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WASC Resource Guide for 'Good Practices' in Academic Program Review

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PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THIS GUIDE

In July 2008, WASC issued its revised *Handbook of Accreditation*. Among the changes in the new *Handbook* are updated requirements for institutions' program review processes. These new requirements focus on incorporating an outcomes-based analysis of student learning into program review and integrating the results of program review into an institution's budgeting, planning and overall quality assurance processes.

This good-practice guide is designed to assist colleges and universities with meeting the new program review expectations within WASC's revised accreditation standards. While it is useful for meeting the revised standards, the guide is framed in terms of 'good practices' for academic program review processes rather than accreditation compliance.

This 'good practice' guide is not designed as a comprehensive instruction manual for how to implement outcomes-based program review. There are many existing resources which serve this purpose (Allen, 2004; Angelo & Cross, 1993; Bresciani, 2006; Bresciani, Zelna & Anderson, 2004; Huba & Freed, 2000; Maki, 2004; Suskie, 2004; Palomba & Banta, 1999; Walvoord, 1998; Walvoord, 2004). Nor is this an instruction manual for how to integrate program review into broader institutional quality assurance, budgeting and planning processes. Instead, it describes some of the key concepts and good practices implicit in an outcomes-based program review process in an effort to assist institutions with understanding the new WASC expectations.[1]

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[1] The following criteria (CFR = criteria for review) from the 2008 *WASC Handbook* (Standards 2 and 4) address program review and place it within the larger context of the need for each institution to develop an ongoing, comprehensive quality assurance and improvement system:

> All programs offered by the institution are subject to systematic program review. The program review process includes analyses of the achievement of the program's learning objectives and outcomes, program retention and completion, and, where appropriate, results of licensing examination and placement, and evidence from external constituencies such as employers and professional organizations (CFR 2.7).

WASC's program review requirement applies to academic AND co-curricular programs (CFR 2.11). This guide focuses on academic program review (primarily undergraduate although also including graduate) as a starting point and will be expanded at a later time to cover co-curricular program review, as well as review of administrative support units.

There are three main sections to this guide:

I. Framing concepts for a program review process that meets the new expectations
II. Overview of components and steps for conducting an outcomes-based program review process
III. Strategies for using program review results to inform planning and budgeting processes

In addition, **colleges and universities are encouraged to submit samples of their own outcomes-based program review guidelines so WASC institutions have a variety of models from which to customize their program review processes**. If you have a sample to share, please submit it electronically to: http://wascsenior.ning.com/forum/topics/good-practices-in-academic

Highlighted throughout this guide are three features of program review processes which are expected under the revised WASC standards:

- outcomes-based assessment of student learning and development
- evidence-based claims and decision-making, and
- use of program review results to inform planning and budgeting.

Planning processes at the institution define and, to the extent possible, align academic, personnel, fiscal, physical, and technological needs with the strategic objectives and priorities of the institution (CFR 4.2).

Planning processes are informed by appropriately defined and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data, and include consideration of evidence of educational effectiveness, including student learning (CFR 4.3).

The institution employs a deliberate set of quality assurance processes at each level of institutional functioning, including periodic program review. These processes include assessing effectiveness, tracking results over time, using comparative data from external sources, and improving structures, processes, curricula, and pedagogy (CFR 4.4).

Leadership at all levels is committed to improvement based on the results of the processes of inquiry, evaluation and assessment used throughout the institution. The faculty take responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and use the results for improvement. Assessments of the campus environment in support of academic and co-curricular objectives are also undertaken and used, and are incorporated into institutional planning. (CFR 4.6)

The institution, with significant faculty involvement, engages in ongoing inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning, as well as into the conditions and practices that promote the kinds and levels of learning intended by the institution. The outcomes of such inquiries are applied to the design of curricula, the design and practice of pedagogy, and to the improvement of evaluation means and methodology. (CFR 4.7)

Appropriate stakeholders, including alumni, employers, practitioners, and others defined by the institution, are involved in the assessment of the effectiveness of educational programs. (CFR 4.8)

See also: Table B, Addressing New Requirements in the Institutional Review Process (WASC, 2008)

The three highlighted features are explained in Section I. The last feature—use of results to inform planning and budgeting—is probably the most challenging to achieve, yet the most important component for a review process to be effective and sustainable. For this reason, we have devoted all of Section III to addressing this issue. We recognize that this is still a nascent conversation within higher education. We anticipate that this guide gradually will link to good practices from colleges and universities as they develop effective strategies for systematically using program review results for continuous improvement.

Please note that this guide is not intended to be prescriptive; it provides guidelines only, since **program review processes need to fit organically within an institution's existing structural processes and values.** Moreover, this guide does not presume to offer a definitive explanation of the new requirements; rather, it is designed merely as a helpful resource toward implementing the new WASC standards.

I. FRAMING CONCEPTS

This section provides a general overview of what a program review is and its relationship to accreditation reviews. It also explains the three key features of the revised program review process addressed in this guide: outcomes-based assessment of student learning, evidence-based claims and decision-making, and integration with planning and budgeting. Combined, these three features shift program review from a traditional input-based model to an outcomes-based model, heighten attention to improving the quality of student learning, shift the focus from *conducting* an effective program review to *using the results effectively*, and facilitate integrating the results of program-level evaluations into larger institutional processes.

A. Definition and Purpose of Program Review

A program review is a cyclical process for evaluating and continuously enhancing the quality and currency of programs. The evaluation is conducted through a combination of self-evaluation, followed by peer-evaluation by reviewers external to the program or department and, usually, also external to the organization. It is a comprehensive analysis of program quality, analyzing a wide variety of data about the program. The results of this evaluation process are then used to inform follow-up planning and budgeting processes at various levels in the institution—program, department, college, university—and incorporated into the institution's overall quality assurance system. An institution's program review process typically occurs on a regular cycle of five to eight years, meaning that each program/department is reviewed every five-eight years.

Program review is a required element in the WASC accreditation process. While accreditation attests to the institution's capacity and effectiveness, it is not possible for WASC to review and evaluate every degree program in the course of an accreditation review. Instead, WASC expects institutions to have processes that assure program currency, quality and effectiveness. When implemented effectively and followed up deliberately, program review is a powerful means of engaging faculty in evaluating and improving programs in the organization.

Even though required by WASC, the primary utility of program review is internal to an institution. It provides a structure to foster continuous program improvement that is aligned with departmental, college and institutional goals. Such improvements may include:

- Developing or refining program learning outcomes and identifying appropriate means for assessing their achievement
- Better aligning department, college and institutional goals

- Refining departmental access and other interventions to improve retention/attrition, and graduation rates
- Making curricular and other changes to improve student learning and retention
- Refining, reorganizing or refocusing curricula to reflect changes in the discipline or profession
- Reorganizing or improving student support systems, including advising, library services, and student development initiatives to improve the academic success of students in the program
- Designing needed professional development programs, including programs to help faculty learn how to develop and assess learning outcomes, to improve pedagogy, and to improve curricular cohesion
- Reorganizing or refocusing resources to advance student learning or specific research agendas
- Re-assigning faculty/staff or requesting new lines
- Illuminating potential intra-institutional synergies
- Developing specific action plans for modifications and improvements
- Informing decision making, planning and budgeting, including resource re/allocation
- Linking and, as appropriate, aggregating program review results to the institution's broader quality assurance/improvement efforts

B. Distinction between Types of Accreditation Review and an Institution's Program Review Process

Colleges and universities engage in a variety of review processes, including:

- WASC Regional Accreditation
- Specialized Program Accreditation and State Licensure
- Institutional Program Review

Each region of the U.S. has an institutional accrediting agency for colleges and universities. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (there is a separate Commission for community and junior colleges) is the accrediting body for the western region of the U.S. and several international institutions that have ties to the western region.

WASC's regional accreditation review evaluates whether the institution as a whole meets WASC standards. This institution-wide review focuses on the capacity (personnel, curricula, student learning, finances, infrastructure, organizational processes, etc.) and effectiveness of the college or university to meet its particular mission and its documented results in fulfilling its educational goals and outcomes. WASC expects each institution to have its own ongoing system of quality assurance and improvement: program review and assessment of student achievement are key components of this system. The forms of external review described below are part of such a system, not a series of separate, disconnected activities.

Specialized accreditation reviews are conducted by outside agencies which certify the professional quality of particular programs. Specialized accreditors evaluate whether or not a program meets the standards set by the disciplinary or professional body or a State licensing agency. Examples of this type of accrediting body include the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), the American Bar Association (ABA), the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), and the California Commission of Teacher Credentialing (CCTC).

The WASC form, "Inventory of Concurrent Accreditation" calls for institutions to identify the results of specialized and professional accreditation as well as key indicators being used to address outcomes in

each review. This form is useful to institutions, apart from WASC reviews, for aggregating information on issues arising from the multiple accreditation reviews conducted at an institution.

