



***Educational Quality Improvement***  
**A Handbook for the Academic Audit**  
**Undergraduate Programs**

***2015 - 2016 Cohort***

Tennessee Board of Regents  
August 2015

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**Annual Timeline for the Academic Audit 2015 - 2016**

<b>Planning and Self-study activities for 2015 - 2016 Cohort programs</b>	<i>Academic Audit Coordinators, program leaders and TBR</i>	<b>Summer &amp; Fall 2015</b>
<b>Names of additional programs to be added to 2015 - 16 Academic Audit Cohort due to TBR</b>	<i>From each campus as applicable</i>	<b>Friday, September 18, 2015</b>
<b>Call for Auditors and Team Leaders</b>	<i>Experienced and new</i>	<b>Fall 2015</b>
<b>TRAINING SESSIONS for current Self-study Teams, future Self-study Teams &amp; prospective Auditors</b>	<i>Regional Sessions are organized by TBR Academic Affairs and hosted regionally</i>	<b>September 2015</b>
<b>Recommendation by each Self-study Team for auditors (2) &amp; academic auditor team site visit date due to TBR</b>	<i>AA Campus Coordinator informs TBR Academic Affairs</i>	<b>Friday, October 30, 2015</b>
<b>Formation of Auditor Teams and identification of Team Leaders</b>	<i>Organized by TBR Academic Affairs</i>	<b>November 2015 forward</b>
<b><u>Self-Study Reports Due to TBR Academic Audit Coordinator</u></b>	<i>Electronic submission in one PDF file</i>	<b>Friday, January 29, 2016</b>
<b>Academic Auditor Teams and Team Leaders finalized</b>	<i>Organized by TBR Academic Affairs</i>	<b>February 2016</b>
<b>Academic Auditor Training for Team Members, Team Leaders, and the following year's Self-study Leaders</b>	<i>Regional Sessions are organized by TBR Academic Affairs and hosted regionally</i>	<b>February 2016</b>
<b>Academic Auditor Team campus visits</b>	<i>Arrangements made by Auditor Team Leader and AA Campus Coordinator</i>	<b>March 14 - April 22, 2016</b>
<b>Academic Auditor Team Report to TBR</b>	<i>By Auditor Team Leader</i>	<b>May 13, 2016</b>
<b>Academic Auditor Team Report Submitted to Chief Academic Officer</b>	<i>By TBR</i>	<b>June 17, 2016</b>
<b>Program improvement activities</b>	<i>Implemented by program</i>	<b>Ongoing</b>

## **Academic Audit: An Overview**

The Academic Audit, like more traditional program reviews, is a peer review process including a **self-study** and a **site visit** by peers from outside the institution. Unlike the traditional approach to program evaluation, this process emphasizes **self-reflection** and **self-improvement** rather than compliance with predetermined standards. The purpose of an academic audit is to encourage departments or programs to evaluate their “**education quality processes**” – the key faculty and program activities required to produce, assure, and regularly improve the quality of teaching and learning. An academic audit asks how faculty approach educational decision-making and how they organize their work, using the resources available to them and working collegially to provide a quality education in the best interests of the discipline and student learning.

### **I. Elements of the Academic Audit:**

#### **The Self-study Process – Fall semester:**

- ❖ Departments examine the following five focal areas of the educational process by asking questions about their current practices and processes. This may be done at meetings where conversations about the focal areas take place. However, other methods may be used include but are not limited to real-time online discourse, asynchronous online input, surveys, focus groups and social media forums.
  - *Learning Outcomes*
    - Have we consciously considered what students who complete our courses/program should know and be able to do
      - To prepare them for further academic success?
      - To prepare them for employment in this field?
      - To meet their abilities/responsibilities as citizens?
    - In forming and revising learning outcomes, how do we use and document information gathered from
      - Employers?
      - Former students?
      - Senior institutions?
    - How do we identify and learn from best practice by evaluating student outcome goals of other programs in our institution and/or comparable programs in other institutions?
  - *Curriculum and Co-curriculum*
    - How do we determine what is taught, in what order, from what perspective? How frequently do we revisit this activity?
    - How do we work collaboratively on curriculum design?
    - How do we decide what resources and resource materials will be used as content vehicles?

- Do we consciously consider how the course design relates to other courses students will take as part of this program?
- Do we consider out-of-classroom activities and high impact practices that could complement or be integrated into the curriculum?
- Do we identify and learn from best practice and evaluate curricula of comparable departments in other institutions?
- *Teaching and Learning*
  - How are teaching and learning organized for students?
  - How do we determine what methods and teaching technologies will be used
    - To expose students to material for the first time?
    - To answer questions and provide interpretation?
    - To stimulate student involvement with the material?
    - To provide feedback on student work?
  - In what ways do we analyze teaching and learning processes on a regular basis?
  - How do we assure coherence in the department's curriculum and educational processes?
  - In what ways do we work collaboratively on designing, developing and delivering teaching methods that improve student learning?
  - What processes do we use to analyze evaluation results on a regular basis and modify teaching methods to improve student learning?
  - Do we identify and learn from best practice, evaluate teaching and learning methods of comparable departments in ours and other institutions?
- *Student Learning Assessment*
  - What measures and indicators do we use to assess student learning?
  - Have we defined indicators or measures of achievement based upon our stated learning outcomes?
  - Do we assess performance only at the end of the course/program or do we compare beginning and ending performance to ascertain value added?
  - How do we work collaboratively on assessment design, implementation, and analysis?
  - How do we use the results of student learning assessments?
  - In what ways do we identify and learn from best practice, for example, do we evaluate assessment practices of comparable departments in ours and other institutions?
- *Support of Quality Education*
  - In what ways do we evaluate those ancillary functions and facilities in terms of how well they support program outcomes and needs in order to sustain a continuous quality improvement agenda?
  - How does our budget promote or restrict our ability to implement improvement initiatives?

- How do we engage our student populations (past, present and future) in order to support a high-quality, sustainable program?

**The Self-study Report Writing process:**

- ❖ Undergraduate programs write a self-study report based on the evidence about the program gathered from faculty and stakeholders as well as data about the program from its records, institutional research and other sources. The report is written following a proscribed outline with a maximum of 20 pages for first time self-study reports and a 25 page limit for second and ensuing self-study reports. The structure and content of the self-study report is described in detail on pages 14 – 18, but following are some key attributes of a well-conceived and well-constructed report. The self-study report:
  - Describes the current state of their efforts to improve student learning and the academic quality of their programs;
  - Describes the program's strengths and opportunities for improvement in the five focal areas;
  - Cites and briefly describes both anecdotal and data-based documentation supporting exemplary practices and evidence of quality improvement practices. Note: up to 10 additional pages of Appendices are permitted; links to online support materials in addition to the ten Appendix pages are permitted as well;
  - Describes potential initiatives to address ineffective practices that need improvement or strengths that have potential to be even more effective;
  - Describes implementation plans for improvement initiatives that are given the highest priority by the department. (This is known as the Matrix of Improvement Initiatives.)

**The Academic Auditor Team review process:**

- Academic Auditors are volunteers (primarily faculty) who receive training on education quality processes and audit methodology.
- Academic Auditor teams (2-4 members - usually 3) will most often come from TBR institutions, but they may come from other public and private institutions including outside of higher education. All auditors must participate in a formal training experience.
- A program undergoing the Academic Audit may nominate up to two Academic Auditors for its Academic Auditor Team.
- Because the auditors focus on quality processes, they do not have to come from the academic discipline of the department being audited though TBR strives to have at least one faculty from the discipline or a closely aligned discipline on each auditor team.
- Academic Auditor team visits are typically one day.
- Academic Auditors meet with departmental leadership, faculty, students and other stakeholders.
- Academic Auditors ask questions similar to the self-study questions cited above.
- The Academic Auditor Team presents an onsite evaluation at the end of the site visit day. This evaluation includes commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

- If the program is being evaluated for Quality Assurance Funding purposes, the Academic Auditor Team presents – but does not discuss – its completed Quality Assurance Funding Rubric to the program at the exit session.
- After the site visit, the Academic Auditor Team writes a report:
  - highlighting examples of exemplary practice,
  - noting areas for improvement,
  - evaluating a department’s approach to educational quality practices, and
  - when a Quality Assurance Funding Rubric has been completed, explaining its findings where necessary.

**II. Principles of the Academic Audit:** The Academic Audit advocates the following underlying quality principles as foundations of good educational practice.

- Define quality in terms of outcomes
  - Learning outcomes should pertain to what is or will become important for the program’s students.
  - Student learning, not teaching per se, is what ultimately matters.
- Focus on process
  - Departments should analyze how teachers teach, how students learn, and how to best approach learning assessment.
  - Departments should study their discipline’s literature and collect data on what works well and what doesn’t.
  - Experimentation with active learning should be encouraged.
  - Faculty should be encouraged to share and adopt their colleague’s successful teaching innovations.
- Work collaboratively
  - Teamwork and consensus lead to total faculty ownership of and responsibility for all aspects of the curriculum and make everyone accountable for the success of students.
  - Dialogue and collaboration should be encouraged over territoriality and the “lone wolf” approach.
- Base decisions on evidence
  - Departments should collect data to find out what students need and how students perform.
  - Data should be analyzed and findings incorporated in the design of curricula, learning processes, and assessment methods.
  - Results of such analyses should be used to foster continuous improvement.
- Strive for coherence
  - Courses should build upon one another to provide necessary breadth and depth.

- Assessment should be aligned with learning outcomes.
- Learn from best practice
  - Faculty should seek out good practices in comparable departments and institutions and adapt the best to their own circumstances.
  - Faculty should share best practices and help “raise the bar” for their department.
- Make continuous improvement a priority
  - Faculty should continually and consciously strive to improve teaching and student learning outcomes.
  - Programs and the departments/divisions/colleges in which they are housed should provide support for the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. That support should include ways to measure student performance and persistence in such ways that the results of those measures can be used to identify both effective and ineffective pedagogies.
  - Programs and the departments/divisions/colleges in which they are housed should demonstrate ways in which effective teaching that results in higher levels of student achievement is facilitated and sustained.

## **Academic Audit Focal Areas: Questions for Faculty Discussion**

The following questions are designed to help faculty examine the processes by which you are pursuing your goals for student learning in a program of study. Although most of these questions seem to call for “yes” or “no” answers, they are meant to prompt wider discussions.

- If you answer “yes” to a question, your self-study should briefly describe the “who, what, when, where, and how” of that answer. Ask follow-up questions of yourselves such as
  - In what ways?
  - Are our approaches effective?
  - How do we know that our approaches are effective?
  - How can we demonstrate that our approaches are effective?
  - How can we improve upon what we do now?
- If you answer “no,” the self-study should discuss whether you wish to improve in this regard and how you plan to do so.

You should be prepared to provide more details or examples when the Auditor team visits.

