Academic Program Review

Guidelines and Procedures

Office of the Provost

June, 2012

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Introduction

The purpose of an academic program review process is to improve the quality of academic units individually and the university as a whole. Academic reviews provide an opportunity for each academic unit to reflect, self-assess, and plan; they generate in-depth communication between the unit and the university administration, thus offering a vehicle to inform planning and decision-making; they invite candid assessment by external experts. By stimulating program planning and encouraging strategic development, academic program reviews can be a central mechanism to advance the University mission and the Plan for Academic Enrichment (http://www.brown.edu/web/pae/).

Brown began the current cycle of reviews in 2007-08. Thirteen units were reviewed by the end of spring term, 2009 after which the review process was revised; all other academic departments will be reviewed between 2009 and 2014. After a one-year break for a thorough evaluation of the review process, an on-going cycle, with review for each academic department approximately every seven (7) years, will be established.

In the current cycle, we seek to improve the review process in several ways:

❖ Strengthen the continuous process of dialogue among faculty and administration that undergirds the process.

> The review process unfolds over many semesters and includes multiple elements. Although each individual element is valuable, the value is increased when they are contributions to a sustained conversation on strategic academic development. The revised process enhances department-administration interaction, including initial decisions about the focus of the review, the discussion of internal and external reports, as well as the yearly follow-up.

❖ Better engage faculty expertise and internal review processes.

> While the visit of an external team offers a distinctive value, program reviews can also take advantage of on-campus faculty expertise and faculty committees such as the Academic Priorities Committee, the College Curriculum Council, and the Graduate Council. The revised process strengthens the role of the APC by charging it to lead an internal review to parallel the external visit. Second, it regularizes the relationship between the overall department review and the concentration and graduate program reviews conducted by the CCC and Grad Council.

❖ Clarify and communicate the framework for evaluation and assessment.

> An important goal during the current cycle of reviews is to develop departmental and university measures of effectiveness that will contribute to an overarching institutional framework for assessment. In addition, to better support both departments

and reviewers, the Provost's office will define a common set of data that will be provided to the academic unit as well as the external review committee.

❖ Focus reviews sharply on a few key issues.

        If one think about academic reviews as a continuous process, each individual review need not cover every potential topic in a department; nor would reviews necessarily address the same issues in every department. By focusing on a relative few issues of strategic significance to the unit, we can streamline preparation and enhance decision-making.

Overview of the Review Process

Academic program review is a multi-year process including five (5) distinct steps. The purpose of this section is to describe the entire review process; subsequent sections of the guide address each step in the review process.

1. <u>Identification of Key Issues</u>: Two semesters prior to the external review, the department is notified that it will be reviewed. The departmental planning process begins with a discussion of the issues that should drive the review. By the end of this semester, the department should:
   a. Identify a few key issues that will be the focus of the review;
   b. Identify several peer departments outside Brown and, in some cases, peer departments inside Brown;
   c. Identify potential external reviewers; and
   d. Understand the timeline and elements of the review process.

2. <u>Study and analysis -- the Self-Study</u>: The term prior to the external review is devoted to the departmental self study, which should engage all faculty and include graduate and undergraduate student input. The Provost's office will provide analytical data to support the department's analysis, which will be supplemented as necessary by the department.

3. <u>Review team visits</u>: Two groups will visit the department during this semester. The internal team, led by the Academic Priorities Committee (APC) will meet with faculty and students. A separate visit by a small external team will follow and will occur over one and a half or two days.

4. <u>Academic Priorities Committee review</u>: After the external review team's report is submitted, the APC will meet with the internal review team and the department chair to discuss the department's self-study, the review team reports and the department's response. The result of this analysis will be a set of conclusions or recommendations to the Provost, who will then generate a response letter to the department. This letter will be the basis for the follow-up discussions with the Provost and appropriate faculty Dean in subsequent years.

5. <u>Ongoing assessment and review</u>: Departmental assessment is a continuous process and a multi-level process. The External Review is followed by reviews by standing faculty committees (the College Curriculum Council and the Graduate Council) and regular administrative updates, including a mid-cycle report and discussion with the Provost.

Step One: Identification of Key Issues

The first step in the review process is for the department to identify the issues it believes should be the focus of the review. Issue identification should be completed two semesters prior to an external review visit.

A key issue is a question or concern with potential to have a significant impact on the department within the next 3-5 years and/or with which the department must contend with in order to improve. These issues provide the foundation for the review, so it is important that departments encourage broad input and discussion among the faculty during this step of the process.

To identify the focal points of the review, the department should review previous internal or external review documents. Consider changes that have occurred since the previous review – both internal changes as well as pressures from the external environment. If the department has a strategic plan, use it to guide this process. An inventory of questions that may be useful in developing a set of core issues is listed below. This list is *not* a definition of key issues, nor is it an outline for a report. Rather, it is a brainstorming tool intended to help departments explore a wide range of issues and ideas and thus help the department reach a consensus on the most critical issues to consider during the self-study phase.

1. Mission and strategic position
   a. What is the unit's purpose? What is the unit's intellectual agenda in the context of current trends in its discipline? Are there changes in the discipline that the unit has responded to or that suggest the unit will need to re-examine its mission and focus? Is the unit mainstream, cutting edge, or behind the times?
   b. What are the unit's strengths and weaknesses? How have those changed since the last review? Are the unit's strengths aligned with its aspirations? What are the most important challenges the unit faces?
   c. What is the unit's reputation and what makes it distinctive vis-à-vis its peers? For what is it known? What is the unit doing to improve its quality and visibility?
   d. Which institutions represent (a) peer and (b) aspirant departments for the unit? By what measure beyond reputation?
   e. Where does the unit fit within the University? Within the Division? How do links with other units support the unit's mission and objectives? Where can they be strengthened?
   f. Does the unit have a strategic plan for long-term development? How is the strategic plan related to the unit's perceived strengths and weaknesses, its vision of its contribution to the discipline, and its academic priorities?

2. Faculty and research

a. Have there been significant hires or losses since the last review? Has the unit been successful in recruiting and retaining top faculty members? How does the unit mentor junior faculty? What are the prospects for the future in terms of attracting the best scholars to the unit?

b. What efforts have been made to recruit a diverse faculty with regard to ethnicity and gender? How are faculty from under-represented groups mentored and retained? What are the retention patterns?

c. What is the teaching load of the unit's faculty? How are teaching assignments made, and how are they distributed among the different levels of faculty? What percentage of undergraduate courses is taught by tenured faculty, or by non-regular faculty?

d. What is the distribution of advising and mentoring responsibilities to faculty, and what methods are used to evaluate their effectiveness? How does the faculty provide role models, mentoring and research opportunities to under-represented students to encourage them to continue in the discipline?

e. What are the research strengths of the unit? Do these research strengths support the unit's mission? How do they support the curriculum? How do the faculty engage undergraduates in the research activities of the unit?

f. Does the unit have a coordinated research agenda? Should it?

g. Are there new research areas that need to be developed? Similarly, are there areas that no longer appear as relevant and should be phased out?

h. How has research support of faculty changed since the last review? Are sources of research funding increasing or decreasing?

i. Do faculty actively seek partnerships with faculty in related departments? How does this contribute to the intellectual life of the unit? Are there new strategic partnerships that should be pursued?

3. Undergraduate program
    a. What is the purpose of your concentration? How does the structure of requirements ensure that students acquire a deep and rigorous understanding of the methods and substance of your discipline? What evidence do you have that students are achieving your concentration goals?

    b. How does your concentration contribute to the overall mission of liberal learning at Brown?

    c. How do you balance the need to provide service courses for non-concentrators with the need to provide courses for concentrators?

    d. What opportunities are available to concentrators for a capstone experience? How many students pursue honors? Research opportunities?

    e. What are the weaknesses and limitations in your concentration program?

4. Graduate program

a. What are the objectives of the graduate program(s) affiliated with the department and how are they being met? How do you measure your success in meeting your objectives? What opportunities are there for training grants and for individual fellowships?
b. What constitutes "quality" in graduate education in your field? How does your unit measure and meet this standard?
c. How successful are you in recruiting and competing with other institutions for graduate students? How to pay specific attention to recruiting and retaining graduate students from underrepresented groups?
d. What is the average time to degree?
e. What has been the placement record for the department?
f. How does the training of graduate students affect the undergraduate curriculum?

5. Governance and administration
a. How is the unit organized; describe the role of the chair or director and the unit's standing committees. Is the structure effective or are changes needed?
b. How is the work of the unit distributed among its members?

6. Unit support
a. How has technology been integrated into the teaching, research and administrative activities of the unit?
b. Does the unit's current space meet its research and teaching needs? Is the space maintained well?
c. Have library collections kept pace with the changes in the discipline?
d. Is the current level of research administrative support adequate to manage grant funding?

Step Two: The Department Self-Study and Report

The semester of self-study offers departments an opportunity for candid assessment of itself and for consideration of future directions. The report that results for these discussions should focus on an analysis of the issues identified earlier in the process. It should reflect the unit's sense of its strengths and weaknesses, as well as its perception of strategic opportunities or challenges. It should define ways in which the faculty believes the program can improve, primarily with existing resources. While the need for additional resources may be noted, the report should focus on strategic choices and directions; the means for pursuing those ends generally should be confined to existing resources, including reallocation of resources to better align them with departmental priorities.