An institutional academic program review evaluates degree programs in a department or cross-disciplinary/-school program (such as General Education) within the institution. This type of review is usually conducted as a formative assessment to assist with ongoing planning and improvement of programs. Such institutional program review is required by WASC standards (CFR 2.7) and is the type of review addressed in this resource guide. The program review process must include an assessment of student learning outcomes, an external review of the program[2] (of which a specialized accreditation is one form), and the use of program review results for continuous program improvement.

Universities and colleges are encouraged to coordinate the specialized program accreditation process (e.g., ABET, NCATE, AACSB, etc.) with the institutional program review process to avoid duplication of labor. This is sometimes accomplished by substituting the specialized accreditation review for an institution's internal program review process. If the specialized accreditation review does not include assessment of student learning outcomes and/or other required elements of an institution's internal program review process, then these additional elements are sometimes reviewed immediately prior to or following the specialized accreditation review (and then appended to the specialized accreditation review documents).

Institutions might wish to consider adapting the WASC form "Inventory of Concurrent Accreditation" for program review results across the institution to identify common issues and connect the program review process to broader institutional issues and concerns.

C. Distinguishing Features of this Resource Guide

Below is a brief definition of the three essential features embedded in the program review model discussed in this guide. These elements are consistent with the revised WASC standards and may be new to institutions' program review processes:

- **Evidence-Based Claims and Decision-Making**
  Any conclusions drawn within a self-study report or decisions made as a result of a program review are to be informed by evidence. That is, all claims within a self-study report about a program's strengths, weaknesses, and proposed improvement plans are to be supported by relevant qualitative and/or quantitative evidence (cf., *WASC Evidence Guide*). This contrasts, for instance, with program review self-studies that are largely descriptive and based on advocacy. Hence, the section of this guide describing the components of a self-study report (IIC below) identifies types of evidence useful for answering questions about various aspects of a program's quality or viability.

- **Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**
  Evidence-based program review includes the ongoing evaluation of how well a program's student body (in the aggregate) is achieving the stated learning outcomes (or objectives) for that program. While such assessment of student learning outcomes is independent of program review and part of ongoing faculty processes for program improvement, program reviews need to incorporate an analysis of a program's assessment of student learning. This includes: a review of program learning outcomes; evaluation of the methods employed to assess achievement of these outcomes; and analysis and reflection on learning results,

[2] "External" can mean external to the program/department or external to the institution; this choice is left to the discretion of individual colleges and universities.

retention/graduation rates and other outcomes data (qualitative as well as quantitative) over a multiple-year period.

- **Integration of Results with Planning, Budgeting, and Institutional Quality Assurance Systems**
  The results of program review are to be used for follow-up planning and budgeting at various decision-making levels within the organization (program, department, college and institution). In addition, program review is to be incorporated into the institution's broader quality assurance/improvement efforts. For example, problems found across several program reviews might be addressed institutionally as well as within individual programs.

II. CONDUCTING A PROGRAM REVIEW

This section provides an overview of each step of the program review process. It starts with general principles and steps in the governance of a program review process, then addresses key components of a program review in the sequence in which they occur: the self-study inquiry and report, followed by the external review, then a formal Findings and Recommendations report, and culminating with a Memorandum of Understanding that may involve commitments from senior administrators regarding resources.

A. Governance of the Process – Guiding Principles

The guiding principles governing the process are:

- Academic program review is a faculty-driven process; that is, the program review process is usually codified by Academic Senate policy and implemented by a committee that includes faculty and may involve administration.
- Formative assessment "by faculty, for use by faculty" is preferable and more effective in improving student learning and other program aspects than is assessment by administration.
- Collaborative involvement of administration in various steps of the program review process (e.g., meeting with the external team of evaluators) helps to secure buy-in for change and improvement, as well as to ensure alignment with institutional goals and resources.
- It occurs on a regularly scheduled timeline, which is determined by the institution.
- It includes a program or departmental self-study process, where departmental faculty and administrators collectively engage in inquiry and analysis.
- The self-study process and report include, as one element in the comprehensive review of the program, an analysis of the ongoing assessment of student learning.
- The program review process includes an external review and written report, including recommendations for improvement.
- Agreed-upon recommendations emanating from program review are the result of deliberations between the department, the academic program review committee, and senior administrators (e.g., deans and provosts) with decision-making power regarding priority setting and resource allocation.
- Program review results are integrated into college and institutional planning and budgeting.

