

Guidelines for Department and Program Comprehensive Reviews

In addition to annual assessment of student learning outcomes in academic departments and programs, Southwestern University has a regular cycle of comprehensive program reviews. Normally, the time interval between comprehensive reviews for each department/program will range from seven to eight years. The program review has the following major components: a self-study completed by the department/program and a visit of an external reviewer or reviewers resulting in a report. Finally, the department/program is asked to submit to the Curriculum Committee an executive summary of the comprehensive review and self-study, which should include the departmental response to the external reviewer's report.

Timeline Overview (Please read the full document for additional details):

- Beginning of fall semester: Department/Program Chair initiates self-study process by coordinating departmental responsibilities and communicating with relevant support units (e.g., IR, Library, ...).
- First Wednesday in October (or sooner): The Department/Program Chair submits a list of three potential external reviewers with their CVs to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. It is recommended that at least two of the individuals put forward should come from liberal arts colleges. (As a suggested starting point, see Section I below for a list of peer & aspirant institutions established by the Strategic Planning Committee.)
- Early October: The Dean of the Faculty approves an outside reviewer and the Chair informs the selected external reviewer. The Dean of the Faculty reports this information to the Curriculum Committee.
- Mid October: The Department/Program Chair, with the assistance of the relevant faculty administrative assistant, completes a detailed schedule for the visit of the external reviewer. This should be done in collaboration with the Office of the Dean of the Faculty (Barbara Jean).
- Late October: The Office of the Dean of the Faculty will provide the external reviewer with a contract and detailed schedule of visit.
- End of fall semester/Beginning of spring semester: Self-Study portion of review is completed and submitted to the Dean of the Faculty, Associate Dean, Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness, and the external reviewer.
- February or March: External reviewer makes campus visit. Within one month of visit, the outside reviewer sends a report to the department/program and the Dean of the Faculty.

- First Wednesday in October (in the fall following the review): The following should be submitted to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty: An executive summary of the comprehensive review and self-study, which should include the departmental response to the external reviewer's report.

Why Do a Program Review?

Systematic review of academic departments and programs allows for self-reflection about program goals and results, assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the program and its curriculum, comparison to national standards in the field, and insights about best practices from both peer and aspirational institutions. Conversations related to this review encourage faculty to collaborate on their shared vision for the program. Recommendations from the external program reviewer may help guide a department/program as they plan for the future. It may result in modifications and improvements in the curriculum, both for majors and minors, and for students taking courses in the field as part of their general education requirements, including Paideia. It can also help a department/program to work toward the strongest teacher/scholar model possible. Data collected during both the self-study and external program review may also provide useful information for institutional decisions about resources.

I. Elements of the Department/Program Self-Study

1. Description of the curriculum developed for the major and minor

- List all department/program course offerings for the past four years. Indicate which of the courses fall into one or more of the following categories:
 - Suitable for first-year students
 - Suitable for non-majors and may be used to fulfill distribution requirements
 - Writing intensive courses
 - Approved as SJ courses
 - Offered without prerequisites
 - Taught by an adjunct or visitor more than twice in the past four years
- Describe the curriculum developed for the major and minor.
- What are the objectives of the department or program major?
- Are there required courses? Is there a required sequence of courses? What is the frequency with which required courses are taught?
- Some questions to consider: Are there enough/too many courses at different levels, for students at different points in major? Are courses offered frequently enough? Does the

overall suite of courses offered fit together? Offer sufficient breadth? Sufficient depth?
Are class sizes effective (in relation to pedagogy, developing student community, etc.)

- How does the capstone experience serve as a culminating learning experience for the major?
- Provide a table with the number of students graduating with a major or minor during the years following the previous comprehensive program review.
- In terms of strengths and weaknesses, compare the major to the following:
 - National guidelines;
 - Peer and Aspirant Institutions: A suggested starting point is following list of Peer and Aspirant* schools established by the Strategic Planning Committee:
 - Allegheny College
 - Bates College*
 - Centre College
 - Hendrix College
 - Kalamazoo College
 - Kenyon College*
 - Lawrence University*
 - Reed College*
 - Wheaton College (MA)
 - Whitman College*
- Assess the adequacy of faculty resources to support the curriculum for majors.
- How do student accomplishments (for example: student awards, conference presentations, student employment, etc.) illustrate effectiveness of the curriculum?
- Are there improvements that the department/program could make?

2. Description of how the department/program meets student learning outcomes

- Provide a copy of the current department/program assessment plan.
- How well is the department/program accomplishing its stated goals and student learning outcomes?
- What changes have been made based on the assessment of student learning outcomes?
- In what ways does the capstone experience serve as a means for assessing the overall goals for student learning?
- In what ways does the department or program contribute to University-wide learning outcomes, including the learning goals for the applicable distribution requirements and courses for non-majors?

