ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW GUIDELINES

Introduction

Regular program reviews promote excellence in our academic programs by aligning teaching and learning, curriculum, and other academic processes and activities with the mission of individual programs and the university, and with disciplinary trends and standards. Periodic program reviews are an opportunity to review student learning outcomes from these broad perspectives. They also serve as a basis for ongoing planning. Program reviews will include the preparation of a self-study of the program or programs, and a review by an external consultant. The program review consists of four steps: a proposal for the program review, the reparation of a self-study, an evaluation by an external consultant, and the preparation, in consultation with the dean, of a memorandum of understanding that itemizes an action plan for the department or program.

The review process is a mini self-study of curriculum—both course offerings and requirements—as well as of the staff, facilities and other resources needed to maintain strong learning outcomes for students. Both the self-study and the external review--for which the self-study becomes a resource document-- are most useful if they are structured around important questions or issues relating to the academic program. In other words, the self-study has the attributes of a research project. In addressing these central questions, the self-study should evaluate curriculum—both course offerings and requirements—as well as the staff, facilities and other resources as they relate to learning outcomes for students. As part of the self-study, faculty should compare their own work to programs at other like or aspirational institutions, as well as seek the perspectives of current students, alumni, and at least one neutral external consultant regarding the state of their discipline and their program's reflection of this. The self-study should address the results of ongoing assessment of documented teaching and learning outcomes. The assessment process should be simple but rigorous so that clear teaching and learning outcomes can be documented, and so that clear recommendations can be made for program development or change. Finally, faculty should state, as part of the self-study, their department's mission and goals in such a way that outcomes can be assessed, and that continuing excellence is possible for faculty, for students and for the program itself. And they should be able to do so within the framework of the University's strategic plan, i.e., in the context of its enduring values, its current initiatives and its future directions.

It is expected that every degree program will participate in a Program Review every seven years. Programs that undergo regular external review for accreditation may use that process as the basis for institutional program review and planning. Where necessary, they should supplement that process to include the following essential elements: 1) a self-study that analyses student learning outcomes and evaluates curriculum, staff, facilities, and other resources; 2) evaluation by at least one neutral external consultant; and 3) a memorandum of understanding that identifies future programmatic directions in the context of the department's mission and Nazareth's values, current initiatives, and future directions and plans.

The Planning Document

Each program to be studied should prepare a one to two page planning document that will do the following:

- State the department/program's current mission and its educational goals.
- Give a brief rational for these goals; this rationale should connect them to the discipline, to the University's mission and strategic plan, and to current course offerings, related requirements and practices that are intentional in promoting student learning.
- Indicate how learning outcomes and other forms of student success that issue from these goals are currently being assessed.
- Describe the most important issues the program faculty are preparing to consider during the review, and suggest a tentative plan to study them. This brief plan should include an initial list of university data and resources they believe they will need to do an effective self-study so that the Institutional Research Office & the Dean can begin to provide support. It should also assign tasks to individuals so that every faculty member is engaged in the self-study as appropriate.
- Suggest one or two names of consultants, their affiliation(s) and why faculty perceive them to be good choices to assist in their program's self-study. If possible, attach curriculum vitae for the consultant(s). The dean will issue the invitation to the consultant and receive the consultant's report.
- Appoint a faculty member if other than the department chair to coordinate and lead the review process.

This document will be submitted to the Dean for his or her consideration before the actual self-study begins.

1. Suggested Questions and Structure for the Review and Self-Study Document

   a. Does the structure and content of your curriculum lead to the achievement of your defined program goals and learning outcome?

   b. Using the material presented in 1-3 of your planning document, review your current assessment practices and state the kinds of evidence you are able to gather and the kinds of conclusions you are able to draw. State whatever additional data you may have chosen to use and why. State how you have used your evidence and what conclusions you have drawn.

   c. How does your program interface: with other programs, with the university-wide core curriculum including the First Year program, the WAC program, with university diversity initiatives, and with the institutional mission?

      Offer evidence of the effectiveness of these interfaces.

d. What is the general educational profile of students in your program and how does the department craft a program that serves the goals and learning outcomes of these students?

2. Offer evidence to support your responses to the following questions:

    a. How are students advised and how does that advisement process support student goals, learning outcomes and expectations?

    b. What supports are provided for students needing remediation or other academic supports?

    c. What types of challenging learning opportunities are offered to well-equipped and perhaps even outstanding students?

    d. How many students are seeking education certification (Inclusive, etc) and what impact does this have on your program?

    e. How many students are completing minors in your program who are doing so because they are currently enrolled in an accredited professional program that requires courses in your discipline? What impact does these students' educational needs have on your program?

3. Provide an analysis of standard institutional data relating to demand for and enrollment trends in the program.

4. Describe and evaluate the physical and human resources available to support your goals and determine how well they are being used. These should include: technology and equipment, library resources, support for faculty-student undergraduate research, professional and support staff, space, classroom design, etc.

5. Discuss outcomes of the alumni and majors surveys.

6. Write a conclusion that summarizes your findings in brief and indicates what action steps program faculty will take to respond to their conclusions, and proposing the resources they might need to support these actions.

7. Send the completed self-study to the program's chosen consultant, along with material that represents the university and the program: university catalogue, curriculum vitae of program faculty, sample course syllabi, overview data on majors and minors over a ten year period, alumni and majors survey results, etc.

8. Request a written report within four to six weeks.

The Final Step: Memorandum of Understanding

The final step in the Program Review Process is the development of a Memorandum of Understanding in which the department and dean agree to a plan for future action based on the findings of the program review (self-study, external consultant's report, etc.). This agreement should identify future activities (curriculum revision, for example) as well as resources needed for improvement.

Once the Review is completed please forward and electronic copy of the Office of Institutional Research.