

## Program Review Instructions for External Evaluators

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## Responsibilities

External evaluators are asked to:

- assess and verify the information presented in the self-study
- prepare a factually-based evaluative report on the unit

Please consider the following:

- quality of faculty
- level of research/scholarship
- effectiveness of teaching
- competence of graduates
- quality of the students and student outcomes for the program
- administration of the program
- relative standing in comparison to other institutions
- academic goals and quality

We would like an objective analysis that summarizes:

- the state of the program and its vision for the future
- the extent to which operational and curricular standards are met
- strengths and weaknesses
- future issues for the department/program
- constructive suggestions for further development of the department/program

## Procedures

Department Chairs/Program Directors will provide the following to the external evaluators:

- A copy of the self-study and a copy of all supporting data no later than three weeks prior to the site visit
- An itinerary for the site visit

Careful prior examination of the self-study and associated data will enhance the effectiveness of the campus visit. The evaluators and Department Chair/Program Director should discuss arrangements before the visit. Evaluators should:

- make a list of key persons to interview
- ask in advance for pertinent information not contained in the self-study
- determine if student learning outcomes have been clearly articulated and how they are being assessed
- assess how well operational and curricular standards are met
- assess how well the department is meeting its goals and objectives
- identify issues that need further clarification
- look for functions, operations, or program areas that are problematic or require special attention

## The Site Visit

The external evaluators should do the following (where applicable):

- conduct a thorough review of all departmental graduate and/or undergraduate programs
- review university and departmental policies and procedures for evaluation of programs and

implementation of changes, with particular emphasis on policies and procedures to ensure that student competencies are met

- review documentation concerning appointment accomplishments, promotion and tenure of faculty, which should include the following:
  - 1st and 2nd promotion records
  - Governance
  - Course syllabi
  - Portfolios
  - Exhibition and event programs
- inspect physical plant and equipment, computer facilities and consider repair, maintenance and replacement policies and plans
- consider department/program's budgetary resources, library resources and faculty/staff size and configuration
- evaluate the qualifications of students accepted into the program, their progress, attrition and graduation rates and placement following graduation

The site visit will include the following meetings, as outlined on the itinerary provided by the department chair:

- An orientation meeting on the first morning with Vice Provost for Educational Effectiveness, Carol Van Zile-Tamsen, who will address the goals of program review.
- A meeting on the first day with the decanal dean and any appropriate associate deans
- adequate time to meet with faculty, students and staff
- a tour of departmental facilities
- a one hour meeting on the second day of the visit for the external evaluators to meet alone and organize thoughts for the exit interview
- an exit interview on the second day of the review with the Provost, academic Dean, the Vice Provost for Educational Affairs and Dean of the Graduate School, the Dean of Undergraduate Education, and the Assistant Vice Provost for Educational Effectiveness. In this Exit Interview, the external evaluators may ask any final questions, report general observances and answer questions, review the preliminary findings of the team that might be included in the evaluator's report, and review the next steps in the process
- a 15-minute meeting for the external evaluators to meet with Emily Luchterhand, Program Review Coordinator, to complete travel and honoraria paperwork

## The Evaluator's Report

The external evaluators should submit a copy of a single jointly-written report, within four weeks following the site visit, to Emily Luchterhand, [ERL2@buffalo.edu](mailto:ERL2@buffalo.edu), Program Review Coordinator, who will then distribute it to the Department Chair, the academic Dean, the Vice Provost for Educational Affairs and Dean of the Graduate school, and the Dean of Undergraduate Education.

### Format of the Report

- general program issues, including academic and operational functions
- the graduate program, if applicable, with an emphasis on research and scholarly activity and the quality of the faculty and graduate students
- the undergraduate program, if applicable, with an emphasis on student learning, quality of teaching faculty and undergraduate students
- summary of your recommendations for the improvement of the department/program.

Each section of the reports should reflect a consideration of all standards contained in the self-study.

There is no need to repeat material from the self-study, although you may refer to it. The report should focus on the educational, research and scholarly missions of the department/program as well as the quality and effectiveness of the department/program in pursuing those missions.

### **General Program Issues**

When writing this section, external evaluators should comment on (a) the department/program's mission, goals and objectives; and (b) its size and scope. How compatible and effective are relationships among the different components of the department?

#### ➤ **Faculty and Staff**

- faculty background, training, competence and achievements,
- faculty diversity
- the number of faculty and distribution of faculty expertise in relation to mission, goals and objectives, and size to scope
- the effect of the full-time/part-time faculty ration on the education of students and fulfillment of academic functions such as counseling and project guidance
- faculty morale

Describe the extent to which the following are effective within the department/program:

- appointment, evaluation and advancement, including special mentoring activities for junior faculty and movement of faculty through ranks
- distribution of teaching loads
- student/faculty ratio
- faculty development
- strengths or weaknesses in terms of faculty quality or numbers

Please also comment on the following:

- contributions by graduate assistants and support/technical staff to the teaching and research missions of the department/program
- size and composition of professional, technical and clerical support staff available to the department/program

#### ➤ **Facilities, Equipment and Safety (if applicable)**

- Are space, facilities and equipment adequate for the programs offered?
- Are the facilities and equipment sufficient to support all activities offered, including lectures, laboratories, studio instruction, etc.?
- Do facilities and equipment meet safety standards?
- Are there adequate plans and provisions for the maintenance, repair and replacement/upgrade of technology and equipment?

