

**University of Connecticut
Division of Student Affairs
Unit Review**

What is Unit Review?

Unit review is a collaborative process designed to provide an in-depth, comprehensive study of a unit/department. A unit review is a data-based review of the unit mission with the goal to provide information for unit growth and continuous quality improvement. Unit review includes unit self-study, external review, reporting, and action plan components. External review is analysis by professionals with relevant expertise who do not work at UConn. The unit review process can be modified depending on a variety of variables, for example functional area accreditation requirements, size of unit, fiscal constraints, or similar factors. Modifications must be negotiated with the appropriate Assistant Vice President.

Purpose

The purpose of unit review is to provide an opportunity for focused reflection, study, and gathering of information which supports on-going unit development and improvement. The intention is to set up patterns and processes to systemically and regularly collect, analyze, and interpret data concerning a unit. The review process is expected to have positive effects on Student Affairs planning, decision-making, performance, and stature within the University.

Guiding Principles of Unit Review

- Unit review should be conducted according to this basic set of principles:
 - Involve in the review a broad and representative group of staff, students, and faculty
 - Demonstrate adherence to professional standards and best practices
 - Provide evidence of the excellence, including satisfaction, and effectiveness of the unit's programs, activities, services, and operations
 - Identify obstacles to accomplishing the unit mission and goals
 - Encourage strategic thinking about the unit's plans for the future
 - Identify and celebrate what the unit is doing well
 - Implement change to address areas for growth and support strengths

Types of Assessment Incorporated into Unit Review

Available assessment results and data should be included in unit review. This could include any of the following:

- **Tracking/usage** (counting and analyzing who and how many are using or accessing facilities, services or programs)
- **Student needs** (trying to understand the needs of students in order to align programs and services)
- **Satisfaction** (gauging satisfaction with a particular process, service or program)
- **Student culture/characteristics/beliefs/behaviors** (trying to understand aspects of students – beyond just needs)
- **Learning outcome** (assessing whether students are learning specific outcomes as a result of a specific intervention)
- **Program/service outcome** (assessing whether a unit/program is achieving a specific programmatic outcome as a result of a specific change/improvement effort)
- **Benchmarking** (gathering national data and comparing it to local data)

Review Process

Timeline

Ten Months before External Review Visit

- Letter of notification from the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) to unit

Nine Months before External Review Visit

- Unit review coordinator appointed
- Unit self-study is initiated

Eight Months before External Review Visit

- Unit submits the names of six potential external reviewers to the Assistant to the Vice President for Planning and Assessment

Six Months before External Review Visit

- The VPSA selects three external reviewers

Three Months before External Review Visit

- Unit self-study report is submitted to the VPSA and appropriate supervisors

One Month before External Review Visit

- Unit self-study report is distributed to the external review team

External Review Team Visit

- External review team visits campus and conducts a focused and intense evaluation of the unit and issues noted in the self-study report

One to Three Months after External Review Visit

- External review team submits their report to the VPSA and the unit review coordinator

Two Months after External Review Report Submission

- Unit submits their response to the external reviewers' report along with a set of recommendations to the VPSA
- Debriefing meeting with the Assistant to the Vice President for Planning and Assessment, unit director, and self-study team

Budget

The initial expectation is that the unit undergoing the review will cover the costs of the external review visit. If budgetary issues arise the unit should consult with the AVP to whom the unit reports.

Accreditation Processes

Some units are required to obtain accreditation from a governing body. An accreditation process may substitute, in part, for the Division-mandated unit review if the accreditation process includes a comprehensive self-study and a visit from external reviewers. The decision to substitute an accreditation review for the Division unit review will be made by the appropriate Assistant Vice President.

Pre-Review Preparation

The unit review process begins with written notification from the VPSA. The letter of notification will include unit review guidelines and other important information. The unit director will then appoint a unit review coordinator. It is recommended that the unit review coordinator not be the unit director because of the amount of work required of the coordinator; for small units, however, it is likely that the unit director will need to perform the unit review coordinator's duties. The unit review coordinator and unit director will select the unit self-study team.

Self-Study

The unit shall initiate a self-study nine months prior to the external review site visit. This is an in-depth, reflective process that should incorporate available assessment results/data, input from relevant stakeholders

and comparison to professional standards. The self-study serves two purposes; to provide the unit an in-depth reflective understanding of its own performance and capacities, and to provide the external review team a foundation for their site visit and review process. All units should use the relevant CAS Self-Assessment Guides as the primary guide for their self-study. Modifications to the standard guidelines, such as incorporating accreditation or industry standards, should be done through consultation between the Assistant Vice President and the unit director. Modifications will receive final approval from the Office of the Vice President. The unit director and unit review coordinator will create a self-study team to conduct the unit self-study. Units may include other Student Affairs unit directors and other University employees on the self-study team.

Self-Study Report

Three months before the external review visit, the unit self-study team will submit the self-study report to the VPSA and appropriate supervisors. Following review of the self-study report, the report will be sent to the external review team at least one month prior to the external review visit.

