



TOWSON UNIVERSITY

Review of Academic Departments (RAD) Guidebook

Office of the Provost

Revised February 2024



Table of Contents

Purpose	3
Summary of the RAD Components	4
RAD Life Cycle	5
Summary of RAD Timeline	5
Detailed Description of the RAD Components	7
The Self-Study	7
The External Review	8
The USM Report	10
The Program Progress Report	11
Action Plan Implementation	11
Appendix I – Self-Study Template	12
Appendix II – RAD Milestones and Timeline	18
The Self-Study	18
The External Review	19
The USM Report	19
The Program Progress Report	20
Action Plan Implementation	21
Appendix III: Standard Data Sets	22
Appendix IV: External Reviewer Selection – Guidelines for Avoiding Conflicts of Interest	23
Appendix V: External Reviewer Invitation Letter Template	24
Appendix VI: External Reviewer Campus Visit – Sample Itinerary	25
Appendix VII: External Review Report Template and Guidelines	26
Appendix VIII: Usm Program Review Report Template	31
Appendix IX: Program Progress Report Template	35

Purpose

The University System of Maryland (USM) requires system institutions to review all undergraduate and graduate academic programs on a seven-year cycle.

“The Board of Regents shall, on an ongoing basis, review and determine whether any University programs are inconsistent with the University’s mission or whether any constituent institution’s programs are inconsistent with that institution’s mission. The Board shall also assure that the University’s programs are not unproductive or unreasonably duplicative, taking into account the mission of the institution, student demand, and efficient use of the University’s resources.” (Code of Maryland, SB682, Sec. 12-106IV)

The purpose of the Review of Academic Departments (RAD) is to maintain compliance with the USM policy and to enable TU’s academic programs to continually improve and meet the needs of our students. The RAD provides quality assurance; ensures efficient use of resources; determines program effectiveness; and identifies areas and solutions for improvement within academic departments. Note that while the RAD process requires a review of individual academic *programs*, TU titles this activity a “Review of Academic Departments” because academic programs are housed in departments or equivalent units (henceforth referred to collectively as “departments”) and therefore administratively it makes the most sense to conduct these reviews on a department-wide basis.

The RAD analyzes the performance and status of programs within the department from the time of the last review, details any new programmatic directions, and articulates any proposed strategic initiatives and/or actions (in the form of action plans) based on any recommendations that emerge as a result of the review.

The Office of the Provost maintains a master schedule of the review of all academic programs and notifies departments of upcoming reviews one year before the scheduled review.¹

¹ *In order to qualify for participation in the RAD process, an academic program should have operated for five years (thereby allowing for the review of five years’ worth of data).*

Summary of the RAD Components

- (1) **SELF-STUDY:**² Permits the department to reflect upon its academic program(s), contextualize its present status, and envision a strategic path moving forward, with specific actions identified. The Self-Study draws on program data supplied by the Office of Institutional Research, which the Office of the Provost will provide to the College Dean in the form of Standard Data Sets for dissemination to departments/programs, as well as other relevant data maintained by departments/colleges. An external accreditation study can be used in place of a Self-Study for those programs that are externally accredited and must meet the requirements of the RAD process.
- (2) **EXTERNAL REVIEW:** Departments engage an external discipline expert to evaluate all aspects of a program. The External Review must describe the role and functioning of the program within the department and assess strengths and areas for improvement of the program. An external accreditation review can be used in place of an External Review for those programs that require external accreditation and must meet the requirements of the RAD process.³
- (3) **USM REPORT:** Is prescribed by the USM and must be submitted using a standard USM template. All programs, including those that require external accreditation, must submit the USM report, which should include an action plan to address any recommendations.
- (4) **PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT:** Is generated by the department to assess progress on the action plan(s) detailed within their Self-Study(ies) and the USM Report(s). All programs, including those that require external accreditation, must submit a Program Progress Report.

² Departments may choose to prepare separate Self-Studies for each individual academic program within their department or to report on some or all programs in the department on a combined basis within the same Self-Study (for example, preparing a combined Self-Study when the department offers a bachelor's and master's degree program with the same degree title, or for a master's degree program with associated certificate programs). This decision rests with the department (with input from the College Dean) and depends on factors such as how closely aligned the curricula of academic programs within the department are, the size of the programs, etc.

³ Where possible, the RAD process will be scheduled in coordination with a program's external accreditation activities. Requests to align these activities should be submitted to the Office of the Provost at least one year in advance of the year in which a program is due to begin its RAD process.

- (5) **ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:** In between RAD submission cycles, departments/programs implement recommendations from the action plan(s) included in the Self-Study and USM Report. Departments do not normally need to submit any formal reports to the Office of the Provost during this period, other than the Program Progress Report described in (4), unless the RAD process has identified a need for closer scrutiny of an academic program(s).
- (6) **DOCUMENT SUBMISSION:** All documents associated with the RAD process should be uploaded to a shared drive maintained by the Office of the Provost. The Accreditation and Compliance Specialist will grant access to the shared drive to stakeholders involved in the RAD process and will provide assistance, as needed, with document submission.

