

Policy Abstract

for the

Handbook for Program Review:

Cleveland State University's Self-Study Process for Growth and Change

Spring 2005

Significant institutional resources are devoted to academic program review on campus, and it is important for all engaged in this effort to have a clear understanding of why we review programs. Accreditation agencies and the Ohio Board of Regents require us to engage in systematic review. However, the University conducts these required reviews with an eye towards accountability and a need for creating conditions that stimulate introspection, program planning, and a climate for reaching progressively higher standards of excellence in each department and curricular area. Following are some of the key reasons for engaging in Program Review at CSU:

External

- The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association and the Ohio Board of Regents require member institutions to engage in program review.

Internal

- Reviews provide a time for reflection in which the departments undertaking this exercise have an opportunity to carefully observe how their program works and to prioritize their needs based on their strengths and weaknesses.
- Reviews facilitate connections between the most recent developments in the field and programmatic aspirations, and provide faculty and administrators with a sense of stewardship in capitalizing on emerging opportunities.
- Reviews open up opportunities for exploring connections between existing curricular structures of the major within the department, and other disciplines, as well as with political, ethical and social aspects of liberal learning.
- Reviews become an occasion for collective faculty discussions regarding administrative support, rewards, recognition, scholarship in the field, advising, funds for faculty development, space, etc., that can be used for determining strategic direction.
- Departmental reviews provide a basis for University-wide decisions.
- Reviews provide opportunities for external visibility for the unit undergoing review in that the findings often highlight discipline-specific needs and other differences in governance of departments within sciences, humanities and professional programs. These differences help to sensitize the University community in recognizing and addressing unique departmental needs in constructive ways.

Successful integration of program review into the overall planning process of the institution depends on a number of factors: The review process must fit the campus environment; it must be supported by the interest and leadership of key personnel; the review policies must be straightforward and must adhere to principles of good practice. The current policies should build on what we know about creating a useful framework for program review and on CSU's past experiences in implementing reviews since 1978. The new guidelines should be realistic assumptions of what can and cannot be achieved through the review process.

The Program Review Process

Mandatory 5-7 Year Cycle

All CSU academic programs are required to undergo program review on a 5-7 year review cycle.

Unit of Analysis for Program Review

Traditionally, the unit of analysis at CSU has been the academic department in larger schools or colleges, a combination of departments supporting a single degree or academic program, smaller colleges as a whole,

or other credit generating units. Program review as currently defined may still be conducted using any of these units of analysis as appropriate.

Three Program Review Options

The scope of program review is adapted to include more flexibility by including the following three options:

- **Traditional Comprehensive Program Review** – a conventional review of an entire department/unit following established guidelines
- **Special Emphasis Self-study Option** – a review focused on a particular theme or subunit
- **Common Theme Option** – a review of several units focused on a common theme

For each of these options documentation on topics such as who is eligible, how reviews are scheduled, the report format, review process and follow-up is provided in the comprehensive Program Review Handbook.

Option	Eligibility	Scheduling	Report Format	Evaluation and Follow-up
Traditional	No external accreditation Last review 5+ years ago	5-7 yr. minimum or discretion	To follow self-study guidelines	Implementation Provost, Dean and Chair
	New program Unit request			
Special Emphasis	Designed for programs with accreditation	5-7 yr. minimum or discretion	To be approved at time of scheduling	Implementation Provost, Dean and Chair
Common Theme	Designed for programs administered through multiple departments	Based on need	To be approved at time of scheduling	Implementation thro Provost, Dean and Chair

Follow-up to Program Review: How Review Findings Will Be Used on Campus

The strongest criticism of program review at CSU has been that the review results have little or no effect on decisions on campus, so the investment of time and resources seem for naught. It is important to develop procedures to ensure that the results of reviews are introduced systematically into planning and budgeting at multiple levels. To accomplish this, a strategy involving the direct engagement of those individuals with direct and indirect responsibility for overseeing implementation is outlined below.

