Academic Program Reviews (APR)

Handbook for Program Coordinators

Office of Institutional Effectiveness

Last revised: July 2025

More info at: https://srinfo.sulross.edu/ie/academic-program-reviews/

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Purpose of the APR

The Academic Program Review (APR), first and foremost, is an opportunity for self-study and evaluation of academic programs aimed at reflecting and analyzing the program's quality, productivity, and effectiveness to inform improvement initiatives.

Knowledgeable program faculty conduct the program review with the support from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The faculty assigned to conduct the program review is named the Academic Program Coordinator (ideally this is the same person who completes the annual Academic Program Assessment for a department).

The APR follows a ten-year cycle set by The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The SRSU schedule can be found on page 7 in this handbook.

The purpose of the APR is below:

1. Required for compliance with THECB.

2. Provides evidence of compliance with SACSCOC core requirement 7.1, and comprehensive standards 8.2.

   a. Core Requirement 7.1: The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission.

   b. Comprehensive Standard 8.2: The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results for student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.

3. Suggests opportunities for programmatic improvement.

4. Identifies programmatic innovations worth replicating.

5. Ensures a quality learning experience for students.

6. Supports decision making.

Key Content in the APR

The APR may take most of the year to complete. *The schedule for the APR process is on page 6 of this handbook.*

Report Writing Process
The process begins with the Academic Program Coordinator gathering data and evidence from other faculty in the program, as well as the Department Chair and Dean. The Office of Institutional Research provides tables of data for the report.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness will provide graduate and undergraduate Academic Program Coordinators access to the template in Watermark. Coordinators can expect to write about the program's statement of purpose and alignment with the SRSU Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan, as well as goals, student outcomes, curriculum, and faculty members. The guide how to complete the APR in Watermark is found in page 11 of this report.

Report Review Process
When the Coordinator completes the draft of the APR, it moves into the review process. The Department Chair, the Dean, and the Provost all review the APR and deliver feedback for the Coordinator to work into the report. This process has very tight deadlines that should be adhered to in order to complete the report in a timely manner.

Upon approval by the Provost, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness sends graduate APRs to an External Reviewer for their feedback. This is a requirement from THECB to provide outside support and critique to programs. The External Reviewer will return a detailed report to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. More information about the External Reviewer can be found on pages 5, 16, and 17 of this handbook.

The Coordinator must write a response to the External Reviewer's comments. This can be a short narrative, or it can be in the form of bullets responding to comments.

Report Submission Process
The Office of Institutional Effectiveness must submit three documents to the THECB Portal: the Self-Study, the External Reviewer's Report, and the Coordinator's Response. Copies of all these documents will be delivered to the Department Chair, Dean, and Provost. In addition, Institutional Effectiveness will share a summary of findings with the Executive Cabinet.

Review Cycle Ends
Finally, the Coordinator will receive a stipend for completion of the work, and the External Reviewer will also receive a stipend.

Programs should carefully consider the information gleaned from the APR and use the findings to improve and modify practices and content. Programs should continue to keep data for the next APR.

In addition to a tool for improvement for a program or department, the APR will be used in future SACSCOC reports to prove that a program is regularly and comprehensively evaluated.

Differences Between the Graduate and Undergraduate APRs

There are two major differences between the undergraduate and graduate APR:

1. Graduate APRs must be reviewed externally, while undergraduate reviews do not have this requirement from the THECB. The process to secure a reviewer is as follows:

   a. The Academic Program Coordinator must identify a prospective External Reviewer.

   b. If the Academic Program Coordinator needs assistance finding an External Reviewer, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness can assist.

   c. The External Reviewer must be an academic who:

      ▪ holds expertise in the same type of program, and

      ▪ resides (or is affiliated with an institution) outside of the state of Texas.

   d. The Academic Program Coordinator contacts the External Reviewer with an invitation to participate in the review process.

   e. Upon acceptance, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness sends the Evaluation Agreement Letter to the External Reviewer.

   f. The Academic Program Coordinator provides the External Reviewer with the APR by the date on the calendar in Appendix A of this document.

   g. The External Reviewer receives an honorarium of $1000 within 30 days upon APR feedback.

