

## **Guidelines For Department and Program Periodic Review**

### **Introduction**

Since 1999, the University has asked departments and programs to assess their goals for the major and evaluate their success in achieving them on a biannual basis. The Institutional Effectiveness Committee is responsible for overseeing this process and collecting the data.

In addition, the University will also undertake periodic departmental and program reviews that are more extensive in nature and involve a self-study and an outside evaluation. Based on these two studies, the department or program will then develop a five year strategic plan.

In the first semester of the review year, a department or program will undertake a self-study, and in the second, a visiting team of two or three outside reviewers will conduct a campus visit and evaluation of the department or program. Once that report is received, the department or program will then develop a five-year strategic plan by the end of the year.

Departments and programs should be reviewed every seven to ten years.

The deans of the college and commerce school are responsible for working with their respective departments and programs to establish a schedule and will be responsible for the expenses of the self-study and the visiting team. The scheduling should be done with flexibility and in response to the particular department's or program's situation.

### **The Self-Study**

Self-study by all the members of a department or academic program (interdisciplinary programs, the Writing Program) provides the working group an opportunity to think together about the structure of its curriculum, the nature and quality of its offerings, pedagogy, the coherence of the major (if there is a major), its representation of its discipline or area, its staff and resources, its engagement with related departments and programs, its objectives and accomplishments, and other matters which concern it. While the self-study articulates the department's historical situation, it is essentially forward-looking, articulating the department or program's aspirations, problems, and proposals for itself, the academic administration, and the external reviewers to consider.

Materials to be gathered in the course of the self-study would normally include:

- The catalogue description of the department/program/major.
- The department or program's Mission Statement and assessment reports on how the department or program evaluates its success in meeting the mission.
- Budgets for the department or program over the last several years.
- Syllabi for each course taught in the department or program.
- Comparison of curriculum with other similar institutions.
- C. V. for each faculty member
- Enrollment figures for the last five years.
- Numbers of majors and non-majors served.

- Placement of recent graduates.
- Other materials deemed important by the department or program.

The department or program members should discuss extensively the following questions either in small groups, in meetings of the whole, or on line. Naturally, these questions will be adapted to each department's or program's shape, and additional questions will be devised and considered by the self-study group.

1. How is the department's (or program's) mission statement consistent with the overall mission of Washington and Lee?
2. How are the range, balance, and sequence of the course offerings reasonable? How do they reflect the state of the discipline? Should any courses be introduced, modified, or discarded?
3. How is the design of the major (number of courses, required courses, sequencing, and capstone experience) appropriate?
4. How well do these course offerings at every level meet the Washington and Lee objectives for appropriate general education requirement(s)?
5. How do students get sufficient opportunity to practice the discipline?
6. Is there a requirement for research (i.e., fairly independent work) as part of the program? Should there be?
7. How do students acquire adequate training in necessary library or laboratory skills? In reading, writing, and speaking?
8. To what extent do professors enjoy teaching the courses they teach? Do they wish that they taught different courses--or existing courses differently? Is the curriculum flexible enough to allow innovation in pedagogy and course design?
9. What are the relationships of the department/program to other programs and departments within and outside the University, and how should these relationships be extended and improved? Are there any new relationships which should be developed?
10. How does the department/program relate to the profession, to the practice of the discipline elsewhere?
11. What success are majors having in finding post-undergraduate opportunities consistent with their interests and training?
12. How are resources (faculty positions, non-teaching support, and budget) adequate or inadequate for the department's/program's mission?
13. How is the department/program receiving sufficient assistance from supporting groups such as the Library, Information Technology Services, and Instructional Support Services?

14. How are facilities (office spaces, classrooms, and laboratories) adequate or inadequate?
15. How are non-tenured faculty appropriately apprised of criteria and procedures for faculty evaluation?
16. How are junior faculty mentored? How might such mentoring be improved?
17. What are the opportunities for faculty development? How are they adequate or inadequate?
18. What tools are being used to evaluate student performance? How are these adequate or inadequate?

After the extended discussion, several members of the department should summarize the department's/program's study in a form which will be useful to itself and the outside reviewers-to-come. A draft of this summary should be circulated to all members so that they can suggest revisions.

### **The Visiting Team**

The visiting team will normally consist of two or three members chosen by the dean from a list submitted by the department or program. Notes on why a particular person would be a good candidate for the team and a c. v. for each will be supplied to the dean by the department or program head. The dean then selects the team and works with the department or program head to coordinate the schedule for a two to three day visit.

The visiting team is charged with studying the department or program, measuring it in comparison to the stated goals, in comparison to departments elsewhere and in comparison to the state of the discipline. The team submits a report of its findings to the department head and to the dean and president. This report will be read by all the department and program members. It should candidly assess the strengths and weaknesses of the department or program and make concrete suggestions for improvements. Sensitive material such as specific personnel issues should be included in a separate letter to the dean.

An honorarium will be paid to the visiting team members upon receipt of the report. All of their expenses for food, lodging and travel will be covered as well. The report should be submitted within 30 days of the visit.

### **Details of the Outside Evaluation Process:**

1. Normally the visiting team will be supplied with the following material before their visit:
  - A catalogue
  - The department or programs' self-study report
  - The Faculty Handbook
  - The Mission Statement
  - Budget for the department or program

- Syllabi for each course taught
- C. V. for each faculty member
- Enrollment figures for the last five years
- Numbers of majors and non-majors served
- Placement of recent graduates
- Other materials deemed important by the department or program

2. Although every department and program is different and may have its own ideas about the best way to conduct the visitation, normally the visiting team would meet with the following:

- Each faculty member in the department or program individually
- The department or program as a whole
- The Dean and the President
- Students in the discipline
- Faculty in allied fields
- Others that the department or program deem important

3. Again, while each department or program may have suggestions about what areas the visiting team should look at, normally the following should be considered:

- Curriculum
- Pedagogy
- Currency in the discipline
- Mission of the department, program and University
- Resources including facilities, technology, budget, and library support
- Staffing
- Student satisfaction
- Resources for faculty professional development
- Other items deemed important by the department or program

### **Strategic Planning**

Once the Outside Evaluation Report is received and read by all the department members and the dean, it should be the basis for further strategic planning. The department or program should then develop a five-year plan with the approval of the dean. Copies of the Self Study, the Outside Evaluation Report and the Strategic Plan should also go to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee.