

Academic Program Review Policy 08/22/00

I. Purpose of External Reviews:

1. To assess from a broad perspective the existing strengths and weaknesses of departmental academic programs.
2. To help the department faculty identify areas in which improvement, growth, and development might take place.
3. To improve and broaden the information base available to central administration for use in the allocation of resources.

II. General Schedule for Review:

The following is a general description of the review process. It is designed to provide an **outline** of the process, **not** a detailed, exhaustive description. Details may vary since the process is flexible enough to take into account the special needs of various departments and programs.

Departments will be asked to conduct a self-study in a timely fashion. This self-study will be **guided by, but not limited to**, a set of questions provided in this document (See III. Below). The self-study should be completed two weeks prior to the visit of the External Review Team. The dean of Graduate and Professional Studies will send copies of the completed self-study, as well as the formal charge, to the External Review Team.

The department will provide to the dean of Graduate and Professional Studies a list of possible reviewers. The list should include names, addresses, telephone and email, and brief biographical data. The list should contain at least eight names. The department will also provide a list of addresses of national organizations, accreditation boards, or other groups that might be a source of additional names. The dean of Graduate and Professional Studies will solicit additional names from these organizations as well as from departments at other universities. The dean of Graduate and Professional Studies, after consultation with university, college and departmental leaders, will choose three or more people to comprise the External Review Team. No less than one of the members of this Team will come from the list provided by the department under review.

The External Review Team will visit the campus for a minimum of 1-½ days with expenses borne by the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies. If a department or college, rather than the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies, initiates the review, cost sharing of expenses will be negotiated prior to the visit. The Team will meet with the dean of Graduate and Professional Studies, and the college dean and department chair for a discussion and review of the process. At the conclusion of the visit a similar meeting will be held to review the effectiveness of the process. There will also be exit interviews with the department faculty, the college dean, the dean of Graduate and Professional Studies, the Provost, the Associate Vice-President for Academic and Faculty Affairs, the VP for Research and the President. The purpose of these exit interviews will be the presentation of preliminary findings.

The External Review Team will provide a written report to the dean of Graduate and Professional Studies within a time frame established by the dean and the Review Team. A copy of this report will be given to the department and the college dean. The department and/or the college dean will have the opportunity to provide a written response to this report.

III. Departmental Self-Study Format:

The purpose of a departmental self-study from the point of view of the department is to provide an opportunity for the consideration of long term goals for development, where the department stands in terms of achieving those goals (the department's strengths and weaknesses), and what resources are necessary to move forward. From the point of view of those conducting an evaluation of a department or program, the self-study is a major source of quantitative and qualitative data for the external reviewers as well as a means of conveying to the university administration a coherent picture of the department. The questions that follow **need not be followed in minute detail**, if for no other reason that some will not be entirely relevant to every department or program. In many cases, other documents might be substituted

for the self-study (for example accreditation documents). Nevertheless, the administration and the outside evaluation team will both be seeking information on these questions, and the more information that can be provided, **regardless of format**, the more accurate and complete a review can be.

1. Goals and Objectives: Degree Programs and Curricula

- A. Does the department have a vision of itself that is widely shared among its members? That is, if there is some consensus among members of the department concerning the kind of department they would like to be, describe this shared vision. How does this vision fit with the Provost's vision of selected areas of excellence rather than broad coverage of multiple areas?
- B. Describe the specific departments in the nation with which you wish to be favorably compared, now and in the future. What are the specific aspects of those departments that you wish to emulate?
- C. What specific objectives does the department have over the next five years that it feels will assist it in moving toward this shared vision?
- D. What specific problems, restraints, or weaknesses does the department see as inhibiting or preventing movement toward these goals?
- E. What specific support, or resources, beyond what is already available, is needed to move effectively toward these goals?
- F. How does faculty research and publication support your programs? How do you assess the quality and quantity of faculty scholarship over the last five years? What is being done to broaden and/or deepen scholarship efforts in the department? What does your department do to insure quality rather than just quantity in scholarly production? What steps has the department taken to assist faculty development to keep them current in their respective fields? What resources not now available would assist this faculty development effort?
- G. Comment on the recent history of the department illustrating changes that might have occurred in its goals, the progress that has been made, and special aspects of the department's situation that need articulation.