- 3. Description of how the department/program curriculum supports general education at SU.**
 - Describe how the department/program's curriculum contributes to University programs such as distribution credits, interdisciplinary programs, FYS, SJ, and Paideia.
 - How are faculty resources used towards this end? Does the program use adjuncts for this?
- 4. Description of department/program initiatives regarding advising.**
 - Describe the advising loads for each faculty member in the department/program.
 - What has the department/program done to ensure that students are advised well?
- 5. How well is workload of teaching spread across faculty in the department/program? (Where applicable, provide the requested information for each year since the previous comprehensive review.)**
 - Provide a description of the teaching loads within the department/program, including the number of courses taught per year by each faculty member, number of preparations per faculty member and range of class sizes.
 - Describe department efforts to foster and maintain workload equity.
 - How many independent studies are conducted each year by each faculty member?
 - How many students complete departmental honors each year?
 - Is there a sense of equity and fairness among department/program members?
- 6. How well does the department/program ensure faculty professional achievement?**
 - Provide copies of each faculty member's CV listing professional achievements.
 - Provide a copy of the (updated) document describing department/program professional growth expectations and criteria for tenure/promotion.
 - How does the department/program and the University help faculty have sufficient resources (time and money/material resources) to achieve professionally? How could the level of professional achievement be improved?
 - How does the department mentor faculty to promote success in this area?
- 7. How does the department/program contribute to the wider SU imperatives of diversity and inclusion for both students and faculty?**

- Specifically, what efforts has the department/program made to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of the faculty?
 - Specifically, what efforts has the department/program made to increase the diversity of the curriculum? (e.g. a list of course offerings that address diversity, variety of pedagogical styles, how welcoming department is to both student and faculty members of traditionally underrepresented groups, # of majors and minors from traditionally underrepresented groups.)
- 8. Department/program statement on adequacy of information technology/library resources.**
- Provide a report from the library that includes a collection review of physical and electronic resources. When relevant special collections resources should be identified.
 - Library usage should be provided in this report including circulation, research, interlibrary loan, and instructional support specific to the department/program.
- 9. What changes did the department/program make in the light of the previous comprehensive self-studies and annual review/assessments?**
- 10. Plans for improvement and/or future plans.**
- Is there a perceived need to change or redesign the department/program curriculum? If so, how might a redesign be accomplished if no additional resources were available?
 - Include a narrative description of department/program plans for the next seven or eight years. The narrative should be grounded in the results of assessment of student learning outcomes and should be framed in terms of the improvement of student learning and student success post-graduation. Resources deemed necessary to achieve the department/program vision for the near future may be listed in this section. Copies of the self-study should be sent to the Dean of the Faculty, the Associate Dean of the Faculty, and the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (prior to the external reviewer's campus visit).

II. Elements of the External Review Procedure The external review occurs after the self-study is completed, normally in March of the academic year of the review.

1. The department/program Chair solicits the names and CVs of three potential outside reviewers.
2. The department/program Chair submits the list of three potential outside reviewers with their CVs to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. Due on the first Wednesday in October (during the fall preceding the external review). The list should be in ranked order with reasons for preferences stated. It is recommended that at least two of the individuals put forward should come from liberal arts colleges. A suggested starting point is to look for reviewers from the list of Peer and Aspirant* schools established by the Strategic Planning Committee given in Section I.1 above.
3. The Dean of the Faculty approves an outside reviewer and the Chair informs the selected outside reviewer. The Dean of the Faculty reports this information to the Curriculum Committee.
4. In advance of the outside reviewer's visit (in February or March):
 - The relevant faculty administrative assistant and the department/program Chair send the Dean of the Faculty's Office (Barbara Jean) information (CV, relevant dates, name of sponsor – usually the department Chair) to complete the reviewer's contract.
 - The Dean of the Faculty's Office (Barbara Jean) writes a letter specifying the honorarium (\$750) and completes the reviewer's contract.
 - The Dean of the Faculty's Office sends the contract and letter to the Fiscal Affairs Office (Latoya Jenkins) who sends the package with a tax form to the reviewer, who signs and returns the materials.
5. The department/program chair with the assistance of the relevant faculty administrative assistant completes a detailed schedule for the visit of the outside reviewer, noting the following:
 - The Dean of the Faculty's Office (Barbara Jean) is provided with a copy of the reviewer's schedule.
 - The reviewer travels one day, perhaps with a meeting the evening of arrival, has meetings all the second day and perhaps part of the third, and leaves on the third day.