RAD Life Cycle

The RAD life cycle comprises five stages, occurring over seven years, and is represented below:



Summary of RAD Timeline

SELF-STUDY

- **January – February of Year I:** Overview of RAD Process
- **Spring – Summer Year I:** Data Analysis

- **Summer – Early Fall of Year I:** Drafting of the Self-Study(ies)
- **Third Monday in October of Year I:** Draft Self-Study(ies) due to College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable)
- **Second Monday in November of Year I:** Feedback on Draft Self-Study(ies) due from College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable)
- **Third Monday in December of Year I:** Revised Self-Study(ies) due to College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable)
- **Third Monday in January of Year II:** Finalized Self-Study(ies) due to Office of the Provost

EXTERNAL REVIEW

- **December, Year I – Mid-January, Year II:** Initial Identification of External Reviewer Candidates
- **Third Monday in January of Year II:** External Reviewer Nominations due to Office of the Provost
- **Mid-January – February, Year II:** Final Selection and Invitation of External Reviewer(s)
- **Spring Year II:** External Review Visit
- **First Monday in May, Year II:** External Review Report(s) Due

USM REPORT

- **May – June, Year II:** Drafting of USM Report(s) Using USM Template
- **Third Monday in June, Year II:** Draft USM Report(s) Submitted to College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable)
- **Third Monday in July, Year II:** External Review Report(s) and USM Report(s) Submitted to Office of the Provost; Dean Meets with Office of the Provost (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable) to Review and Provide Feedback on USM Report(s)

- **October 1st, Year II:** Deadline for Submission of USM Report(s) to USM
- **January, Year III:** USM Review and Feedback

PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT

- **Spring Year V:** Drafting of Program Progress Report(s) Using Template
- **Third Monday in June, Year V:** Program Progress Report(s) Due

ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

- **Year III – Year VII:** Action Plan Implementation

A detailed outline of the milestones and due dates is presented in Appendix II.

Detailed Description of the RAD Components

(1) THE SELF-STUDY⁴

The Office of the Provost will provide a Standard Data Set (generated by the Office of Institutional Research) on courses, students, faculty, and finances for each program housed within the department for the purpose of informing the Self-Study and generating an evidence-based report (see Appendix III for more information). The Self-Study is comprised of the following sections (see Appendix I: Self-Study Template for more detailed information about what should be included in the Self-Study):

- a. **Executive Summary** (no more than 1 page).
- b. **Introduction to the Department** (no more than 2 pages).
- c. **Academic Program(s) of Study** (no more than 3 pages).
- d. **Faculty Profile** (no more than 5 pages).

⁴ *Departments may choose to prepare separate program-specific Self-Studies (for example, if the academic programs they offer are very distinct in nature, are disparate in size, etc.) or a combined Self-Study for some or all programs within the department that are participating in the RAD (which is the model presented in this template). This decision rests with the department (with input from the College Dean).*

- e. **Student Profile** (no more than 5 pages).
- f. **Program Assessment** (no more than 10 pages).
- g. **Program/Department Action Plan** (no more than 10 pages).
- h. **Appendices**

(2) THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

Selection and Invitation of External Reviewers

External reviewers are expected to review the entirety of the department, its program(s) and all other specialties, functions, and aspects pertaining to each academic program. As such, external reviewers should be tenured faculty members with administrative experience and domain expertise in a program comparable to the one under review. Whenever possible, reviewers should be faculty members at institutions comparable to TU. *[Note that the Office of Institutional Research provides a list of [institutional performance peers](#) that can help in identifying institutions from which to select external reviewers and/or offer a profile of the type of institutions outside this list that could be comparable to TU.]*

While one external reviewer will normally review all the academic programs within the department participating in the RAD, if a department houses academic programs that are not closely aligned (for example, in terms of distinct coursework offerings, different degrees, the faculty who teach in the program, etc.) or where very specialized expertise is required to review a particular program, it may be appropriate to employ more than one external reviewer (in which case, separate External Review Reports should be prepared). Department chairs/unit heads should consult with the Office of the Provost as to whether more than one external reviewer is needed for the RAD process.

The department chair/unit head follows the steps below in selecting and inviting the external reviewer(s):

- *Select* a minimum of three potential reviewers, ensuring that no conflicts of interest exist with the program(s) being evaluated (see Appendix IV for guidelines on avoiding conflicts of interest). [*Note that it is appropriate to contact potential nominees during this selection stage to gauge their availability and willingness to participate before submitting the final list of nominees to the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs.*]
- *Consult* with the College Dean on proposed reviewers.
- *Submit* the names of potential external reviewers, via the Dean's Office, along with their CVs and a brief rationale for their selection to the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, who then approves a reviewer(s) from the proposed list.
- *Invite* the approved external reviewer(s) using the invitation letter template provided by the Office of the Provost (see Appendix V). It is recommended that information about Towson University and the University System of Maryland be included in or with the invitation letter (e.g., providing a link to the [About TU](#) webpage).
- *Schedule* the visit of the external reviewer(s) around the Provost and Vice Provost's availabilities to ensure that they are available for the external reviewer visit. [*Note the Vice Provost may on occasion have to stand in for the Provost when meeting with the external reviewer(s).*]
- *Send* the current Self-Study(ies), including appendices, as well as the prior Self-Study(ies), External Review Report, USM Report, Program Progress Report, and other relevant documentation (where applicable) from the previous RAD cycle,⁵ to the external reviewer(s) in advance of the visit.
- *Plan* the External Review visit to include meetings with relevant stakeholders (students, faculty, program staff/administrators, etc.). A typical visit occurs over approximately two days (see Appendix VI for a sample itinerary). The external reviewer should meet with the Provost (or Vice Provost) for 30 minutes to provide a debriefing on the preliminary findings from the visit. This meeting should be scheduled as the last

