Academic Program Review
Obtaining an External Perspective

Selection of the External Reviewer

1. The chair will identify qualified individuals from peer institutions (e.g., public institutions of comparable size and collection of degrees within the department) for selection to serve as the External Reviewer, avoiding potential conflicts of interest (e.g., close personal relationship with reviewer). Candidates with an identified conflict will be eliminated from further consideration. The chair will discuss possible candidates with the dean, providing biographical sketches and a decision will be made by agreement of the dean and the chair.

2. The External Reviewer will be contacted to discuss the expected outcomes of the review as well as set a schedule for the site visit. The schedule will also include a date for the receipt of the External Reviewer’s final written report by the dean and chair. It is the Department chair’s responsibility to ensure that the dean is able to meet with the External Reviewer on the date of the site visit.

3. Prior to the site visit, the chair will provide the External Reviewer with access to the Department’s self-study including appendices, the College’s strategic plan, the University’s guidelines on academic program review, the University Academic Plan, a cover letter from the dean or chair, rubric for evaluation, and a draft itinerary for the site visit.

Suggested qualifications for External Reviewer:
- Expertise in the areas of specialization of the department under review
- Experience with a similar department
- Prior experience in program reviews
- Academic administrative experience (e.g., dean, department chair, program director)

External Reviewer Report:

The final written report from the External Reviewer should begin with an overall review of the Department and conclude with specific recommendations. The reviewer shall provide a synthesis of information contained in the Department’s self-study and the information gathered during the site visit. Recommendations that are achievable within the limits of the current budget are important. Recommendations that require additional resources can be balanced by recommendations that reallocate resources away from underperforming areas within the department in one or more additional years. Targeted questions are included below to provide guidance to the External Reviewer in shaping his or her final written report.
Questions to be addressed in External Reviewer report

Teaching Program
  a. Does the curriculum ensure that students have access to a high-quality, well-integrated and current knowledge of the field? Do students have appropriate mentorship/advising?
  b. Are the learning outcome assessments appropriate for the field and are they used effectively to improve the curriculum? Do students and faculty have appropriate opportunity to provide recommendations for improvement of the curricula?
  c. Do the degree program(s) provide value (program quality/effectiveness and program efficiency, page 3 of self-study guidelines) and do they relate to College goals and the University Academic Plan and its strategic goals?
  d. Is the faculty teaching workload appropriately balanced across faculty and consistent with research and outreach expectations?
  e. Are the Department’s academic programs sustainable considering the offered degree programs, numbers of students served, faculty and facilities?

Research and Scholarship
  a. Are the scholarly contributions (publications, performances etc.) of the faculty consistent with the strategic goals of the Department?
  b. Do scholarly contributions of the Department provide value (program quality/effectiveness and program efficiency, page 3 of self-study guidelines) and do they relate to College goals and the University Academic Plan and its strategic goals?
  c. Do the scholarly activities of faculty provide appropriate support for student (eg, graduate, undergraduate and professional) scholarship and creative work?
  d. How effectively does the institutional support for research at the College and University level (eg, faculty start-up and resource requests, facilities, library, staff support, sponsored research office) provide the faculty the opportunity to conduct research in a manner consistent with the strategic goals of the Department, College, and University?

Service and Public Engagement
  a. Do the faculty services to the professional community (eg, editorial positions, review panels, leadership in professional societies) support Department, College and University strategic goals?
  b. Do the outreach programs engage the local and regional community in a significant and meaningful manner that is consistent with the strategic goals of the Department, College, and University?
Example itinerary for External Reviewer  (note: programs will vary in scheduling based upon size, complexity and mission of the unit)

University of Rhode Island
Academic Program Review
External Reviewer Site Visit Itinerary

DAY 1

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM  Breakfast (w/ dean or chair)
9:00 AM – 10:00 AM  Meet with dean
10:00 AM – 11:00 AM  Meet with department faculty
11:00 AM – Noon  Tour of facilities
Noon – 1:30 PM  Lunch (w/ dean or chair)
1:45 PM – 2:15 PM  Meet with undergraduate students (if applicable)
2:15 PM – 2:45 PM  Meet with graduate students (if applicable)
3:00 PM – 3:30 PM  Meet with student organization leaders (if applicable)
3:45 PM – 4:15 PM  Meet with advisory boards (if applicable)
4:30 PM – 5:30 PM  Report preparation time

6:00 PM – 7:30 PM  Dinner with _____________________

DAY 2

8:00 AM – 10:00 AM  Reviewer works on draft report
10:00 AM – 11:30 AM  Open Forum for faculty, staff and students
10:30 AM – Noon  Meet with department chair and/or program coordinator
Noon – 1:30 PM  Lunch with _____________________
1:30 PM – 2:30 PM  Exit meeting with dean
2:45 PM – 3:45 PM  Wrap up with dean and department chair