2. THECB Submission is required for Graduate APRs, but not for undergraduate.

   a. Chapter 5, Subchapter C, section 5.52 of THECB rules provides criteria and procedures for the review of existing graduate programs. See the Texas Administrative Code for more information.

   b. THECB has an online system that records and tracks the graduate review schedule of each institution, allows institutions to submit review materials, and gives institutions feedback from Board staff. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness submits APRs to THECB. See the THECB graduate program reviews site for more information.

APPENDIX A: SRSU APR CALENDAR

The following calendar will be used for Graduate and Undergraduate APRs in 2025-2026.

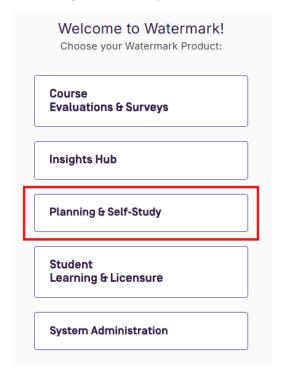| Phase	Due date	Activity
Report Writing Process	September 26	IE Office provides APR orientation and handbook for Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinators
	January 5-16	IR Office launches Alumni Survey
	Fall-Spring	Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinators begin collecting data and soliciting feedback from program faculty to write APR
	February 9	IR Office provides data reports and Alumni Survey results to Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinators to add to APR content
	March 6	Graduate Program Coordinators select External Reviewer and report to IE; IE contracts with Reviewer
Report Review Process	March 16	Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinators send APR draft to Department Chair for review
	March 31	Department Chair delivers feedback to Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinators
	April 17	Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinators send APR draft to Dean
	May 1	Dean delivers feedback to Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinators
	May 15	Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinator makes final edits, submits APR to Provost
	June 2	Provost sends approval to Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinators
	June 5	Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinators submit APR to IE
	June 16	IE provides Graduate APR to the External Reviewer for feedback
	July 1	IE receives feedback from External Reviewer and sends to Graduate Program Coordinators to write a response to comments
Report Submission Process *(Graduate APRs only)*	July 31	Graduate Program Coordinators deliver completed APR documents to IE: 1. Self-study 2. External Reviewer's report 3. Response to External Reviewer's comments
	August 27	IE submits Graduate Program APR to THECB
Review Cycle Ends	August 28	Each Undergraduate and Graduate Coordinator (1 per program) receives a $1,000 stipend in SRSU paycheck upon completion Each External Reviewer (1 per program) receives a $1,000 stipend upon completion
	September 11	IE presents summary of findings to the Executive Cabinet

APPENDIX B: THECB APR 10-Year Cycle

Review Year	Program CIP	Graduate Program Name	Undergraduate Program Name
2025 - 2026	13110100	Counselor Education	
2025 - 2026	40050100		Chemistry
2025 - 2026	50090100		Music
2025 - 2026	15061200		Industrial Technology
2026 - 2027	16090500		Spanish
2026 - 2027	23130400		Communication
2026 - 2027	13010100	Education, General	
2026 - 2027	13040100	Educational Leadership	
2026 - 2027	52021300		Organizational Leadership
2027 - 2028	13050100	Educational/Instructional Technology	
2027 - 2028	31050500	Health & Human Performance	Kinesiology & Human Performance
2027 - 2028	45100100		Political Science
2028 - 2029	42010100		Psychology
2028 - 2029	43030100	Homeland Security	Homeland Security
2028 - 2029	50070100	Art	Art
2029 - 2030	23010100	English	English
2029 - 2030	26010100	Biology	Biology
2029 - 2030	40060100	Geology	Geology
2030 - 2031	03060100	Range & Wildlife Management	
2030 - 2031	03060100	Natural Resource Conservation	
2030 - 2031	03020100		Natural Resource Management
2030 - 2031	24010200		General Studies
2031 - 2032	44040100	Public Administration	
2031 - 2032	45100100	Political Science	
2031 - 2032	54010100	History	History
2031 - 2032	51380100		Nursing
2031 - 2032	31050400	Sports Administration	
2031 - 2032	01000000		Agriculture
2032 - 2033	24010100	Liberal Arts	
2032 - 2033	52020100	Business Administration	Business Administration
2032 - 2033	24010100		Theatre
2032 - 2033	45010100		Social Science
2032 - 2033	01010200		Agriculture & Industry
2033 - 2034	01090100	Animal Science	Animal Science
2033 - 2034	13120600		Education
2033 - 2034	43040600	Forensic Science	