### **Focal Area 1: Learning Outcomes**

- ▶ Have we explicitly defined what we want students who complete our program to know and be able to do? (e.g., as employees, as graduate students, as citizens)
- ▶ Do we work collaboratively to define program learning outcomes, or is the task delegated to one or a few individuals?
- ▶ Do we consult sources beyond our own faculty when defining program learning outcomes? (e.g., employers, students or graduates, comparable programs in other institutions, professional associations)
- ▶ Do we communicate program learning outcomes to students, employers or other stakeholders?
- ▶ Do we periodically review program learning outcomes to see how they might be improved?
- ▶ (See also questions in the remaining focal areas on how we use program learning outcomes.)

**Academic Audit Focal Areas: Questions for Faculty Discussion (continued)**

**Focal Area 2: Curriculum and Co-curriculum**

- ▶ Do we consciously design the curriculum and co-curriculum to achieve program learning outcomes?
- ▶ Do we work collaboratively to design the curriculum and co-curriculum, or do they reflect our individual preferences or decisions?
- ▶ Do we consider out-of-classroom activities (co-curricular activities) that could complement or be integrated into the curriculum?
- ▶ Do we consult sources beyond our own faculty when designing the curriculum and co-curriculum? (e.g., employers, students or graduates, comparable programs in other institutions, professional associations)
- ▶ Do we clearly communicate curricular and co-curricular requirements and the reasoning behind these requirements to students?
- ▶ Do we periodically review the curriculum and co-curriculum to see how they might be improved?

**Focal Area 3: Teaching and Learning Methods**

- ▶ Do we consciously consider program and course learning outcomes when deciding which teaching methods we will use in our courses?
- ▶ Do we discuss our teaching practices with each other and work collaboratively to improve teaching and learning, or is teaching primarily an individual responsibility?
- ▶ Do we consult sources beyond our own faculty when selecting our teaching practices? (e.g., employers, students or graduates, comparable programs in other institutions, professional associations)
- ▶ Do we identify best practices in teaching and use this information to improve our teaching?
- ▶ Do we periodically review our teaching methods to see how they might be improved?

**Academic Audit Focal Areas: Questions for Faculty Discussion (continued)**

**Focal Area 4: Student Learning Assessment**

- ▶ Are we measuring the degree to which our students are achieving program learning outcomes?
- ▶ Do we work collaboratively to develop and implement assessments of program learning outcomes, or are these tasks delegated to one or a few individuals?
- ▶ Do we consult sources beyond our own faculty when designing assessments of program learning outcomes? (e.g., employers, students or graduates, comparable programs in other institutions, professional associations)
- ▶ Do we discuss assessment data and use our findings to improve our curriculum, co-curriculum and teaching practices?
- ▶ Do we identify best practices in assessment of program learning outcomes and use this information to improve our assessments?
- ▶ Do we periodically review our assessment methods to see how they might be improved?

**Focal Area 5: Support of Quality Education**

- ▶ In what ways do we evaluate ancillary functions and facilities in terms of how well they support program outcomes and needs in order to sustain a continuous quality improvement agenda?
- ▶ How does our budget promote or restrict our ability to implement improvement initiatives?
- ▶ How do we engage our student populations (past, present and future) in order to support a high-quality, sustainable program?

## **Academic Audit Sources of Evidence by Focal Area**

### **Focal Area 1: Learning Outcomes**

- Student demographics: Major and/or educational objective; age; gender; GPA and/or results of placement tests
- Enrolled student surveys (institutional or targeted) or interviews
- Alumni/graduate surveys (institutional or targeted) or interviews
- Employer surveys (institutional or targeted) or interviews
- Advisory board/committee meeting minutes
- Feedback from faculty teaching courses for which yours are pre-requisites
- Peer feedback from senior/graduate institutions
- Competencies/outcomes (syllabi) of senior/graduate programs in your discipline
- National standards for your discipline: competencies, outcomes
- Syllabi

### **Focal Area 2: Curriculum and Co-curriculum**

- Departmental/institutional policies for curriculum development
- Minutes/notes from faculty meetings, curriculum development/textbook selection committees, etc.
- Curricula from peer programs in the discipline and from senior/graduate programs
- National standards for curriculum in your discipline
- Feedback from stakeholders (students, graduates, employers, advisory boards)
- Documentation of curriculum revision (course inventory forms)
- Syllabi

### **Focal Area 3: Teaching and Learning Methods**

- Current research/literature on effective teaching methodology in the discipline
- Minutes/notes from faculty meetings
- Feedback from stakeholders (students, graduates, employers, advisory boards)
- Learning styles inventory assessments
- Evaluations by students; supervisors
- End of course surveys
- Peer mentoring; classroom observations
- Annual personal goals and objectives
- Course analysis documents
- Assessments of student success in different instructional settings (web vs. traditional); other types of student success analysis – withdrawal rates, grade distribution, success in subsequent courses
- Professional development (internal or external); disciplinary or pedagogical
- Ongoing professional memberships

#### **Focal Area 4: Student Learning Assessment**

- Documentation of key learning quality indicators
- Feedback from stakeholders (students, graduates, employers, advisory boards)
- Minutes/notes from faculty meetings
- Pre-and-post tests
- Exit testing through departmental/programmatic final assessment (national, collaborative or local instruments)
- Foundation testing such as your institution's General Education assessment instrument
- Student portfolios, capstone course projects, coop or internship supervisor evaluations
- Test item analysis
- Test/assessment bank or library
- Job placement rates
- Acceptance into senior institution or graduate programs
- Success (GPA/retention) in senior institution or graduate programs

#### **Focal Area 5: Support of Quality Education**

- Institutional facilities and services (e.g. library, learning center) that support your program's effectiveness and student learning
- Operating budget documents and planning processes
- Enrollment history
- Graduation records and trend data
- Benchmarking for national comparison (NSSE/CCSSE, NCCBP, etc.)
- Regularly published and shared information about progress on improvement initiatives
- Documentation of data collection, analyses and uses of results
- Institutional effectiveness program and practices