B. Governance of the Process – Steps and Responsibilities

Different constituencies within a college or university are responsible for carrying out different steps in the program review process. The following steps are broad outlines of the various constituencies'

responsibilities. Considerable variation in these steps occurs across institutions. Typically, the governance process for program review is organized in the following manner:

- The Faculty Senate or Academic Senate usually defines the program review process through a formal written program review policy.
- Administration usually maintains a timeline for all academic program reviews and assists departments with the steps involved in the process. (In some institutions, the Academic Senate assumes these responsibilities.)
- While faculty usually oversee the evaluative aspects of program review, the process is typically implemented in collaboration with administrative leaders.
- The body tasked with carrying out program reviews on campus—the program review committee—notifies the department of an upcoming review in accordance with the established timeline for review. This communication should be sent well in advance of the formal review itself. Special issues for the review are also identified in advance and agreed upon, such as alignment with specific school or institutional goals, or special issues relating to a particular program or department.
- Program review committee members are typically appointed by the major academic divisions within the college/university (to represent that division, such as school, department, etc., depending on size of the institution), but may include members of the administration as well.

- Office for Institutional Research provides the department with a program review data packet that contains relevant/available program data that will be analyzed in the self-study (e.g., enrollment and retention data, alumni and student satisfaction survey results, NSSE data, market research, etc.).
- Department faculty conduct a departmental self-study within guidelines provided in the established program review policy. It is important that these guidelines include very specific requirements for program level assessment. Some institutions combine self-studies of both graduate and undergraduate programs while other institutions separate these reviews.
- The self-study identifies program strengths and limitations and suggests solutions to identified problems.
- After completing the self-study, some institutions have the department chair/head submit that document to the dean and/or administration for review (and sometimes approval); others omit this step.
- The institutional program review policy should describe how to secure qualified, objective external reviewers, including those with understanding and experience in addressing student learning outcomes assessment. Once the self-study is completed (and approved, if relevant), the visit from external reviewers is organized. Institutions typically bring in one or two reviewers for one-two days.
- The external reviewers read all relevant documentation, including for example: the self-study report; relevant data from institutional research; survey results of faculty and students in the program; course syllabi; course evaluations; examples of student work, such as senior papers and theses; reports on annual assessment of student learning outcomes; curricular flow charts; faculty CVs; and examples of faculty research.
- External reviewers typically prepare a written report of the review, which may include recommendations not cited in the program faculty's own self-study process.
- The program review committee examines all reports and writes a final Findings and Recommendations report that is submitted to the department and to senior campus administrators (e.g., the dean and provost).

- The final product of the program review—a Memorandum of Understanding—places the Findings and Recommendations in the context of resource allocation decisions by mandating the participation of senior campus administrators with authority over campus resources.
- A formal Improvement Plan is usually required, especially for departments/programs that receive a conditional approval (see pages 12-13) given the results of program evaluation. Follow-up plans are established for tracking progress.

C. Components in the Self-Study Report

The self-study consists of evidence-based inquiry and analyses which are documented in a comprehensive self-study report. The **specific format and content of a self-study report varies across institutions**, but they usually share some core elements.

1. Introduction/Context

Most reviews begin with a section that provides a context for the review. In contrast to the rest of the self-study report, this portion is primarily descriptive and may include:

- The internal context – In what department does it reside? In which school or college? What degrees does it grant? What concentrations are available?
- The external context – How is the program responsive to the needs of the region or area in which it serves?
- It may also include a brief history of the program or a description of changes made in the program since the last review (if relevant).

A key component in providing the context for the review is a description of the program's mission, goals, and outcomes.

- A mission statement is a general explanation of why your program exists and what it hopes to achieve in the future. It articulates the program's essential nature, its values and its work.
- Goals are general statements of what your program wants to achieve.
- Outcomes are the specific results that should be observed if the goals are being met.

Note that goals typically flow from the mission statement, and outcomes are aligned with goals. In addition, the program's mission, goals and outcomes should relate to the mission and goals of the college and institution.

2. Analysis of Evidence About Program Quality & Viability

The bulk of a self-study report consists of a presentation and analysis of evidence about the quality and viability/sustainability of a program. This major portion of the report addresses the extent to which program goals are being met by using evidence to answer key questions related to those goals. It is important for an institution's program review guidelines to identify the precise evidence to be analyzed in the self-study and for Institutional Research to provide a packet of relevant institutional data available on the program.

To facilitate meaningful analysis of the evidence, it is helpful to provide guiding questions to structure the self-study inquiry and report. These questions often produce deep discussions among faculty and are considered the most important aspect of the self-study process. Hence, a set of sample questions is embedded below within each of the core elements typically analyzed in a self-study report.