⁵ *The Accreditation and Compliance Specialist can provide documentation from the previous RAD cycle upon request.*

meeting on the itinerary, or as close to the end of the visit as possible. This meeting is closed and is held between the external reviewer and the Provost (or Vice Provost) only.

External Review Report Format: A template for the External Review Report indicating required evaluations is provided in Appendix VII. *[Note that if programs are not being reviewed on a combined basis, an external reviewer may need to prepare more than one External Review Report for the programs they review.]*

External Reviewer Expenses: The Office of the Provost will pay a \$2,000 honorarium per external reviewer.⁶ Additional to the honorarium, the Office of the Provost will fund reviewers' travel, hotel, and/or meal expenses during the visit up to \$750. The Office of the Provost shall process necessary paperwork to hire and pay the external reviewer(s) (Honorarium Letter of Invitation, Honorarium Request Application, Miscellaneous Expense Voucher, and W-9 form). The Office of the Provost will remit honoraria and any expenses claimed following receipt of the final External Review Report(s).

Additional expenses claimed by the external reviewer(s) beyond the \$750 allowance are the department and/or college's responsibility. It is solely the decision of the department and/or college whether or not they wish to cover these additional expenses and how such expenses are managed, for example, in terms of booking hotel accommodation, reimbursing the external reviewer(s), etc.

(3) THE USM REPORT

Using a template provided by the USM (see Appendix VIII),⁷ the USM Report is drafted by the department in collaboration with the College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable). It includes information on enrollment and degrees awarded for each program;

⁶ Note that external reviewers are paid a set honorarium rate even if they review multiple programs within a department and/or prepare more than one External Review Report.

⁷ Some departments may choose to report programs on a combined basis within the same USM Report if there is significant overlap between programs (for example, preparing one USM Report if the department offers a bachelor's and master's degree program with the same degree title, or for a master's degree program with associated certificate programs). This decision rests with the department (with input from the College Dean) and depends on factors such as how closely aligned the curricula of academic programs within the department are, the size of the programs, etc.

a summary of major findings and recommendations from the internal Self-Study and External Review; and an action plan to address these recommendations. The College Dean meets with Office of the Provost staff (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable) to review and finalize the USM Report. The Office of the Provost submits the finalized USM Report to the USM and the University Senate Executive Committee.

(4) THE PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT

Using the template provided (see Appendix IX), the Program Progress Report is prepared by the department, with input from the College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable), approximately 2½ years after the USM Report(s) is submitted (see Appendix II for a detailed outline of RAD milestones and due dates). The Program Progress Report should assess progress on the action plans included within the Self-Study(ies) and the USM Report(s) and provide suggestions for alignment or revision, as necessary. The Program Progress Report is submitted by the College Dean to the Office of the Provost. If necessary, Office of the Provost staff may request a meeting with the College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable) to discuss the Program Progress Report. Once it is finalized, the Program Progress Report will be forwarded to the University Senate Executive Committee.

(5) ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

The aforementioned periods of activity are followed by an action plan implementation phase which occurs during the intervening years between RAD cycles. During this period, departments/programs implement recommendations from the action plans articulated in the Self-Study(ies) and the USM Report(s). In addition, the Office of Institutional Research automatically collects a new five-year Standard Data Set in preparation for the next RAD. Departments do not normally need to submit any formal reports to the Office of the Provost during this period, other than the Program Progress Report described in (4), unless the RAD process has identified a need for closer scrutiny of an academic program(s).

Appendix I – Self-Study Template

a. Executive Summary (no more than 1 page)

A one-page executive summary drawing excerpts from the completed self-study, and normally written last.

b. Introduction to the Department (no more than 2 pages)

An introduction to the department including its purpose, organization, brief history, and relationship to the college, division, and/or the university, and alignment with the university’s mission and strategic plan.

c. Academic Program(s) of Study (no more than 3 pages)

List all academic programs under review within the Self-Study in a table:

Program Title	Degree Level or Certificate	Instructional Modality

Do not include undergraduate minors in the table as they are not included in the RAD.

Any additional programs that are not under review in this Self-Study should be mentioned in a separate paragraph.

