

Process for Full Academic Unit Reviews

(Last Revised 6/6/2025)

12-18 MONTHS BEFORE SITE VISIT

Initiation of the Review

In late summer or early autumn quarter of the year before the site visit is scheduled, the Graduate School Office of Academic Affairs will notify the academic unit leadership and respective chief academic officer (Dean or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs) of the scheduled review. For example, a unit scheduled for review in 2026-2027 would receive this notification in summer 2025.

Attend an Academic Unit Review Orientation

In early autumn quarter, each unit to be reviewed the following year will send representatives to attend an Academic Unit Review Orientation conducted by the Graduate School Office of Academic Affairs. The unit under review is required to send at least one representative – the recommended attendees for this session are unit/department chairs and staff leads.

Identify Unit-Defined Questions & Potential Committee Members

After attending the Academic Unit Review Orientation, the unit to be reviewed will have approximately two months to:

1. Identify potential internal and external review committee members and a set of preferred dates for the site visit.
2. Identify 3-4 *unit-defined questions*, which are supplementary questions the unit wishes to explore and pose to the faculty review committee for consideration during the review. The rationale for this aspect of the review is to provide units an opportunity to reflect on strengths, challenges, aspirations, and strategic planning. These questions will supplement the standard set of questions provided by the Graduate School to all review committees. Unit-defined questions will be included in the charge letter to the review committee, discussed in the charge meeting, and further explored in the unit self-study.
3. Submit this information to the Office of Academic Affairs via the Academic Unit Review Planning Form.

Note: Units are expected to discuss potential review committee members and unit-defined questions with their respective chief academic officer (Dean or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs) and will confirm having done so on the Academic Unit Review Planning Form.

6-12 MONTHS BEFORE SITE VISIT

Site Visit Scheduling + Forming Review Committee

In winter quarter the year before the scheduled site visit, the Graduate School Office of Academic Affairs will work with each academic unit to schedule its site visit and establish the review committee.

Once the site visit has been scheduled, the Office of Academic Affairs will assemble a review committee based on the list of faculty nominees submitted by the unit in the Academic Unit Review Planning Form.

The size of the review committee depends on the size and structure of the unit under review:

	SITE VISIT LENGTH	REVIEW COMMITTEE SIZE
Non-departmentalized schools and colleges	2-day site visit	2 Internal (UW) faculty 2 External (Non-UW) faculty
Departments with faculty appointments and multiple degree offerings	2-day site visit	2 Internal (UW) faculty 2 External (Non-UW) faculty
Departments with only one degree offering	1.5-day site visit	2 Internal (UW) faculty 1 External (Non-UW) faculty
Interdisciplinary units and programs without faculty appointments	1.5-day site visit	2 Internal (UW) faculty 1 External (Non-UW) faculty
Small interdisciplinary units, standalone graduate certificate programs, etc.	1-day virtual site visit	1 Internal (UW) faculty 1 External (Non-UW) faculty

Professional programs may include an expert in the field of practice in lieu of one of the external faculty reviewers, as appropriate and with the support of the respective chief academic officer (Dean or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs).

Adjustments to the site visit length and review committee size may be made at the discretion of the Graduate School associate dean of academic affairs.

Charge Meeting

When a full committee is established, the Graduate School Office of Academic Affairs will schedule a charge meeting to take place 3-4 months prior to the scheduled site visit.

Participants in the charge meeting include:

- Chair/Director, or otherwise faculty lead, of the unit
- Chief academic officer (Dean or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs) with oversight over the unit
- Associate dean of the Graduate School or staff representative
- Associate dean of Undergraduate Academic Affairs, for units that have undergraduate program offerings
- Review committee members

During the meeting, participants will review the primary questions the review provided by the Graduate School in the Charge Letter. In addition, participants will discuss the supplementary questions the unit has submitted for the review committee to consider, agreeing upon any possible revisions.

The review committee will also have the opportunity to ask clarifying questions of the unit's leadership. All participants are full and active contributors to the discussion.

The relationship between the unit and its review committee should be cordial, but an appropriate distance should be maintained from the time the committee is constituted until the review has been completed in order to preserve the integrity of the review process and avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The meeting will result in a formal charge to guide the committee's review and the unit's composition of the self-study.

Academic Unit Review Shared Drive

At this stage, the Office of Academic Affairs will create a shared drive where all academic unit review material will be located and available to all key stakeholders throughout the review. Initially, the shared drive will contain the draft charge letter and the documents from the last review of the unit.

