite visit will represent a narrative report of the team’s conclusions and the final responsibility of the visiting team. The template for completing this report (limited to 10 pages) is attached. This report is due to TBR on May 16, 2014.

The Audit Evaluation will become part of the record of the academic program review and will be shared with the academic department/unit, the college, and the central administration, as well as the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. Each department/campus will be provided opportunity to respond and comment on the written report.

Audit Chair’s name, title, and institution: ____________________________________________

Audit Chair’s signature: ____________________________________________ Date ____________

Names, titles, institutions, and signatures of other Audit Team members:
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
Academic Audit Visiting Team Report
Record of Commendations, Affirmations, and Recommendations

This form must be completed by each audit review team prior to concluding the visit. All observations included on this form should be represented as commendations, affirmations, or recommendations. Please be concise in your descriptions as you will have opportunity to expand upon your justification for each item in your written report due to TBR by May 16, 2014.

This document should serve as the outline of information to be disclosed during the exit session with the department. The original signed copy is to be forwarded to TBR with one copy left with the campus audit contact or department chairperson prior to leaving campus.

*******************************************************************************
Total Number of Commendations

Commendation #1 –
Commendation #2 –
Commendation #3 –
Commendation #4 –

*******************************************************************************
Total Number of Affirmations

Affirmation #1 –
Affirmation #2 –
Affirmation #3 –
Affirmation #4 –

*******************************************************************************
Total Number of Recommendations

Recommendation #1 –
Recommendation #2 –
Recommendation #3 –
Recommendation #4 –
Academic Audit Summary Sheet: Undergraduate Program

Institution: ____________________________________________________________

Program Title(s): ______________________________________________________

CIP Code(s): ___________________________________________________________

Academic Audit Status: ______ First Academic Audit _____ Second Academic Audit

Instructions for Academic Audit Team:

In accordance with the 2010-15 Performance Funding guidelines of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), each non-accreditable undergraduate program undergoes either an academic audit or external peer review according to a pre-approved review cycle. If the program under review contains embedded Technical Certificates, the names of each certificate should be included on the “Program Title” line above. The review of embedded certificates must be included as part of the review of the program in which they are embedded. Embedded certificates do not require a separate Summary Sheet.

The criteria used to evaluate a program appear in the following "Academic Audit Summary Sheet." The Summary Sheet lists 26 criteria grouped into eight categories. THEC will use the criteria in categories 1-6 to assess Performance Funding Standard 1C when the Academic Audit process is used for programs undergoing the Academic Audit process for the first time. For programs undergoing the Academic Audit for the second time, criteria 7 (follow-up) will also be used to assess Standard 1C. The criteria in the eighth category, Support, may be used by the institution and submitted as part of the Performance Funding report. If the Academic Audit process did not include information about criteria 8.1 - 8.3, they should be marked N/A. These criteria will not be included in the THEC Performance Funding point calculation.

These criteria have been selected based on the Academic Audit Focal Areas to be consistent with the spirit and process of the Academic Audit. The program faculty has provided a self-study document that includes information for each criterion within the Focal Areas. Supporting documents will be available as specified in the self-study. As the Academic Audit Team Leader, you should assess this and other evidence observed during the site visit to determine whether the process has met each criterion within a category. A checkmark should be placed in the appropriate box to indicate whether you believe that a program has “met” or “not met” each criterion in the table.

The Academic Audit Summary Sheet will be sent to the appropriate campus official for inclusion in the Annual Performance Funding Report. When combined with the self-study and the written report prepared by the visiting team, the Summary Sheet will facilitate institutional development of a program action plan to ensure continuous quality improvement.

Your judgment of the criteria will be used in allocating state funds for the community college or university's budget.

Name, Title, and Institutional Affiliation of Academic Audit Team Leader(s):

Name ___________________________ Name ___________________________
Title ___________________________ Title ___________________________
Institution ______________________ Institution ______________________
Signature ________________________ Date ________________
Signature ________________________ Date ________________
## Academic Audit Summary Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution:</th>
<th>Program Title:</th>
<th>Degree Level:</th>
<th>CIP Code:</th>
<th>Academic Audit Status:</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
<th>Evaluation Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Learning Objectives Met Not**

1.1 The faculty completed a thorough and candid analysis of their process for developing learning objectives for the program, considering measurability, clarity and what students need to know.