Immediately following the submission of review findings to the Provost, the Provost will initiate a series of meetings with the department chair/director, dean, and vice provost of Planning, Assessment and Information Resource Management (PAIRM) to develop a memorandum of agreement clarifying steps for follow-up and assignment of responsibility for each planned activity. The purpose of these meetings, which will culminate in a written document, will be to (1) create an opportunity to clarify expectations regarding the outcome of the review; (2) discuss potential links between the review findings and decision making in the future; and (3) identify strategies that allow the conclusion of the review to be used fruitfully at the department, college, and campus level. *See Program Review Handbook, Appendix B, p. 21 for a template for developing a memorandum of agreement.*

Relationship between Program Review and Planning:

A close link exists between the Program Review process and CSU's strategic planning. Departments reviewed under the traditional program review are required under self-study guidelines to prepare a report on the program's specific goals for student learning, evidence that these goals were being met in the prior 5 to 7 years, and a discussion of how information about learning is used to guide curricular decisions. Results and findings stemming from academic program review will be reported to University Curriculum Committee (UCC), which will, in turn, report these findings, along with relevant comments, to the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC). The findings and decisions emerging from the academic program review process will thus provide valuable input to strategic planning.

I Traditional Comprehensive Program Review

Eligibility

A comprehensive program review, which is the most common form of review in CSU's mandatory 5-7 year review cycle for all academic units, is appropriate for programs that do not undergo disciplinary accreditation through external agencies. It is also the appropriate form of review for new programs, or for any program that requests such a review. Departments and schools may self nominate their units for review. In addition, the Provost, college deans, and senate committees may nominate units for review.

Establishing Program Review Committees

Each undergraduate college shall establish a Program Review Committee consisting of four to six faculty members. The membership of this committee will be composed of the following:

- 1 Member representing UCC
- 1 Appointee of the College Curriculum Committee
- 1 Appointee of the Dean of the Undergraduate College
- 1 Elected member of the Graduate Council (for programs with graduate components)
- 1 Appointee of the Dean of Graduate College (for programs with graduate components)
- 1 External consultant selected for units with programs without any external accreditation; 2 such consultants for units with doctoral or other programs with sufficient diversity in their specialized offerings. The external consultant provides a written report to the committee but is not a voting member of the committee.

The chair of this group is elected by the committee members. The Dean of the Graduate College and Graduate Council will be encouraged to appoint members from outside the program and college being reviewed, but within the University.

Role of External Consultants

The external consultant's role is to serve as a content expert in the discipline being reviewed. The other committee members turn to the external consultant for information about current trends in the discipline and opportunities for external funding. They also look to him/her for two key comparisons: how the program being reviewed compares to departments in other universities that have similar mission, demographics, and funding base; and, a critique of how the program measures up in relation to those departments who are at a higher level of functioning, i.e. aspirational peers.

Selection of External Consultant

The dean of a college shall consult with department faculty and the chair/director of the unit being reviewed. Faculty shall identify and submit to their chair/director a list of four candidates--ranked in the order of preference--who would be appropriate to serve in the role of an external consultant for a unit. The chair/director may add additional comments and shall forward the list of candidates to the dean of the college.

The following information is needed for each external consultant nominated by the department undergoing review:

Required information:

1. Name, address, phone number, email address, and web site information, if a web site is available.
2. A brief description on no more than 2 to 3 sentences on how the reviewer was selected for recommendation by the department.
3. Why each recommended reviewer represents a "good-fit" in reviewing the CSU department. For example, does the nominated individual have experience with units similar to CSU's in scope and size? Does the person have a background in developing or overseeing a department with the same mix of graduate and undergraduate programs offered in the department? Or, perhaps the reviewer has a background in an area in which a CSU department wants to grow, and the reason for nominating him/her is that the reviewer will provide expertise needed for moving the department to the next level of excellence.