Program evidence falls into two categories:

- Evidence that addresses questions about program quality
- Evidence that addresses issues of program viability and sustainability

2a. **Evidence of program quality** typically addresses questions about:

- **Students** – What is the profile of students in the program and how does the profile relate to or enhance the mission and goals of the program?
  - Data in this category might include students' gender, ethnicity, age, GPA from previous institution, standardized test scores, type of previous institution, and employment status.
  - Note that the specific list of indicators in this category will depend on the goals of the program.

- **The Curriculum and Learning Environment** – How current is the program curriculum? Does it offer sufficient breadth and depth of learning for this particular degree? How well does it align with learning outcomes? Are the courses well sequenced and reliably available in sequence? Has the program been reviewed by external stakeholders, such as practitioners in the field, or compared with other similar programs?
  - Evidence in this category might include
    - A curriculum flow chart and description of how the curriculum addresses the learning outcomes of the program (curriculum map)
    - A comparison of the program's curriculum with curricula at selected other institutions and with disciplinary/professional standards
    - Measures of teaching effectiveness (e.g., course evaluations, peer evaluations of teaching, faculty scholarship on issues of teaching and learning, formative discussions of pedagogy among faculty)
    - A description of other learning experiences that are relevant to program goals (e.g., internships, research experiences, study abroad or other international experiences, community-based learning, etc), as well as how many students participate in those experiences
    - A narrative that describes how the faculty's pedagogy responds to various learning modalities and student learning preferences.

- **Student Learning and Success** – Are students achieving the desired learning outcomes for the program? Are they achieving those outcomes at the expected level of learning, and how is the expected level determined? Are they being retained and graduating in a timely fashion? Are they prepared for advanced study or the world of work?
  - Evidence in this category might include:
    - Annual results of direct and indirect assessments of student learning in the program (could be combination of quantitative and qualitative measures), including the degree to which students achieve the program's desired standards
    - Ongoing efforts by the department to "close the loop" by responding to assessment results
    - Student retention and graduation rate trends (disaggregated by different demographic categories)
    - Placement of graduates into graduate schools or post-doctoral experiences
    - Job placements
    - Graduating student satisfaction surveys (and/or alumni satisfaction surveys)
    - Employer critiques of student performance or employer survey satisfaction results
    - Disciplinary ratings of the program

        - Student/Alumni achievements (e.g., community service, research and publications, awards and recognition, professional accomplishments, etc.)

- **Faculty** – What are the qualifications and achievements of the faculty in the program in relation to the program mission and goals? How do faculty members' background, expertise, research and other professional work contribute to the quality of the program?
    - Evidence in this category might include:
        - Proportion of faculty with terminal degree
        - Institutions from which faculty earned terminal degrees
        - List of faculty specialties within discipline (and how those specialties align with the program curriculum)
        - Teaching quality (e.g., peer evaluations, faculty self-review)
        - Record of scholarship for each faculty member
        - Faculty participation in development opportunities related to teaching, learning and/or assessment
        - External funding awarded to faculty
        - Record of professional practice for each faculty member
        - Service for each faculty member
        - Distribution of faculty across ranks (or years at institution)
        - Diversity of faculty
        - Awards and recognition

        [Note that the specific list of indicators in this category will depend on the goals of a particular program/department/college.]

2b. **Evidence of program viability and sustainability** typically addresses questions about the level of student demand for the program and the degree to which resources are allocated appropriately and are sufficient in amount to maintain program quality:

- **Demand for the program**
    - What are the trends in numbers of student applications, admits, and enrollments reflected over a 5-8 year period?
    - What is happening within the profession, local community or society generally that identifies an anticipated need for this program in the future (including market research)?

- **Allocation of Resources**:
    - **Faculty** – Are there sufficient numbers of faculty to maintain program quality? Do program faculty have the support they need to do their work?
        - Number of full-time faculty (ratio of full-time faculty to part-time faculty)
        - Student-faculty ratio
        - Faculty workload
        - Faculty review and evaluation processes
        - Mentoring processes/program
        - Professional development opportunities/resources (including travel and research funds)
        - Sufficient time for course development, research, etc

    - **Student support**
        - Academic and career advising programs and resources
        - Tutoring, supplemental instruction, and T.A. training
        - Basic skill remediation

    - Support for connecting general learning requirements to discipline requirements
    - Orientation and transition programs
    - Financial support (scholarships, fellowships, teaching assistantships, etc)
    - Support for engagement in the campus community.
    - Support for non-cognitive variables of success, including emotional, psychological, and physical interventions if necessary
    - Support for research or for engagement in the community beyond campus, such as fieldwork or internships

  - **Information and technology resources**
    - Library print and electronic holdings in the teaching and research areas of the program
    - Information literacy outcomes for graduates
    - Technology resources available to support the pedagogy and research in the program
    - Technology resources available to support students' needs