## Guidance Notes for Self-Study Reports

The self-study report should be organized into these five sections: 1) Introduction; 2) Overall Performance; 3) Performance by Focal Area; 4) Potential Improvement Initiatives; and 5) Matrix of Improvement Initiatives. The length of the self-study report for an undergraduate program is set at a maximum of 20 single-spaced pages of 12 point type plus up to 10 appendix pages for undergraduate programs. Appendix pages may also be used to provide links to additional information, forms and data about the program. For undergraduate programs undergoing the academic audit process a second or greater time and thus reporting activities on Improvement Initiatives and Recommendations by the Academic Auditor Team, the maximum self-study report length is 25 pages. This page limit places a premium on crisp, clear communication while also defining the scope of the academic auditor team's task. The following discussion focuses on what should be included in each section of the self-study report. ***The self-study report including appendices should be submitted to TBR as one document in a single Adobe PDF file.***

### 1. Introduction [One page summary]

Begin this section with a few paragraphs in which you introduce the reader to your program. This will include such elements as an overview of current student demographics, the role and scope of the program, a very brief history if applicable to an understanding of the program's current status, etc. If your program is structured as a cohort program, includes a block scheduling option, is offered in part or entirely online, etc. include in your Introduction. Also in your Introduction, describe how the program conducted its self-study process – who was engaged (faculty, adjunct faculty, stakeholders, students); how they were engaged (meetings, online methods, focus groups, survey, etc.); and how the self-study report was drafted, reviewed and finalized...

### 2. Overall Performance [One to two pages]

This section is essentially the Executive Summary or Abstract of the self-study report. Begin this section with a brief assessment of your unit's education quality assurance processes and how you work together as a faculty and with stakeholders to improve quality. The Academic Auditor Team will ask about the logic and evidence behind your assessment, but it will not collect additional evidence nor substitute its judgment about education quality for yours. Your objective is to provide an accurate state of the program in terms of teaching and student learning. It is not expected that your program flawlessly delivers exemplary quality education. For example, candid descriptions of areas that will benefit from attention and improvement, supported by evidence, will be received better than unsupported claims of excellence. A summary statement of how the academic audit self-study processes benefited the program may also be included in this section.

### **3. Performance by Focal Area** [Two or three pages per focal area]

Here you reflect on your performance in each of the five essential focal areas. For reference, the five focal areas common to all undergraduate programs are: (1) Learning Outcomes; (2) Curriculum and Co-Curriculum; (3) Teaching and Learning; (4) Student Learning Assessment; and (5) Support of Quality Education. We suggest that your team discussions proceed back and forth among the focal areas and sub-questions as a means of gaining insight regarding the interconnectedness of the focal areas and your unit's strengths and weaknesses in applying the quality principles to these focal areas. This section represents the heart of your self-study report and provides groundwork for consideration of improvement initiatives.

It is suggested that you address the following for each focal area:

- A short narrative that describes your department's quality processes as they pertain to the focal area. The list of questions entitled *Academic Audit Focal Areas: Questions for Faculty Discussion* (pages 14– 16), is useful starting point for your reflections.
- Refer to the seven quality principles discussed on pages 5 and 6 as you write. The quality principles should be integrated into your discussions of the focal areas not treated as separate areas to address.
- **Important note regarding Quality Assurance Funding reports:** If your program is participating in the Academic Audit process as a means of fulfilling the non-accreditable program review requirement for Quality Assurance Funding, pay particular attention to the criteria on the *Academic Audit Rubric*. Your onsite review team will be asked to evaluate how your program has addressed these criteria and in what stage of development your program currently rests. You may wish to structure your discussion around the criteria for each focal area. See page 28 for an explanation of the evaluation levels to be used by the Academic Auditor Team.
- If your exploration of a focal area reveals weaknesses or opportunities for improvement in that focal area, say so in your report. The purpose of the self-study is to identify successes, strengths and areas for improvement. You do not have to find that all is well in each focal area. At the same time, an area of strength may have additional potential for improvement that will further bolster the quality of teaching and student learning in your program.

### **4. Potential Improvement Initiatives**

Now the focus becomes strictly formative. Having assessed your overall performance and your education quality processes, you are asked to formulate some specific initiatives for improvement. If you have identified a specific, significant weakness in a focal area, you **MUST** indicate how you plan to correct the weakness. If you see an opportunity to improve on already good performance in a focal area, you **MAY** present an idea for achieving this improvement. The goal is to sketch out actions that would have a strong positive impact on education quality.

As you describe initiatives, please demonstrate that you:

- Clearly state what needs to be accomplished and why.
- Outline the tasks required to accomplish the objective(s).
- Indicate how you will gauge whether the initiative is being implemented as planned.
- Demonstrate that your unit is capable of carrying out the initiative, especially in light of other demands on your time and resources. If you need additional support to accomplish the initiative, say so.
- Identify performance indicators and measures that will substantiate your progress.

In short, you should provide enough information to demonstrate that the initiatives are well thought out and feasible. Above all, your plan should confirm the participants' enthusiastic commitment to move forward and the department's support of the effort.