3-6 MONTHS BEFORE SITE VISIT

Site Visit Planning Meeting

The Office of Academic Affairs will schedule a meeting with representatives of the unit under review to discuss:

- Site visit logistics
- Office of Academic Affairs vs unit responsibilities
- Best practices in developing the site visit agenda

The unit under review will submit a draft site visit agenda and its self-study at least eight weeks before the scheduled site visit. The exact due date is indicated in the official charge letter.

FINAL 3 MONTHS BEFORE SITE VISIT

Site Visit Agenda and Self-Study:

Approximately twelve weeks prior to the site visit, the unit will submit its draft self-study and draft site visit agenda to the Office of Academic Affairs for review and comment. After any necessary or suggested revisions have been made, the Office of Academic Affairs will send the self-study to the chief academic officer (Dean or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs) with oversight of the unit for review and approval. The chief academic officer (Dean or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs) can provide feedback directly to the unit under review.

When the chief academic officer (Dean or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs) has reviewed and approved the self-study, the Office of Academic Affairs will distribute the self-study and site visit agenda to the review committee with an invitation and deadline to provide input. The Office of Academic Affairs will relay any requests for further information or agenda modifications to the unit.

The Office of Academic Affairs goal with this timeline is for the site visit agenda and self-study to be finalized two to four weeks prior to the site visit. This allows the unit to ensure its faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders are fully aware of, and able to participate in, the scheduled meetings.

Final Logistics and Communications:

In the weeks leading up to the site visit, the Office of Academic Affairs will communicate with the review committee and separately with the unit under review regarding logistical details.

THE SITE VISIT

Site Visit Meetings:

The site visit allows the review committee to have candid conversations with the unit's various stakeholder groups to better understand the unit and answer the charge questions. Additionally, if there are any other individuals or groups (e.g., an advisory board) the committee wishes to meet, the academic unit should arrange the meetings. Stakeholder categories typically include unit leadership, faculty, staff, students and, when applicable, governing bodies, advisory boards, and alumni groups. The Graduate School provides detailed guidance and sample agendas on its website.

Exit Discussion:

The site visit concludes with an exit discussion including all individuals who were present at the initial charge meeting. The first half of this meeting will allow the review committee to share its initial findings and recommendations. The second half of the meeting will be an executive session during which academic unit representatives, including the chair/director of the unit, will not be present.

CONCLUDING STEPS AFTER THE SITE VISIT

Review Committee Report

After the site visit, the review committee will send its report electronically to the Office of Academic Affairs. The committee report due date is generally two weeks after the site visit and is specified in the charge letter.

The Office of Academic Affairs will distribute the review committee report to the unit under review as well as the other review stakeholders represented at the exit discussion.

Unit Response to the Committee Report

The unit being reviewed, in collaboration with its respective chief academic officer (Dean or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs), will develop a written response and initial action plan based on the review committee report. The unit response due date is generally two weeks after the review committee report due date and is specified in the charge letter. The unit response offers a unit's leadership the opportunity to formally respond to the recommendations contained in the review committee's report.

When preparing a unit response, departments are advised to share the review committee report among members of the unit, taking their input into consideration.

Optional Chief Academic Officer Comment

Following submission of the unit response to the Office of Academic Affairs, the chief academic officer (Dean or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs) with oversight of the unit will be invited to submit an additional response to the review committee report. The response will be distributed to unit and review stakeholders represented at the exit discussion.

Graduate School Council Consideration of the Review

Within one to two academic quarters after the unit's and chief academic officer's response to the review committee's report, the Graduate School Council will consider the review. The unit leader and the chief academic officer (Dean or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs) with oversight of the unit will be scheduled to attend a Graduate School Council meeting. This conversation with the Graduate School Council will conclude the academic unit review and allow the Council to engage in a collaborative and forward-looking discussion about the next steps. Prior to the meeting, the Council will review all documents generated during the review process. Following the meeting, the Graduate School Council will make final recommendations on the review to the Graduate School dean and associate dean of academic affairs.

Summary and Final Recommendations

The Office of Academic Affairs will distribute a memo containing a summary of the review, along with final recommendations and the timeline for the next review to the chief academic officer (Dean or Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs), the unit leadership, and review stakeholders represented at the charge meeting and exit discussion. The Office of the Provost as well as the President of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate also receive this document.

Academic Unit Review Archive

At the conclusion of the process, the Office of Academic Affairs will upload the core documents of the review to the online Academic Unit Review Archive. This archive can be accessed by any UW faculty and staff with a NetID.

The following are core documents uploaded to the archive:

- Unit self-study
- Review committee report
- Unit response to the report
- Chief academic officer comment (if submitted)
- Final recommendations from the Graduate School