  - **Facilities**
    - Classroom space
    - Instructional laboratories
    - Research laboratories
    - Office space
    - Student study spaces
    - Access to classrooms suited for instructional technology
    - Access to classrooms designed for alternative learning styles/universal design

  - **Staff**
    - Clerical and technical staff FTE supporting program/departmental operations

  - **Financial resources**
    - Operational budget (revenues and expenditures) and trends over a 3-5 year period

3. Summary Reflections

This portion of the self-study report typically interprets the significance of the findings in the above analysis of program evidence. Its purpose is to determine a program's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

It is helpful to have questions that guide the interpretation of the findings, such as:

- Are the curriculum, practices, processes, and resources properly aligned with the goals of the program?
- Are department/program goals aligned with the goals of the constituents that the program serves?
- Is the level of program quality aligned with the college/university's acceptable level of program quality? Aligned with the constituents' acceptable level of quality?
- Are program goals being achieved?
- Are student learning outcomes being achieved at the expected level?

It is also helpful to have evaluation criteria in mind; that is, what guidelines will be used to determine what the evidence suggests about the program's strengths and weaknesses? In some cases, an absolute standard may be used. For example, it may be decided that a student-faculty ratio of 20 to one is

necessary to ensure program quality, and any ratio higher than that is unacceptable. In other cases, a norm-referenced criterion may be more appropriate. For example, if a national student survey was used to assess student satisfaction with the program, the evaluation criterion might be that your students' satisfaction is at least as high as students at other similar institutions.

4. Future Goals and Planning for Improvement

Self-study reports conclude with a section devoted to future planning and improvement. Findings from all prior sections of the report serve as a foundation for building an evidence-based plan for strengthening the program.

This section might address such questions as:

- What are the program's goals for the next few years?
- In order to achieve these goals:
    - How will the program specifically address any weaknesses identified in the self-study?
    - How will the program build on existing strengths?
    - What internal improvements are possible with existing resources (through reallocation)?
    - What improvements can only be addressed through additional resources?
    - Where can the formation of collaborations improve program quality?

D. The External Review

The external review typically occurs a month or two after a program or department submits its self-study report.

1. Choosing Reviewers

The size and composition of the review team vary considerably, depending on the size of the department/program under review. Usually, the team ranges from 2-4 people. At the time a department or program is notified that it will be conducting a program review, departmental leadership usually are asked to submit to administration or the campus program review committee (depending on the institution) a list of names of possible reviewers. Depending on the institution's program review policy, these reviewers may be external to a department/program but it is more typical (and highly recommended) for them to be external to the college/university.

External reviewers should be distinguished scholars/teachers/practitioners in the field and, if external to the institution, be chosen from campuses that are similar to the campus of the department undergoing review. It is also helpful for external reviewers to have had experience with program administration. With the inclusion of student learning results in program review, it will be important for at least one of the reviewers to understand and be experienced with student learning outcomes assessment and have the ability to review and analyze the program's assessment processes and results; one way to include such expertise is to have a campus expert/coordinator on outcomes-assessment join the other external reviewers as part of the external review team.

Some institutions also include local campus faculty on a review team (from departments external to the program under review). Campus faculty serving as reviewers should have some familiarity with the department undergoing review. The department undergoing review is typically asked to assure the program review committee that the list of proposed reviewers is capable of carrying out a neutral review. The program review committee (or, at some institutions, the administration) may add names to the list of reviewers proposed by the department. The department/program is typically asked to comment on any

additional names proposed by the program review committee (or administration). The program review committee (or administration) decides on the final list of possible reviewers, contacts proposed reviewers for their availability, and typically designates one reviewer to serve as Chair of the review team. Many universities have departments sign a conflict of interest form to help ensure that reviewers are acceptably unbiased in their association with the department under review.

2. Instructions and Materials for the External Review Team

About thirty days prior to the scheduled department visit, the information from the program self-study and perhaps additional materials are sent to each member of the external review team, along with a charge by the campus program review committee. An identical information package is provided to the members of the campus review committee and other designated administrators (e.g., dean, provost, chancellor).

3. External Review Team Visit and Report

The review team visit typically lasts for two days (sometimes one day for small campuses/programs), during which time the review committee members meet with department faculty, academic advisors, students, the campus program review committee, and select administrators. The review team typically takes part in an exit interview just prior to concluding its departmental visit and is expected to submit its written evaluation to the campus program review committee within several weeks of the visit. Upon submission of the report, off-campus reviewers generally receive a stipend and travel expense reimbursement.