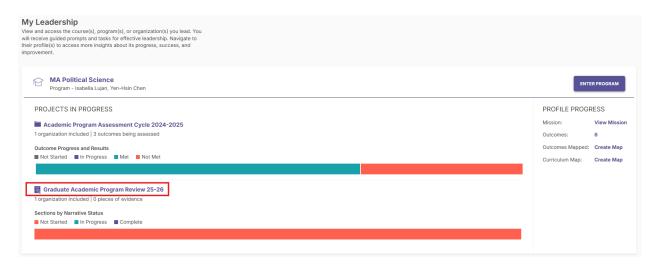| 2033 - 2034	45020100	Anthropology	
2034 - 2035	13100101	Educational Diagnostician	
2034 - 2035	43010400	Criminal Justice	Criminal Justice
2034 - 2035	11010100		Computer Science
2034 - 2035	27010100		Mathematics

Appendix C: Using the Watermark Platform for APRs

Log in to Watermark with Single Sign-On (SSO) at https://srinfo.sulross.edu/ie/academic-program-reviews/. Select the Planning & Self-Study option.

Accessing the APR Template
Select the **Program** that is scheduled to be reviewed. The THECB Review schedule can be found on Page 9 of this handbook, Appendix B: THECB APR 10-Year Cycle.

Under the Projects In Progress portion, you will find all projects in progress for the program. Select the **Graduate Academic Program Review 25-26** or **Undergraduate Academic Program Review 25-26** project.

Once a program is selected, the actual APR dashboard will open, and you'll see a welcome message at the top, along with some details including the last updated and the Coordinator assigned. Each required section of the APR has been added to this site.

The panel on the left-hand side shows all categories and sections included in the template. You can navigate between an overview of the entire template or specific sections to view progress made on each area.
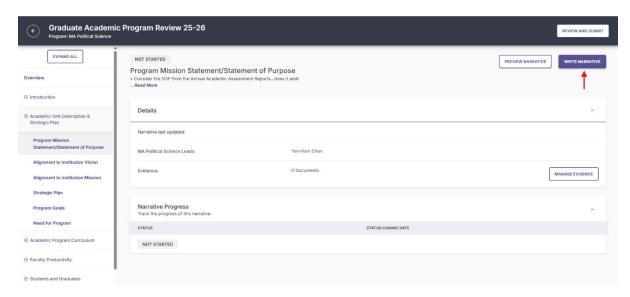
"Progress by Section" gives a glimpse of the status of all the sections of the APR. It also displays the date and name of the Program Coordinator who made the latest changes to a narrative.

To get started writing or uploading evidence, click on any of the sections.
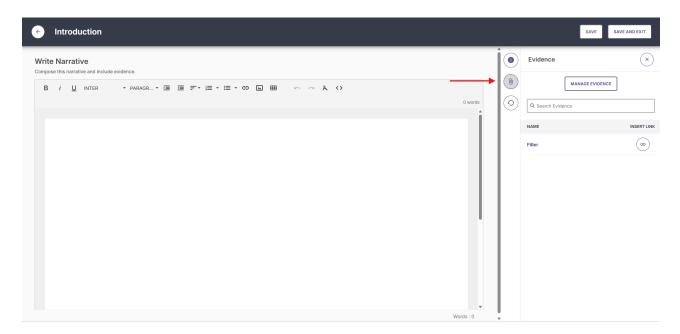

Writing the APR Narrative

In this section, Coordinators can write a narrative in the rich text box. Begin by clicking the Write Narrative button on the upper right side of the page.
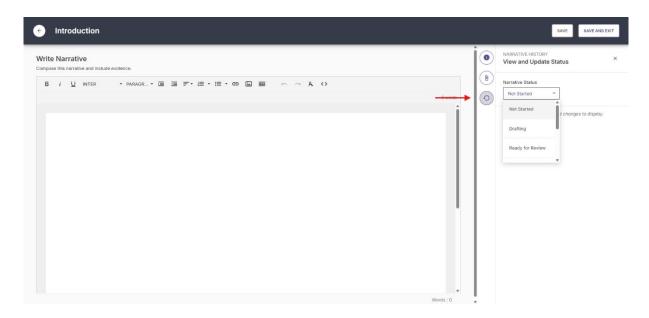
The Write Narrative screen is similar to a Word document (or rich text editor). Coordinators have an icon to view **Prompts** or directions for their quick reference.

