

Protocols for Departmental External Review, Ursinus College

Aims:

- provide information to assess strengths and weaknesses;
- provide information for future planning;
- place department/program into a larger context
 - within the College,
 - and with reference to peer departments at comparable institutions and within the liberal arts more generally

Oversight:

The review process is coordinated by the Office of Academic Affairs.

Timing and Preparation:

Timeline for Departments/Programs (administrative assistants and chairs)

6-12 months before review:

- ✓ The department chair in consultation with the department faculty submits a **list of prospective reviewer names** to the coordinator in the Dean's Office. (In other words, if the review is on the President's calendar for April; submit the names no later than October.) The list should contain at least **four** potential external reviewers, of whom **two** will be selected by the Dean's Office and invited to conduct the external review. Necessary information: brief bios information (educational background, research interests, teaching focus), as well as contact information (phone, email, institutional mailing address). Reviewers should be selected using the following criteria whenever possible: (a) small liberal arts college experience; (b) no actual or perceived conflicts of interest; (c) Associate or Full Professor level, ideally the latter; (d) broad representation of critical expertise; (e) peer-quality of both department and institution; (f) relative cost-effectiveness re: travel expenses although longer distances are not out of the question if the perspective provided is particularly valuable.
- ✓ The department chair **begins to gather the data** listed below and to draft the self-study. This is best accomplished with input from all members of the department.
- ✓ The department chair should work with her/his department to **submit up to four additional questions** for the department's alumni survey to the Dean's Office representative.

6 weeks before review:

- ✓ Dean's Office coordinator should work with the chair and administrative assistant to develop a schedule for the visit. (Sample attached. Note: each department member should have ample time [ideally, one hour] to meet with the review team; if possible, untenured faculty and the chair should have time to meet with the team alone.) If deemed useful to meet with adjuncts, they can be included in the schedule. The Dean's Office should make time on the appropriate Deans' schedules for meetings with the reviewers.

- ✓ Final draft of self-study should be almost done. Ideally, the reviewers should have a **four-to-six-week window** to review it and all supporting documents.

2-4 weeks before review:

- ✓ Reviewers' visit schedule should be finalized. (Administrative assistant should check on dietary restrictions for team and department when ordering meals.) Set up lunch with faculty from other departments; consult with department chair to see who should be invited. If more substantial meetings with faculty outside the department are necessary, they should be organized now too. Recruit students for the dinner and to provide the team with a campus tour. Double-check the President's calendar to confirm his/her appointment with the team. Confirm with Dean meetings with the team; make sure it's on their Outlook calendars.
- ✓ Self-study, all supporting documents (discussed further below), and final schedule for visit, should be sent out to team as pdf documents if they have not already been distributed. . (Note: some departments have distributed small external flash drives for the reviewers.)
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- ✓ Administrative assistant should send out reminders to team (with chair and Dean's Office rep copied in), including directions from hotel. If not all team members have cars, clarify who is driving whom from campus to hotel. Finalize travel from airport if needed. Remind team to save all transportation receipts, etc. for reimbursement. NOTE: Administrative assistant should be the keeper of the most updated schedule, sending a copy to the Dean's Office coordinator for reference.

After the review is received from the visiting team:

- ✓ The department under review will have an opportunity to write a 1-page response from the department to be submitted to the Dean's Office. The department will then have a meeting with the Dean of the College to discuss the review. Both the external review and the department's response will be shared with CPPC for use in guiding future planning as relevant.

Dean's Office Timeline

6 months before review:

- ✓ Approximately six months before review is scheduled, Dean's Office coordinator gets appointments with the review team on the President's calendar. Dean's Office coordinator should check with department chair to establish some ballpark dates, taking into account major conferences in the field, dates on which department members may be unavailable, etc.

- ✓ The Dean's Office coordinator, Institutional Research Office, and Dean's Office administrative assistant work send out alumni surveys, to include four standard questions, plus up to four additional questions provided by the department.

2-3 months before review:

- ✓ Dean's Office coordinator to check with departmental administrative assistant, who should make hotel reservations for the external reviewers (Courtyard by Marriott or Staybridge are closest hotels).
- ✓ Dean's Office coordinator should check in with department chair on her/his progress on the draft. Ideally, a very rough draft should be done by now.
- ✓ Dean's Office administrative assistant should close alumni survey and provide department chair the results of the survey.