4. Any prior professional or personal relationships that department members have with the individual being nominated.
5. Whether the nominated reviewer may be in a position of competing with the department, which would disqualify him/her from being a reviewer for us?

Optional Information:

1. A vita for each individual being nominated.

Distribution of Findings

Program review findings and reports are to be shared with all relevant parties: i.e.: departments, deans, the Provost, UCC, Graduate Council, Strategic Planning Committee, etc.

II Special Emphasis Self-Study Option

The special emphasis self-study option is made available to departments who wish to eliminate the duplication of effort involved in preparing a self-study for a professional accreditation as well as for CSU's internal program review. The new special emphasis option will give the department or college credit for successfully completing a round of accreditation review. However, the department will be invited to explore, within the context of CSU's program review, its unique opportunities and challenges that may only be of cursory interest to accrediting agencies. Using the special emphasis option for review will pave the way for aligning a department or program's goals with the strategic direction adopted by the college, and the university as a whole. One example of differences in accreditation vs. internal priorities is CSU's need to affirm its responsiveness to the complex issues of its urban community through teaching and research. An emphasis such as this and many others may be outside the sphere of accreditation.

In other instances where a program has completed an accreditation review, the data compiled for the initial dossier may show that a particular weakness deserves attention or that a particular strength provides an opportunity for growth given sufficient resources; in these cases, the self study may focus on a single theme.

Eligibility

This option is available as an alternative to the traditional program review to academic programs that meet one of the following conditions: (1) are accredited through professional or specialized accreditation agencies outside the university; or (2) are well-functioning CSU departments that are willing to commit serious attention to a select group of critical issues in order to strengthen the quality of their programs. The option of engaging in a focused review is not for everyone; however, some departments may be able to seize this opportunity to build their self-study around a small number of carefully selected critical areas in which they want to improve.

Selected Topics for Areas of Special Emphasis

A program review with a special emphasis can be limited to particular themes or subunits, e.g., a curricular sequence, a graduate program, advising, or recruitment. This type of program review may be warranted for units that have recently undergone external review for accreditation.

The potential special emphasis topics listed in this section reflect actual challenges reported by CSU departments during an exercise on building Academic Unit Profiles in Fall 2003. Following are examples of topics that could be addressed through a focused study:

- Designing new programs, assessing the market for such programs
- Designing interdisciplinary or international programs
- Curriculum realignment, developing new majors or phasing out others
- Strengthening instruction in courses with large enrollment
- Addressing the issues of part-time faculty as it relates to the quality of the programs
- Developing interdisciplinary collaborations in research or instruction
- Developing partnerships with other regional or national universities
- Strategic planning, engaging alumni, advancement, development, promotions, marketing
- Pursuit of external funding
- Coping with rapid enrollment growth or decline

- Strengthening the graduate or undergraduate curriculum or programs
- Developing new electives in the major or strengthening service courses
- Improving student performance – working on quality, rankings or accreditation
- Recruiting majors, developing links with feeder institutions and high schools
- Developing distance or web delivered courses
- Introducing technology or adapting to new technology in the field

III Common Theme Option

Review of Several Units Based on a Common Theme

Under a third option, several units, departments or school, may be reviewed based on a single theme, such as general education requirements, writing across the curriculum, distance education, introducing technology in the curriculum, or the need for adjunct faculty. In some cases, several units may be reviewed for common resources, e.g., all fine and performing arts programs in anticipation of a new building or school.

Eligibility

Nominations for review of several units based on a common theme may originate through the following sources: College and University Curriculum Committees, senate committees, deans, provost, or other non-academic units on campus. The nominations are forwarded to the Provost with a detailed rationale for the request, a list of all programs affected by the review, and, where possible, letters of interest from affected programs. The Provost will consult with all involved programs and seek their input prior to including a theme based review on the review schedule. Such a review is to be approved by the Provost, Vice Provost (PAIRM) and on the recommendation of the Deans of the colleges in which the program resides.