#### **5. Matrix of Improvement Initiatives** [About 1 page.]

Self-studies will conclude with specific commitments for improvement and a structure for assessing progress. Please provide a matrix which provides the following information for each initiative discussed in section 4 that is being put forward as a formal Initiative for Improvement by the department/program. It is important that the self-study be clear in this section as the Academic Auditor Team will work from these details to affirm the Improvement Initiatives presented in this section by the program. Brief description of the Initiative for Improvement

1. Title of the initiative
2. Objective(s) of the initiative
3. Who will have overall responsibility for the initiative and who will participate in the implementation, assessment and use of results of the initiative
4. Performance indicator(s) \*
5. Timetable

\*Performance Indicators are often associated with quantifications and numbers in order to provide an objective picture of progress or achievement. Such statistical data may be very relevant to an improvement initiative that focuses on persistence of program students to graduation, for example. However, other initiatives may not be easy to quantify. For example, an initiative to increase the level of student engagement in the program through development of co-curricular off campus field trips may be measured by responses of students in a focus group or to a survey rather than by only the number of students who participated in field trips. Discuss Performance Indicators thoroughly. You may wish to consult your Office of Institutional

Research and/or Office of Institutional Effectiveness for assistance with developing appropriate metrics. Conduct measurements on a regular basis.

**Matrix of Improvement Initiatives: Sample Initiative from an English program**

	<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>When</b>
1.	Develop and implement an online tutorial resource to complement teaching the research paper in all Composition I classes	To provide students with relevant and consistent research writing instructional support that will support their successful completion research paper requirements	Coordination will be by the Composition Program Director in collaboration with Composition I faculty members (FT & PT).	a) Development and implementation of research paper tutorial; b) Record of use of online tutorial by students; c) Satisfaction survey of students	This is a multi-year project; planning and site development have begun in AY 2015 -16. Implementation planned for Fall 2016.

**6. Follow-up of Previous Academic Audit** [Only for programs undergoing the academic audit process for the second and subsequent times. Not to exceed 5 pages. NOTE: these are in addition to the 20 page limit on the self-study report]

This section of the self-study reflects upon two outcomes of the prior academic audit process: 1) Initiatives for Improvement that were generated by the program itself; and 2) Recommendations by the Academic Auditor Team. The expectation is that the program will have acted in a number of ways to advance improvement in these areas. Thus, a brief discussion of the process that the program followed to develop and enact its action plan is appropriate here.

It is expected that the Initiatives for Improvement that were generated by the program itself have been implemented and that progress on each initiative has been tracked. Further, it is expected that the results of those implementations have been considered and used to further improvement in the program. Include evidence of how the use of results from each initiative has contributed to quality improvement. If an initiative has spawned additional improvement activities, cite those as outcomes of the initial Initiative for Improvement. If the program has a detailed summary report for each initiative or a series of annual reports for each initiative, these do not need to be reiterated in the self-study report. Rather, those reports

including evidence of progress towards or accomplishment of the initiative objective(s) should be included as appendices or web links. However, a brief narrative describing the process followed by the program to initiate and follow through with its initiatives should be included in the self-study as well as a summary of the effectiveness of the initiatives. If it is the case that an Initiative for Improvement was NOT implemented or was altered significantly from how it was originally described, provide appropriate explanation in this part of the self-study report.

Regarding Academic Auditor Team Recommendations, the self-study report should address how each recommendation was considered by the faculty. If a recommendation was not pursued, then include a brief explanation why it was not pursued. If it was pursued as written or pursued in a modified manner, a similar narrative about its inception, follow-through and effectiveness should be included in this section of the self-study. As with Initiatives for Improvement, if the program maintained detailed annual, periodic or summary reports regarding the implementation of a Recommendation, these reports including evidence of progress towards implementation or accomplishment of the recommendation should be provided in the Appendix.

## **Preparation for Onsite Visit**

After the self-study report is submitted to the TBR office at the end of January, the next major Academic Audit activity is the onsite visit by the Academic Auditor Team. While the Academic Audit Campus Coordinator serves as the point person for the Academic Auditor Team Leader with regards to making preparations, the program lead and faculty should be engaged and consulted in the construct and scheduling of the site visit agenda.

The following notes represent suggested activities prior to the onsite visit and a general timeline for completing these activities. Questions regarding these steps should be addressed to the TBR Office of Academic Affairs or your institution's Academic Audit Campus Coordinator. TBR staff and Academic Audit Campus Coordinators will work with Academic Auditor Team members to ensure proper preparation and receipt of appropriate materials. Regional Academic Auditor Training sessions will be offered in February 2016. New Academic Auditors are required to attend one of these sessions.

1. **Recommendation of Auditors and Setting of Review Date.** Each program undergoing the academic audit process may select up to two faculty, administrators or professionals in its discipline or from another discipline that they would like to have on their academic auditor team. These nominations should be submitted to TBR by no later than October 30, 2015 with a brief description of the nominees' academic credentials. Also provide contact information (email and phone number) so that they can be included in academic auditor training sessions in early February as well as correspondence with fellow team members. At this same time, each program should put forward a proposed date (between March 14 and April 22, 2016) on which the onsite visit will take place.
2. **Tentative Academic Audit Schedule.** Each campus should submit a tentative Academic Audit Onsite Visit Schedule when the self-study document is submitted to TBR. For the current year, this due date is set for Friday, January 29, 2016. In addition to the date for the campus visit and the planned agenda, this tentative schedule should include information about hotel accommodations and contact information for the designated Campus Contact(s).
3. **Assignment of Team Leaders and Teams.** The TBR Office of Academic Affairs works with the network of campus Academic Audit Coordinators to identify a list of experienced and new academic auditors for the current year. By mid-February, assignments are made and confirmed for the makeup of each Academic Auditor Team. NOTE: TBR will pay for travel costs and any necessary hotel accommodations for the team members. Any meals, refreshments, and other costs will be provided and paid for by the host campus during the Academic Audit onsite visit.