Coordinators also have quick access to the **Evidence** icon where they can upload files and access the files added as evidence. They also have the option to insert (embed) the links of these files in the narrative.
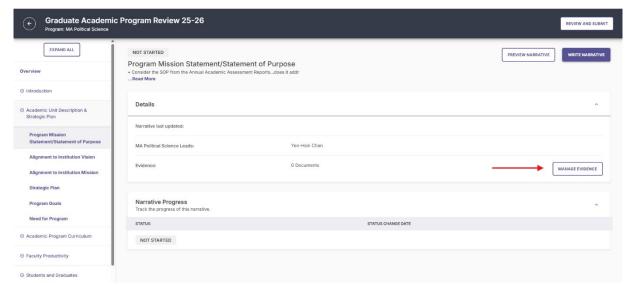

On the **Narrative Status** icon, Coordinators can select the status of their narrative and save a log entry each time they make changes. This helps to track the progress of the narrative over time. The selected status is also displayed on the section's main page.

Managing Evidence in the APR

To **Manage Evidence,** Coordinators will select the section they wish to upload files and links to support their Narrative. Only acceptable file types with a unique title are allowed.

*Note: Users are restricted from adding or editing evidence titles containing the specified special characters. Special characters include: # ? : " *< > | ./',*

Once a file is uploaded, Coordinators can rename or remove the file later. Examples of files the Coordinator may want to upload include Academic Assessment Reports, Alumni Survey results, or anything that supports the narrative.
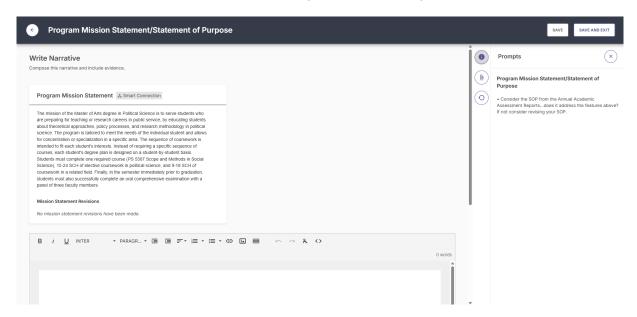
Note: Sections titled Program Student Learning Outcomes, Curriculum Mapping, Annual Academic Assessments (Measures and Results), and Program Enhancements (Action Items) have references coming in from Planning (see Smart Connections Explained below). <u>However, these Smart Connections will not download with the report and are more available for reference</u>

and quick copy/paste into the narrative. Therefore, users will see some reports already available on the Manage Evidence page and cannot delete those reports.
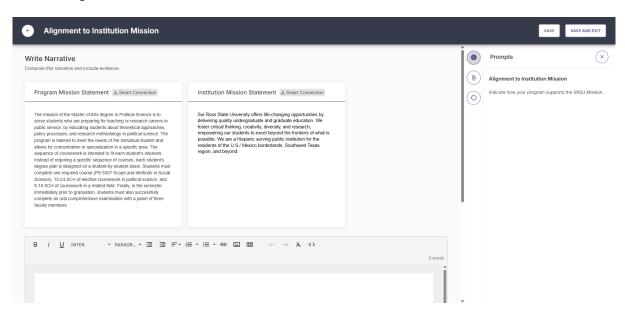
Smart Connections Explained

Smart Connections will not download with the report and are more available for reference and quick copy/paste into the narrative. The following items may be included as Smart Connections in your program's APR:
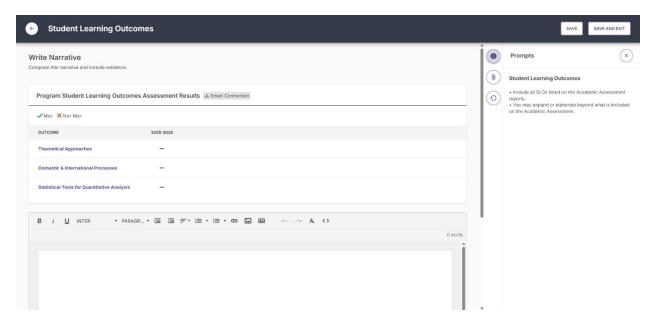
Program Mission Statements: The narrative area for this section displays the latest mission statement of the program that is tied to the current academic year. Also, if there are any versions of the mission statement present, they would be displayed here too.
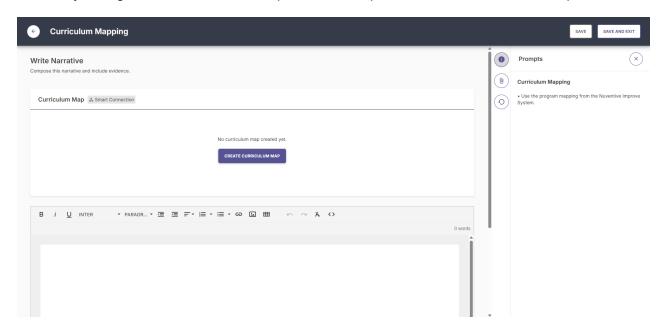

