ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEWS

Office of the Provost

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Table of Contents

Preface

The University is responsible for developing and promoting academic programs of quality. The quality and effectiveness of programs, the extent to which planned objectives have been met, the priority that the University attaches to the programs, and the costs of these activities must be considered as the University proceeds with its continuous review and adjustment of institutional plans, activities, and resource allocation.

The goal of this system of program review is to improve the quality and effectiveness of the University's graduate and undergraduate offerings. The review process provides an opportunity for faculty and administrators to obtain insights regarding the level of excellence of the programs. As the University proceeds with its planning process, information is needed about the strengths and weaknesses of programs. It is expected that specific recommendations aimed at maintaining or enhancing the quality of programs will be an outcome of this review process. In rare cases, as a result of the review process, it may be determined that an existing degree program is no longer viable. In these cases, after such a recommendation is received, strategies may be employed to restructure or discontinue the program.

Units to be Reviewed and Scheduling of the Review

The dean/president determines the schedule for the review of programs in consultation with units chairs and program directors. The Provost may request the dean/president initiate the review of a particular unit. Evaluations of programs on the regional campuses should be organized by Division.

- New programs should be reviewed within five years of their implementation

- Review of each academic unit is required at least every ten years.

- In the case of those units in which some programs are subject to review by external accrediting groups, the scheduling of the academic program review may be coordinated with the accreditation. If some of the programs in the unit receive a particularly thorough accreditation review, the unit may petition the Provost for an exemption of these programs from review by the complete process. As a condition of such approval, units must document how the accreditation review will satisfy the objectives and characteristics of program reviews.

Academic Program Review Process

The following activities, described in greater detail in this document, are the framework of the academic program review process.

1. Self-study
2. External review
3. Final report
4. Post-review planning

5. One year follow-up

Self-Study Recommended Guidelines

The self-study acquaints members of the review committees with the composition and functions of the unit and helps the unit to make an appraisal of its strengths, weaknesses, goals, and future directions. Sample questions for the self-study are listed in appendix A.

The self-study, (usually 20-30 pages in length), should include review of the following elements:

1. Overview
2. Faculty
3. Educational programs and students
4. Infrastructure and budget resources
5. Interrelatedness (if any) of programs with other programs, units, centers and schools within the university and at other leading institutions
6. Comparison to similar programs within the institution and at other leading universities (where feasible)
7. Strategies for strengthening the program

All faculty should have an opportunity to review the self-study document. Unit-wide faculty sessions should be held to discuss the report and to propose avenues for strengthening the academic programs. The unit chair then forwards the self-study to the dean/president of the unit who may ask that additional information be included. The dean/president forwards the completed self-study to the Provost.

External Review Team Visit

The unit should submit to the dean/president the names of approximately ten nominees to be considered as members of an external review committee, together with brief descriptions of their qualifications. This should be done approximately one month before the self-study is submitted.

The dean/president appoints the external review committee and may select one member to chair the group and then submits to them the unit's self-study, the unit's current planning document and any other relevant documents. In those cases where the review of the unit occurs shortly after the review of any of the unit's programs by an external accrediting group, the external review committee will receive copies of the accreditation report.

Sample visit schedule for the review committee is listed in appendix B

Final Report

The chair of the external review committee is responsible for coordinating the submission of the final report of the group; however, all committee members are expected to participate in the preparation of the report. The final report should describe the strengths and weaknesses of the program, offer recommendations and include a brief executive summary of its major findings

and recommendations. It is normally submitted within one month of the visit.

The final report is submitted to the dean/president and shared with the faculty of the unit for comment.

The final report, with the unit's response, is submitted to the school's Planning and Budgeting Committee and/or other appropriate committees, to the Provost and to the Senior Vice Chancellor for the Health Sciences when a school in the Health Sciences is being reviewed. As appropriate, the Provost will submit the report and unit response to review subcommittees of the University Council on Graduate Study and the Provost's Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Programs for their information and advice.

Post Review Planning

The most important part of the Academic Program Review process is implementing the final report's recommendations. The Provost requests the unit and the dean/president, in consultation with the school's Planning and Budgeting Committee or other appropriate committees, prepare an action plan based on the review recommendations.

A post review meeting should be held within a few months of the final reports submission to the Provost. Attendees at this meeting should include the dean/president, the unit's leadership and representatives from the Provost's office.

The goal of this meeting should be to decide on the next steps in implementing this action plan. The result of this meeting should be a memo to the Provost outlining the steps that will be taken by the unit over the coming year.

One Year Follow-Up

Approximately one year after the post review planning meeting, units will be asked to provide an update on their progress. It is the responsibility of the dean/president to monitor this process throughout the first year. A follow-up report should be drafted by the unit and submitted to the dean/president. After review by the dean/president, this report, with written comments or feedback by the dean/president, should be submitted to the unit and shared with the Provost.

Conclusion

The results of the Academic Program Review process should provide plans with explicit directions for the unit to capitalize on their strengths, recognize weaknesses with concrete ways to improve, allowing their unit to move forward in a very positive direction.

APPENDIX A: POTENTIAL QUESTIONS FOR SELF-STUDY

Self-studies should be tailored to specific programs but should cover faculty, education programs, and infrastructure.