External Review

Eight months before the external review visit, the unit will provide the VPSA with a list of six knowledgeable and experienced individuals from their specific functional area not associated with UConn. Six months before the external review visit, the VPSA will select three external reviewers from this list of six individuals or other experts. This process may be modified for those units who work with professional associations to provide review or accreditation (e.g., APA or NACE). It is expected that the cost of the external review (including honorarium and travel and lodging costs) will be covered by the unit being reviewed. If budgetary support is required, units should consult with the AVP to whom they report. The unit is responsible for all scheduling related to the visit.

External Review Report

One to three months after the external review visit, the external review team will submit a report to the Office of the VPSA, the Assistant Vice President, and the unit review coordinator.

Action Plan

One month following receipt of the external reviewers' written report and recommendations, the unit will provide a response to the external reviewers' report and prepare a final set of recommendations for unit operations and improvement. When the recommendations have been approved by the appropriate Assistant Vice President, the unit will develop an action plan that supports existing strengths and addresses areas where improvements are needed.

Debriefing Meeting

One month following receipt of the external reviewer's report, the Assistant to the Vice President for Planning and Assessment will conduct a debriefing meeting with the unit director and self-study team to evaluate the unit's review and the Division unit review process.

Oversight and Coordination of the Unit Review Process

Oversight

The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) oversees Unit Review and will:

- Establish a positive culture for unit review
 - Communicate the purpose, process, and value of unit review to employees
 - Promote a climate that supports inquiry and candid dialogue
 - Celebrate the achievement and commitment of the employees who participate in the unit review process

- Schedule unit reviews
- Monitor deadlines
- Review budget requests
- Coordinate unit review activities with the Vice President's schedule
- Approve modifications to the self-study protocol, in consultation with the unit director
- Determine the appropriate unit review cycle for units with an accreditation cycle other than five years, in consultation with the unit director
- Provide unit review support through the Assistant to the Vice President for Planning and Assessment. Specifically, the Assistant to the Vice President for Planning and Assessment will:
 - Revise unit review guidelines as needed
 - Provide clear communication about unit review guidelines, expectations, and deadlines to the unit head and unit review coordinator
 - Facilitate a unit review orientation meeting with the unit director and unit review coordinator
 - Facilitate additional unit review orientation meetings for unit staff and the self-study team as needed
 - Serve as a consultant regarding design and facilitation of the unit review process
 - Review the final draft of the self-study report to assist the unit in meeting unit review guidelines and expectations
 - Facilitate the external review visit planning meeting to review logistics and agenda
 - Co-facilitate a debriefing meeting with the unit director, unit review coordinator, and self-study team

Unit Director

The Unit Director will:

- Establish a positive unit culture for unit review
 - Communicate the purpose, process, and value of unit review to employees
 - Promote a climate that supports inquiry and candid dialogue
 - Acknowledge the time commitment associated with unit review and allow self-study team members to negotiate their professional responsibilities accordingly
 - Celebrate the achievement and commitment of the self-study team and other employees who participate in the unit review process
- Ensure the development and implementation of a unit review process and timeline that meets VPSA and Assistant Vice President's expectations and is congruent with the guidelines presented
- Appoint a unit review coordinator
- Collaborate with the unit review coordinator to:
 - Identify and recruit self-study team members
 - Identify possible external review panel members
 - Design and facilitate a unit review process that is inclusive of employees not selected for the self-study team
 - Develop the unit review budget and ensure the availability of necessary unit or Division funds
 - Establish the external review site visit agenda
- Submit list of potential external review panel members to the VPSA
- Prepare external review panel invitation letters
- Submit copies of unit review documents (Self-Study, External Review Panel, Action Plan) to the VPSA, appropriate supervisors, and the Division Assessment Committee
- Develop and implement an action plan based on the results of the self-study and external review reports
- Present a unit review summary and action plan to the VPSA and Assistant Vice President

Unit Review Coordinator

- Establish a positive unit climate for unit review
 - Communicate the purpose, process, and value of unit review to employees
 - Promote a climate that supports inquiry and candid dialogue
 - Celebrate the achievement and commitment of the self-study team and other employees who participate in the unit review process
- Ensure the development and implementation of a unit review process and timeline that meets VPSA and Assistant Vice President's expectations and is congruent with the guidelines presented
- Collaborate with the unit director to:
 - Identify and recruit self-study team members
 - Identify possible external review panel members
 - Design and facilitate a unit review process that is inclusive of employees not selected for the self-study team
 - Develop the unit review budget and ensure the availability of necessary unit or Division funds
 - Establish the external review site visit agenda
- Facilitate and coordinate the self-study review process
- Develop the self-study report
- Prepare external review site visit materials
- Serve as external review site visit host
- Co-facilitate a debriefing meeting with the unit director, unit review coordinator, and self-study team

Review Cycle

Each unit/unit will participate in a review on a five to seven year cycle, with the schedule established by the VPSA. The schedule for unit review is yet to be determined