UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Quality Assurance
Curriculum Review
Handbook

Revisions to be approved by GFC January 17, 2019

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A. INTRODUCTION

The University of Calgary Eyes High Vision and the Academic Plan set out ambitious goals for the university and the strategies to achieve those goals. The Quality Assurance Process is a central element for achieving these goals. To complement Academic Unit reviews, Curriculum Reviews are designed with a more specific focus on the quality of the curriculum offered in degree programs. Students' learning experiences are organized in course units, and the integration of those courses to form a comprehensive program of study helps determine the overall quality of learning. Similarly, curricula in which plans for knowledge and skills development are well sequenced and aligned have a significant positive impact on the teaching effectiveness of academic staff.

Curriculum Review (CR) is a critical examination of academic programs for the purpose of optimizing student learning experiences led collaboratively by academic staff who teach within the program. The aim is to understand how well these programs support and contribute to student learning experiences and how they can be enhanced. CR at the University of Calgary includes undergraduate major programs and course-based master's programs. The CR process includes a report and action plan for enhancing the program. An interim progress report is submitted to the VPTL's office at the mid-point of the review cycle. The CR process is intended to be collaborative, meaningful, and reasonable in scope, and to contribute to purposeful and positive change for staff and students who teach and learn within a program of study. Curriculum review will usually take place on a 5 to 7 year cycle.

The main purpose and objectives of a CR are to:
- Provide an opportunity for academic staff to have meaningful, collaborative discussions about teaching and learning across a program.
- Provide an opportunity for academic staff to solicit feedback from students, and often other groups such as alumni, on their experiences in a program under review.
- Reflect upon the current and future state of an academic program.
- Help ensure programs achieve and enhance intended standards of excellence in students' learning experiences.
- Create an evidence-based process through which the educational impact of existing programs can be assessed and analyzed collaboratively.
- Facilitate a collaborative, evidence-based decision-making processes for strengthening academic programs.
- Document program effectiveness relative to previous reviews.
- Fulfill public accountability expectations through a credible, transparent and action-oriented process.

The Office of the Provost and Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning) holds administrative responsibility for CR. The Office of the Provost will harmonize the curriculum review process with unit reviews and accreditation processes, and negotiate timing of reviews to optimize outcomes.

B. ACADEMIC SPONSOR AND CONTACTS

ACADEMIC SPONSOR
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C. DEFINITIONS

Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC): A standing committee of the General Faculties Council.

***Office of Institutional Analysis (OIA)*:** Unit responsible for generating and storing data used for benchmarking and analysis.

Program Lead: The person responsible for the program; for example, a dept. head or program director.

Review Lead: an academic staff member from the program under review who will oversee and facilitate the review process, track the progress of the review, coordinate resources to support colleagues in providing information to the process, and coordinate the writing of a draft Curriculum Review Report.

Review Team: In the case of CR, the Review Team includes all academic staff involved in teaching in the program. In addition, sessional colleagues will be invited, but not required, to participate in the CR process. Members of the review team help develop the CR guiding questions, participate in curriculum mapping and are invited to participate in data analysis to identify the main findings. The Review Team will also approve both the Guiding Questions and the CR Action Plan through the appropriate forum such as Department, Faculty or Program council meetings. A sub-set of academic staff from the Review Team will form a CR Committee to help the Review Lead coordinate and implement the CR process. Activities supported by the CR Committee include drafting guiding questions, curriculum mapping and ensuring that all members of the Review Team have multiple opportunities to engage in the CR process

and to provide feedback on the CR Report and Action Plan. The CR Committee also supports the writing the CR Report, including the Action Plan.