Institution Mission: The narrative area of this section allows Coordinators to view the program mission statement and the institutional mission statement together at one place so that they do not have to go out of the module to view these.

Program <u>Student Learning Outcomes</u>: The narrative area of this section displays the outcomes of the program and the year when the outcome was assessed. It also shows whether the outcome was met or not met in a particular reporting year in which it was assessed.
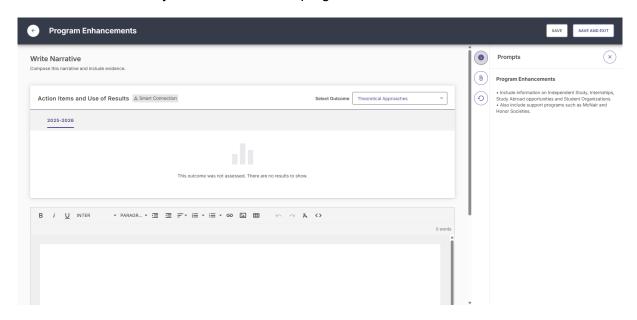

<u>Curriculum Map</u>: This section's narrative area displays the curriculum map for the program. It also shows the alignments made on the curriculum map. Additionally, if a Coordinator wants to make any changes to the curriculum map, there's an option to edit the curriculum map.
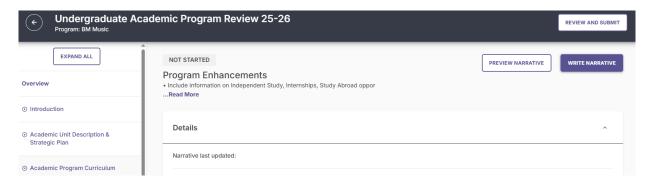
Action Items and Use of Results in the Program Enhancements section: Coordinators can select any outcome and view the assessment data for that particular outcome. Also, for each assessment year, the narrative area also displays the action items that were in place for the selected outcome.

In addition to this, the Evidence area also has the HTML report which has the assessment data of the outcomes for the years selected in the program review.
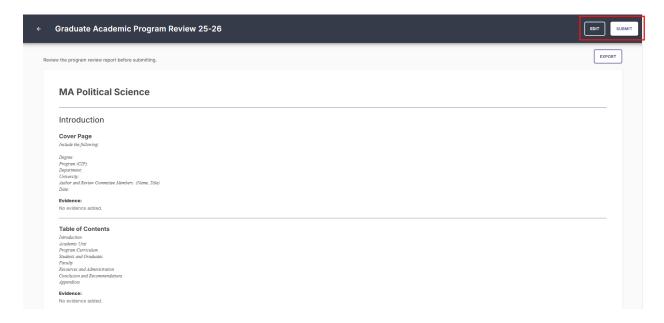

Submitting APRs for Review

After all Narratives are complete click Review and Submit in the top-right.

Review your APR before submitting. You can continue to edit in the narrative workspace by clicking **Edit**. Once satisfied with all reported, click **Submit.** Once submitted, the APR will automatically go through the feedback flow; to Chair, then Dean, then Provost.
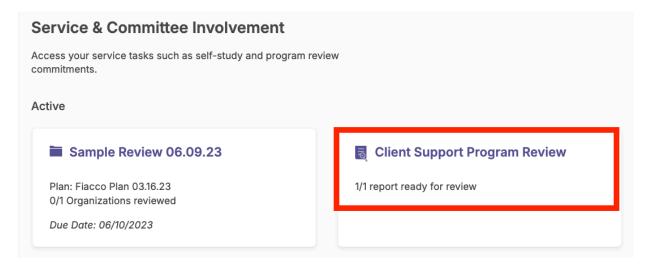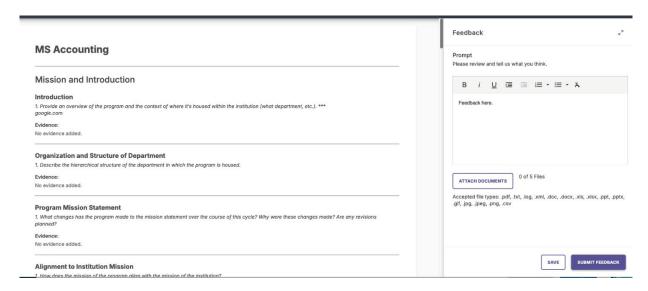

How to Review an APR in Watermark

As a Reviewer, you can view available APRs on the home page or via an email notification. Once you receive an email notification, click the link in the notification and get taken to the APR.

