

## **Claremont Colleges Intercollegiate Departments/Programs Academic Program Review Guidelines**

The following guidelines describe the purposes, characteristics, and procedures for an intercollegiate academic department/program review. The guidelines are suggestive, not prescriptive, and should be of help to departments/programs as they plan for, undertake, and interpret the results of an intercollegiate academic department/program review.

### **The Purposes of Intercollegiate Academic Department/Program Review**

Student learning and program planning are at the heart of the review process. Reviews will typically include an internal program self-study and a multi-day visit by external reviewers. The insights gained through this process should provide feedback to help the faculty do its job better, use its resources more efficiently, attract new resources to its curriculum and programs, plan for educational innovation and evolution, and engage in conversations about educational practices with respected colleagues from other institutions and the ADC.

### **Overview of the Intercollegiate Academic Department/Program Review Process**

An academic program includes a self-study by the intercollegiate department/program, followed by a visit from three external reviewers. The ADC pays for the self-study and external review, although the Lead Dean's College, in consultation with the ADC as appropriate, provides guidance and substantive and logistical support for the review process.

Approximately one month after the external review, the reviewers submit their final report to the Lead Dean (see Appendices A and D for selected questions and topics for academic department/program self-studies and reviews the reviewers could consider during their campus visit and a suggested framework for their final report, respectively), who then forwards the report to the department/program. The department/program chair and Lead Dean will meet to discuss the content of the report and any necessary responses, including clarifying any inaccuracies. One semester later, the department/program chair provides a written follow up report to the Lead Dean, outlining how the department/program plans to respond to the external reviewer's report, and discussing any further recommendations for action. The Lead Dean or the ADC may meet with the department/program chair to discuss the report and recommendations. In addition to participating in the external review team's campus visit, the Academic Dean's Committee reviews the self-study, the external reviewers' final report, and any program response and provides feedback to the department/program review committee.

### **Getting Started with Program Review**

Ideally, academic department/program reviews will be spread over three semesters, a period that should allow a department/program ample time for preparation, collecting and analyzing data, writing the self-study, hosting an external visit, making specific plans and commitments based on what has been learned in the review process. The Lead Dean initiates the review

process by informing the department/program chair that a review should be take place by a certain date. The department/program chair is generally responsible for:

- 1) Convening and leading a department/program review committee;
- 2) Preparing the academic department/program review plan, including preparation of the self-study;
- 3) Managing the review process.

The department/program chair works closely with members of the department/program review committee, and the Assessment Office and/or the Institutional Research office of the lead college to gather necessary information and write the self-study.

Early in the process, the department/program should set aside sufficient time for discussion of an appropriate focus for the self-study (see below for basic elements of self-study report). In order to facilitate that discussion, the department/program chair may want to distribute a set of possible topics or issues for the self-study before that initial discussion. Selected questions and topics for academic department/program self-studies and reviews can be found at the end of this document (Appendix A). Also early in the process, the department/program chair will meet with the Lead to discuss the self-study and get feedback on issues and directions that are important from the perspective of the Academic Deans. Three months prior to the external reviewer visit, the department/program chair must submit the written self-study report to the Lead Dean and the ADC for review.

A detailed timeline and checklist for academic department/program review can be found at the end of this document (Appendix B).

### **Resources Available for Intercollegiate Department/Program Review**

In planning for and undertaking a program review, several resources are available to intercollegiate departments/programs.

- National studies of general curricular issues for liberal arts colleges.
- Studies by national organizations in the discipline or field.
- Academic department/program reviews conducted at the Claremont Colleges by other departments/programs (permission is required to view the self-study documents).
- The lead college's Institutional Research and/or Assessment Office can provide:
  - Advice on the development of academic department/program review plans;
  - Assistance articulating and revising program goals and student learning outcomes;
  - Help in identifying and supplying existing assessment data from institutional surveys to inform the review where appropriate (The National Survey of Student Engagement, the CIRP Freshman Survey and Senior Surveys cover many topics relevant to student learning and program review);
  - Technical support for web-based surveys (of alumni and students);

- Assistance with the collection and analysis of other institutional data relevant to academic program review.