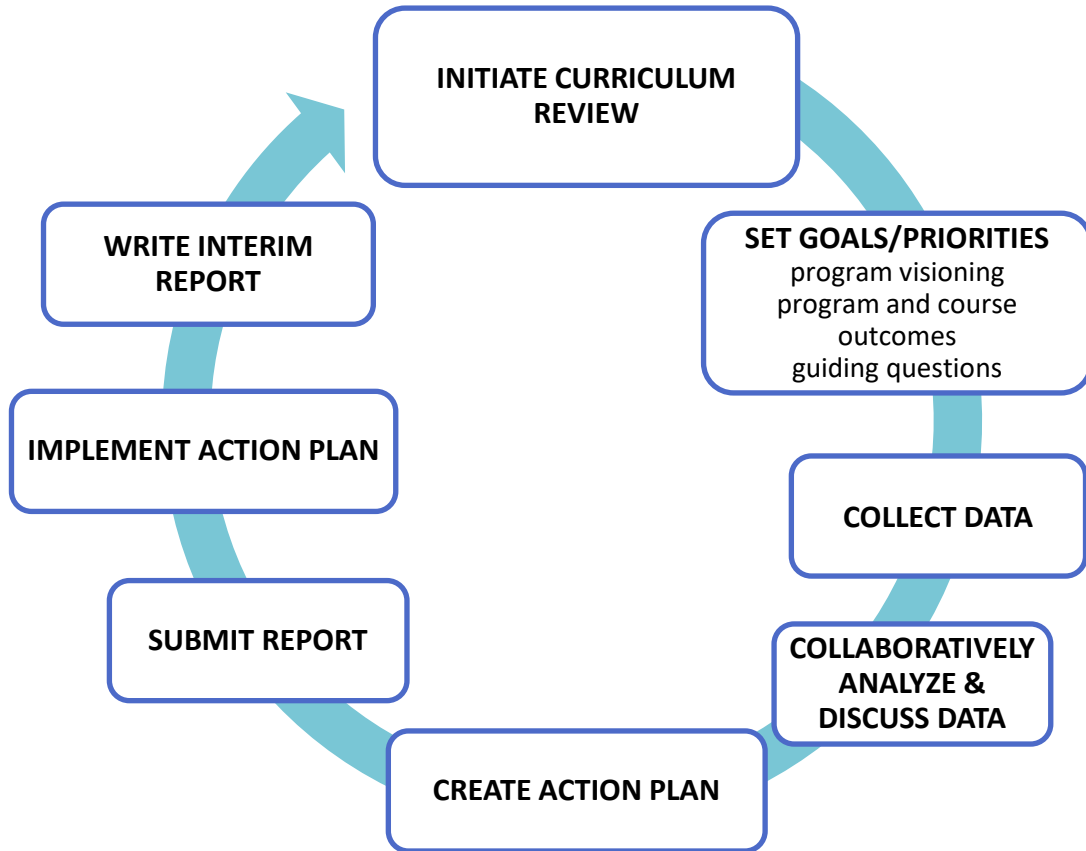*Unit:* A major academic entity; for example, a faculty, school, or institute.

Unit Lead: The person responsible for the unit; for example, a dean or director.

Unit Review: A comprehensive review that assesses the overall operations of a major unit and includes an external review.

For more definitions, please see Appendix I.

D. CURRICULUM REVIEW PROCESS

The Vice-Provost Teaching and Learning (VPTL) will work with the Dean (or Dean's delegate) to establish a cycle of Curriculum Reviews for programs within a unit. The review cycle may be adjusted to align with unit and accreditation review processes, where appropriate. Once the cycle is established, each CR will be initiated through communication from the Review Coordinator to the Unit Lead and other contacts as appropriate. The diagram below illustrates the main steps in the CR process. CR is usually a 1-year process from initiation to report submission. See Appendix II for the suggested timeframe for CR activities within these steps.

The cyclical diagram shows the Curriculum Review process stages:

- INITIATE CURRICULUM REVIEW
- SET GOALS/PRIORITIES
  - program visioning
  - program and course outcomes
  - guiding questions
- COLLECT DATA
- COLLABORATIVELY ANALYZE & DISCUSS DATA
- CREATE ACTION PLAN
- SUBMIT REPORT
- IMPLEMENT ACTION PLAN
- WRITE INTERIM REPORT

Support for the unit

The Review Lead and the Review Coordinator meet with the Unit Lead to clarify any issues or concerns regarding the review process. The Review Lead will keep the Unit Lead informed about the progress of the Curriculum Review process, ideally on a monthly basis.

Program data will be provided by the Office of Institutional Analysis for the CR process. Collecting undergraduate student feedback, and data from other groups such as alumni, program staff and graduate student teaching assistants during the CR process is the responsibility of the Unit.

The Office of the VPTL will maintain a webpage featuring resources, templates and examples to support the Curriculum Review process, as well as the Executive Summaries and Action Plans from units that have concluded the Curriculum Review process.

The Review Coordinator and Educational Development Consultants are available to answer any questions or concerns regarding Curriculum Review procedures.

Resources provided

The University will provide educational development support, including access to curriculum mapping resources and platforms, through the Taylor Institute as well as standard data collected by the OIA. Any additional costs (for instance, employing a student to assist with the review process or collecting data via focus groups) will be the responsibility of the Unit.

