



ILLINOIS WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

GUIDELINES AND OBJECTIVES FOR EXTERNAL REVIEWS FOR DEPARTMENTS, SCHOOLS AND PROGRAMS

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**Illinois Wesleyan University External Reviews
for Departments, Schools and Programs
Guidelines and Objectives
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I. Purpose and Benefits of the External Review

External program reviews provide the opportunity for departments/schools/programs to reflect on their work and explain how it relates to the goals of the department and the university mission. The guidelines detailed below are designed to support academic units as they prepare to undertake an external review and to promote the faculty dialogue that is central to this process.

Each department will have different emphases for its review process, but several general questions should frame each program review:

- How is the department/school's mission related to IWU's mission and vision?
- Is the academic program up-to-date, rigorous, and appropriate for both majors and non-majors? Is the department following national trends and best-practices?
- How does the department assess progress on goals related to student learning and outcomes?
- What are the short- and long-term priorities of the department?

These general questions can also help each department/school/program define the specific objectives of the self-study. This step is crucial. By establishing the goals of the review before embarking on the self-study, faculty can avoid collecting information that has little relevance for the department/school/program's mission. Program reviews can be a formidable and time-consuming undertaking for all constituencies, including faculty, students, and support staff. Thus, it is important that the review process be structured so that it provides information that is germane to the mission of the academic unit and speaks to the ongoing work of the faculty.

At its conclusion, the review can help build consensus around the collective priorities of an academic unit and define how the work of each faculty member contributes to those goals. Besides encouraging intra-departmental dialogue, the external review process will also encourage communication between central academic administrators and schools/departments/programs. This ongoing dialogue will enhance the administration's ability to support the work of the academic unit.

II. Major Components of an External Review

The information gathered during the external review should help programs fashion a narrative that effectively communicates their story to their IWU colleagues and to external constituencies. Much of this information can draw on existing assessment efforts. For instance, departments/schools/programs routinely collect information on their curricula, the scholarly achievements for faculty, and the accomplishments of alumni, but often employ different strategies for gathering that information. (For reference, Appendix I provides an overview of the

different assessment strategies employed by academic units.) The Associate Dean of Curriculum and the Assistant Provost/Director of Institutional Research and Planning routinely collect other information that can be useful, such as enrollment data and student surveys that are benchmarked against peer institutions.

Each external review will include three components:

1. A comprehensive self-study conducted by faculty members in the department or school
2. An external review conducted by two to three colleagues from other institutions
3. A departmental/school response to the external reviewers' report, including an action plan

The self-study. (See Appendix I for detailed discussion of the elements of the self-study). The first task of the comprehensive self-study is to gather and organize the information already collected by the department/school and by other university offices. Many academic programs have a formal mission statement that can be reviewed in light of the faculty's work, the university's mission statement, and the IWU Strategic Plan. If your unit does not already have a formal mission statement, you might consider crafting one as part of the review process. The self-study provides an opportunity to review the scholarly and artistic work of the faculty and explain how the department supports the work of each faculty member.

Departments and schools will review the academic unit's curriculum, referencing disciplinary "best practices" for majors and minors and how the program contributes to university-wide programs such as General Education and May Term. Also important are program efforts to develop the faculty's teaching pedagogy. Where possible, departments/schools/programs will want to marshal available information on the career paths of the program's graduates. As noted above, the Associate Dean of Curriculum and the Assistant Provost/Director of Institutional Research and Planning can provide information from existing data sources.

Visit of the external review team. (Appendix II provides more detail on the external review, including a sample schedule.) Each department or school will consult with the Provost on the selection of personnel for the external review. Two to three faculty colleagues from other institutions will visit the campus for approximately two-days, during which they will meet with faculty from the academic unit, students, and administrators. The external reviewers will have access to the self-study in advance of their visit, and while on campus may visit classes, labs, and/or rehearsals. The external reviewers will compile a written report that summarizes their campus visit and responds to the self-study of the department.