Include the following information in the discussion of academic programs:

- For each undergraduate program: list “Requirements for the Major”; in an Appendix, provide the “Four-Year Plan of Study” from the TU academic catalog.
- For each graduate program: list all degree requirements; in an Appendix, list the courses offered, including online and off-site courses.

- For each certificate program: list all program requirements; in an Appendix, list the courses offered, including online and off-site courses.
- For all programs: detail the overarching program goals/objectives and student learning outcomes.

d. Faculty Profile (no more than 5 pages)

Using data from the Standard Data Set, and other relevant data sources, include a description of:

- The full-time and part-time/adjunct faculty members employed in the department over the last five years, including faculty hired, promoted, retired, or no longer with the department.

Present the number of faculty at each rank for the last five years in a table:

Faculty Rank	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Professor					
Associate Professor					
Assistant Professor					
Total Tenured/Tenure-Track Faculty					
Visiting Professor					
Lecturer					
Clinical					
Other Full-time Faculty					
Total Full-time Faculty					
Adjunct Faculty					
Total Faculty					

- The program(s)/department's needs and how they are met by the mix of tenured/tenure-track faculty and non-tenured faculty in the department.
- Departmental efforts to achieve and support increased faculty diversity.

- Existing faculty mentoring procedures and highlight what has been beneficial.

In an Appendix, include CVs of all current full-time faculty members (lecturers, visiting, clinical, tenured/tenure-track).

e. Student Profile (no more than 5 pages)

Using data from the Standard Data Set, and other relevant data sources, include a description of:

- Undergraduate/graduate student enrollment in each program (part-time students, full-time students, gender, race/ethnicity).
- How well the department's programs meet the needs of students.
- Student research, creative inquiry, and internship opportunities.
- Scholarships and awards made available to students both inside and outside the department.
- Methods employed in recruiting, evaluating, admitting, and advising undergraduate and/or graduate students.
- Practices that have been successful, and unsuccessful, for recruiting or retaining students in undergraduate and/or graduate programs and an analysis of what made the practices successful/unsuccessful.
- Analysis of the success of recruitment/retention practices in supporting underrepresented students in the department's programs.

Include a table of "Annual Degrees"; correlate this information to your evaluation of how well students are served by the department's programs.

In addition, those departments serving other majors or the core curriculum may wish to elaborate on that contribution to the university using the provided student credit hour data.

f. Program Assessment (no more than 10 pages)

Provide a description of:

- The sufficiency of student learning opportunities for each program.
- Curricular and/or operational changes made to improve each program since the last Self-Study (for example: addition of new courses, discontinuation of existing courses, and/or revisions to existing courses; changes in course sequencing; revisions to program or course student learning outcomes or assessment plans/practices; changes to admissions or graduation requirements; etc.); the data/evidence used as the basis for implementing these changes (for example, student learning outcome achievement data, annual assessment reports, course evaluations, stakeholder feedback, etc.); the internal and, where applicable, external stakeholders involved in these various deliberations (i.e., faculty; students; administrators; alumni; advisory boards; employers; professional associations/governmental agencies; professional practitioners in the field, etc.); and how decisions were communicated to stakeholders.
- The extent to which the curricular and/or operational changes implemented (as described per the previous bullet) contributed to program improvement; the data/evidence to support this; and how the results/outcomes of the actions taken were communicated to stakeholders.
- The extent to which the department's programs remain current and pertinent relative to its alignment with disciplinary trends, and the evidence to support this critique.

Using a table, provide a review of annual academic program assessments that includes summary evidence from student learning outcome assessment trends. A representative table summarizing annual student learning assessments is shown below:

Learning Goals	Learning Outcomes	Measures	Student Achievement (% meets expectations by year)
Goal # 1	Outcome A	Measures i & ii	Year 1
	Outcome B	Measures iii & iv	Year 2
	Outcome C	Measures v & vi	Year 3
			Year 4
			Year 5

Include the following as appendices:

- Current curriculum map for each program showing the alignment (for required courses only, not electives) of course-level student learning outcomes to program-level student learning outcomes and, in turn, the alignment of program-level student learning outcomes to [TU’s six institutional student learning outcomes](#).
- Current assessment plan for each program.
- Annual assessment reports for each program for the past five academic years.

g. Program/Department Action Plan (no more than 10 pages)

This action plan should tie the actions taken over the past seven years during the preceding RAD cycle to the goals for each program for the next seven years:

- Include the action plan(s) included in the corresponding Self-Study(ies) and USM Report(s) from the last RAD cycle. *[Note this action plan(s) can be attached as an appendix.]*
- Provide a narrative describing actions taken since the last review for each program, and elaborate on whether the intended programmatic trajectory(ies) continue to fit each program.
- Provide an executive level summary of the new or updated goals for each academic

program and strategic or long-range plans regarding teaching, research, and service.