Data Collection

Each CR will be informed by the following data sources: OIA report, curriculum mapping data, and feedback gathered from students through methods such as surveys, interviews, and focus groups. It is expected that required courses in a program will be included in the curriculum mapping process. Additional courses, including optional courses from the department or faculty, should also be included in the curriculum mapping, where feasible. Optional courses from other departments and faculties are not expected to be included in the curriculum mapping process.

The Review Team may decide to collect other data to inform the CR, as appropriate. Potential sources of data include alumni surveys, program documentation, past curriculum and unit reviews, an environmental scan of similar programs from other institutions, a literature review, and current or potential employer survey data and/or consultations.

For more information on data collection, see Appendix III.

E. THE CURRICULUM REVIEW REPORT

Each CR report requires the elements listed below. Curriculum Review reports and action plans should be discussed and approved at the appropriate Council (Department, Program, Faculty) for the Unit to ensure all academic staff who teach within the program have an opportunity to provide feedback and input on the final report and plan.

1. **Executive summary:** an overview of the report including the focus of the review, data collected, findings, and major recommendations.
2. **Context**: a brief description of the program's history, relation to field of study, particular strengths, accreditation requirements, etc.
3. **Overview**: description of both the program and the CR process (including the program-level learning outcomes, program structure, etc.)
4. **Guiding questions**: the critical concerns that guided the CR process. At least one guiding question must address a University of Calgary institutional priority related to teaching and learning.
5. **Data collection, analysis, and findings**: description of both the process and the findings from the data sources used (including OIA data, curriculum mapping, and student feedback)
6. **Consultation and engagement process**: description of how academic staff, students and other groups were consulted and engaged throughout the curriculum review process
7. **Action plan**: a concise summary of how the program will address findings emerging from the CR process
8. **Communication plan**: strategies that will be used to share findings and progress with students, faculty and staff
9. **Appendices (optional)**: data collection items, raw data, preliminary analysis, etc.

Detailed information on each of these elements is located in Appendix IV.

Note: Units are responsible to keep an electronic record of the raw data used to generate the CR report and to archive all reports for reference in their interim reporting process and for future curriculum reviews.

F.   POST REVIEW PROCESS AND INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT

Report Review
The Curriculum Review Report will first be reviewed by the Department Head or Program Director and then brought to Dept Council (or equivalent) for approval by the Review Team. Otherwise it will first be reviewed by the Dean (or Designate) of the home Faculty, or equivalent academic administrator in other units housing programs. In the case of course-based Master's programs, the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies will also review and approve the report. The signed approval form will be submitted to the Provost's Office along with the Report.

Meeting with the VPTL to discuss the Curriculum Review Action Plan
Once approved, the Curriculum Review Report will be submitted through the Review Coordinator who will arrange a meeting with the VPTL and Review Lead to discuss the Curriculum Review process and the program's action plan.

Further dissemination of the Curriculum Review Results
The Review Coordinator will submit the Curriculum Review Report (without appendices) to
- The Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) for discussion and feedback; and
- The Curriculum Review Coordinator for posting on the Curriculum Review website (Executive Summary and Action Plan).

The Review Coordinator will maintain a permanent record of all Curriculum Review Reports submitted.

Action plan items from the Curriculum Review Report must be referenced in the Interim Report as well as in subsequent reviews undertaken by the program. Results and ongoing progress of the action plan will be communicated to students and other stakeholders as per the Communication Plan outlined in the CR report.

Interim Report
Each Unit will submit a 1-2 page interim progress report through the Review Coordinator to the VPTL at the mid-point of the review cycle. The interim report will describe progress made on the action plan, briefly discuss any challenges in fulfilling specific action plan items and outline any changes or adjustments made as a result. This report will be discussed at the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) of the General Faculties Council, chaired by the VPTL.

A template for Interim Reports is available in Appendix VI.

G.   FEEDBACK

The unit may provide any comments or feedback on the process to any members of the Curriculum Review contacts in Section B.

APPENDIX I: GLOSSARY OF CURRICULUM REVIEW TERMS

Action Plan: A concise summary of how, over the period between curriculum reviews, the staff responsible for a program will address recommendations emerging from CR.

Curriculum Review (CR): An academic staff-led collaborative and critical examination of academic programs for the purpose of optimizing student learning experiences. Curriculum reviews of undergraduate and/or course-based Master's programs are scheduled in consultation with the Dean/Director of the Unit and normally occur on a 5-7 year cycle.