4. **Program Self-Study.** The self-study document will be provided to the Academic Auditor Team at least four weeks prior to the scheduled visit. This document will be emailed to the chair and team members by the TBR Office of Academic Affairs.
5. **Local Arrangements.** The team leader of the Academic Auditor Team should make contact with the designated campus contact at least three weeks prior to the scheduled visit. This conversation should assure that both parties are aware of local arrangements, meeting rooms, scheduled meetings with faculty, students, and other stakeholders, and available work space/materials for the visiting team.
6. **Academic Auditor Team Communication.** The team is encouraged to hold one or more conference calls prior to the site visit to discuss questions surrounding division of work, site visit schedule, questions/prompts for the conversations with the various stakeholder groups, and any other pre-visit details. If a phone call is not possible, it is recommended that email exchange or other electronic media communication between the team members and the team leader be open, active and engaging for all team members.
7. **Assignment of Responsibilities.** Many of the Academic Auditor Team members from the past years advised that all teams should assign a specific “focal area(s)” to each team member. This allows that team member to focus on that area when reading the self-study document and subsequently planning for questions to be asked during the site visit.
8. **Initial Meeting of the Team.** It is ideal for the team to be able to get together the evening before the visit. If this is not possible, the schedule for the site visit should remain flexible to allow a breakfast meeting of the team at the hotel prior to going to the campus for the initial meeting with campus officials, program leaders and faculty.

## Suggested Academic Audit Onsite Visit Schedule

Academic Department Name, Institution  
Date of Visit

<u>Session</u>	<u>Time/Attendees</u>	<u>Location</u>
Breakfast and Team Meeting at Hotel	7:30am – 8:15am Auditor Team	Hotel, Room/Location
Opening Session & Introductions	8:30am – 8:45am Auditor Team Faculty and Administrators	ABC Bldg, Room 1
Small Group Meeting #1	9:00am – 10:00am Auditor Team Faculty Members	ABC Bldg, Room 2
Small Group Meeting #2	10:15am – 11:00am Auditor Team Students	ABC Bldg, Room 2
Small Group Meeting #3	11:15am – 12:15pm Auditor Team Stakeholders	ABC Bldg, Room 2
Working Lunch	12:15pm – 1:30pm Auditor Team	ABC Bldg, Room 1
Flexible Meeting and Work Time	1:30pm – 3:30pm Auditor Team	ABC Bldg, Room 2
<i>Time may be used for materials review, tours, or additional meetings as well as for the team to discuss its observations and work on the required forms</i>		
Exit Session	3:30pm – 4:00pm Auditor Team Faculty and Administrators	ABC Bldg, Room 1

*-Brief report of initial commendations, affirmations, and recommendations*

*-If the Quality Assurance Funding Rubric is required, a copy of that sheet must be left with the campus contact prior to departure*

### Logistics Information

**Campus Contact for Academic Audit**– Name, Position, Phone, Email

**Hotel Accommodations** – Hotel Name, Address, Phone

## Academic Audit Onsite Evaluation Checklist

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Program: \_\_\_\_\_

CIP Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Degree Level:  Certificate  Associate  Baccalaureate  Master's  Doctoral

### Instructions for Academic Auditor Chairs and Teams

#### **Part I: Academic Auditor Team Report -- Record of Commendations, Affirmations, and Recommendations**

This form must be completed by each academic auditor team prior to concluding the visit. The original will be forwarded to TBR but a copy must be left with the department prior to departure. All observations included on this form should be represented as commendations, affirmations, or recommendations. Please be concise in your descriptions as you will have opportunity to expand upon your justification for each item in your written report due to TBR by **May 13, 2016**.

#### **Part II: Academic Audit Rubric (only for use if program is being reviewed for Quality Assurance Funding purposes)**

This form is **only** to be completed if the program review is serving as the Performance Funding review. Using the QAF Undergraduate Academic Audit Rubric, complete the evaluation results checklist. This exercise must be completed and signed by the team prior to the Exit Session [see complete directions on the form]. The original will be left with the department prior to departure, but a copy must be forwarded to TBR with the Academic Auditor Team Report.

#### **Part III: Narrative Evaluation and Written Report**

The Auditor Chair and Team will use their evaluations indicated on the Academic Auditor Team Report and Academic Audit Rubric (if used for Quality Assurance Funding purposes) as the basis of a written report. Summarized findings from the self-study report and onsite visit will represent a narrative report of the team's conclusions and the final responsibility of the academic auditor team. The template for completing this report (limited to 10 pages) is attached. This report is due to TBR on **May 13, 2016**.

The Audit Evaluation will become part of the record of the academic program review and will be shared with the academic department/unit, the college, and the central administration, as well as the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. Each department/campus will be provided opportunity to respond and comment on the written report.

Audit Chair's name, title, and institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Audit Chair's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Names, titles, institutions, and signatures of other Audit Team members:

\_\_\_\_\_

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## Academic Auditor Team Report

### Record of Commendations, Affirmations, and Recommendations

This form must be completed by each academic auditor team prior to concluding the visit. All observations included on this form should be represented as commendations, affirmations, or recommendations. Please be concise in your descriptions as you will have opportunity to expand upon your justification for each item in your written report due to TBR by **May 13, 2016**. This document should serve as the outline of information to be disclosed during the exit session with the department. The original signed copy is to be forwarded to TBR with one copy left with the campus audit contact or department chairperson prior to leaving campus.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Total Number of Commendations

- Commendation #1 –
- Commendation #2 –
- Commendation #3 –
- Commendation #4 –

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Total Number of Affirmations

- Affirmation #1 –
- Affirmation #2 –
- Affirmation #3 –
- Affirmation #4 –

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Total Number of Recommendations

- Recommendation #1 –
- Recommendation #2 –
- Recommendation #3 –
- Recommendation #4 –

**2015-20 Quality Assurance Funding**  
*Academic Audit: Undergraduate Programs*



<b>Institution:</b>		
<b>Program Title:</b>		
<b>CIP Code:</b>		
<b>Embedded Certificates:</b>		
<b>Academic Audit Status:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>First Academic Audit</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Follow-up Academic Audit</b>

**Instruction for Academic Audit Team**

In accordance with the 2015-20 Quality Assurance Program Funding guidelines of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), each non-accreditable undergraduate program undergoes either an academic audit or external peer review according to a pre-approved review cycle. If the program under review contains embedded Technical Certificates, the names of each certificate should be included above. The review of embedded certificates must be included as part of the program audit in which they are embedded. Embedded certificates do not require a separate *Academic Audit Rubric*.

