Assessment of Academic Programs at NC State: summary and updates

Increased scrutiny on higher education at both the state and federal levels has triggered several changes to how we review and assess academic programs at NC State. As of late spring 2025, our programs are reviewed and assessed through four different processes:

- Strategic program reviews
- Outcomes assessment
- Academic program review addenda
- Biennial productivity review.

This document summarizes each process and summarizes the current status of each of these processes.

Strategic program reviews (SPR): These reviews are and remain our main process for academic program reviews that occur on an eight-year cycle. SPRs were modified after a Covid hiatus to: (i) increase emphasis on strategic thinking and continuous improvement, (ii) decrease emphasis on reporting, and (iii) ease access to academic program data. To address the last point, program assessment dashboards have been developed in collaboration with ISA. SPR expectations are listed here.

Outcomes assessment: Our approach to student learning outcomes assessment is reaching maturity. There are however three significant changes: (i) our assessment software is now Anthology Planning (which replaces APA), (ii) the due date for assessment reports has shifted to and will remain in the fall (end of September), and (iii) degree programs with only a small number of graduates in a given year will be excused from the process that year[1]. More information is available on undergraduate and graduate outcomes assessment.

Academic Program Review Addenda (APRA): The University of North Carolina System Office (UNC-SO) adopted a new policy of "Academic Program Planning" in spring 2024; Policy 400.1 puts renewed emphasis on the continued alignment of our academic degree programs, both new and existing, with "state needs". This policy also requires that all UNC system institutions review all their degree programs (at least) every seven years and evaluate student and societal demands, student outcomes and program productivity. Policy 400.1 (V.A) states that each UNC system institution "shall be prepared to expand, contract, or discontinue programs based upon that review"[2].

---

[1] This extends to degree programs a rule we were already applying to transcripted certificates. The thresholds consider the number of graduates over the last three calendar years (e.g., 2022, 2023, 2024 for the fall 2025 reports): bachelor's and master's: 21 graduates over three years, doctoral: 6 graduates over three years, certificates: 15 graduates over three years.

[2] Or maintain program size.

	Strategic program review	Outcomes assessment	APRA[3]	Biennial productivity review[4]
Covered credentials	Degree progs not covered by specialized accreditation	All degree programs and transcripted certificates	All degree programs	All degree programs
Cycle	7-10 years	Yearly	7 years	2 years
Required by	NC State	NC State and SACSCOC	UNC-SO	UNC-SO
Managed by	OAA and Graduate School	OAA and Graduate School	OAA and Graduate School	UNC-SO
Foci	● Program quality ● Strategic vision ● Student learning	● Student learning ● Curriculum	● Student and workforce demand ● Student outcomes ● Program costs	● Student demand ● Program productivity ● Student careers ● ROI
Output	● Reviewers report and recommendations ● Action plan ● Program reports on progress yearly	● Actions on curriculum or student support	● NC State recommendations on program size[5]	● Benchmark on program productivity and quality
Shared with	● Prog/Dept ● College ● University leadership	● Prog/Dept ● College ● University leadership	● Prog/dept ● College ● University leadership ● UNC-SO[6]	● Board of Governors

---

[3] At NC State, Academic Program Review Addenda (APRA) are implemented as complementary to our strategic review process and have their own review cycle, consistent with UNC SO Policy 400.1 V.A.
[4] See UNC SO Policy 400.1 V.B.
[5] Recommendations are issued by the Chancellor in consultation with faculty, program, department and college, see APRA SOP.
[6] Only recommendations and university summaries are shared with UNC-SO, not the APRAs.

After extensive consultations across campus and engagement with a dedicated working group, we have taken the following steps to address these new requests from UNC-SO

- APRAs are implemented as a distinct process from our current review process (SPR) given their different foci, goals and cycles.
- A new policy on program assessment was developed and adopted in fall 2024.
- We updated our existing regulation on the assessment of academic programs in fall 2024.
- A collaborative effort with ISA is under way to develop a new data dashboard for APRAs.
- APRAs are implemented college by college to look at all academic undergraduate and graduate programs.

More information is available through the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for APRAs. The Wilson College of Textiles (WCOT) will be the first college to navigate this new process. The Office of Assessment and Accreditation and the Graduate School will work with the WCOT during this summer and fall semester (2025) to develop APRAs for each of its 11 degree programs;

Biennial productivity reports: These reports cover metrics that are similar to those considered in the APRAs but will be produced by UNC-SO and shared with the Board of Governors (BOG) of the University of North Carolina per Policy 400.1 (V.B).

A copy of the April 2025 BOG presentation on biennial productivity reports is available here.