- Give an outline of intended changes in the scope and/or direction of each academic program and of how the department and/or program plans to make these changes.
- Describe internal and/or external influences, if applicable, that might propel or inhibit the ability of the department or a program to achieve its goals.
- Articulate an action plan for continuous improvement for each academic program in consultation with stakeholders (program faculty, the department chair/unit head, College Dean, Dean of Graduate Studies (if applicable), etc.), that identifies the initiative(s) designed to help each program achieve its goals. For each initiative, identify a timeline and responsible parties who will coordinate and complete the initiative.

h. Appendices (no page limit)

The Self-Study should abide by the following guidelines:

- Be no longer than 35 pages, excluding executive summary and appendices.
- Have normal margins.
- Use a 12 pt. ADA compliant font.
- Be 1.5 line spaced.

Appendix II – RAD Milestones and Timeline

(1) THE SELF-STUDY

January – February of Year I: Overview of RAD Process

College Dean, Associate Dean, department chair(s)/unit head(s), and program director(s) meet with Associate Provost for Academic Affairs and Assistant Provost for Assessment, Accreditation and Compliance for overview of the RAD process.

Spring – Summer Year I: Data Analysis

Standard Data Sets (generated by Office of Institutional Research) containing pertinent data for the Self-Study(ies) are provided to College Dean by Office of the Provost (see Appendix III). Analysis, reflection, and discussion begins in department using the Standard Data Sets and other relevant data/materials available to department.

Summer – Early Fall of Year I: Drafting the Self-Study(ies)

Department continues analysis and writes Self-Study(ies).

Third Monday in October of Year I: Draft Self-Study(ies) due to Dean(s)

Department chair/unit head submits Self-Study(ies) draft to College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable), who must provide feedback within one month.

Second Monday in November of Year I: Feedback on Draft Self-Study(ies) due from Dean(s)

College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable) submits feedback on Self-Study(ies) to department chair/unit head.

Third Monday in December of Year I: Revised Self-Study(ies) due to Dean(s)

Department chair/unit head submits revised Self-Study(ies) to College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable) to review.

Third Monday in January of Year II: Finalized Self-Study(ies) due to Office of the Provost

Finalized Self-Study(ies) submitted by College Dean to Office of the Provost.

(2) THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

December, Year I – mid-January, Year II: Initial Identification of External Reviewer Candidates

Department chair/unit head identifies potential candidates to serve as external reviewer(s).

Third Monday in January of Year II: External Reviewer Nominations due to Office of the Provost

Department chair/unit head forwards names of a minimum of three potential external reviewers, plus CVs and a brief rationale for their selection, to College Dean for review. If approved, Dean's Office submits list of nominees (with the supporting documentation) to Office of the Provost.

Mid-January – February, Year II: Selection and Invitation of External Reviewer(s)

Associate Provost for Academic Affairs selects external reviewer(s) and notifies department chair/unit head. Once external reviewer(s) is approved, department chair/unit head sends invitation to external reviewer(s). Once invitation accepted, department chair/unit head forwards Self-Study(ies) to external reviewer(s) and arranges visit (approximately two days), which should occur before spring semester ends.

First Monday in May, Year II: External Review Report(s) due to Department Chair/Unit Head

External reviewer(s) submits External Review Report(s) to department chair/unit head, who will forward to College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable).

(3) THE USM REPORT

May – June, Year II: Department Drafts USM Report(s) Using the USM Template

Department summarizes findings from Self-Study(ies) and External Review Report(s) and collaborates with College Dean on development of action plan(s) to be included in USM Report(s).

Third Monday in June, Year II: Department Chair/Unit Head Submits Draft USM Report(s) to College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable)

College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable) reviews and submits feedback on draft USM Report(s) to department chair/unit head.

Third Monday in July, Year II: College Dean Submits External Review Report(s) and USM Report(s) to Office of the Provost

College Dean submits External Review and USM Reports to Office of the Provost. College Dean meets with Office of the Provost staff (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable) to review USM Report(s), clarify prioritization of action items, and refine all materials, including requesting further revisions to USM Report(s), to meet USM expectations.

October 1st, Year II: Deadline for Submission of USM Report(s) to USM

Office of the Provost submits finalized USM Report(s) to USM. USM Office of Academic Affairs provides feedback for any necessary revisions.

January, Year III: USM Review

USM Committee of Education Policy and Student Life reviews and acts on final USM Report(s) and submits recommendations to USM Board of Regents. USM Board of Regents acts on these recommendations.

(4) THE PROGRAM PROGRESS REPORT

January – June, Year V: Draft Program Progress Report(s)

Department prepares, with input from College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable), Program Progress Report(s) that assesses progress on initiatives outlined in action plans included in Self-Study(ies) and USM Report(s).

Third Monday in June, Year V: Program Progress Report(s) Due

College Dean submits Program Progress Report(s) to Office of the Provost. If necessary, Office of the Provost staff meet with College Dean (and Dean of Graduate Studies, if applicable) to discuss Program Progress Report. Once finalized, Program Progress Report is forwarded to University Senate Executive Committee.

(5) ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Year III – Year VII

Department implements action plans articulated in Self-Study(ies) and USM Report(s). During this action plan implementation period, Office of Institutional Research automatically collects a new Standard Data set for the next RAD. Departments do not normally need to submit any formal reports to Office of the Provost during this period, other than Program Progress Report described in (4), unless the RAD process has identified a need for closer scrutiny of an academic program(s).