Overview

- Overview of the unit and background
- What are the goals of the various academic programs and how do they relate to the unitand to the University's strategic plan?
  - Ways in which these goals have changed during the past several years, and their responsiveness to changes in the University's strategic plan?
  - Ways in which the programs have succeeded in achieving these goals?
  - Ways in which the programs have fallen short of these goals?
- How has the program responded to changing trends of the discipline?
- How has the program responded to changes in available resources or workload?
- How has the program responded to the changing needs of society?
- What role do alumni have with the unit?

Faculty

ATTRACT, RETAIN, MENTOR

- What is the number of tenured faculty, in the tenure stream, and outside the tenure stream, including part-time and adjunct faculty? (Have these numbers changed since the last review?)
- What is the number of faculty with graduate faculty status?
- What are the specific qualifications of the faculty? (curricula vitae, limited to five pages, of all faculty of the program must be included as an appendix to the self-study)
- How do salaries and fringe benefits compare against benchmarking?
- How does the unit assess its ability to attract and retain faculty?
- What are the faculty turnover rates and reasons?
- What are the faculty teaching loads and advising loads?
- What initiatives are in place to provide mentoring and support for faculty development, for new faculty, for those on promotion tracks*?*
- What is the faculty involvement in governance and program development?
- What are the opportunities for intellectual interactions among faculty? Is there a sense of community, opportunity to participate?

DIVERSITY

- What are the trends in minority and gender representation among the faculty?
- What efforts have been made to enhance representation and create a diverse community?

RESEARCH

- What is the research productivity of the faculty; publications and other evidence of creativity?
- Trends in funding? If not, what are the obstacles?
- Is there interdisciplinary collaborations? If not, what are the obstacles?

RECOGNITION
- What is the national and international impact of faculty on their discipline and profession?
- What is the external recognition of faculty, including exhibits, awards, prizes, commissions, fellowships, etc.?

Educational Engagements
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
- What are the demographic and academic characteristics of student population?
- What are the policies on admission of students and resources and strategies used for recruitment?
- What are the attrition rates, amount of time to complete degree, graduation rates?

GRADUATE STUDENTS
- What financial assistance is available to graduate students?
- What is the success in placement of graduates, including postdoctoral students, during the past five years, and career achievements of graduates?
- Is the size of the graduate program appropriate?

INSTRUCTION
- What are the numbers, types and sizes of classes taught by tenure stream, tenured, and non-tenured stream faculty, and by TA/TFs?
- What are the curriculum objectives and student programs of study? How has curriculum changed, or planning to change, in response to trends in the discipline?
- Are effective, evidence-based approaches to teaching appropriate to the discipline regularly used in instruction?
- How is technology used to enhance student learning?
- What is the support for, and quality of, student advising?
- How are student learning outcomes assessed? And how effective is the program in achieving these learning outcomes?

ASSESSMENT
- What is the quality of instruction? How is it assessed? How are student evaluations used?
- What are the opportunities for experiential learning?
    - undergraduate and graduate student research experiences?
    - internships and practicums?
    - international opportunities?
- Are there opportunities for professional development for graduate and undergraduate students?

Infrastructure and Budget Resources
- Describe classroom space and other instructional areas, including distance education facilities. What are the projections for future needs?
- Describe offices and meeting space. What are the projections for future needs?
- Describe laboratories, equipment for research and instruction, computer facilities and support, library space and resources. What are the projections for future needs?

- Provide summaries of financial support from externally funded grants, endowments, and University funds. How do these resources align with current and future needs?

Interrelatedness of Programs with Other Programs, Units, Centers and Schools within the University and at other Leading Institutions (if any)

- Curricula
- Research
- Dual-degree or joint-degree programs and/or dual majors
- Joint appointments

Comparison to Similar Programs within the Institution and at other Leading Universities (where feasible)

- Identification of peer programs
- Ratings by accrediting agencies, professional organization or others
- Annual program support (all sources)
- Faculty size and number of students
- Success at recruitment of good graduate students
- Success at placement of graduates and productivity and recognition of these graduates
- National and international reputation in profession or discipline

Strategies for Strengthening the Program

- What are the units strengths and weaknesses? How have these changed over time?
- What are ways to strengthen the program?

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE SCHEDULE FOR EXTERNAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

A staff person from the dean/president's office, working with the chair of the unit under review, is responsible for the scheduling of the on-campus activities of the external review committee and for sending the committee the self-study and other materials well in advance of the visit. The campus visit normally lasts two days.

Mandatory Items

- Private meeting with the dean/president of the unit under review, at the beginning of the visit (the committee is given its charge at this meeting.);

- Private meeting with the chair of the unit, close to the beginning of the visit;

- Meeting with faculty of the program, either singly or in groups, depending on the size of the unit;

- Closed meeting with graduate students of the unit, and with undergraduate majors;

- Free time to start writing the report and preparing for the debriefing with the dean/president.

- Debriefing meeting, at the end of the visit, with the dean/president and appropriate Associate Deans, Assistant Provost, and the Vice Provost who is the contact for the school.

Optional Items

- Meeting with the school's planning and budgeting committee or the graduate or undergraduate policy committees;

- Visit to library, to laboratories, to computing facilities;

- Meeting with faculty in related units;

- Meeting with involved faculty and administrators from outside the unit;

Social reception for faculty and students at the end of the first day. The evening schedule is the responsibility of the Office of the Dean/President and normally is left free for the committee to discuss the evaluation among itself