2. Faculty and Academic Programs

- A. Describe the sub-fields (not specializations) generally accepted as part of your discipline. How are the department's faculty distributed over these sub-fields? How would you assess the strength of your faculty in each of these sub-fields? How do the strengths and weaknesses in the various sub-fields in the department relate to the goals and vision you are pursuing?
- B. Describe the programs and degrees provided by your department. What are the programming strengths and weakness in your department? What programming areas have you developed, or do you need to develop, to assure that your department represents the newer trends of knowledge in your discipline? What programs might need de-emphasis in the future?
- C. Discuss the teaching mission of the department. Speak to this in terms of such factors as the kind of student it produces and the support it gives to the general curriculum and other teaching units in the university. Describe the kind of students you hope to produce at the undergraduate and graduate/professional levels --- what skills, abilities, and areas of knowledge should they possess (both in terms of what you can provide and what you expect other academic units to provide). How successful do you feel you are at present in producing these kinds of students? What steps do you take to assure quality teaching? How has the department utilized non-traditional modalities of teaching (distance education, web-based, instructional TV, etc.) in its instructional mission? How are the effects of such teaching modalities assessed?
- D. Comment on the service your department provides to the rest of the university. What contribution does the faculty in your department make to enhance the reputation of and resources for the university? How do the various aspects of service fit into the

overall vision of the department and contribute to departmental goals? If there is extensive outside consulting by your faculty, how does it help or hinder department programs?

3. Students

Discuss the quality of students in each of your programs. To what extent has departmental programming been forced to respond to the numbers of students it attracts, and the distribution of these students over programs and sub-fields, rather than to its own long-term goals? What evidence can you provide that your graduate/professional and undergraduate students compare favorably with graduates of departments and programs with which you are trying to compete, or with which you hope to compete? What evidence can you provide regarding student satisfaction with their education and training? Describe the advising/counseling processes in the department and assess the effectiveness of these processes. What changes have you made, or are planning, to improve advising/counseling? What resources are needed to effectively assist you in this regard?

4. Further Comments

Provide any further information or discussion that you feel was not solicited by the above questions but that you think would assist the outside reviewers and the administration in understanding and evaluating the department.

Draft of Charge to External Review Team 08/24/00

I. Goals and Objectives

1. Are the goals and objective of each degree program clearly defined? How well are the programs achieving those objectives?
2. Are the curricula, program structure, and instruction well designed and appropriate to the scholarly and creative trends in the discipline?
3. Are the degree programs offered appropriate to the mission of the University of Houston to become the top urban research university in the country? Are these programs commensurate with the qualifications of the faculty? Are there any degree programs that should be offered that currently are not? Are there programs offered that should be de-emphasized and phased-out?
4. Evaluate courses that perform service functions for other departments in the university.
5. Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the graduate (and/or professional) programs.
6. If appropriate, evaluate the opportunities for research, assistantships, internships, or relevant student experiences.
7. What future direction would faculty be advised to take in developing the scholarship and teaching aspects of the degree programs?

II. Faculty

1. How does the quality of the faculty as researchers and the quality and quantity of their scholarly work compare with faculty in similar programs at other universities with whom you are familiar? Please list these universities.
2. What are the areas of particular strength and weakness discernible in the faculty?
3. How does the ability of individual faculty members to attract outside funds compare with that of faculty in other institutions mentioned in the above question?
4. Are there any program/area imbalances that would speak to the need for redirecting the hiring pattern within the department?
5. Are faculty qualifications and current or proposed teaching responsibilities commensurate?
6. Are expectations for faculty performance in teaching, research/scholarship, and service reasonable? Is there flexibility in these expectations to allow for different teaching and service loads? How do these expectations compare to those at the other universities mentioned above?
7. What judgments would you make about teaching effectiveness of faculty members in the department?
8. Evaluate the rigor of promotion standards in the department.

III. Students

1. Evaluate the quality of students in each program.
2. Are student selection and retention criteria adequate?
3. Is there evidence of success of program graduates? For departments where post-graduate licensing and/or board certification examinations are common, evaluate the performance of the graduates.
4. Are student satisfied with the program?
5. Is financial support for students adequate and competitive with peer institutions?
6. Are students properly advised and counseled?
7. Is there evidence that students evaluate individual instructor's teaching and that those evaluations are considered for merit and promotion decisions?

IV. Facilities, Support and Administration

1. Are the maintenance and operation, equipment, and travel budgets supplied by the university adequate given the size, quality and needs of the department?

2. Please assess the adequacy of the facilities and support services, e.g., office space, classrooms, language laboratories, library, secretarial support, Information Technology Support, laboratory equipment.
3. Comment on the organization and administration of the department.
4. Is financial support for research, instruction, and other activities adequate? How does the level of such support compare on a nationwide basis?

V. Comprehensive

1. How do you rate the University of Houston department when compared to: (a) the best departments in the country, (b) the best departments in public universities, (c) the best departments in urban research universities?
2. What recommendations would you make to improve the overall quality of the department: Please be specific.
3. In which two or three particular “niches” might the department be particularly poised to succeed? That is, are there areas of current strength where a modest infusion of targeted resources could result in national-level quality and visibility?