- The Dean of the Faculty meets with the outside reviewer as he/she arrives on campus and just before leaving campus. These meetings are arranged with Barbara Jean.
- Departments and programs should limit off-campus meal costs to no more than \$25 per person including tax and tip. Off-campus meals are limited to no more than two per visit, with other meals occurring on campus in the Commons.
- Departments and programs should reserve the most reasonably priced lodging – the Comfort Inn, for example, as opposed to the San Gabriel Bed and Breakfast.
- Administrative Assistants-Faculty should purchase the lowest cost practicable air fare.
- The Dean of the Faculty approves the schedule for lodging and meal expenses.
- The reviewer is paid the honorarium upon receipt of the reviewer's report.
- The reviewer is reimbursed for airfare, lodging and other reasonable expenses upon presentation of itemized receipts.

Correspondence with the external reviewer

When corresponding with the external program reviewer, the department/program chair should provide the reviewer with a list of questions or concerns he or she would like addressed during the review. These questions and concerns will help guide the reviewer during the site visit. In addition, it will be useful to have some brief statements from each of the faculty members in your department.

Itinerary for the visit

The length of a typical visit of an external reviewer is one and a half to two days. The itinerary during that time should include the following elements:

1. Ideally, it is good to have an opening/orienting session with the full department/program. This can orient everyone to the purpose of the visit. A dinner the night of the arrival of the reviewer is one way to fit this into the schedule. This often is not possible; in that case, it is important that a clear statement of the purpose and goals of the visit has been circulated prior to the arrival of the external reviewer, along with the itinerary for the visit.
2. Early in the visit the reviewer should meet with the Dean of the Faculty.
3. Ideally, the reviewer should meet with each faculty member in the department in an individual interview, including adjunct or part-time faculty. In the case of interdisciplinary programs, some of the meetings may need to be with groups of faculty who cross-list courses in the program.
4. The program reviewer should interview chairs of any other departments/programs related to the department through cross-listed courses, service courses, interdisciplinary majors, or minors. Again, this may be done in a group setting, if necessary.

5. The reviewer should be given the opportunity to interview administrative support staff.
6. The reviewer should meet with students in the department/program. This often works well over lunch.
7. The reviewer should interview the library director & the library department/program liaison.
8. A debriefing session with full department/program should be built into the schedule.
9. An exit interview with the Dean of the Faculty will conclude the on-campus visit.
10. It would be good to have a bit of open time built into the schedule so that the reviewer can walk around campus and do a bit of fieldwork.

Documents that should be sent to the reviewer in advance of the visit

Well in advance of the campus visit, the external reviewer should be sent copies of the following materials. If any of these are found on a campus or department website, sending the reviewer links to those materials is appropriate.

1. A link to the *Southwestern University Catalog*.
2. A link to the department/program webpage.
3. A copy of the self-study.
4. A copy of college/university guidelines for external reviews of departments/programs.
5. Copies of syllabi from the department/program for the most recent iteration of each regularly taught course. While corresponding with the reviewer, find out if s/he wants to see all syllabi, or only syllabi for the core courses in the program.
6. Copies of each faculty member's CV. These are included in the self-study.
7. Course enrollments and number of majors and minors during the years following the previous comprehensive department/program review.
8. Department budgets.
9. Library collection and research report prepared by the library director and liaison. These are included in the self-study.
10. A copy of the department assessment plan. This is included in the self-study.
11. Written statements of concerns from the department/program as a whole as well as from individual faculty.
12. In addition, if the following documents are available they would be useful:
 - a. Department/Program Newsletters.
 - b. Information on student clubs.
 - c. Results of any studies on topics such as faculty, student, or alumni satisfaction with the program.

Report from the External Reviewer

Within a month of the visit, the external reviewer should provide the department/program chair and the Dean of the Faculty with a draft of the written report. At a minimum, the report from the external reviewer should include an assessment of the department/program goals, structure of the curriculum, and student-learning outcomes as they compare to other institutions of our type and/or, where applicable, with national guidelines in the particular field of study. The report should provide the external reviewer's perspective on how well the department/program is achieving the stated goals and student learning outcomes. It should include specific recommendations related to this range of issues. The chair of the department/program and/or the Dean of the Faculty may request that the external reviewer include additional information in the report. Copies of the report of the external reviewer should be sent to the Dean of the Faculty, the Associate Dean of the Faculty, and the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness.

III. Executive Summary (including a response to the Report of the External Reviewer)

The purpose of the executive summary is to give the Curriculum Committee a synopsis of the self-study, the external reviewer's report, and provide the department/program response to the external reviewer's report. The executive summary consists of 3-4 single-spaced pages. It is written at the conclusion of the department/program review process and includes a response to the external reviewer's report that balances the recommendations of the reviewer with institutional realities and addresses points of agreement or disagreement with the findings and recommendations of the report. Copies of the executive summary should be sent to the Dean of the Faculty, the Associate Dean of the Faculty, and the Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. Due by the first Wednesday in October (during the fall following the review).

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