### **Selecting the External Reviewers**

The department/program review committee submits a list of 6-8 potential external reviewers, including names, titles, institutions and email addresses, and also brief statements explaining the appropriateness of each suggestion and an explanation of any personal or professional relationships (if any) exist between members of the department/program and potential reviewers. The list and statements should be forwarded to the Lead Dean who will identify three External Reviewers from the submitted list or after consultation with the department/program review committee; the Lead Dean, in consultation with the ADC as appropriate, will formally invite identified reviewers to participate in the review. In general, at least one external reviewer should come from a comparable liberal arts college and one from a research university that offers PhDs in relevant disciplines. This helps to ensure that the program receives feedback on how well the program is preparing students for further study as well as on the unique situation of the Claremont Colleges as liberal arts colleges. Other considerations in selecting external reviewers include potential conflicts of interest, dimensions of diversity, history with the Claremont Colleges, and expertise related to the key questions/issues identified in the self-study.

Generally, close associates of department/program faculty members are not eligible to serve as external reviewers. The department/program will indicate dates it would prefer the external reviewers to visit campus. The Office of the Lead Dean will determine availability and once reviewers have confirmed, arrange travel and housing for reviewers.

### **The Basic Elements of a Self-Study Report**

The review committee creates a written self-study report that it will provide to the Lead Dean and the ADC three months prior to the external review team visit. The Lead Dean will provide the external reviewers the written self-study report no later than one month before the external review visit. While there is no single, prescriptive model for the self-study report, it will typically include the following basic elements:

- 1) A history of the department/program which may include changes in faculty, facilities, and/or curriculum;
- 2) A statement of department's/program's goals and student learning outcomes.
- 3) An assessment of student learning in the department/program/major(s) in light of the department's/program's student learning outcomes. The assessment of student learning may contain some indirect evidence (e.g., survey results, interviews, focus groups), but should have at least one direct assessment of student learning (e.g., embedded exam questions, portfolio evaluation, standardized test results, capstone project evaluation). The assessment of student learning could be a summary and review of the department's/program's annual assessment of student learning;
- 4) A description of how the department/program contributes to the intellectual life of the Claremont Colleges.

- 5) Description of degrees offered (if any) and with data on enrollment, majors, and minors (if applicable), disaggregated by relevant demographics;
- 6) The adequacy of library and/or informational technology resources for the department's/program's needs-;
- 7) Results from student/alumni surveys (if any);
- 8) Comparative data from departments/programs at similar colleges;
- 9) Faculty profiles including the role of the faculty member in the department/program (e.g., core faculty, affiliate faculty, etc), such as CVs or other documents that speak to including teaching, research, and service;
- 10) ADC, College, and Departmental financial support for faculty and students (e.g., research funds, travel funds, funds for senior projects, chair stipends, conference funds, programming funds);
- 11) Questions or issues the department/program would like the external review team to address during its visit and in its report.

### **The External Review**

At least one month before the review, the Lead Dean will send the external reviewers this document and its appendices, the department's/program's written Self-Study Report, and selected questions and topics the academic department/program and the ADC wish the external reviewers to consider during their campus visit (see Appendix A). External reviewers typically spend two days on campus. The external review team meets with the Lead Dean on the beginning of the first day of their visit and meets with the Lead Dean for an exit interview in the late afternoon in the second day. After this exit interview, the reviewers should have time to discuss the contents of their written final report and should refer to Appendix C for a suggested framework for the final report. The department/program, in consultation with the ADC when appropriate, sets the schedule for the visit, ensuring that external reviewers meet with all continuing department/program faculty and support staff as well as individuals in joint or related departments/programs-Deans from the Claremont Colleges, and students, especially undergraduate majors and minors. The goal is for reviewers to gain the fullest picture of the department/program and from a variety of constituencies. Many departments/programs find it valuable to have reviewers visit one or more classes and review resources (e.g., laboratories, workspaces). Departments/programs may wish to have reviewers examine student work such as thesis or class projects, or potentially to host a reception or dinner for the reviewers during their campus visit.

### **Final Report**

The external reviewers will send the final report directly to the Lead Dean no later than one month after the review, who then will forward it on to the department/program Chair.