The department or program should ensure that all faculty members have a role in the delineation and analysis of issues. Graduate and undergraduate students should have an opportunity to contribute to the self-study. Whatever process is used, the report should be shared with all faculty and should represent a consensus, or it should state clearly the nature of the differences of viewpoints.

The length of the report should be approximately 15-20 pages, exclusive of appendices. It might begin with a brief description of the unit's current status: mission, organization, program areas, etc. The most significant part of the report, however, should be the analysis of the issues. Recommendations for the future should be included but can be articulated concisely and presented in the context of the identified issues.

Data to support the department's analysis will be provided by the Provost's office and the department. Generally speaking, the Provost's office will provide institutional data on course offerings, teaching loads, undergraduate and graduate programs, faculty appointments, and, in some cases, sponsored research and space utilization. Departments should supplement these data in several critical ways, including descriptions of academic programs, methods of assessing faculty productivity in teaching and research, and educational outcomes for your students.

Information provided by Provost's Office:

Faculty Data
- Faculty Roster
- Faculty Search Summary
- Faculty Arrivals and Departures
  - Tenure Rate and Cohorts Entering
- Faculty Awards

Faculty Productivity
- Faculty Awards
- Teaching:

   o Courses by Faculty Member with Enrollments
- Research
   o Grant Activity of Proposals, Awards and Costs
   o Space Report: Research dollars and square footage by Faculty Member (Sciences Only)
   o In Biomed departments, Academic Impact Reports

Graduate Education

- Graduate School Admissions
   o Applications Offers Selectivity and Yield
   o GRE and TOEFL Scores (Recent Applicant Population)
   o Applicant Diversity Profile
- Student Diversity Profile and Ph.D. Cohort Tracking Chart
- Attritions By Year

Undergraduate Education

- Undergraduate Enrollments over time
- Undergraduate Concentrations over time
- Grade Distribution
- Honors, Awards, Senior Prizes
- Offered Courses
- Completed Concentrations by Ethnicity and Gender
- Multiple Concentrators
- Independent Study Enrollments
- Course Counts and Enrollments for Liberal Learning, Diversity Perspectives and First Year Seminars
- Senior Survey Description & Results (*Selected Departments*)

Previous External Review Report available upon request.

Information supplied by the Department

In each of the areas above – faculty and research, graduate program, undergraduate program – departments manage essential information. The list below suggests items that all departments will consider in the course of their self study and should supply to reviewers; departments may add additional materials to support the analysis of specific issues.

Faculty, Research and other Department Information

- Mission statement.
- Description of departmental approach to assessing faculty teaching excellence and research productivity.
- Faculty awards, honors, academy memberships or other indications of national recognition (to supplement data provided by the Provost's office).

- Comparative data (with department-identified peers) on department size, teaching load, research productivity, and other metrics.
- Please ask your faculty to update their research directory sites during the fall semester, as this will be a useful site during the review process.

Graduate Program
- Graduate students and postdocs by faculty member
- Graduate program description and requirements.
- Graduate student placement data, last 5 years.
- Dissertations by advisor (date, student, advisor, dissertation title), last 5 years
- Graduate student grant funding – Fellowship awards, Training Grants
- Size of graduate student groups per faculty member.
- Peer program information: if the department has data on peer programs that would support the self-study, please include it.
- Please review carefully the Graduate Council review description for additional items, especially if your external review includes a focus on graduate education.

Undergraduate Program
- Undergraduate Concentration description(s) and requirements
- Undergraduate advising (freshman, sophomore, concentration), last 5 years
- Please review carefully the CCC review description for additional items, especially if your external review includes a focus on the undergraduate curriculum.

The complete self-study, including appendices, should be submitted to the Provost's Office by December 15, for spring reviews, or May 15, for fall reviews. Please submit materials electronically and provide one unbound print copy. The self-study will be reviewed by the Provost before distribution to the external review committee members.

Step Three: Review Team Visits

Two review teams will study departments' submitted materials, meet with department faculty and students and report to the Academic Priorities Committee: an internal review team, consisting of two Brown faculty members, and a small external review team, comprised of scholars selected from those nominated by the department and by the academic administration. Both review teams will provide insight on a department's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges, with the external team emphasizing a department's standing in relation to its national and international peers and the internal team emphasizing the department's role within the context of Brown's mission and strategic plan.

The department and the Provost's office will work together on the scheduling of reviewers' visits. The Provost's office will set the overall schedule of internal and external team visits and arrange transportation and lodging for external reviewers. It will work collaboratively with departments to set the general itinerary and schedule administrative appointments. The department will host the visitors during the reviews, escorting them to meetings as necessary and managing the schedule of meetings with faculty and students.

Generally it is expected that review teams will meet with departmental faculty, undergraduates, graduate students, representatives from related units, and appropriate members of the administration. Reviewers may suggest additional meetings or adjustments in the schedule. In order to facilitate effective discussion, departments are asked to give careful attention to balancing the size of meeting groups, the number of meetings, and the particular needs of the department and its faculty.