E. Post External Review Process

As soon as the campus program review committee receives the report from the external review team, it is distributed to the department and select administrators. The department is typically asked to review the report (within a brief time period) for factual inaccuracies and misperceptions. The department summary of factual corrections and misperceptions becomes part of the package of documents subsequently reviewed by the campus review committee.

1. Findings and Recommendations Report

The campus program review committee reviews all relevant documentation (self-study report, external review report, departmental response, if relevant) and, based on the evidence reviewed, writes a report detailing the major findings and recommendations resulting from the evaluation process. The findings and recommendations report presents a cohesive plan of action for program improvement based on the program review documents.

These findings and recommendations are conveyed to the department by the campus program review committee. The chair of the department undergoing review distributes the findings and recommendations report to the program faculty, staff and, in some cases, students. The department/program collects input from all constituents and prepares a detailed response, either outlining plans for implementing the recommendations or detailing reasons for not doing so.

This response is submitted to the campus program review committee within a reasonable time frame for consideration in drawing up the final Findings and Recommendations. The campus review committee distributes its approved final report to the department/program for action and to designated administrators.

2. Responding to Findings and Recommendations Report

The campus review committee and designated administrators (e.g., dean and provost) meet with department/program representatives to discuss the action steps to be taken as a result of the review. A timeline is set and resources needed to accomplish the plan's goals are identified. At this stage, it is imperative that senior campus administrators with authority over resource allocation decisions be involved in the process. Some university program review guidelines call for a written response to the Findings and Recommendations Report from the dean. This requirement focuses the dean's attention on the review and increases the potential for change. Unless program review has the involvement and attention of deans and the provost and is in accordance with their priorities, findings from the reviews are not likely to be included in budget decisions.

In some cases, an MOU (memorandum of understanding) is written and signed by the department chair, dean, and provost. The MOU may contain recommendations that the department is expected to fulfill by the next review, including a timeline with progress milestones. The MOU may also contain recommendations for resource allocation.

Regarding the contents of the MOU recommendations, planning that emanates from the program review should not be confused with solely a demand for additional resources, but rather should enable institutions and programs to focus on effective ways to achieve their program goals. In fact, many recommendations do not require resource allocation or redistribution. A reorganization of curriculum, the addition of new courses, or partnerships with other departments are examples of changes which might require no (or few) resources. On the other hand, an MOU might also suggest changes that do require substantial resource allocation, such as additional faculty or staff hires or the purchase of lab equipment. In those cases, the recommendation usually occurs in a section of the MOU directed to the dean or the provost.

In some institutions, based on the final report, the department is given full or conditional approval. If the department is granted a full approval, it will not be required to submit any further reports or documentation until the next program review. If there are serious issues that require immediate attention the department might be granted conditional approval and given a plan for improvement. In this case, it will be given a timeline for reporting on the specific issues of concern before the next program review cycle. Typically, administration is responsible for follow-up on conditional approvals.

3. Sharing Results and Tracking Improvement Plan

To maximize the effectiveness of program review, it is important to share the findings and resulting decisions with stakeholder groups. Such sharing of findings generates buy-in to the program's and/or institution's goals and creates an opportunity for all stakeholders to review the program review results.

To facilitate and track the implementation of improvement plans, each year the campus review committee or relevant administrator reviews the progress of programs reviewed in previous years. If the department/program was not successful in implementing all aspects of the plan, the campus review committee or administrator may recommend follow-up actions to the department/program and appropriate campus administrators.

4. Distribution and Archiving of Program Review Documents

Copies of the unedited program review documents (self-study report, external review report, responses, findings and recommendations report, improvement plan, MOU) are sent to relevant parties, such as the chancellor, provost, dean, and Academic Senate. File copies are archived in an appropriate location for future reference. deans and other administrators need to retain copies of program reviews and the decisions that resulted from them (including MOUs) and refer to them in their planning and budgeting.

III. USING PROGRAM REVIEW RESULTS IN PLANNING & BUDGETING

Program review provides one way for institutions to link evidence of academic quality and student learning with planning and budgeting. That is, the findings in the self-study, recommendations in the external review, Findings and Recommendations Report, and MOU can be used as evidence to inform decision-making processes at various levels in the institution (i.e., from the program-level through the university-level, depending on the nature of the recommendations). The mechanism for facilitating such integration will vary greatly from one organization to the next, but there are some processes and guiding questions that facilitate the use of the results from program review flow in planning and budgeting processes at each decision-making level.

Many recommendations involving program improvement can be met with very little resource reallocation (e.g., re-sequencing of courses, refinements in the criteria for student evaluation, re-organization of instructional or workshop material). However, other recommendations can point to a larger reallocation of resources ranging from faculty development for assessment to hiring more staff or faculty members to fill current unmet needs.