Department/school/program response and discussion with administrative colleagues. Each academic unit will draft a brief response to the external review which identifies any planned programmatic changes resulting from the external review and any significant disagreements with the external reviewer's report. This report is to be sent to the Provost, the Associate Dean of Curriculum, and the President no later than one month after receiving the external reviewer's report. The chair or school/program director will meet with the President, the Provost, and the Associate Dean of Curriculum to discuss the external review and the department/school/program's response with a view to outline short- and long-term plans for the program. It is anticipated that

this discussion should be ongoing as the Provost and other administrators help support the academic unit's progress.

III. General Schedule for External Review

First Year. Each unit will identify the faculty member responsible for the review (oftentimes the chair or director) and the formal roles of other faculty members. Using the guidelines found in Appendix I, the department will compile the information of the self-study, including supporting documents. Candidates for the external review should be identified early in the first year by using the criteria discussed in Appendix II. The timing of the visit should be coordinated with the Associate Provost for Academic Services.

Second Year. During the second year the external reviewers will visit campus. (See Appendix II for additional details). After this visit and receipt of the reviewer's report, the unit will prepare their response and submit copies to the President, the Provost, and the Associate Dean of Curriculum. Finally, the chair or director will meet with these administrative colleagues to discuss the review and any potential action resulting from the process.

Subsequent Years. During subsequent years, the administration will continue to work with the department/school/program in implementing changes to their academic program in response to the review.

IV. General Information Regarding Reviewers and Process

Chairs/Directors will identify 3-5 potential colleagues to be brought to campus for the review. Typically, two external reviewers are brought to campus for the review. The names of these colleagues along with CV's will be provided to the Associate Dean of Curricular and Faculty Development approximately 12 months before the external review campus visit is to take place. The Associate Dean in consultation with the Provost identifies the external reviewers. Once identified, Chairs/Directors then make the invitation to campus and work with these colleagues on travel arrangements.

The honorarium for external reviewers is typically \$1000 each, but this is subject to change and to the approval of the Provost. Travel expenses and accommodation are reimbursed by IWU. When possible, accommodation arrangements can be made in advance for the reviewers. Honoraria and reimbursements are handled through the Provost's Office.

Appendix I: Elements of the Self-Study

The self-study of each department/school should be guided by the mission and focus of the program's work. The primary purpose of the self-study is to provide information that will support planning for the department/school's future. Faculty members of each program will highlight aspects of their work and gather the information needed to assess current practice and identify areas for development.

The outline in this appendix suggests some guidelines for the self-study. *The information presented below is offered as a recommendation, not as a set of requirements.* Each department/school should include materials that will be useful for the review, including materials that are not suggested below.

I. Background on Department/school's mission and identity

A. Relevant departmental history

B. Relationship with the broader mission/strategic plan of the university

1. The President's website has copies of some documents to which department/schools might refer:

<http://www2.iwu.edu/president/Strategic/>

2. The Institutional Research and Assessment page also references data sources that might be useful:

<http://www2.iwu.edu/instres/>

C. What disciplinary or other national trends in your field have a bearing on the department/school's work?

1. Comparisons with similar programs
2. Expectations for graduate and professional schools
3. Changes in the opportunities for students entering the private sector

II. Description of Department/School's Resources

A. Describe the physical resources that support the department/school's mission: office, lab, and studio space, specialized equipment necessary for teaching and research, library holdings, etc.

B. How does the non-salary budget support the work of the department/school? Where appropriate, explain how external funding has supported teaching and scholarly activity of the faculty.

III. Overview of the instructional program

- A. What are the teaching goals of the department? Are there defined learning outcomes? How does the department measure the students' progress toward these goals or outcomes?
- B. What is the structure of and rationale for the major/minor?
- C. How does the department contribute to campus-wide curricula such as May Term, General Education, and interdisciplinary programs?
- D. How does the curriculum facilitate learning opportunities outside the classroom, such as student-faculty research projects, off-campus study, and service learning?
- E. Does the department/school focus on development of faculty pedagogy?

