

## **Undergraduate Academic Program Review at the University of New Hampshire**

### **Overview**

Academic program review is a process that involves collecting and analyzing information about existing academic programs. The immediate goal of program review is to assess a program with respect to four criteria: centrality, quality, demand, and cost. The resulting assessments will be used as a basis for three further action steps: 1) planning, 2) budgeting, and 3) program enhancement. If a decision is made that a program should be reduced in size/scope or eliminated, a specific action plan will need to be prepared and then appropriate approvals sought.

### **The Review Process**

A program review should include several components that are collectively aimed at assessing the program with respect to the four criteria listed above. A self-study, evaluation by external consultants, and uniform data collection are included in each review. The self-study is to be conducted by program faculty. The program faculty should carry out the data collection process, with assistance provided by the school/college dean's office and by the Office of Academic Affairs (Institutional Research). These offices will provide assistance to departments as they collect, organize, and interpret relevant data. The core data collected should be common to all reviews, but other data sources will be particular to programs. The self-study committee prepares a report that addresses the questions and issues described in the present document.

## **Departments and Program Review**

Many departments have two or more distinct academic programs, sometimes leading to different degrees. When feasible, all programs within a department should be reviewed at the same time, even if distinct review processes are required. For example, there is a distinct program review process for graduate and undergraduate programs. Academic programs that are not located within an individual academic department (e.g., International Affairs Dual Major, Humanities) will also be reviewed, and if appropriate and practical, the review may coincide with the review of one or more related departments.

## **Scheduling Programs in the Review Cycle**

Programs will normally be reviewed every seven years. Programs may be reviewed out of the normal cycle if deemed appropriate by the appropriate dean and the Provost. Some programs at UNH are involved in regular reviews for the purpose of specialized accreditation. Such programs will be scheduled for university program review either in the year during which they are scheduled for their specialized accreditation review or during the following year. The department chair and dean will make this determination.

## **Guidelines for the Self-Study**

The faculty in the program under review has primary responsibility for the self-study. Academic Affairs (Office of Institutional Research) will provide standard data (e.g., from Department Profiles; the University of Delaware Study of Cost and Productivity; summaries of major counts; student evaluation of teaching summaries; etc.)

Some data may be provided by the school/college dean's office. In some cases, the external review team (see below) may request additional data.

The format of the self-study report may vary from program to program. However, all reports should include clearly labeled sections that address the following:

- **General Overview of the Program.** This section includes a clear description of the program and a statement of its mission and how it relates to the missions of its college and the university. For example, how does the program fit with the goals of the University's Academic Plan (2001-2006) (<http://www.unh.edu/academic-affairs/apsc/executivesummary.htm>) and with the appropriate school/college academic plan? The program's goals and objectives for the next five to seven years should be included with its mission statement. Also, describe the program's currency in relation to the field/discipline in which it is situated. Finally, compare and contrast this program with similar programs at other institutions. The University's official list of comparator institutions may provide a starting point: North Carolina State University; Oregon State University; Rutgers University; State University of New York–Buffalo; University of California–Santa Cruz; University of Colorado; University of Connecticut; University of Delaware; University of Maine; University of Massachusetts; University of Rhode Island; University of South Carolina; University of Vermont; Washington State University.
- **Curriculum.** Describe the curriculum and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, its currency within the field/discipline, and any plans for

curricular modification. Describe program requirements. Describe how the University's Writing Intensive Courses policy is addressed in the context of this program. Provide in an appendix a copy of a standard syllabus for all of the courses included in the undergraduate catalog that make up the curriculum.

- **Undergraduate Research/Creative Artistry, Service Learning, and Honors-in-Major Opportunities.** Do students have opportunities to work with faculty on research or creative artistry projects beyond the classroom? Do students have opportunities to become involved in service learning? If so, please describe and evaluate the benefits of these opportunities to students. If the department has an honors-in-major program, describe it and discuss the nature of the relationship of this program to the University Honors Program.
- **Faculty.** Describe the qualifications and accomplishments of faculty associated with this program. Describe the process that the chairperson uses to assign individual faculty workloads and how these assignments meet program needs. Based on programmatic need and faculty interests/strengths, do individual faculty workloads differ from one another in terms of the allocation of time to teaching, research/creative artistry, and service activities? Discuss the role of faculty in the advising of students in the program. Are all program faculty involved in advising? Are others involved—e.g., staff? How efficient and effective is the student advising associated with this program? On what basis are these conclusions reached—e.g., student or faculty surveys, numbers

of problems that students have at course registration times or at graduation?

Include in an appendix current curriculum vitae for all program faculty.