Appendix III: Standard Data Sets

Standard Data Sets are automatically collected by the Office of Institutional Research for all TU academic programs. The Office of the Provost supplies these data to the College Dean for dissemination to departments/programs at the beginning of the RAD process. The Standard Data Sets are used to inform the Self-Study and include the following:⁸

Course Productivity Profile

- Five Year Student Credit Hours
- Five Year Undergraduate Class Size

Faculty Productivity Profile

- Five Year Scholarship, Research, & Service Faculty Profile

Faculty Profile

- Five Year Faculty by Rank
- Five Year Faculty by Race/Ethnicity
- Five Year Faculty by Gender

Financial Profile

- Five Year Departmental Expenditures

Student Profile by Program

- Five Year Enrollments Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, Level, Status*
- Five Year Annual Degrees*

**Note that the USM Report requires the inclusion of an additional year's enrollment and degree award data, which the Office of the Provost will provide to departments prior to drafting the USM Report.*

Undergraduate Program Graduating Senior Survey Results

- Results of Institutional Student Surveys regarding Program

⁸ Questions regarding the Standard Data Sets, or any other data requests, should be directed to the Assistant Provost for Assessment, Accreditation and Compliance, who will consult with the Office of Institutional Research, as needed.

Appendix IV: External Reviewer Selection – Guidelines for Avoiding Conflicts of Interest

Objective assessments of programs by external reviewers ensure that departments receive useful feedback that will be used in developing action plans for inclusion in the USM Report(s). Conflicts of interests prevent unbiased assessment and may compromise the value of the RAD process, and must be avoided.

Conflicts of interest may occur if the external reviewer has:

- A professional affiliation with TU.
- A financial interest in the program or TU.
- A close professional or personal association with the program/department's faculty, staff and/or students including, but not limited, to:
 - Former employment at TU.
 - Current close family relationship with a TU student, faculty, or staff member.
 - Record of scholarly collaboration with a member of the department/academic unit within the past seven years.
 - Attendance at TU within past seven years.
 - Membership on any TU advisory board.

Appendix V: External Reviewer Invitation Letter Template

[Insert Date]

Towson
University 8000
York Road
Towson,
Maryland

Dear [Dr., Mr., Ms., Name]:

Towson University is committed to maintaining and improving the quality of its academic departments and programs by engaging in Reviews of Academic Departments (RADs). RADs occur every seven years as mandated by the University System of Maryland (USM) and include an extensive self-study and external review. The aim of the external review is to provide objective evaluation of departments and academic programs and identify areas of strength and improvement.

The University is extending an invitation to you to serve as an external reviewer for the [Insert department name and programs undergoing review]. You have been identified based on your disciplinary expertise in [Insert the reviewer's area of expertise] and because of your role as [Insert the reviewer's title, department and the college or university name and additional relevant professional experiences]. We value your professional experience and would welcome your participation in TU's process, and appreciate the confirmation of your participation no later than [Insert date here five business days].

In the interim, should you have questions about participating as an external reviewer, please email me at [Insert email address here]. To learn more about USM, Towson University, our department and academic programs, and the RAD process specifically, please visit/see attached [Insert links to USM, TU, department/program, and RAD web pages or attach materials].

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Insert the name department chair/unit head or program coordinator and title]

Appendix VI: External Reviewer Campus Visit – Sample Itinerary

Sunday

Reviewer(s) arrive (orientation dinner with department representatives and Dean)

Monday

9:00-10:00AM	Breakfast and orientation (if not offered night before)
10:00-11:00AM	Discussion of undergraduate program(s)
11:00AM-12:00PM	Discussion of graduate program(s)
12:00-1:00PM	Lunch with instructional faculty
1:00-5:30PM	Individual discussions with faculty, including meeting with the Dean
6:00-8:00PM	Working dinner for external reviewer(s) only

Tuesday

8:00-9:00AM	Breakfast with directors of research centers
9:00-9:30AM	Meeting with program and department staff
9:30-10:00AM	Meeting with program administrators (advisors, budget officers, associate deans)
10:00-11:30AM	Tour of facilities
11:30AM-12:00PM	Begin drafting initial findings for the External Review Report
12:00-1:00PM	Lunch with students (undergraduate and/or graduate)
1:00-1:45PM	Complete drafting of initial findings for the External Review Report
1:45-2:15PM	Meeting with the Provost (or Vice Provost) to share initial findings (this meeting must occur at the end of the campus visit)
2:45PM	Reviewer(s) depart campus

Appendix VII: External Review Report Template and Guidelines

COVER PAGE

Review of Academic Department

[Department Name]

External Review Report

Towson University

[Month, Year]

Reviewers:

[Insert Names, Titles, and Home Institutions]

EXTERNAL REVIEW FOR TOWSON UNIVERSITY

As part of the Review of Academic Departments (RAD) process, External Reviews are conducted to evaluate the overall quality of departments and academic programs, including faculty, students, and curriculum. The sequence of steps below is provided to assist the external reviewer(s) in reporting their findings.