The criteria used to evaluate an undergraduate program appear in the following *Academic Audit Rubric*. The *Academic Audit Rubric* lists 25 criteria grouped into seven standards. Criteria in standards 1-6 will be used to assess standards and distribute points to undergraduate programs utilizing the Academic Audit for the first time. For programs undergoing a follow-up Academic Audit, criteria 7 will also be used to assess standards and distribute points. The three criteria noted with an asterisk are excluded from the point calculation but will be used by the institution in their overall assessment.

For each criterion within a standard, the responsible program has provided evidence in the form of a *Self Study*. Supporting documents will be available for review as specified in the *Self Study*. As an Academic Audit Team Leader, you should evaluate this evidence and any other evidence observed during the site visit to determine whether each criterion within a standard has been met. A checkmark should be placed in the appropriate box to indicate whether the criterion is not evident, emerging, established, or highly developed in the program. If a particular criterion is inappropriate or not applicable to the program under review, the item should be marked NA.

The rubric will be shared with the department, college and central administration, as well as the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. When combined with the written report prepared by the Academic Audit Team, the *Academic Audit Rubric* will facilitate development of a program action plan to ensure continuous quality improvement.

Your judgment of the criteria will be used in allocating state funds for the institution's budget.

**Name, Title and Institutional Affiliation of Audit Team Leaders**

<p><b>Name</b> _____</p> <p><b>Title</b> _____</p> <p><b>Institution</b> _____</p> <p><b>Signature</b> _____</p> <p><b>Date</b> _____</p>	<p><b>Name</b> _____</p> <p><b>Title</b> _____</p> <p><b>Institution</b> _____</p> <p><b>Signature</b> _____</p> <p><b>Date</b> _____</p>
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## Academic Audit Rubric Undergraduate Programs

**Directions:** Please rate the quality of the academic program by placing a checkmark in the appropriate box to indicate whether the criterion is not applicable (N/A), not evident, emerging, established, or highly developed.

<b>1. Learning Outcomes</b>		N/A	Not Evident	Emerging	Established	Highly Developed
<b>1.1</b>	The faculty has identified program learning outcomes that are current, measurable and based upon appropriate processes and evidence regarding the requirements of the discipline.					
<b>1.2</b>	The faculty has identified student learning outcomes in its core coursework that are clear, measurable and based on an appropriate process to identify what students need to master in each course.					
<b>1.3</b>	The faculty has an appropriate process for evaluating program and course-level learning outcomes on a regular basis taking into account best practices, stakeholder feedback and appropriate benchmarks in the field.					
<b>2. Curriculum and Co-Curriculum</b>		N/A	Not Evident	Emerging	Established	Highly Developed
<b>2.1</b>	The faculty collaborates regularly and effectively on the design of curriculum and planned improvements.					
<b>2.2</b>	The faculty regularly analyzes the content and sequencing of courses as applicable in terms of achieving program learning outcomes.					
<b>2.3</b>	The faculty regularly reviews the curriculum based on appropriate evidence including comparison with best practices where appropriate.					
<b>2.4</b>	The program regularly incorporates appropriate complementary co-curricular activities and programs to supplement and support student learning					
<b>3. Teaching and Learning</b>		N/A	Not Evident	Emerging	Established	Highly Developed
<b>3.1</b>	The faculty regularly and effectively collaborates in designing, developing and delivering teaching methods that improve student learning throughout the program.					
<b>3.2</b>	The faculty promotes the effective use of instructional materials and teaching tools, including technology as appropriate, for achieving					

*Academic Audit UNDERGRADUATE Handbook 2015-16...*

	student mastery of learning objectives.					
<b>3.3</b>	The program regularly evaluates the effectiveness of teaching methods and the appropriateness of instructional materials.					
<b>3.4</b>	The faculty analyze evaluation results on a regular basis and modify teaching methods to improve student learning.					
<b>3.5</b>	The faculty engages in regular professional development that enhances its teaching, scholarship and practice.					
<b>3.6</b>	The program monitors student persistence and success in its courses and program and uses that data to inform improvements in the program and to optimize student success.					
<b>4. Student Learning Assessment</b>		<b>N/A</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Highly Developed</b>
<b>4.1</b>	The faculty uses indicators of student learning success that are aligned with program and student learning outcomes.					
<b>4.2</b>	The faculty assesses student learning at multiple points throughout the program using a variety of assessment methods appropriate to the outcomes being assessed.					
<b>4.3</b>	The program regularly implements continuous quality improvements based upon the results of its student learning assessments.					
<b>5. Support</b>		<b>N/A</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Highly Developed</b>
<b>5.1*</b>	The program regularly evaluates its library, equipment and facilities, encouraging necessary improvements within the context of overall college resources.					
<b>5.2*</b>	The program's operating budget is consistent with the needs of the program.					
<b>5.3*</b>	The program has a history of enrollment and/or graduation rates sufficient to sustain high quality and cost-effectiveness.					