1.2 The faculty documented or proposed a process for developing learning objectives that are based on realistic and appropriate evidence.

1.3 The faculty documented or proposed specific plans to take best practices and appropriate benchmarks into account in the analysis of learning objectives.

### 2. CURRICULUM AND CO-CURRICULUM

2. **Curriculum and Co-Curriculum Met Not**

2.1 The faculty completed a thorough and candid analysis of the extent to which they collaborate effectively on the design of curriculum and planned improvements.

2.2 The faculty documented or proposed a plan for analyzing the content and sequencing of courses in terms of achieving program learning objectives.

2.3 The faculty documented or proposed a plan for the ongoing review of curriculum and co-curriculum based on appropriate evidence including comparison with best practices where appropriate.

### 3. TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

3. **Teaching and Learning Processes Met Not**

3.1 The faculty completed a thorough and candid analysis of their process for guiding and improving teaching and learning throughout the program.

3.2 The faculty documented or proposed a plan that promotes the effective use of instructional methods and materials for achieving student mastery of learning objectives.

3.3 The faculty analyzed the extent to which there is true, ongoing collaboration in the design and delivery of the teaching and learning processes of the program.

### 4. STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

4. **Student Learning Assessment Met Not**

4.1 The faculty documented or proposed indicators of student learning success that are keyed to the learning objectives of the program.

4.2 The faculty documented or proposed assessments of student learning that are grounded in best practices and appropriate comparisons.

4.3 The faculty documented or proposed a plan for using student learning assessments that leads to continuous improvements in the program.

4.4 The faculty documented or proposed a continuous improvement plan that incorporates multiple measures to assess student learning and program effectiveness.
### 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>There is an evident commitment to making continuous quality improvements in the program a top priority.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>The faculty documented or proposed a continuous improvement plan that incorporates multiple measures to assess student learning and program effectiveness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>The Academic Audit process was faculty driven.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>The Academic Audit process (self-study and visit) included descriptions of the program’s quality processes including all five focal areas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>The process resulted in a candid description of weaknesses in program processes and suggestions for improvements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Overall, the visiting team affirms the openness and thoroughness of the program faculty in completing the academic audit of this program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>The Academic Audit process included involvement of and inputs from stakeholder groups identified by the program’s faculty.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7. FOLLOW-UP OF PREVIOUS AUDIT *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>An action plan was developed as a result of the previous Academic Audit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>There is documented evidence that recommendations made by the Academic Audit Team have been considered and, when feasible and appropriate, implemented and tracked.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>There is documented evidence that the program has implemented and tracked the progress of and use of results from improvement initiatives cited by the faculty in its self-study.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8. SUPPORT (Note: The Support category is NOT included in the Performance Funding calculation. If the Academic Audit process did not address these criteria, they should be marked “NA.”)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>The program regularly evaluates its library, equipment and facilities, encouraging necessary improvements within the context of overall college resources.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>The program's operating budget is consistent with the needs of the program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>The program has a history of enrollment and graduation rates sufficient to sustain high quality and cost-effectiveness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Criterion only included in the performance funding calculation for programs undergoing the Academic Audit during the 2010-2015 cycle that also used the Academic Audit in the 2005-10 cycle. Note: please be sure that the “Second Academic Audit” is checked on page 1.
Auditor Report Guidelines

Template for Academic Audit Team’s Narrative Report

NOTE: The report must be limited to ten (10) pages for undergraduate programs. Extra pages may be needed to address the additional focal areas required for graduate programs.

General Report Outline

I. Introduction - Briefly describe the unit/program evaluated, the date of the Auditor Team site visit, the schedule of meetings followed by the auditors, and other relevant information.

II. Overall Performance - What are the team’s overall summary conclusions about the state of the unit/program and how it conducted its self-study process? Discuss.

III. Performance in the Focal Areas – How does the unit/program’s work in each focal area measure up against the quality principles? Is evidence of quality improvement processes and outcomes provided?
   A. Learning Objectives
   B. Curriculum and Co-Curriculum
   C. Teaching and Learning Methods
   D. Student Learning Assessment
   E. Quality Assurance

NOTE: For Graduate programs, address all other focal areas that are presented in the self-study report that respond to Criteria 6 – 13 in the Graduate Program Performance Funding Summary Sheet (see pp 40 – 42).