IV. Professional Activities, Leadership, and Service

- A. Self-studies might reference the principal areas of leadership and service by faculty in the department/school/program. Doing so not only recognizes the collective investment of the program to broader institutional, community, or national efforts, but also facilitates planning for future commitments.

While not part of the self-study, the following should be included in the material that is sent to each reviewer prior to the team visit.

- A copy of the IWU catalog
- Curriculum vitae of all members of the unit
- Syllabi for courses typically offered in unit
- Number of majors and minors for the past five years
- Recent enrollment data for courses typically offered

Appendix II: The External Review

Departments, programs, and schools will coordinate the visit of a two- or three-person external review team. In the spring semester prior to the on-campus visit of the external review team, faculty in the program under review will develop a list of suggested external reviewers. Typically the reviewers will be selected from tenured faculty at institutions that are similar to IWU. The list should include the reviewers contact information, a short paragraph that explains the strengths of each candidate, and a statement that identifies any relationships between prospective reviewers and faculty in the department/program/school.

The coordinator of the self-study will forward the list to the Associate Dean of Curriculum who will then meet with the Provost to determine which reviewers to invite. The coordinator should work with the Associate Dean of Curriculum to determine which dates will work for the department and other campus constituencies. The Associate Dean of Curriculum will be responsible for inviting the selected reviewers and working with them on travel arrangements.

The department/school/program will share a draft of the self-study with the Associate Dean two months before the visit of the external review team. The final self-study and materials related to the self-study will be submitted six weeks prior to the visit of the external review team. Electronic versions of these materials will be delivered to the Associate Dean of Curriculum and Faculty Development, who will post them on the Mellon Center webpage (password protected) and forward the link and password to each external reviewer and to the Provost and the President.

One month before the external reviewers' visit to campus the coordinator should develop, in consultation with the Associate Dean of Curriculum, an itinerary. The external reviewers will arrive on the first day in time for a dinner with two members of the department/school/program. The reviewers should have the opportunity to meet with the Provost early in the morning of the second day of the visit and to meet with the President, Provost, Associate Dean of Curricular and Faculty Development. In addition, reviewers usually appreciate some time to meet by themselves near the end of the on-site visit. Otherwise, the schedule will vary from program to program, including some or all of the following constituencies:

- All full-time faculty in the department/school, both tenured and untenured;
- Members of departments, schools, or programs with which the program under review has regular interaction;
- Student advisory groups or other student groups in the department/school/program;
- Where possible or appropriate, the external reviewers might visit individual classes, labs, or rehearsals.

We will request the external review report be submitted within four weeks of the campus visit. By doing so, departments and schools will have ample time to prepare a written response to the external reviewers' report.

Sample Schedule

First Day

2:00 – 6:00PM – arrive in Bloomington/Normal
Unit representative escorts to hotel
Dinner with 2-3 members of academic unit

Second Day

8:00 – 9:00 – breakfast at hotel (or restaurant) with appropriate staff
9:00-9:45 – meet with the Provost
9:45-10:45 – campus and facilities tour
10:45-11:00 – break
11:00–11:30 – meet with a faculty member
11:30-12:00 – meet with a faculty member
12:00-1:00 – lunch in the Cartwright Room with representative University faculty
1:00-1:30 - meet with a faculty member
1:30-2:00 – meet with a faculty member
2:00-2:30 - meet with a faculty member
2:30-3:00 – meet with a faculty member
3:00-4:00 – meet with chair
4:00-5:00 – meet with students
5:00-6:30 – break (reviewers may wish to work on preliminary report)
6:30 – dinner with members of academic unit

Third Day

Eat breakfast and check out of hotel by 10:00AM
10:00-11:00 – time for reviewers to finalize preliminary report
11:30-12:45 – report to faculty from academic unit
1:00-2:00 – present preliminary report to the President, the Provost, and Associate Dean of Curriculum and chair/director
2:00-5:00 – depart Bloomington-Normal