#### ➤ **Published Materials**

Summarize your observations about the clarity, accuracy, comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the course catalog and other published/web materials describing the programs.

#### ➤ **Community Involvement**

The external evaluators should note the department/program's efforts to be a cultural resource for its surround community and any significant education/outreach activities.

## ***The Graduate Program***

Does the institution ensure sufficient enrollment for the size and scope of the program(s) offered? Does it also ensure an appropriate number of faculty and other resources to cover the size and scope of the program(s) offered?

Please comment on the following:

- recruitment and admissions policies and procedures
- quality of enrolled graduate students and how that quality compares with that of graduate students enrolled in such programs at peer institutions
- financial support (ex. assistantships, fellowships, tuition scholarships, etc.) currently provided to graduate students in the program and how the nature, sources and levels of that support compare with such programs at peer institutions

### ➤ **Research/Scholarly Activity Profile of the Faculty**

The research/scholarly activity profile of the faculty is key to the success of the graduate program. Please consider the following:

- How many of the faculty are active researchers and publishers?
- Are there particular strengths or weaknesses in faculty quality?
- How well-known is the program nationally and internationally?
- How do the program's productivity and visibility compare with peer institutions?

### ➤ **Graduate Education and Training**

- How well does the program succeed in educating, training, retaining and placing its graduate students and what data/information illustrates that performance assessment?
- What are the outcome measures that were used, or that should be used, in tracking/assessment?

### ➤ **Degree Programs**

Evaluate the program's Master's and Doctoral curricula. Please provide:

- comparisons with standards and benchmarks for similar curricula in peer institutions
- a judgement of the effectiveness of each curriculum in relation to its stated goals and objectives
- an assessment of the institution's success in evaluating and ensuring the development of requisite competencies

The evaluation should focus on student achievement. When commenting on curricular structures, evaluate the extent to which degree/program titles are appropriate for degree/program content. Please discuss each curriculum individually and note if the program is continuing, new, or proposed.

### ➤ **Evaluation of Student Work**

Summarize observations on the overall standard of work by students and provide the rationale underlying these judgements. Comment on the following:

- Quality of recent Doctoral dissertations or other culminating written material for professional degrees, Master's theses, final projects and student portfolios with reference to degree programs and levels being offered
- Student morale
- Progression rates and "throughput" patterns (ex. time-to-degree) of graduate students and how those completion rates and time-to-degree patterns compare with such programs at peer institutions

### ➤ **Overall Quality of the Program**

How would you rate this program compared to other nationally ranked programs? What would be needed to move the ranking of this program into the top quartile of programs in the field, if it is not there already?

➤ **Program Evaluation, Planning and Projections**

Comment on the department's measures to evaluate the success of the program, including student outcomes and placement upon graduation. What are the department's projections for the size and scope of the program and its future directions?

➤ **Other Comments**

The external evaluators should make any additional comments about the program that they deem appropriate.

***The Undergraduate Program***

Does the institution ensure sufficient enrollment for the size and scope of the program(s) offered? Does it also ensure an appropriate number of faculty and other resources to cover the size and scope of the program(s) offered? Does the program offer sufficient advanced courses in the major?

➤ **Recruitment, Admission Retention, Record Keeping and Advisement**

Evaluate recruitment and admission policies and procedures as well as retention policies and procedures for the major. To what extent are these:

- appropriate goals and objectives of curricular programs
- clearly defined
- published for students and faculty
- applied with rigor and fairness

How effective is the advisement and counseling system? How effective are procedures for articulation with other institutions (if relevant)?

➤ **Programs, Degrees, and Curricula**

This is the most critical section for the report on the undergraduate program. The evaluation should focus on student achievement and learning outcomes. When commenting on curricular structures, evaluate the extent to which degree/program titles are appropriate for degree/program content. Discuss each curriculum individually and note whether the program is continuing, new or proposed. Please provide:

- comparisons with standards and benchmarks for similar curricula in peer institutions
- your judgement of the effectiveness of each curriculum in relation to its stated goals and objectives
- an assessment of the institutions success in evaluating and ensuring the development of requisite competencies
- your appraisal on any undergraduate research initiatives or awards available to students in the department

➤ **Evaluation of Student Work**

Summarize observations on the overall standard of work by students and provide the rationale underlying on these judgements. Comment particularly on the quality of written work, final projects and student portfolios with reference to degree programs and levels being offered. Also comment on student morale.

➤ **Overall Quality of the Program**

How well is the program performing in its teaching mission at the undergraduate level? What is needed to improve this undergraduate program?

➤ **Program Evaluation, Planning and Projections**

Comment on the departments measures to evaluate the success of the program, including student outcomes and placement upon graduation. What are the department's projections for the size and scope of the program and its future directions?

➤ **Other Comments**

The external evaluators should make any additional comments about the program that they deem appropriate.

***Summary of Recommendations***

Please provide your observations of the department and your recommendations for improvement.

The department has provided you with their SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis and vision for the future. What can you suggest given their current situation, and the resources associated with the state institution, to assist them in reaching their vision for the department? Are there other issues or concerns that the department should be considering?