IV. Conclusions - These are the same commendations, affirmations and recommendations presented at the Exit Session of the site visit and are repeated here. However, if the team wishes to elaborate on any of these, this is the place to do so.
   A. Commendations – What processes, practices, initiatives, and commitments are particularly commendable and merit recognition?
B. Affirmations – What processes, practices, or plans warrant the team’s affirmation and encouragement?

C. Recommendations – What are some areas for improvement identified by the team on the basis of the unit/program’s self study and site visit?
Key Themes and Tips for Writing Auditor Reports

It is important for Academic Auditor Team members and leaders to observe the following suggestions when developing the Academic Auditor Report.¹

1. The purpose of the report is to summarize findings from the self study report and the auditor team’s onsite visit.
2. Keep the tone of the report developmental – focus on how the department can improve on its own. Address what it will work on as a result of the review.
3. The report is the synthesis of the teaching and research focal areas pulled together by the team leader.
4. In the written report, provide feedback on all five focal areas in summary form and give overview perceptions.
5. Reports are written collaboratively by the auditor team. Team members may provide bullet-type comments or present their findings in paragraph format.
6. Use the debriefing time during the site visit to gather ideas from team members and create an overview of the report.
7. At the site visit, agree on a report format and how long each section should be. Find some consensus from the group and develop a strategy and style for the report (e.g. bullet comments only).
8. During the site visit, ask for evidence as you gather impressions. Don’t build summary points around comments from one faculty member or one small group of students – look for confirming evidence.
9. At the end of the site visit, there is an oral debriefing with the program before the auditor team departs. The team decides on overall points (if for Performance Funding) and presents commendations, affirmations and recommendations.
10. Keep the report simple and tell them what they did capably as well as what they can do to improve.

NOTE 1: Write the report so that it is helpful for the department, but also write it as if others will read it (i.e., be sensitive to language and tone of comments).

NOTE 2: If the program is being evaluated for Performance Funding purposes, the report must explain any “Not Met” cited on the Performance Funding Summary Sheet.

¹ Key themes taken from materials provided by Dr. Bill Massy during work with Tennessee Board of Regents in the 2004-05 Pilot Phase of Academic Audit.
Addendum for the Academic Audit of Graduate Programs

Academic Audit Focal Areas for Graduate Programs: Questions for Faculty Discussion
Updated 10/30/07

The following questions are designed help faculty examine the processes by which you are pursuing your goals for student learning in a program of study. Although most of these questions seem to call for “yes” or “no” answers, they are meant to prompt wider discussions. If you answer “yes” to a question, your self-study should briefly describe the “who, what, when, where, and how” of that answer, and you should be prepared to provide more details or examples when the Audit team visits. If you answer “no,” the self-study should discuss whether you wish to improve in this regard and how you plan to do so.

Note: Some of the questions below are modified versions of those in The Jackson Hole Higher Education Group, Inc. (July 24, 2004). The Tennessee Board of Regents Academic Audit Project: Guidance Notes for Self Studies.

Learning Objectives

► Have we explicitly defined what we want students who complete our program to know and be able to do? (e.g., as employees, as graduate students, as citizens)
► Do we work collaboratively to define program learning objectives, or is the task delegated to one or a few individuals?
► Do we consult sources beyond our own faculty when defining program learning objectives? (e.g., employers, students or graduates, comparable programs in other institutions, professional associations)
► Do we clearly communicate program learning objectives to current and potential students, employers or other stakeholders in both print and electronic formats?
► Do we regularly and systematically review program learning objectives to see how they might be improved and improve the quality of our teaching?
► (See also questions in the remaining focal areas on how we use program learning objectives.)

Curriculum and Co-curriculum

► Do we consciously design the curriculum and co-curriculum to achieve program learning objectives?
► Do we work collaboratively to design the curriculum and co-curriculum, or do they reflect our individual preferences or decisions?
Do we consider out-of-classroom activities and exposure to courses offerings outside the program or departmental offerings that could complement or be integrated into the curriculum?

