

**College Curriculum Council Review of Concentrations**  
**Guidelines for chairs and program directors**  
September 2009

The 2008 report of the Task Force on Undergraduate Education acknowledged the strength and diversity of Brown's concentration programs, noting that more work remained to be done to ensure that all our programs reflected the same high standards. Specifically, the Task Force recommended that all concentration programs define learning outcomes for students, provide opportunities for capstone experiences, and develop systematic plans for assessing students' learning in the concentration ([www.brown.edu/college/tue](http://www.brown.edu/college/tue)). The College Curriculum Council (CCC) is now undertaking reviews to assess progress toward these goals.

Each concentration program will be asked to discuss four areas in the course of the review: (1) the intellectual rationale for the program and the expectations for student learning; (2) how the program advances Brown's liberal learning goals; (3) the strength and coherence of advising in the concentration; and (4) the methods used to assess all concentrators' success in achieving concentration learning outcomes.

Reviews will be conducted in two stages. First, a small committee from the CCC (including one student and two or three faculty members or deans) will visit the department to meet with chairs, directors of programs, and a group of faculty and students. The CCC committee will arrive with some knowledge of the program, including knowledge about enrollments and graduation rates, and will expect the faculty and students in the department to provide more information about the four areas above.

The department should be prepared to give concrete responses to the following questions:

(1) Why is your concentration structured as it is? What specific knowledge and skills do you believe every concentrator should have gained by the time of graduation? What process do you have in your department for verifying that students have gained them? You may want to refer to the AAHE's "9 Principles of Good Practice for Assessing Student Learning" and the Sheridan Center's "Guidelines for a Simple, Sustainable Departmental Assessment Plan," both of which are housed on the Sheridan Center website.

[http://brown.edu/Administration/Sheridan\\_Center/resources/documents/AAHE9Principlesforassessingstudentlearning.pdf](http://brown.edu/Administration/Sheridan_Center/resources/documents/AAHE9Principlesforassessingstudentlearning.pdf)

[http://brown.edu/Administration/Sheridan\\_Center/resources/documents/guidelinesforsustainabledeptassessmentplan.pdf](http://brown.edu/Administration/Sheridan_Center/resources/documents/guidelinesforsustainabledeptassessmentplan.pdf)

(2) What do *you* consider the most important outcomes of a liberal education? (Refer to the CCC's 2008 statement "[Liberal Learning at Brown](#).") How does your concentration help students achieve these outcomes? What requirements do you have in your program to ensure, in particular, that students have worked on their writing?

(3) Outline the goals of your advising program. Do you have a mechanism in place to determine whether advising is working? How do you think advising in your concentration could be strengthened?

(4) What is the nature of the work completed by seniors in your concentration? What percentage of the classes of 2007, 2008, and 2009 completed a senior project? What kind of work did they complete? (Give specific examples.) Did your faculty meet to talk about the work done by your seniors? Finally, what are the criteria for earning honors in your concentration, and how recently has your honors program been revised?

After the interview, the CCC members who visited the department will provide the chair or director with a brief written summary highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the program. Concentrations will be asked to draft a response to the summary statement. This constitutes the second stage of the review, during which time the chair or program director will be invited to discuss the concentration's response with other members of the CCC.