1. DEPARTMENT ANALYSIS

A. Introduction

B. Alignment with the University's mission and responsiveness to the University's strategic plan

C. Efficiency and efficacy of department operations and programs

In section one, provide a brief narrative that addresses the purpose of the external review and site visit, and include an overview of the itinerary. Describe the organization of the department and its relationship to its program(s). Evaluate the department's alignment with, and responsiveness to, the University's mission and strategic plan. Assess how the department's operations and structure facilitate delivery of high-quality programs.

Guiding Questions

1. Did the department clearly articulate its alignment with the University's mission?
2. How is the department responsive to the goals outlined in the University's strategic plan?
3. What if any improvements are needed to enhance departmental operations and academic programs?
4. Does the department demonstrate a culture of continuous improvement of operations and programs?
5. What opportunities exist for continuous improvement?

2. FACULTY PROFILE

D. Quality, qualifications, and productivity of department faculty

E. Stature and diversity of faculty including recent achievements, awards, research strengths, sponsored research support, and service

In section 2, discuss faculty qualifications, productivity, and current scholarly research activities. Provide a brief analysis of strategies utilized within the department to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion through its vision, leadership, messaging, and incentives. Provide feedback on the department's efforts to recruit and retain diverse faculty. Evaluate the faculty's teaching performance. Describe the professional stature and contributions of faculty including excellence in teaching, research productivity, service commitments, and awards and recognitions.

Guiding Questions

1. Are the faculty qualifications appropriate for delivery of the associated program(s)?
2. How effective are the faculty at delivering course content to students?
3. In what way does the department illustrate its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through its vision, leadership, messaging, and incentives?
4. What measures does the department employ to recruit and retain diverse faculty and staff, and create an inclusive atmosphere?
5. Does the department have faculty mentoring procedures in place?
6. How does the department measure research **productivity** and how does the department's research productivity compare to that of departments at peer institutions?

3. STUDENT PROFILE

F. Student scholarship/research opportunities and support

G. Recruitment/retention practices support for underrepresented students

In section three, discuss the student scholarship/research opportunities and support, emerging research themes, and alignment with the themes.

Guiding Questions

1. What are the major student scholarship/research areas in the department?
2. What are the current and emerging research themes within the discipline and to what degree is the department aligned with these themes?
3. How would you characterize the recruitment/retention practices and support for underrepresented departments?

4. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT ANALYSIS

H. Findings from assessment activities and student learning outcomes data

In section 4, discuss the methods used to assess student learning and achievement in courses and programs and the ways in which data informs improvements in teaching and learning.

Guiding Questions

1. Did the department describe the methods used to evaluate the extent to which students are meeting the learning outcomes in courses and programs?
2. Did the department describe how the assessment data was used for continuous program and/or course improvement?
3. Does the department have quality educational programs relative to the goals and stated outcomes and evidence of student learning?

5. DEPARTMENT ACTION PLANNING ANALYSIS

I. Progress on recommendations/action plan from previous seven-year review

J. Program challenges and opportunities for growth

K. Recommendations for program improvement

L. Department resources

In section five, describe the strategies implemented to address the recommendations or action plan noted in the previous seven-year review.

Guiding Questions

1. Did the department provide adequate evidence of addressing the recommendations of the last action plan?
2. Does the review clearly articulate the challenges and opportunities for growth?
3. Has the department utilized resources effectively to support its programs?

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Discuss the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for growth for the department and its programs. Include recommendations, suggestions, and priorities for improvement.

Appendix VIII: USM Program Review Report Template

2024 Format for Reports to USM on Periodic Review of Academic Programs⁹

SECTION I: PROGRAM AND INSTITUTION DEMOGRAPHICS

- A. Institution:
- B. HEGIS+2 (MHEC Program) Code:
- C. CIP Code:
- D. Degree/Certificate Level – Select all that apply and indicate the name of the degree/certificate:
 - Bachelor’s: _____
(BA, BS, etc.)
 - Master’s: _____
(MA, MS, MBA, MEd, MPH, MSN, etc.)
 - Combined Master’s/Doctorate: _____
(MS/Ph.D., MEd/Ed.D., MSN/DNP, etc.)
 - Doctorate: _____
(Ph.D., Ed.D., DNP, PharmD., etc.)
 - Certificate: _____
(LDC, UDC, PBC, PMC, CAS, etc.)
- E. Title of the Program reviewed:
- F. Academic Department:
- G. Academic College/School:

SECTION II: EXTERNAL REVIEW PROCESS

- A. Year in which the program review process was completed:
- B. Is the external review a result of an Accreditation Self-Study (i.e., ABET, AACSB, ACPE, ACEJMC, ARC-PA, ACEN, CCNE, CEPH, CSWE, NCATE, etc.)? _____ Yes _____ No
If Yes, indicate the accrediting organization: _____
- C. List the Names and Affiliation(s) of the External Reviewers (minimum of two):

SECTION III: ENROLLMENTS AND DEGREES AWARDED FOR EACH OF THE PAST FIVE YEARS IN THIS PROGRAM

- A. Enrollment – Fall Headcount for Each of the Following Years

Undergraduate Enrollment (Bachelor’s)				
Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023

⁹ Note that USM prepares a new USM Report Template annually. The template included in this edition of the RAD Guidebook applies to the 2024 RAD cohort only.