The department/program should prepare a written response to the external review, including offering any corrections to factual errors or misinterpretations, context and interpretations for the observations of the external reviewers, and describing plans related to the recommendations noted in the report. The departmental written response should be shared with the Lead Dean within one month of receiving the external review report. The Lead Dean

will take the self-study, the external reviewers' report, and the department's/program's written response to the Academic Dean's Committee for discussion at its next scheduled meeting. The ADC may opt to invite the department/program chair to attend a meeting to discuss the reports and review process, or delegate this discussion to the Lead Dean.

A year after the external review, the department/program submits a brief follow-up report to the Lead Dean. The report outlines which recommendations have been implemented and why, which have not been implemented and why, what impact the changes have had, and where the department/program intends to move in the future. The report also can provide the department/program with an opportunity to remind the ADC of additional steps it would like to have taken. The department/program chair meets with the Lead Dean to discuss the follow-up report. The Lead Dean is responsible for sharing the follow-up report with the Academic Deans Committee.

Approved by the Academic Deans Committee (ADC) on October 1, 2014.

Revised and approved by the ADC on May 24, 2024.

**Appendix A:**  
**Suggested Questions and Topics for Intercollegiate Program Self-Studies and Reviews**  
**(adapted from the Pomona College Guideline for Self-Studies and Reviews)**

The following questions may spark further discussion among colleagues in your department/program. They are only suggestions, not requirements.

**Teaching and Learning**

- How does the department/program determine the learning goals are being met with its current curriculum? What kinds of evidence are used?
- How does the department/program use this evidence to evaluate and improve its curriculum?
- What sorts of faculty/student collaboration does the department/program support? How effective is this collaboration?
- Given the department's/program's learning goals, how appropriate is the senior capstone experience? How does it help students integrate the information, concepts, and skills that they have learned?
- Are there striking ethnic, racial, and/or gender disparities among majors and non-majors taking courses in the department/program? What can be done to address them?
- How coherent are the major and minor requirements?
- How well-prepared are majors for graduate study? How successful are majors in getting into graduate school? What other post-graduate alternatives do the majors pursue?
- How do department/program offerings help all students lead satisfying, productive lives? Does the curriculum offer courses that provide useful skills and knowledge for students who will take only one or two courses in the concentration?
- What courses outside of the department/program do faculty advisors encourage students to take?

**Faculty Development**

- To what extent do professors in this department/program find their teaching satisfying? How can the department/program help faculty members continue to improve their pedagogy or develop new areas of teaching expertise?
- How appropriate is the faculty staffing, given the curricular goals and enrollments? What proportion of courses is taught by regular and continuing members of the faculty?

- How do the physical facilities facilitate or hamper the department/program goals?
- In what ways does the department/program facilitate research productivity among faculty members?

### **Department/Program Governance**

- How well is the department/program functioning? Is there shared governance, or do a minority of faculty or even just the chair make most decisions? Are there written guidelines for the department's/program's governance?
- How does the department/program distribute or delegate responsibilities among individual faculty members? How is leadership encouraged and developed across the department/program?
- How does the department/program distribute resources among individual faculty members?
- How are junior faculty members mentored with respect to their teaching, scholarship, and service? Are information and expectations communicated effectively?
- Are there sufficient opportunities for the department/program faculty to interact with one another and share experiences (through both formal meetings and informal interactions)? Is there potential for better interprogramal and intercollegiate cooperation and complementarity?
- What are administrative or technical staff needs within the department/program and how well are they being met?

## Appendix B: Detailed timeline and Checklist

### Three Semesters before Review

- Initial meeting between the department/program chair and the Lead Dean to begin review process; Chair serves as review coordinator
- Semester and year of external reviewers' visit confirmed
- Potential external reviewers (6-8) are discussed and agreed on by department/program
- Department/Program chair forwards names of potential reviewers to the Lead Dean along with preferred dates (3-4) for reviewers to visit

### Two Semesters before Review

- Department/Program meets to frame focus of department/program review
- Lead Dean's office confirms external reviewers and dates of visit with Review coordinator; invites reviewers
- Department/Program gathers relevant materials for review document:
  - History of program
  - Program student learning outcomes
  - Assessment of student learning in light of aforementioned outcomes
  - Data on enrollments/majors (disaggregated by relevant demographics)
  - Data from student/alumni surveys
  - Comparative data from similar colleges or departments/programs
  - Faculty profiles (CVs teaching, research, service)
  - History of finances/support for faculty and students (e.g., grants received for research, travel, senior projects)
- Department/Program chair meet with Lead Dean to provide status of self-study and get feedback from Lead Dean