Do we consult sources beyond our own faculty when designing the curriculum and co-curriculum? (e.g., employers, students or graduates, comparable programs in other institutions, professional associations)

Do we clearly communicate curricular and co-curricular requirements and the reasoning behind these requirements to students?

Do we periodically review the curriculum and co-curriculum to see how they might be improved?

What benchmarks do we use to demonstrate that the curriculum is contemporary in its content and delivery with sufficient breadth and depth to merit a graduate degree at the level offered?

Do we clearly identify and reflect attained competencies in our outcome data?

Do we clearly articulate and delineate our curricular expectations for the students in a timely fashion?

**Teaching and Learning Methods**

Do we consciously consider program and course learning objectives when deciding which teaching methods we will use in our courses?

Do we discuss our teaching practices with each other and work collaboratively to improve teaching and learning, or is teaching primarily an individual responsibility?

Do we consult sources beyond our own faculty when selecting our teaching practices? (e.g., employers, students or graduates, comparable programs in other institutions, professional associations)

Do we identify best practices in teaching and use this information to improve our teaching?

Do we periodically review our teaching methods to see how they might be improved?

Do we provide adequate professional development activities for students (dissertation support groups, workshops such as grant-writing, academic publications, making one competitive in the job market, teaching assistantship training, internships and field training, where relevant)?

Do students have the opportunity for orientation and socialization within the discipline and to the larger graduate community?

**Student Learning Assessment**

Are we measuring the degree to which our students are achieving program learning objectives?
Do we work collaboratively to develop and implement assessments of program learning objectives, or are these tasks delegated to one or a few individuals?

Do we consult sources beyond our own faculty when designing assessments of program learning objectives? (e.g., employers, students or graduates, comparable programs in other institutions, professional associations)

Do we discuss assessment data and use our findings to improve our curriculum, co-curriculum and teaching practices?

Do we identify best practices in assessment of program learning objectives and use this information to improve our assessments?

Do we periodically review our assessment methods to see how they might be improved?

Quality Assurance

How do we assure ourselves that each course in the curriculum addresses agreed upon content, that sound teaching practices are carried out appropriately and consistently, that assessments are conducted as planned, and that agreed upon plans to improve courses or the program as a whole are implemented by those responsible?

How do we assure ourselves that other faculty activities affecting students, such as academic advisement and mentoring, are being performed appropriately and consistently?

Do we provide meaningful, timely feedback and recognition to faculty regarding how they are performing work related to the curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment, and other practices affecting students?

Do we identify best practices in quality assurance and use this information to improve how we assure that the work of the program is performed appropriately and consistently?

Do we periodically review our quality assurance practices to see how they might be improved?

How do we compare to programs in our peer institutions and what are our benchmarks and supporting evidence?

Research Outcomes

How does our research and scholarship compare to other departments in the same and similar disciplines within and outside the institution?

Have we specifically defined what metrics (publication rate, quality of publication sources, external funding received), if any, we will use to assess our research outcomes?

Do we have breadth in the range of faculty research interests while maintaining sufficient numbers of faculty within key or strategically important areas to be competitive for external funding?
Research Environment

- Do we regularly and systematically consider our research environment?
- Do we demonstrate the values of interdisciplinary, collaborative work?
- Does we describe accurately and completely our research ethic and environment to current and prospective students and other “publics”?
- How do we assist junior faculty to develop their research programs and senior faculty to adapt their research programs to keep up with current conditions?
- How do we incorporate new researchers and researchers from other departments and emerging fields into our research activities?
- How do the administrative processes, policies and procedures (including tenure and promotion, workload, cost sharing arrangements, professional development, travel funds, support for collaborative and multidisciplinary work) influence our research activities and competitiveness as an academic program?
- How effectively do we interface with the campus and system-level infrastructure available to support our research activities and competitiveness as an academic program?

Synergy with Education

- Do we explain and model contemporary principles of scientific advancement to problem-solving in our teaching?
- Do we communicate effectively to the campus and community at large the value of our research activities (internally and externally funded) to the overall mission of the university?
- Do our actions communicate a research ethic without minimizing the valuing of quality teaching?
- Do we reflect on ways in which research contributes to departmental educational programs and put those reflections into action?
- Do we effectively incorporate the ethics of the responsible conduct of research with human subjects (and animals when relevant) into our teaching?
- How have we explicitly addressed the workload demands of theses and dissertations supervision?
- Are we inclusive in offering research participation and mentoring opportunities to all interested graduate and undergraduate students?