6 weeks before review:

- ✓ Dean's Office coordinator should work with the chair and administrative assistant to develop a schedule for the visit. (Sample attached. Note: each department member should have ample time [ideally, one hour] to meet with the review team; if possible, untenured faculty and the chair should have time to meet with the team alone.) If deemed useful to meet with adjuncts, they can be included in the schedule. The Dean's Office should make time on the appropriate Deans' schedules for meetings with the reviewers.
- ✓ Final draft of self-study should be almost done. Ideally, the reviewers should have a **4-6 week window** to review it and all supporting documents.

2-4 weeks before review:

- ✓ Check with department administrative assistant: Reviewers' visit schedule should be finalized. (Administrative assistant should check on dietary restrictions for team and department when ordering meals.) Set up lunch with faculty from other departments; consult with department chair to see who should be invited. If more substantial meetings with faculty outside the department are necessary, they should be organized now too. Recruit students for the dinner and to provide the team with a campus tour. Double-check the President's calendar to confirm his/her appointment with the team. Confirm with Dean meetings with the team; make sure it's on their Outlook calendars.
- ✓ Check with department administrative assistant: Self-study, all supporting documents (discussed further below), and final schedule for visit, should be sent out to team as pdf documents if they have not already been distributed. . (Note: some departments have distributed small external flash drives for the reviewers.)
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1 week before review:

- ✓ Make sure the President has copies of the self-study, supporting documents, and brief biographical information for the external reviewers

When team leaves:

- ✓ The Dean's Office administrative assistant, should collect the reviewers' receipts and SS numbers for immediate reimbursement of travel expenses. Reviewers' stipend will be processed when report is received. This is currently done by Nicole Smith.

After the review is received from the visiting team:

- ✓ The department under review will have an opportunity to write a 1-page response from the department to be submitted to the Dean's Office. The department will then have a meeting with the Dean of the College to discuss the review. Both the external review and the department's response will be shared with CPPC for use in guiding future planning as relevant.

Preparing the Self-Study (Academic Departments)

Instructions for department chairs: Write a reflective self-evaluation of the aims, activities, and accomplishments of your department. While you should focus on the specific activities of your department's faculty and students, please also keep in mind connections between your department and the core curriculum and its learning goals (<https://www.ursinus.edu/academics/catalog/the-core/> and <https://www.ursinus.edu/offices/academic-affairs/assessment/core-curriculum-assessment/>) as well as the college's Strategic Plan (Ursinus 150: <https://www.ursinus.edu/150/>).

Suggestions and overview of aims of the self-study:

The self-study should be occasion for reflection on where the department is currently, where it is going, and where you hope to see it go in the next few years. Successful self-studies are neither overly laudatory nor overly critical; they call attention to and celebrate strengths, acknowledge challenges and limitations, and solicit feedback and guidance. Overall, this is an opportunity for reflection, about things that are going well and about areas to target for improvement.

The document has a distinct audience: faculty at peer institutions probably much like Ursinus, who face similar challenges in similar departments. However, the self-study will also be read by Dean's Office members. Anticipating problems the reviewers might bring up and looking at the department from an external perspective could certainly help your review, as the external team is more likely to be your ally if you offer a frank presentation of strengths and liabilities in advance.

Authors of the self-study should address the following topics and questions, noted below in the *suggested* Table of Contents. This outline suggests the sections the document should contain at a minimum, but self-studies will vary by department. You are encouraged to make decisions to shape your self-study in ways that are meaningful to the particularities of your department and your field of study.

Ursinus College Department of xxx
Departmental Self-Study
2018

Table of Contents

I. Overview of the Department of xxx

- Teaching and Enrollment: majors, minors, current enrollments, enrollment trends for past 5-10 years, use of adjuncts for core and non-core classes within the department enrollment trends over past 5-10 years
- Faculty, with breakdown by position and specialty
- Staff
- Departmental governance and structure
- Advising -- average # per faculty member, including majors and first-year students

II. The Curriculum and Learning Goals: In the discussion of the curriculum, please describe the current shape of your program/curriculum and place it in the context of the current state of the discipline/field of study. Pay special attention to any changes made since your last evaluation, and what you now consider most essential to the program. You may include comments on faculty development or staffing needs in the face of changes proposed by developments in the field of study. Be sure to address each of the following:

- Overview of curriculum and structure
- Department's larger academic vision and mission, including discussion of learning goals and assessment of learning goals (describe the department's practices in assessing the progress of students toward achieving these goals and making adjustments accordingly)
- The Major
- The Minor
- Other programs in your department and/or connections with other departments and programs
- Relationship between your department and the Opens Questions core curriculum, contributions to the core including CIE: Does your department offer courses in the Open Questions core curriculum or staff CIE sections? What connections do you see between the College's core aims and offerings and your department?
- Contextualize your department relative to peer institutions: Using your peer institutions list, how do the department's offerings compare with those of its peer institutions? What elements make it distinctive or innovative in its field? Do areas of weakness exist, or are there areas that need further development to bring you up to current standards to compete with peer institutions?
- What are the strengths of the pedagogical approaches enacted in your department's classes? Are there any new pedagogical approaches you are interested in pursuing or adopting in your department?

- What are the ways in which your curriculum and pedagogy attempts to include all students from across a range of backgrounds? Is anything needed to enhance these efforts?

III. Student Achievement and Outcomes

- Student research, conferences, internships etc.
- Post-graduation activities, including feedback from alumni survey
- Findings from your department's annual assessment of its learning goals

IV. Department activities and outreach

- Service by faculty member: faculty involvement in initiatives across campus and/or in professional activities and organizations off-campus
- Faculty scholarship and other professional development
- Community building and support of diversity and inclusion in your department
- In what initiatives are the department's faculty involved in on campus?
- How does the department contribute to the College's Strategic Plan?

V. Future plans

- What strategic opportunities and challenges face your department? How do you plan to address them?

Documents you will need (note: wherever possible, we have indicated below campus offices poised to provide you with this documentation so as to minimize work for department chairs):

- The most recent curriculum vitae for each current faculty member, going back five years (contact Nicole Smith in the Dean's Office for copies)
- Course enrollment data for the past 5 years (contact Annemarie Bartlett for this information)
- Syllabi for each course taught during the past 5 years submitted with self-study for review team (department administrative assistant can retrieve these from Sharepoint)
- Independent Learning Experiences/XLP in past 5 years: internships, independent study, and honors, study abroad (contact Office of Institutional Research for this information—Annemarie Bartlett)
- Graduating Majors, past five years, numbers and current professional/educational status (contact Office of Institutional Research for this information-- Annemarie Bartlett)
- Department Learning Outcomes Assessment Reports; five years would be ideal depending on availability. (Should be on a website from OAC and can be located by Dean's Office administrative assistant)
- Career Office Data on post-graduation employment and education, past five years (contact Bev Gaydos in CPD for this information)

- Alumni outreach/surveys (to be provided by the Dean's Office)

During the review, you should have additional examples of student work on hand should the committee wish to see them (an honors paper in each specialty within the department is fine). Note: these needn't be perfect pieces of work; in fact, the committee will want to see that how students at all levels of achievement within the department are faring. These should be provided in PDF format with the review data distributed prior to the on campus review.

A final note: preparing a good self-study requires time and effort. It should be a collaborative document, to which all FT members of the department contribute. Each member of the department might write a section of the report. Your administrative assistant can help request and collate the data noted above. Dean's Office members are available to answer questions to the best of our ability.

External Review Visitors' Template

Day One

Travel day and Dinner

4:00

Departmental meeting (if needed)

6:00 PM

External Team dinner with department members

PDR

Day Two

Campus visit

8:00 AM

Breakfast with Deans

PDR

9:30

Campus tour

10:00-12:00

Various meetings with faculty

12:00-1:00 PM

Lunch with faculty from other departments

Faculty/Staff DR

1 – 2

Various meetings

[Note: Individual faculty should have at least a half hour privately or an hour in pairs with the team. Pre-tenure, FT non-tenure-track faculty and the department chair MUST have individual time scheduled, ideally an hour each.]

2-3

Meeting with the President

3-6

various meetings (schedule time here to review documents)

6-7:30

Dinner on campus with students

PDR

7:30

Back to hotel

Day Three

Debriefing

Morning in hotel or campus "headquarters" to prepare draft of report

11:00 or 12:00

Debriefing with Deans in the Dean's Office

12:00 or 1:00

Debriefing and lunch with department

PDR or box lunch

2:00/2:30 PM

Departure