- **Student Characteristics.** Describe the academic profile of students in the program, including their academic record upon entering and leaving the University.
- **Student Outcome Measures.** Describe procedures that are followed to assess student learning in this program as well as the means used to assess the extent to which students achieve the overall goals and objectives of the program. Provide information on retention of students in the major, time to graduation, placement information regarding jobs and graduate schools, etc. Include department-related information from the Registrar's reports on Undergraduate grade distributions. Have there been any trends in changes in assigned grades? Summarize the overall grade distributions in program-related courses. Comment on these as appropriate.
- **Facilities.** Describe the facilities used by the department to implement this program as well as the adequacy of those facilities in meeting the department's mission. Include information on classrooms, office space, course-related and faculty laboratories, recital rooms, studios, computing facilities, equipment, software, etc.
- **Library Resources.** Describe the University Library resources used by students and faculty associated with this program and discuss the adequacy of these resources. The department self-study committee should consult with the

appropriate University librarian before preparing this section of the report and should reflect the librarian's input in the self-study report.

- **Department Structure and Governance.** Describe the department's structure and approach to governance, particularly in terms of how these relate to the program under review. For example, does a curriculum committee routinely review the department's undergraduate academic programs?
- **Other Information.** The department may find it useful to present additional information on its program, faculty, students, and staff in the following areas: extramural grants and contracts, regional/national rankings or ratings, information on public service or outreach activities, external awards or other recognition, etc.
- **Program Enhancement Plan.** As with the self-study guidelines developed for graduate programs, self-studies of undergraduate programs will include an assessment by department faculty members of the strengths of their program and of those areas in which they seek to improve it. What characteristics of the program should be maintained/strengthened, ended, and changed? Based on the self-study committee's responses, a Program Enhancement Plan should be proposed. This plan should include actions for program enhancement, a description resources needed to accomplish this plan, and the sources of these resources. What internal reallocation of resources might be done to fund the enhancement plan? If the department concludes that a current program should be eliminated or reduced, the self-study committee should propose an action plan to bring about this outcome.

The self-study report should be submitted to the school/college dean by May 15 of the year prior to the academic year in which a program will be reviewed. (Please send an information copy to the vice provost for undergraduate studies.) At the same time, the department will nominate two faculty members from outside the University to serve as external program reviewers, along with the names of two additional nominees (if a back-up plan is needed). These nominations should be provided to the school/college dean.

By September 15 of the next academic year, the school/college dean will request any needed additions or clarifications in the self-study document. A revised self-study document should be submitted to the dean and by October 30. (Please send an information copy to the vice provost for undergraduate studies.)

The self-study process provides program faculty with the opportunity to assess their program with respect to the criteria of centrality, quality, demand, and cost. The list of indicators below suggests some ways to apply the criteria in the self-study. Other indicators may be appropriate for a particular program. A useful self-study report provides a straightforward assessment of the strengths of the programs and of the areas in which improvement is warranted.

### **The Criteria and Possible Indicators**

In order to apply the four criteria of centrality, quality, cost, and demand in the review process, indicators for each criterion must be specified. For example, the quality of a program may be judged by considering the quality of its students. Indicators of student quality could include admissions profiles and results from student learning assessment efforts (e.g., performance on standardized exams, reports from employers,

information obtained from student portfolios). Some indicators will be common to all programs, while other indicators will vary from program to program.

Information on the four criteria should be provided within the body of the self-study report. It should be clear to readers of the report where the individual criteria are addressed in the report. It may be useful to include a section in the report that lists the four criteria and the pages on which the criteria are addressed.

I. Centrality

- Statement of program or department mission and its relation to missions of UNH, College, etc.
- Connection to other programs at UNH.

II. Quality

- Faculty
  1. Teaching: peer and students evaluations, awards
  2. Research: reputation in field/discipline, citations, external funding
  3. Service: university and public service, indication of effectiveness
  4. Credentials: appropriate terminal degrees, experience, etc.
- Student Assessment Data: admissions profile, scores on post graduate exams, placement in employment or graduate schools, surveys of employers, direct measures of student learning. If the department has a student assessment plan, describe it and provide examples of assessment data.
- Curriculum: comprehensiveness, progression of courses, currency
- Facilities: offices, classrooms, laboratories, equipment, etc.
- Library Holdings: appropriateness and adequacy of University Library holdings related to the program being reviewed.

III. Demand

- Current Students: number of majors annually, number of credits generated annually (both for 6 year period), unmet demand (e.g., data on courses in which student requests exceed course capacity), number of unmet internal transfers requests, etc.
- Potential Students: number of qualified applicants versus acceptances
- External Demand: need for program graduates in state, region, or nation, ascertained by employer surveys, etc.

- Availability of similar programs at other institutions in the same state or region.