Sponsored Programs

- How does our sponsored research funding compare to other departments within the institution and across peer institutions? (Applies only to departments with such funding.)
To what extent are we supported with start-up funding and resource, in our proposal writing, conducting research, and project management?

How effective are we in keeping faculty informed of university resources and issues related to conflict of interest, technology transfer, and intellectual properties?

Is there a specific departmental plan to increase sponsored program funding?

Quality and Productivity Indicators

What measures and benchmarks are used to gauge research quality and productivity across a faculty member’s career?

How are measures to assess research quality and productivity factored into tenure and promotion decisions?

Does the culminating experience required by the program, in terms of both comprehensives examination and/or research, allow the student to demonstrate the breadth, depth and integration of the disciplinary coursework and experiences with the demonstration of communication skills and the ability to apply knowledge independently?

Contributions to program, department and university goals

How do our research outcomes contribute to the department and university mission and impact the discipline’s current and future directions?

Do we clearly state and embrace appropriate admission and retention standards and are these standards readily available to prospective and current students?

Do we analyze and clearly communicate the consequences of changes in resources on meeting teaching demands while pursuing independent research and research activities with graduate and/or undergraduates students?

Do our program offerings duplicate those in other programs and departments within the university and other institutions in the state?

Do we have a plan and process in place (such as benchmarking with peer institutions) to evaluate quantitatively and/or qualitatively the return on investment of our research activities and scholarship?
Academic Audit Focal Areas for Graduate Programs:  
Examples of Sources of Evidence or Support  
Updated 10/30/07

Learning Objectives

- As reflected in Syllabi, Catalog and Website
- National standards for your discipline: competencies, outcomes
- Advisory board/committee meeting minutes
- Employer surveys (institutional or targeted) or interviews
- Alumni/graduate surveys (institutional or targeted) or interviews
- Feedback from faculty teaching courses for which yours are pre-requisites
- Peer feedback from senior/graduate institutions
- Enrolled student surveys (institutional or targeted) or interviews
- Student demographics: Major and/or educational objective; age; gender; GPA and/or results of placement tests
- Competencies/outcomes (syllabi) of senior/graduate programs in your discipline

Curriculum and Co-curriculum

- Departmental/institutional policies for curriculum development
- Minutes/notes from faculty meetings, curriculum development/textbook selection committees, etc.
- Curricula from peer programs in the discipline and from senior/graduate programs
- National standards for curriculum in your discipline
- Feedback from stakeholders (students, graduates, employers, advisory boards)
- Documentation of curriculum revision (course inventory forms)
- Syllabi
- Programs of Study
- Catalog and Website

Teaching and Learning Methods

- Current research/literature on effective teaching methodology in the discipline
- Minutes/notes from faculty meetings
- Feedback from stakeholders (students, graduates, employers, advisory boards)
- Learning styles inventory assessments
- Evaluations by students; supervisors
- End-of-course surveys
- Peer mentoring; classroom observations
- Annual personal goals and objectives
- Course analysis documents
• Assessments of student success in different instructional settings (web vs. traditional); other types of student success analysis – withdrawal rates, grade distribution, success in subsequent courses
• Professional development (internal or external); disciplinary or pedagogical
• Ongoing professional memberships

Student Learning Assessment
• Documentation of key learning quality indicators
• Feedback from stakeholders (students, graduates, employers, advisory boards)
• Minutes/notes from faculty meetings
• Pre-and-post tests
• Exit testing through departmental/programmatic final assessment (national, collaborative or local instruments)
• Foundation testing such as MAPP (Academic Profile)
• Student portfolios, capstone course projects, coop or internship supervisor evaluations
• Test item analysis
• Test/assessment bank or library
• Job placement rates
• Acceptance into senior/graduate programs
• Success (GPA/retention) in senior/graduate programs
• Catalog [not clear what evidence is meant]
• Admissions standards and other policies
• Student Evaluations

Quality Assurance
• Departmental/institutional policies that support collaboration, assessment, professional development
• Assessment plans, review schedules, meeting calendars, etc.
• Benchmarking for national comparison (NSSE/CCSSE, NCCBP, etc.)
• Regularly published and shared information about progress on improvement initiatives, use of results

Research Outcomes
• Peer data from senior/graduate institutions
• National standards for your discipline: competencies, outcomes
• Minutes/notes from faculty meetings, committees, etc., addressing issues of research outcome, departmental strategies to assess research and hiring matches (fit) to departmental needs
• Student portfolios and capstone course projects
• Indicators of faculty and student publication, citation and grant productivity
• Rate of externally funded grants and renewal rates
• Placement and other indicators of professional accomplishment for faculty and graduates such as licensing, professional leadership roles, honors, recognitions, editorships, etc., of doctoral students post graduation
Research Environment
- Departmental/institutional policies recognizing the role of research activities
- Minutes/notes from faculty meetings, curriculum development/textbook selection committees, etc.
- Student portfolios and capstone course projects
- Professional development (internal or external)
- Ongoing professional memberships
- Dedicated research support staffing
- University, college, departmental and program web pages attuned to research activities
- Budgetary support for research activities including presentation of findings by faculty and students at professional meetings
- Departmental/institutional policies for workload, tenure and promotion inclusive of research responsibilities

Synergy with Education
- Enrolled student surveys (institutional or targeted) or interviews
- Alumni/graduate surveys (institutional or targeted) or interviews
- Employer surveys (institutional or targeted) or interviews
- Advisory board/committee meeting minutes
- Minutes/notes from faculty meetings, committees, etc.
- Professional development (internal or external); disciplinary or pedagogical
- Ongoing professional memberships
- Departmental/institutional policies and programs recognizing the joint role of research and teaching activities

Sponsored Programs
- Peer data from senior/graduate institutions and external funding sources
- Annual reports of sponsored program workshops, seminars, lectures and other activities
- Departmental and University academic strategic plans
- Departmental/institutional policies and programs demonstrating support for sponsored research

Quality and Productivity Indicators
- Annual personal goals and objectives with follow-up on achievement of stated goals and objectives
- Frequency distributions of class size for regular and breakout sessions, by type of course (e.g.: lower division, upper division, graduate; or lecture, lab, seminar)
- Frequency distribution of teaching loads by faculty rank and type of faculty (note that larger loads may not be good for quality)
- Percentage of class sections taught by adjunct faculty, especially those who are hired on a “spot” basis
- Frequency distributions of time to degree and average time to degree for students of different types (e.g., by major, entrance score, gender, ethnicity)
• Departmental/institutional policies and programs recognizing the joint role of research and teaching activities

**Contributors to Program, Department and University Goals**

• Evaluations by students; supervisors
• End-of-course surveys
• Mentoring; classroom observations
• Annual personal goals and objectives
• Annual Reports
• Course analysis documents
• Departmental/institutional policies recognizing the joint role of research and teaching activities
• Peer data from senior/graduate institutions
• Student/faculty ratio of research activity [not clear what this is]
• National standards for your discipline: competencies, outcomes

**Support**

• Library resources
• Information technology resources
• Faculty development resources (including a teaching and learning center)
• Outcome data supporting time-to-degree
# Academic Audit Summary Sheet: Graduate Programs

### Institution:

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### Program Title(s):

---

### Degree Level(s):

---

### CIP Code(s):

---

### Academic Audit Status: 

- _____ First Academic Audit  
- _____ Second Academic Audit

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## Instructions for Academic Audit Team:

In accordance with the 2010-15 Performance Funding guidelines of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), each non-accreditable graduate program undergoes either an academic audit or external peer review according to a pre-approved review cycle.

The criteria used to evaluate a program appear in the following "Academic Audit Summary Sheet." The Summary Sheet lists 55 items grouped into 14 categories. THEC will use the criteria in categories 1 – 13 to assess Performance Funding Standard 1C when the Academic Audit process is used for programs undergoing the Academic Audit process for the first time. For programs undergoing the Academic Audit for the second time, criteria in category 14 will also be used to assess Standard 1C.