Graduate Enrollment (Master's)				
Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023

Graduate Enrollment (Combined Master's/Doctorate)				
Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023

Graduate Enrollment (Doctorate)				
Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023

Certificate Enrollment				
Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	Fall 2022	Fall 2023

B. Degrees Awarded - For the Fiscal Years as Follows:

Undergraduate Degrees Awarded (Bachelor's)				
2019	2020	2021	2022	2023

Graduate Degrees Awarded (Master's)				
2019	2020	2021	2022	2023

Graduate Degrees Awarded (Combined Master's/Doctorate)				
2019	2020	2021	2022	2023

Graduate Degrees Awarded (Doctorate)				
2019	2020	2021	2022	2023

Certificates Awarded				
2019	2020	2021	2022	2023

SECTION IV: SUMMARY OF THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL REVIEW

A. Internal Self-Study Findings:

B. External Review and Recommendations:

SECTION V: DEPARTMENTAL / COLLEGE OR SCHOOL / INSTITUTIONAL ACTION PLAN

A. Brief summary (approx. 250 words) outlining action plan to address recommendation(s) (*the Provost should have had a chance to review this plan prior to submission*):

B. Mechanism for follow-up and assessing the progress of the recommendation(s).

C. For low enrollment and low degree productivity programs:*

- a) List the special circumstances that impact low enrollment and/or low degree productivity in this program;
- b) Briefly explain why this program with low enrollment and/or low degree productivity should be continued at this time (i.e., its connection to or support of another program); and
- c) Outline clearly the plan and progressive timelines to increase enrollment and/or degree productivity in this program such that it remains viable.

* For this review period, please complete the information as indicated if the program has low enrollment and/or is demonstrating low degree productivity in accordance with the MHEC Definition of Low Degree Productivity.

MHEC Definition of Low Degree Productivity:

Bachelor's: < 5 in most recent year or a total of 15 in last three years

Master's: < 2 in most recent year or a total of 6 in last three years

Doctorate: < 1 in most recent year or a total of 3 in last three years

SECTION VI: INSTITUTION SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Submitted by:

Date of Submission:

Contact Information:

- a) Name:
- b) Email:
- c) Office Phone:

Appendix IX: Program Progress Report Template

Program Progress Report Guidance

The Program Progress Report should assess progress on the action plans included within the RAD Self-Study and the USM Report and provide suggestions for alignment or revision, as necessary, in support of continuous program improvement. All programs, including those that require external accreditation, must submit a Program Progress Report. The Program Progress Report is generated by the department/academic unit at the mid-point of the action plan implementation, approximately 2½ years after the USM Report(s) is submitted to USM. Program Progress Reports are due by the **third Monday in June**, in Year V of the RAD cycle.

Programs that used an external accreditation self-study and external accreditation visit/review report as substitutes for the RAD Self-Study or RAD External Review Report should report on any required and/or recommended actions—which might be categorized as citations, requirements, areas for improvement, etc.—and/or any other pertinent findings resulting from the most recent external accreditation review/visit when preparing the Program Progress Report.

Program Progress Report Template

i. Action Plan Summary

- i) Summarize the main elements of the action plans included in the most recent RAD Self-Study¹⁰ and USM Report.
- ii) Detail the measures identified in the RAD Self-Study and USM Report to assess progress on implementation or achievement of each action item listed.

j. Progress on Action Plan Implementation

- i) For each action item, describe what steps have been taken and the progress made towards achievement of that action item, based on the assessment measures identified and other available data/evidence. (If an action item has been successfully implemented, indicate this.)
- ii) For action items still in progress, describe any factors that might have delayed or hindered their successful implementation.

k. Next Steps

- i) Do the actions plans included within the RAD Self-Study and the USM Report require revision? If so, describe what changes are necessary. If an action item is no longer appropriate, provide an explanation as to why that element should be removed from the action plan(s).
- ii) For actions items still in progress, or if new action items are identified, describe what steps will be taken to implement them. Include a projected timeline and what measures or data/evidence will be used to assess achievement of each outstanding action item.

¹⁰ Accredited programs should respond based on the required and/or recommended actions outlined in the most recent external accreditation visit/review report instead of the RAD Self-Study. [*Note this comment applies to all subsequent references to the RAD Self-Study in this template in relation to accredited programs.*]

I. Appendices

Include the following as appendices:

- i) Current curriculum map for each program showing the alignment (for required courses only, not electives) of course-level student learning outcomes to program-level student learning outcomes and, in turn, the alignment of program-level student learning outcomes to [TU's six institutional student learning outcomes](#).
- ii) Current assessment plan for each program.
- iii) Annual assessment reports for each program since the submission of the RAD Self-Study and USM Report.



**TOWSON
UNIVERSITY®**