*Academic Audit UNDERGRADUATE Handbook 2015-16...*

<b>6. Academic Audit Process</b>		<b>N/A</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Highly Developed</b>
<b>6.1</b>	The Academic Audit process was faculty driven.					
<b>6.2</b>	The Academic Audit process (Self Study and site visit) included descriptions of the program's quality processes.					
<b>6.3</b>	The Academic Audit process resulted in a thorough description of program strengths and program weaknesses as well as a prioritized list of initiatives for improvement.					
<b>6.4</b>	The Academic Audit process included involvement of and inputs from appropriate stakeholder groups.					
<b>7. Follow-up of Previous Audit</b>		<b>N/A</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>	<b>Emerging</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Highly Developed</b>
<b>7.1</b>	There is documented evidence that the program has implemented the plans for its initiatives for improvement cited by the faculty in the previous self-study report including any changes to those initiatives for improvement.					
<b>7.2</b>	There is documented evidence that recommendations made by the Academic Auditor Team have been considered and, when feasible and appropriate, implemented and tracked.					

*\*Criteria not scored as part of Quality Assurance Funding.*

## **Academic Audit Rubric**

### **Explanation of Evaluation Levels**

A program that is undergoing the academic audit to meet Quality Assurance Funding requirements will be evaluated by an Academic Auditor Team that will use a rubric developed through a statewide process during 2015 prior to the approval of the 2015 – 2020 Quality Assurance Funding standards. One charge of the Academic Auditor Team is to evaluate evidence provided by the program in its self-study document, appendices and any other evidence observed during the site visit to determine whether each criterion within a standard has been addressed and, if so, at what level of development. The Academic Auditor Team will indicate whether each criterion is not evident, emerging, established, or highly developed in the program. If a particular criterion is inappropriate or not applicable to the program under review, the item will be marked NA.

- **Not Evident** – the criterion statement was not addressed by the program in either its self-study report or appendices. Furthermore, questions about this criterion asked by the Academic Auditor Team at its site visit did not elicit responses that demonstrated that the criterion has been addressed or that a planning process is in place to address the criterion.
- **Emerging** – the program has acknowledged the criterion statement as an area that has only recently been formally addressed. The program may have presented a planning process that it has put in place to address this criterion. It may have formulated initial plans to address this criterion but not have implemented the plan. Or, it may be that plans and processes are in place to address this criterion, but that these are in the initial stages of implementation.
- **Established** – the program demonstrates that its plans, activities and assessments of the criterion are in place in an appropriate, reasonable and well-organized manner. Program faculty, and where applicable students and other stakeholders, are aware of and participate in continuous improvement processes related to the criterion.
- **Highly Developed** – the program thoroughly exhibits that its plans, activities and assessments of the criterion are fully articulated and richly incorporated into the culture of the program including the active engagement of all faculty (full and part-time) as well as students and other stakeholders as pertinent to the criterion. Furthermore, the program shows how it uses the results of assessments regarding the criterion for ongoing improvement of performance in that criterion.

## **Academic Auditor Team Narrative Report Guidelines**

**NOTE:** The report should be limited to ten (10) pages for undergraduate programs.

### ***General Report Outline***

- I. **Introduction** - Briefly describe the members of the academic auditor team, the program evaluated, the date of the Academic Auditor Team site visit, the schedule of meetings and with whom, and any other relevant information.
  
- II. **Overall Performance** - Discuss the team's overall summary conclusions about the state of the program. You may wish to comment upon how it conducted its self-study process and what conclusions it reached in terms of its quality assurance and improvement functions as well as plans for future improvement in teaching, learning and student success.
  
- III. **Performance in the Focal Areas** – How does the unit/program's work in each focal area measure up against the quality principles? Is evidence of quality improvement processes and outcomes provided?
  - A. Learning Outcomes
  - B. Curriculum and Co-Curriculum
  - C. Teaching and Learning
  - D. Student Learning Assessment
  - E. Support of Quality Education
  
- IV. **Conclusions** - These are the same commendations, affirmations and recommendations presented at the Exit Session of the site visit and are repeated here. However, if the team wishes to elaborate on any of these, especially Recommendations, it is appropriate to do so.
  - A. Commendations – What processes, practices, initiatives, and commitments are particularly commendable and merit recognition?
  - B. Affirmations – What processes, practices, or plans warrant the team's affirmation and encouragement?
  - C. Recommendations – What are some areas for improvement identified by the team on the basis of the unit/program's self study and site visit?

### **Top Ten Tips for Writing Auditor Reports**

When developing and writing the Academic Auditor Team Report, Academic Auditor Team members and leaders are encouraged to consider the following:

1. Remember that the purpose of the report is to summarize findings derived from both the self- study report (including appendices and links) and the academic auditor team's onsite visit.
2. Develop these summary points around multiple points of evidence.
3. Use the debriefing time during the site visit to gather ideas from team members and create an overview of the report as well as due dates for when written sections of the report are due to the team leader.
4. At the site visit, agree on a report format and how long each section should be.
5. Keep the tone of the report positive and formative. Focus on how the department can foster improvement. Suggestions on how that improvement can be fostered may be included, but they should be suggestions and not instructions.
6. Engage all team members in the process of writing and editing of the report.
7. In the written report, provide feedback on all five focal areas in summary form and give overview perceptions. Be generous with positive feedback where warranted.
8. Reports are written collaboratively by the auditor team. Team members may provide bullet-type comments or present their findings in paragraph format.
9. At the end of your report, include the same commendations, affirmations and recommendations that were presented at the site visit. You may elaborate on one, several or all of these in the written report.
10. Keep the report straightforward and concise. Recognize what the program is doing capably as well as what it can do to improve.