#### IV. Cost

- Annual expenditures, ratios of expenditures/credit, expenditure/major and other cost-related information. Data from Institutional Research Office on the Delaware Cost Study and cost data from Department Profiles.
- Information on special revenues, e.g., differential tuition, fees, income from related sales, etc.
- Space, library, and other resources used that are not accounted for in program expenditure data.

Although the extent of existing resources is addressed in the cost data, the self-study report is an appropriate place to discuss, from the department/program perspective, the adequacy of those resources to support both current activities and future goals.

Resources include program personnel and support budgets as well as physical facilities, library resources, computer services, etc. (Department Profiles reports include detailed information on expenditures at the unit level, not for individual programs within a unit.)

When program weaknesses are related to inadequate resources, that connection should be made explicit.

#### **The External Review**

As with graduate program reviews, the external review team will consist of three members:

- One (1) University of New Hampshire faculty member. The UNH reviewer will be selected from the school/college in which the program is located (but not a faculty in the department undergoing the review). The school/college dean will appoint this person.
- Two (2) senior faculty members from other universities with recognized expertise in the appropriate field/discipline. Department faculty members

nominate the external reviewers to their dean. The school/college dean reviews the nominations of the department and makes the final decision on the membership of the review team.

One of the members of the review team will serve as its chair. The site visit of external review team will be scheduled by the dean in consultation with the chair of the department/program under review. The specific agenda of the external review team may vary, but will normally include:

- An opening meeting with the department chair, department undergraduate program coordinator, and school/college dean to discuss the self-study report and to review the schedule for the site visit. This will typically be a dinner meeting that takes place the evening before the day of the site visit.
- A meeting with current undergraduate students.
- Meetings with the department chair, undergraduate program coordinator, other department faculty, and appropriate staff.
- A tour of program facilities and continued meetings/interviews as needed.
- A meeting with the school/college dean.
- An exit interview with the department chair, undergraduate program coordinator, school/college dean, and vice provost for undergraduate studies.

The review team will submit to the department faculty, school/college dean, and vice provost for undergraduate studies a written report that describes and discusses their findings. The report, which should be submitted no later than three weeks after the site visit, should address the following issues:

- To what extent is the program central to the mission of the University of New Hampshire and the school/college and department in which it is located? What changes would be necessary to increase the program's centrality?
- What is the quality of the program's curriculum with respect to scope, depth, currency, and student requirements for degree completion? What changes would be necessary to improve the current level of quality?
- What is the quality of the program's faculty with respect to teaching and student advising effectiveness, scholarly or creative productivity, and impact on the discipline/field? What changes would be necessary to improve the current level of quality?
- What is the quality of the program with respect to impact on student outcomes? (For example, does the department provide information on student learning outcomes and, if so, is that information used to improve the curriculum?) What changes would be necessary to improve the current level of quality?
- What is the quality of the program's resources with respect to its teaching, research, and service obligations? What changes would be necessary to improve the current level of quality?
- Is the demand for this program on the part of prospective students and post-graduate placements indicative of a high quality program? Is the level of demand likely to change during the next five years? What can the department do to affect demand for the program, if that seems advisable?

- Is the Program Enhancement Plan proposed by the self-study committee clear, appropriate, and feasible? Does the review team have recommendations for any changes to the plan?

Within three weeks after receiving the report by the external review team, the program faculty may write a response to the dean. This response may correct any errors of fact in the report and may provide alternative perspectives to those written by the review team.

### **Decisions About The Program**

On the basis of the self-study report, the report from the external review teams, and responses to the external reviewers' report by program faculty, the appropriate school/college dean will make one of three decisions. The decision, and the rationale for it, will be provided in writing to the department chair within one month after the review panel has submitted its report and the department has had the opportunity to provide a response to the dean. The dean's decision is subject to review and approval by the Provost. Any final decision to close a program must be approved by the Provost and by the President and may be subject to approval by the USNH Board of Trustees.

- **Approval.** The self-study committee's Program Enhancement Plan should be adopted. The dean will then work with the department to maintain and strengthen the program.
- **Provisional Approval.** The dean proposes specific changes in the Program Enhancement Plan and works with the department chair to incorporate these changes into the plan. The dean sets a date by which implementation of the modified plan will be reviewed.

- **Program Closure.** The program should be phased out. As described in an earlier section of this document, the department conducting the self-study may also propose to close a program. Before an academic program may be closed, a number of steps and approvals are required. Applicable UNH and USNH policies must be followed as well as any applicable sections of the USNH - AAUP/UNH Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Within two weeks of receiving the dean's written decision, the department chair may submit a written request to the dean to reconsider her/his decision. The department chair may make a final written appeal to the Provost.

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