Curriculum Mapping: The process of associating course outcomes with program-level learning outcomes and aligning teaching and learning strategies and assessment methods for courses so the relationships between the components of the program can be identified. The results are instrumental in identifying patterns, trends, gaps, and overlaps to ensure that the program is structured in a strategic, thoughtful way that enhances student learning.

Office of Institutional Analysis (OIA): Unit responsible for generating and storing data used for benchmarking and analysis. The OIA will provide a standard data reports to each program for CR.

Program Lead: The person responsible for the program under review (i.e. department head, program director).

Review Coordinator: The Review Coordinator is a staff member in the Provost's Office who provides information and process guidance to the Review Lead, to ensure curriculum reviews are completed in a timely and accurate fashion.

Review Lead: The Review Lead for Curriculum Reviews will be an academic staff member from the program under review who will oversee and facilitate the review process, track the progress of the review, coordinate resources to support colleagues in providing information to the process, and draft the Curriculum Review Report.

Review Team: In the case of CR, the Review Team includes all academic staff involved in teaching in the program. In addition, sessional colleagues will be invited, but not required, to participate in the CR process. Members of the review team help develop the CR guiding questions, participate in curriculum mapping and are invited to participate in data analysis to identify the main findings. The Review Team will also approve both the Guiding Questions and the CR Action Plan through the appropriate forum such as Department, Faculty or Program council meetings. A sub-set of academic staff from the Review Team will form a CR Committee to help the Review Lead coordinate and implement the CR process. Activities supported by the CR Committee include drafting guiding questions, curriculum mapping and ensuring that all members of the Review Team have multiple opportunities to engage in the CR process and to provide feedback on the CR Report and Action Plan. The CR Committee also supports the writing the CR Report, including the Action Plan.

Curriculum Review Report: Written by the Review Team, the report will include an Executive Summary, the process followed, the guiding questions, the names of the review team, and the findings and action plan emerging from the Review, including points of alignment with the University of Calgary Academic Plan. Data collection items and raw data are usually contained in Appendices to this Report.

Unit: A major academic entity, for example a faculty, school, or institute.

Unit Lead: The person responsible for the unit; i.e., a dean, or director.

Unit Review: A comprehensive review that assesses the overall operations of a major unit and includes an external review.

APPENDIX II: SUGGESTED TIMEFRAME & ACTIVITIES FOR CR PROCESS

	TIMELINE*
INITIATE CURRICULUM REVIEW	**2-3 months** (prior to the academic year)
Unit Lead (or delegate) consults with each eligible Program Lead to develop a rolling schedule that is submitted to the Provost's office.	
Unit or Program Lead appoints Review Lead, delegates CR responsibilities and makes appropriate workload adjustments to reflect CR leadership responsibilities.	
Office of the Provost requests standard data package from the OIA.	
GOAL SETTING	**1-2 months** (fall)
Program Lead, Review Lead, and Review Team examine and reflect on recommendations from previous reviews, the data report from the OIA, and draft questions to guide the CR process.	
Review Lead & Program Lead meet to discuss goals, processes, and timelines.	
Review Lead (or delegate) creates a CR plan, consulting with Educational Development Consultants at the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning as needed.	
Review Lead (or delegate) consults with the appropriate Subject Librarian to review library resources available to the program.	
Program Lead & Review Lead initiates CR by outlining CR as a collaborative process involving all academic staff teaching in the program (i.e. the Review Team), clearly emphasizing the importance of each member's role in the curriculum mapping and review process. Review Team participates in developing CR guiding questions to be approved at dept council (or equivalent).	
DATA COLLECTION	**4-5 months** (fall-winter)
Review Lead shares CR information with Review Team	
Review Lead organizes orientation to curriculum mapping process for Review Team (this may include contacting an Educational Development Consultant).	
Curriculum mapping is completed by Review Team.	
The Review Lead (or delegate) coordinates the collection of feedback and input from staff, alumni, and current students within the program that addresses appropriate guiding questions.	
DATA ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION	**1-2 months** (early spring)
The Review Lead collaborative analysis of data generated through curriculum mapping, the OIA standard report, student feedback, and any additional data sources. Key findings and action plan priorities identified.	
CREATE ACTION PLAN	**1 month** (spring)
The Review Team drafts an action plan and coordinates opportunities for feedback. Action Plan is approved by Review Team.	
CREATE AND SUBMIT CURRICULUM REVIEW REPORT	**1-2 months**

The Curriculum Review Report is drafted. Consultation on the report is facilitated with academic staff throughout the department/faculty.	(for June submission)
Review of Draft Curriculum Review Report by Review Team.	
Submission of Curriculum Review Report to Program Lead for discussion and approval for final sign off by Unit Lead. In the case of course-based Master's programs, the report also goes to Faculty of Graduate Studies for review and signed approval.	
Submission of Curriculum Review Report to VPTL for review and discussion. VPTL will meet with the Review Lead to discuss challenges and opportunities presented. Meeting should include the Educational Development Consultants from the TI, and may include the Unit Lead.	Mid-late June No later than August
Submission of the Executive Summary and the Action Plan from CR Report to the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) of the GFC.	
Review Lead and Program Lead attend GFC TLC for discussion and feedback on CR Action Plan	
IMPLEMENT ACTION PLAN	Throughout the CR cycle
WRITE INTERIM REPORT	At midpoint of CR cycle
Interim Progress report on implementation of action plan submitted VPTL and GFC TLC for discussion.	
Review Lead and Program Lead attend GFC TLC to give an update on CR action plan.	

*Recommended timelines are based on the most common pattern of work in academic programs. If an alternative timeline is desirable, the recommended pattern can be adapted.

APPENDIX III: DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

Mandatory data collection:

1. Standard Report from the Office of Institutional Analysis (OIA)
    a. Demographic information, such as number of students, DFW rates, attrition
    b. NSSE engagement indicators and responses (%) for specific questions, if applicable
2. Curriculum mapping data
3. Student data (survey, focus group, or interview)

Optional data collection:

There are many potential sources of data which could inform a curriculum review. The guiding questions

will help to determine which data collection methods are used. Suggestions include:

1. Student exit surveys or interviews

2. Alumni surveys

3. Quantitative student performance indicators, such as grades on a key assignment

4. Teaching and learning artifacts, such as portfolios of student work

5. Anecdotal information and testimonials

6. Program documentation

7. Past curriculum reviews

8. Past unit reviews

9. Environmental scan, or an examination of similar programs across the province, Canada, or
   North America

10. Literature review

11. External reviewer reports

12. Accreditation reports

13. Current or potential employer data

APPENDIX IV: CURRICULUM REVIEW REPORT DETAILS

1. **Title page:** Include the faculty logo, title of the document and date. Include an image on the title page if desired.

2. **Table of contents**

3. **CR Report Authors:** Include the names of people who were instrumental in conducting the review and preparing the CR report.

4. **Executive summary:** A high-level overview of the review, including highlights of the process, findings, and action plan. A suggested maximum for the executive summary is 2-3 pages.
   - One paragraph describing the program.
   - Context for the review: How many years since the last one? Coordinated with an accreditation process, unit review, or strategic priorities process? How long did it take and who was involved?
   - A few sentences on the process of the review: When did it start and how long did it take? Did you write your program-level learning outcomes, were they revised from a previous set, or provided from an accrediting body? What data were collected? How were all faculty involved? How were students involved in the process? Include the details that are salient to your review process.
   - Highlight a few of the major findings. Include both positive results and aspects of the curriculum that the group will work on.
   - Highlight approximately three major action plan items that you will work on in the next five years.
   - Take the opportunity to brag about a couple of things. What went particularly well about your review? What would you like to emphasize about your program to readers?

5. **Timeline:** A list of the review steps, when they occurred, and who was involved.

6. **Context:** A one-page summary to set the context in which the program is offered: history, how it is situated in the field of study, particular strengths, accreditation requirements, etc.
   - Can be taken from a Unit Review or other documents – in many cases it is already written and may need minimal or no revisions.

7. **Overview:** Consists of three sections
   - Program-level learning outcomes: What are the overarching areas of knowledge, skills and abilities that a graduate of this program is intended to acquire? List them in the overview.
   - Program structure: Provide information on the program organization. For example, how is the program organized in terms of required and elective courses? Majors, minors, concentrations, embedded Certificates? Horizontal and vertical integration? Course structures (labs, tutorials, projects, etc.)? Experiential learning? Integrating teaching and

research? Internationalization? Special features of the learning experience? Links to other programs? In what ways do courses service other academic programs?
- Highlight points of alignment with priorities of the University of Calgary's Academic Plan

8. **Guiding questions:** The critical questions or inquiry that guided the curriculum review
   - List them in this section.
   - At least one guiding question must address a University of Calgary institutional priority related to teaching and learning.