What follows are examples of the types of decisions that might be made based on the results of program review at three levels of an organization—the department/program level, the college level, and the institution level—and questions that might guide decision making.

A. Department Level

At the department and/or program level, results from program review can be used to:

- Inform curriculum planning, such as:
  - Changing the sequence of courses in the major curriculum
  - Adding or deleting courses
  - Refinement or articulation of pre-requisite or disciplinary requirements
  - Re-design of the content or pedagogy of specific courses

  The primary questions driving such changes would be:
  - *Are our students achieving the desired learning outcomes for the program?*
  - *If not, what elements of the curriculum could be changed to improve learning?*

- Inform changes in how resources are used within the department/program, such as

- Assignment of faculty to teach specific courses or sections
- Changing the scheduling of certain courses or the frequency with which they are offered
- Changing the number of students required in course sections so that student learning and effectiveness of teaching are maximized
- Implementing improved advising and support services to increase learning, retention, and/or graduation rates
- Adjusting the allocation of faculty resources across General Education, the major, and the graduate program
- Providing additional professional development or research resources for faculty
- Adjusting faculty teaching loads and assigned/release time

Some guiding questions here are:

- *How can resources within the department be allocated in such a way as to better achieve the mission and goals of the department?*
- *At what point in the prioritization of departmental goals do these recommendations fall?*
- *What are the costs of each recommendation (both the direct monetary cost and the opportunity cost in the form of lost resources for other initiatives)?*
- *What is the extent of departmental funds available and where might the department turn for external funding?*

- Make recommendations for how resources outside the department/program should be used. For example, the department may suggest that
  - Library collections be enhanced
  - Additional tutors be added to the learning resource center
  - Instructional technology support be improved
  - The university explore writing/speaking across the curriculum initiatives
  - Career placement services be improved

- Make a case to the dean for specific additional resources. For example, the department may ask for
  - An additional faculty line or support staff
  - Additional funds to support faculty professional travel or research
  - Release time for curriculum development or research-related activities
  - A reduction or increase in program enrollment

B. College Level:

At the dean/college level, program reviews can be used to decide how to allocate resources across departments. For example, by looking across the results of several departments' program reviews, the dean may decide to

- Add resources, such as faculty lines, travel money, equipment, space, to certain departments, based on needs identified in the reviews
- Enhance support to programs with the potential to grow or to establish research distinction in the field
- Combine or phase out certain programs
- Re-tool and reassign faculty or academic support staff

In making such decisions, a dean may consider:

- *How do these recommendations fit into the overall department mission and goals?*
- *How do these recommendations fit into the College mission and goals?*
- *At what point in the prioritization of both sets of goals do these recommendations fall?*
- *What are the costs of each recommendation (both the direct monetary cost and the opportunity cost in the form of lost resources for other programs)?*
- *What is the extent of resources available and where might the dean turn to for eternal funding?*

In addition, deans may use resource allocation decisions to ensure that departments include outcomes-based assessment and evidence-based decision making in the program review process to ensure that the process is a meaningful tool for quality enhancement. This can be encouraged by withholding resources if these two elements are absent from the self-study or granting additional resources for those programs engaged in meaningful assessment of student learning and which demonstrate evidence-based decision-making within program review. Program review will be viewed as more meaningful and departments will take the process more seriously if there are a) consequences for departments not meeting new program review and assessment standards and b) strategic funding by deans and provosts of evidence-based proposals for improving student learning and other dimensions of program quality.

C. Institutional Level:

At the institution level, program reviews can be used in a variety of ways in planning and budgeting, among them:

- By deans bringing forward requests during the budgeting process that are informed by the results of program reviews
  - In this case, many of the guiding questions listed under the dean/college level may also be questions that are discussed at this level, depending on institutional culture and the institution's business model.
- By aggregating program review results across departments and Colleges, the institution can get a sense of whether university goals (or strategic planning goals) are being met or being modified.
  - If the overall pattern of results suggests that there is an area for improvement then university leadership may decide to allocate additional resources, typically to Colleges, to address that area.
- By institutional leadership articulating its primary strategic initiatives and allocating funds or resources to Colleges or programs in order to strengthen efforts in those areas.
  - If this approach is adapted, many of the guiding questions listed under the dean/college level may also be questions that are discussed at this level, depending on institutional culture and the institution's business model.
  - The idea here is that the institution controls all allocation of resources and can influence directly the decisions to improve specific aspects of desired strategic initiatives.

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