These criteria have been selected based on the Academic Audit Focal Areas to be consistent with the spirit and process of the Academic Audit. The program faculty has provided a self-study document that includes information for each criterion within the Focal Areas. Supporting documents will be available as specified in the self-study. As the Academic Audit Team Leader, you should assess this and other evidence observed during the site visit to determine whether the process has met each criterion within a category. A checkmark should be placed in the appropriate box to indicate whether you believe that a program has “met” or “not met” each criterion in the table. If a particular criterion is inappropriate or not applicable to the program, the criterion should be marked “NA”.

The Academic Audit Summary Sheet will be sent to the appropriate campus official for inclusion in the Annual Performance Funding Report. When combined with the self-study and the written report prepared by the visiting team, the Summary Sheet will facilitate institutional development of a program action plan to ensure continuous quality improvement.

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## Name, Title, and Institutional Affiliation of Academic Audit Team Leader(s):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Institution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Academic Audit Summary Sheet

**Institution:** _____________________________________________________________________

**Program Title(s):** _______________________________________________________________

**Degree Level(s):** ___________________________________________________________________

**CIP Code(s):** ___________________________________________________________________

**Academic Audit Status:** ______ First Academic Audit _____ Second Academic Audit

## 1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>The faculty completed a thorough and candid analysis of their process for developing learning objectives for the program, considering measurability, clarity and what students need to know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>The faculty documented or proposed a process for developing learning objectives that are based on realistic and appropriate evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>The faculty documented or proposed specific plans to take best practices and appropriate benchmarks into account in the analysis of learning objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>The faculty clearly communicates program objectives to current and potential students, employers or other stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2. CURRICULUM AND CO-CURRICULUM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>The faculty completed a thorough and candid analysis of the extent to which they collaborate effectively on the design of curriculum and planned improvements which will reflect attained competencies in the outcome data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>The faculty documented or proposed a plan for analyzing the content, format and sequencing of courses in terms of achieving program learning objectives with appropriate breadth and depth for the degree offered which allows for attainment of the degree in a timely manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>The faculty documented or proposed a plan for determining the soundness of and rationale for curriculum and co-curriculum based on appropriate evidence, including comparison with best practices where appropriate, and communicate these views to the student body.</td>
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</table>

## 3. TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Met</th>
<th>Not Met</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>The faculty examined the extent to which there is focus on and periodic, systematic review of the actual process of teaching and learning throughout the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>The faculty documented or proposed a plan that promotes the effective use of instructional methods and materials for achieving student mastery of learning objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>The faculty analyzed the extent to which there is true, ongoing collaboration in the design and delivery of the teaching and learning processes of the program with reliance on best practices and resources beyond the confines of the program or department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>There is a critical mass of faculty and students to promote a scholarly community and assure an appropriate group of peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Faculty/graduate student ratio, average course load, average thesis/dissertation load per faculty and distribution across department, and teaching evaluations evidence support of graduate teaching and learning processes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The faculty documented or proposed a plan to inform students of course offerings and the provision of professional development activities and relevant courses to supplement departmental offerings in a timely fashion.

The faculty documented or proposed a plan to ensure that all students are adequately oriented, advised, mentored and socialized within the discipline and the larger graduate community.

### 4. STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

| 4.1 | The faculty documented or proposed indicators of student learning success that are keyed to the learning objectives of the program. |
| 4.2 | The faculty documented or proposed assessments of student learning that are grounded in best practices and appropriate comparisons. |
| 4.3 | The faculty documented or proposed a periodically and systematically reviewed plan for using student learning assessments that leads to continuous improvements in the program. |
| 4.4 | The faculty documented or proposed a continuous improvement plan that incorporates multiple measures to assess student learning and program effectiveness. |

### 5. QUALITY ASSURANCE

| 5.1 | There is an evident commitment to making continuous quality improvements in the program (e.g., student advisement and mentoring, use of best practices, recognition of faculty performance, regular and systematic evaluation of student performance) a top priority. |
| 5.2 | The faculty documented or proposed ways to ensure that quality assurance will be a systematic and regular process for program improvement. |
| 5.3 | The coursework offers sufficient breadth and depth appropriate for the degree offered. |
| 5.4 | The faculty are documented to hold terminal degrees in the discipline in which they teach and have experience sufficient to serve as effective mentors for graduate students. |
| 5.5 | Data on current students and follow-up data on graduating students including placement data are regularly and systematically collected. |