9. **Curriculum mapping:** The data from the CM process
   - Recommendation: Include aggregate data in the body of the report. If the group would like to include course maps, they can go in an appendix.
   - The group may also want to include a description of the methods used to collect the data for reference, as well as suggestions to conduct the mapping process next time

10. **Analysis of the curriculum mapping data**: You may want to address the following questions when analyzing curriculum mapping data:
    - What are your general observations? What are the trends and patterns? What are the strengths that have emerged? Which learning outcomes are emphasized, and which are emphasized less? Where are the gaps and redundancies?
    - What do the trends and patterns mean within the context of the program? Is there evidence of alignment across learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment methods?
    - How do the data inform your action plan? What strengths do you want to maintain or leverage? What gaps and redundancies do you want to address?

11. **Student-provided data:** Results from student surveys, interviews or focus groups. Include a summary of the trends that emerged.

12. **Integration of evidence from other sources:** The Office of Institutional Analysis (OIA) will create a standard report for Curriculum Reviews. The standard report will include information relevant to curriculum reviews such as enrolment numbers, attrition, retention, DFW statistics, completion rates and times, and relevant survey results. NSSE results will be included if available (note that the NSSE is an undergraduate survey instrument only).

    Programs may choose to collect information from other sources
    - List your data sources and give a brief analysis of the data from each

13. **Findings:** The Review Team will identify findings based on an analysis of data from the curriculum mapping process and other sources. The findings will form the basis of an action plan.
    - Use your guiding questions to structure this section of the report
    - Use different data sources as appropriate as you address each one
    - Include recommendations for your action plan

14. **Consultation and engagement process**: A description of how academic staff, students and other groups were consulted and engaged throughout the curriculum review process

15. **Action Plan:** A concise summary of how, over the period between curriculum reviews, the faculty in a program will address findings emerging from the Curriculum Review process. The Action Plan will be referenced in the Interim Report and subsequent curriculum review processes.
    - The action plan items can include the following:
        - Recommendation: The suggestion to be addressed
        - Action items: Specific details about how the recommendation will be implemented. There can be more than one action item per recommendation.
        - Timeline: Length of time needed for implementation
        - Rationale: Offers a reason for providing the recommendation. The rationale section can also point to the data that support the recommendation.
        - Responsibility: Outlines who is responsible for implementing each action item, usually stated by role rather than by name.
        - Evaluation: How a recommendation will be evaluated in future.
    - Action plan items can refer to curriculum at the program and course level, administration, student advising, marketing, faculty development, and other areas that impact the program

    See Appendix V for an example of an Action Plan item.

16. **Communication Plan:** Identification of the strategies that will be used to convey to students, faculty and staff the findings of the review and progress made at regular intervals.

17. **Optional – Appendices:** Appendices can include any reference material or sections that are not included in the body of the report. While some groups want to include all data (aggregate or not) in the appendices, others opt for a more streamlined report. Possibilities include:
    - Survey questions (student, alumni, and/or other groups)
    - Interview and/or focus group questions
    - Curriculum mapping templates or survey questions
    - Aggregate survey, interview, and focus group data
    - Aggregate curriculum mapping data, and data for individual courses if required for accreditation purposes
    - Selected NSSE data from faculty/ department reports
    - Agendas from meetings and/or curriculum retreats
    - List of course outcomes for all courses

APPENDIX V: EXAMPLE OF AN ACTION PLAN ITEM

1. Recommendation	**Increase capacity for students to take 300 and 400-level courses that have prerequisites**
Action Items	Offer 203 as a block week course in both fall and winter in addition to regular term offerings
Timeline	1 year
Responsibility	Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies
Data Source(s)	Student feedback, curriculum maps
Rationale	Since the regular term sections are typically full we would need to offer more sections of the course
Evaluation	Comparison of the number of students who have passed 203 prior to and after the change
Comments	Students have requested this course in block week format

APPENDIX VI: TEMPLATE FOR INTERIM REPORT

In the interim report, please include your action plan from the latest curriculum review. If the action plan is in chart format, add another column titled 'Progress to Date' and state what has been done to address the action item. If there has not been any progress, note the reasons why the item has not yet been addressed.

In addition, please briefly answer the following questions in 1-2 pages:

1.   What has gone particularly well in implementing the action plan?
2.   Which action plan items need to be modified?
3.   What are your next steps in implementing the action plan?