Step Four: Academic Priorities Committee Review

The external review committee report will be submitted to the Provost, reviewed and then distributed to the department chair as well as the Academic Priorities Committee (APC) and senior administration. The department should prepare a brief response to the external report.

A discussion with APC, the internal review team and the department chair follows and is based on the department's self-study, the review team reports and the department response. To the extent possible, the APC will conduct its discussion and make recommendations to the administration in the same semester as external review occurred. The Provost will thereafter communicate in writing to the department, summarizing the APC recommendations as well as administrative conclusions or actions, if any; this communication will provide the basis for a status report and update approximately one year following the review.

Step Five: Ongoing Assessment

The review process offers an opportunity for in-depth discussion of a department's strengths, weaknesses, and strategic plans and provides a basis for an on-going discussion with the academic administration. Departments should anticipate regular discussions with the Provost or his designee to review progress, adjust goals and assess accomplishments.

One or two semesters after the external review and APC discussion, the College Curriculum Council (CCC) will conduct the undergraduate concentration review. The Graduate Council review will occur one or two years after the external review. The data used in the self study process will form the basis for these reviews, updated as necessary.

College Curriculum Council Review

The CCC review guidelines are on the web at:
http://brown.edu/Administration/Dean_of_the_College/curriculum/documents/CCC_Concentration_Review_Guidelines.pdf

Graduate Council Review

The aim of the Graduate Council Review is not to subject programs to repeat scrutiny, but rather to look forward. Programs will be asked to summarize the results of the self-study, the external review report and the departmental response to the report, as those documents pertain to the graduate program. The Graduate Council will then want to discuss the changes envisioned for the graduate program as a response to the external review.

The checklist below will be useful as programs prepare for their Graduate Council reviews.
- Excerpt of departmental self-study (section on graduate program)
- Excerpt or summary of the external review report (section on graduate program)
- Departmental response to the external review report (section on graduate program)
- Description of Graduate Program (from web or handbook)
- Brief statement of mission and goals of graduate program
- Departmental Graduate Handbook
- Milestones
- Syllabi for Graduate Courses
- Data indicators from GS website

Midterm Assessment

Midway in the review cycle, the Provost and Department Chair will meet to take stock of the unit's accomplishments and planning and to consider the objectives that the department will pursue prior to the next external review. In advance of this discussion, the department chair will be asked to submit a report (not more than five pages) outlining these matters.

SAMPLE EXTERNAL REVIEW AGENDA

EXTERNAL REVIEW SCHEDULE
BROWN UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF _____

Day One (Thursday or Monday)

8:00 a.m.   External Review Committee Breakfast with Provost and Dean of the Faculty or
               Dean of Medicine and Biological Sciences, Associate Provost
                    Faculty Club, One Magee Street

9:00-10:45   Individual or small group meetings

10:45-11:00   Break

11:00-12:30   Individual or small group meetings

12:30-1:30   Lunch

1:30-3:30   Individual or small group meetings

3:30-4:00   Break

4:00-5:30   Individual or small group meetings

6:30   Committee working dinner

Day Two (Friday or Tuesday)

8:30-11:00   TBD (additional meetings or committee working time)

11:00–11:45   Debriefing with the Chair

12:00 p.m.   Lunch with Provost, Dean of the Faculty/Biomed, Associate Provost

1:00 p.m.   Committee time

2:00 p.m.   Review ends

Schedule of Reviews, 2006-2014

Review Year	Department
2006-2007	Hispanic Studies History Psychology
2007-2008	Africana Studies Dance Comparative Literature MAT Pembroke Center
2008-2009	American Civilization, John Nicholas Brown Center, and the Center for Race & Ethnicity in America Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies Spatial Structure in the Social Sciences Taubman Center for Public Policy Theater, Speech and Dance
2009-2010	Chemistry English Literary Arts Modern Culture & Media Physics
2010-2011	Anthropology Computer Science Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Economics Neuroscience Political Science Sociology Watson Institute
2011-2012	Classics Egyptology and Ancient Western Asian Studies Environmental Studies/Environmental Change Initiative Geological Sciences History of Art & Architecture Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World Judaic Studies Philosophy Religious Studies
Fall 2012	Moleular Biology, Cell Biology and Biochemistry Molecular Pharmacology, Physiology and Biotechnology Music Visual Art

Spring 2013	Center for Language Studies East Asian Studies French Studies German Studies Italian Studies Portuguese and Brazilian Studies Slavic Languages
Fall 2013	Applied Mathematics Cognitive, Linguistic and Psychological Sciences Mathematics
Spring 2014	Cogut Center for the Humanities Molecular Microbiology and Immunology Public Health