### One to Two Semester before Review

- Three months prior to the review, the Department/Program chair sends the written self-study report to the Lead Dean and the ADC (\*time does not include summer or winter break)

### Semester of Review:

- Lead Dean's office arranges transportation/lodging for reviewers as necessary; Obtains CVs of external reviewers
- Lead Dean sends complete version of department/program written self-study document to external reviewers no later than one month before the visit is to take place.
- Department/Program, in consultation with the Lead Dean, is responsible for putting together the schedule for the external reviewer's visit. The department/program



coordinator (or the Lead Dean) sends schedule of visit to external reviewers no later than 2 weeks prior to visit.

- External reviewers submit their final report to the Lead Dean approximately one month after visit.
- Lead Dean's office forwards final report to the Department/Program chair. The Department/Program has one month to submit a written response to the Lead Dean.
- Upon receipt of the Department/Program's response, the Lead Dean sends the self-study, the external report, and the department/program's response to the ADC.
- The Academic Dean's Committee discusses the self-study, the external reviewers' report, and any response from the department/program at its next scheduled meeting.
- The ADC may opt to invite the department/program chair to attend a meeting to discuss the reports and review process, or delegate this discussion to the Lead Dean.

### **One Year after Review**

- One year after visit, the department/program chair submits follow-up progress report to the Lead Dean. The Lead Dean makes further recommendations for action as appropriate.
- The Lead Dean brings forward the follow-up progress report to the Academic Deans Committee.

## Appendix C

### Potential Framework for Program Review Final Report

- 1) Department/Program History
  - a) Provide information on the mission of the Claremont Colleges and how the department/program supports it
  - b) Provide a brief history of prior department/program reviews that have been conducted
  - c) Provide a brief description of the faculty, curriculum, and resources supporting the department/program
- 2) The Review Process
  - a) Describe the process that the review team utilized to gather, review, and interpret evidence
  - b) Who were the stakeholders who participated in the process?
  - c) Provide an analysis of how well the review process aligned with the lines of inquiry that the review team prioritized for its visit
- 3) Quality and Rigor of the Self-Study Report and Supporting Evidence
  - a) Provide a description of the key elements/highlights of the self-study report
  - b) Provide a description of the supporting data/evidence provided in the report
    - i) How relevant was the evidence in addressing reflective questions in the self-study report?
    - ii) To what extent was evidence provided that related to assessing student learning outcomes at multiple (e.g., course, program, institutional) levels?
    - iii) How consistent was/were the analysis(es) and conclusions presented with the evidence?
  - c) Provide an overall assessment of the extent to which the self-study report was helpful and/or effective in framing lines of inquiry for the department/program review visit
    - i) What evidence was most helpful?
    - ii) What evidence was not provided that would have been helpful to include?
- 4) Department/Program Strengths: Curriculum & Instruction, Advising, Student Learning & Department/Program Outcomes\*
  - a) Based on the evidence provided and gathered, what aspects of the department/program are notable as areas of strength and/or models of excellence?
- 5) Opportunities: Curriculum & Instruction, Advising, Student Learning & Department/Program Outcomes\*
  - a) Based on the evidence provided and gathered, what aspects of the department/program were identified as opportunities for improvement?
- 6) Specific Recommendations: Curriculum & Instruction, Advising, Student Learning & Department/Program Outcomes\*

\* Questions to consider in identifying the strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations:

- a) To what extent are processes in place to ensure that curriculum and instruction are current and relevant to department/program goals?
- b) To what extent does the advising provided by faculty support students in making academic progress?
- c) To what extent are student learning and department/program outcomes assessed and in ways in which results are incorporated in curricular planning, instruction, advising, and other areas?
- d) To what extent are processes in place to identify, understand, and address potential disparities in student learning and department/program outcomes?
- e) To what extent are adequate resources available to support high quality teaching and learning and student success in this department/program?