### 6. RESEARCH OUTCOMES

| 6.1 | The faculty documented or proposed a plan to ensure that there is a commitment to matching or exceeding comparable institutions in research activities. |
| 6.2 | The faculty documented or proposed a plan to assure sufficient depth and breadth in faculty research expertise to enable competitiveness in the external funding arena while allowing for collaboration when desired. |

### 7. RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

| 7.1 | The faculty documented or proposed a plan to ensure a commitment to communicate the program’s research environment, research values and priorities. |
| 7.2 | The faculty candidly and thoroughly examined the extent to which the department describes itself accurately and completely to current and prospective students and other “publics”. |
| 7.3 | The department takes active steps to support both junior and senior faculty in remaining vital in their respective research areas. |
| 7.4 | The faculty documented or proposed a plan to ensure that departmental processes, policies and procedures positively influence faculty research activities and program competitiveness. |
| 7.5 | The faculty documented or proposed a plan that engages graduate students in inquiry and research in collaboration with faculty. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8. Synergy with Education</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>NotMet</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>The faculty documented or proposed a plan that honestly evaluates departmental resource demands in light of departmental research and scholarship’s contribution to its educational programs and the mission of the department, college and university.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>There is a commitment to activities designed to keep the faculty and students informed on contemporary issues related to research (e.g., lecture series, responsible conduct of research workshops, professional development activities).</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>The program demonstrates best practices in integrating the science with the practice of the discipline.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>The faculty candidly and thoroughly evaluated the extent to which they incorporate research into the educational programs in support of best practices.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>The program demonstrates best practices in addressing workload demands of theses and dissertations supervision.</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9. Sponsored Programs</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>NotMet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>The faculty documented and proposed a plan to strive for sponsored research funding at comparable levels with other comparable departments within the institution and across peer institutions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>The faculty documented or proposed a plan to assure that faculty are consistently informed of external funding opportunities as well as the availability of assistance in areas such as proposal writing and project management.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10. Quality and Productivity Indicators</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>NotMet</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>There are appropriate indices endorsed by the program faculty as means to gauge faculty quality and productivity.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>The faculty documented or proposed ways to ensure that quality research and productivity will be systematically and regularly examined across the faculty lifespan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>The culminating experience required by the program both in terms of comprehensives examination and/or research allows the student to demonstrate the breadth, depth and integration of the disciplinary coursework and experiences with the demonstration of communication skills and the ability to apply knowledge independently.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>11. Contributions to Program, Departmental and University Goals</th>
<th>Met</th>
<th>NotMet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>There is a process in place which is communicated to other levels of the institution that evaluates the sufficiency of resources in place to meet the teaching responsibilities while actively engaging in research with graduate students and undergraduates.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>The faculty documented and proposed a plan to encourage and support research</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>The faculty clearly state and embrace appropriate admission standards, completion standards and graduation rates which are readily available to prospective and current students.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. OVERALL ASSESSMENT</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>Not Met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>The Academic Audit process was faculty driven.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>The Academic Audit process (self-study and visit) included descriptions of the program’s quality processes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>The process resulted in a candid description of weaknesses in program processes and suggestions for improvements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>Overall, the visiting team affirms the openness and thoroughness of the program faculty in completing the academic audit of this program.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13. SUPPORT</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>Not Met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>The program regularly evaluates its library, equipment and facilities, encouraging necessary improvements within the context of overall college resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>The program's operating budget is consistent with the needs of the program.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>The operating budget is sufficient to attract quality students and provides adequate support without substantially delaying progress toward the degree.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>The program has a history of enrollment and graduation rates sufficient to sustain high quality and cost-effectiveness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>The operating budget is sufficient to allow faculty regular opportunities for professional development including travel and presentation of research findings, participation in professional organizations, workshops and other learning activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. FOLLOW-UP OF PREVIOUS ACADEMIC AUDIT</td>
<td>Met</td>
<td>Not Met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>An action plan was developed as a result of the previous Academic Audit.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>There is documented evidence that Recommendations made by the Academic Auditor Team have been considered and, when feasible and appropriate, implemented and tracked.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>There is documented evidence that the program has implemented and tracked the progress of and use of results from Improvement Initiatives cited by the faculty in its self-study.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>