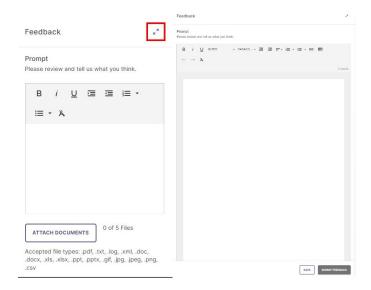*Note: Email notifications come from noreply@watermarkinsights.com.*

Select the **Service and Committee Involvement** section of the homepage. Once you've located the APR, click the program title to begin.

You'll see the text box on the right side. In this area, you can type in comments and feedback based on the program report on the left-hand side.

If more space is needed to write a response, clicking the Expand Feedback button opens up a larger text prompt. Within the feedback box, there is also a button to attach any forms, rubrics, or supplemental documents.

Note: Only 5 attachments can be added and the only acceptable file types are: .pdf, .txt, .log, .xml, .doc, .docx, .xls, .xlsx, .ppt, .pptx, .gif, .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .csv

Clicking **Save** allows for saving and returning to the review at a later time.

Clicking on **Submit Feedback** sends the APR to the next user in the feedback flow (Department Chair to Dean to Provost to IE). Once the Feedback Flow is complete and submitted, both the Program Coordinator and administrator will be able to view the feedback.

APPENDIX D: External Evaluation Agreement Letter

(only for Graduate APR; sent from the Institutional Effectiveness Office)

[date]

Dear [External Reviewer]:

Thank you for agreeing to evaluate our [Program Name]. In addition to fulfilling accreditation requirements and mandates from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), we do recognize that your evaluation of our program is valuable to our faculty in improving our degree. This is an opportunity for us to put into perspective the strengths and weaknesses of our graduate program.

Upon completion we are able to offer you compensation for your evaluation of our program:
         Stipend: $1,000.00

The evaluation will be done remotely. All materials will be delivered electronically. Your contact person is:

<div align="center">

April Aultman Becker
Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness
april.becker@sulross.edu
P.O. Box 77, Alpine, TX 79832
432-837-8121

</div>

In addition, it is expressly understood that you will serve as an independent contractor and not as a representative or agent of Sul Ross State University. If you agree to these terms, please sign in the
appropriate area below and return the signed letter to the address or email above.

Again, thank you for your willingness to provide this service to Sul Ross State University.

Sincerely,

April Aultman Becker
Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness
april.becker@sulross.edu
P.O. Box 77, Alpine, TX 79832

CC: [Program Coordinator]

Acceptance of Terms of Appointment
I accept the terms of appointment as the evaluator of graduate program in [program name] at Sul Ross State University as described above.

Signature   Date

APPENDIX E: External Review Form

(only for Graduate APR; Institutional Effectiveness Office will send to External Reviewer)

Graduate Program External Review Form

Institution: _____

Department: _____

Academic Program: _____

External Reviewer Name: _____

External Reviewer Title: _____

External Reviewer Institutional Affiliation: _____

Directions:

Please write a summary of each section of the report and rate each section as excellent, very good, appropriate, needs improvement, or NA. In your summary, please expound on any items identified as excellent or needing improvement. Provide recommendations for improvement at the end of each section.

Sections:

1. Academic Unit Description and Strategic Plan

2. Program Curriculum

3. Faculty Productivity

4. Students and Graduates

5. Resources and Administration

6. Report Conclusions and Recommendations

Please include at the end:

7. External Reviewer's Conclusion and Recommendations

8. External Reviewer's Curriculum Vitae

Support

For any questions you may have, please contact the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at ie@sulross.edu or 432-837-8224.

Resources

For more Watermark Resources, visit:
Program Review as a Contributor
Program Review as a Reviewer