

GUIDELINES FOR DEPARTMENTAL REVIEWS

Departmental reviews and reviews of interdisciplinary minors should occur every 5-7 years. A review is an opportunity for a department to think critically about itself and what it does through a process of self-reflection and evaluation. The review should identify key concerns or issues where opportunity for improvement or development exists, and set a trajectory for the department for the next 5-7 years. Thus, the departmental review is an occasion to look back at department activities in an evaluative fashion and, even more so, to help the department move forward in its engagement with students and service to the College. A set of focused questions regarding teaching and learning should guide the review process.

The review process should include the following steps.

1. Planning Meeting: In the spring semester of the academic year *prior* to the scheduled review, the department chair (and other department members as warranted) should meet with the Senior Associate Dean of the College to discuss the review process, consider preliminary issues of interest to the department, and begin to identify institutional data that can assist the department in their review. The department chair also should contact the Director of Institutional Research to obtain a copy of the standard Department Dashboard and discuss the different types and sources of data that can be available for the self-study.

2. Proposal: After determining the concerns and opportunities for improvement and development they wish to address, by April 1 of the academic year prior to the scheduled review the department should develop a short proposal with draft focus questions for the review, how it will be conducted (i.e. internal self-study only, bringing outside consultants in, or visiting similar programs), a timeline, and a tentative budget (note: presently we allot approximately \$2500 per review). This written proposal is submitted to the Senior Associate Dean of the College for approval.

3. Self-Study: The department will conduct a self-reflective and evaluative self-study designed to critically examine the department for the benefit of the department, the College, and any outside consultants in investigating the focus questions and department plans for future improvements and revisions. **(This will be a written document submitted to the Dean's Office and outside consultant(s) at least three weeks prior to consultants arriving on campus.** For departments visiting other programs, the self-study may be submitted after site visits, depending on the nature of the review.) See following guidelines for more details about the elements of the self-study.

4. Incorporation of materials from outside sources.

- **Site visitations:** Site visits will generally consist of visits to two-to-three similar or aspirational programs in the GLCA or that are in the geographic region. Departments might elect to arrange zoom interviews and discussions with a broader range of similar or aspirational programs. The department will compile notes from any site visits. These will be incorporated into the department self-study or submitted separately as a summary to the Dean's Office to become part of the department's assessment file.

- **Consultancy Report:** Department reviews utilizing external consultants will generally invite one or two consultants from similar or aspirational schools. Depending on the needs of the review, consultants might visit in person or conduct their work via Zoom. Consultants should be proposed and reviewed by the Senior Associate Dean *prior to extending any invitation to participate*. In the case of a review that brings consultants to campus, please consult with Senior Administrative Assistant to the Dean of the College to find an optimal time for the visit and to schedule meetings with the Senior Associate Dean and Dean. The standard honorarium for an on-site consultation is \$750 plus travel expenses. The consultant(s) will write up the findings of their review and submit that report to the Dean's Office prior to receiving the honorarium.

- **Participation in a developmental workshop or review process from a professional society:** Some professional societies offer developmental workshops or accreditation, certification or approval processes that are appropriate for small liberal arts colleges such as Wabash. These often include a review of curriculum, resources, and staffing that parallel the self-study process and provide an outside assessment of the department's offerings. Please discuss the expectations of the society, potential fees and other requirements with the Senior Associate Dean before beginning this process.

5. Action Plan: At the conclusion of the self-study, the department will submit a written plan for moving forward based on the findings of the internal self-study, consultancy, or site visits. The plan might reflect on questions or possibilities such as: What changes is the department contemplating in light of the review? What questions will be central to department planning over the next several years? How will changes improve student learning and student experience? How will changes be evaluated? What was learned during the course of the department review?

6. Post-Review Debriefing: In the semester following the completion of the review, the Department Chair (and other members of the department as warranted) will meet with the Senior Associate Dean and/or Dean of the College to discuss the review and action plan. In some cases, this conversation may, instead, take place in the department's bi-annual Dean Assessment meeting.

During the implementation of the action plan, the department is encouraged to have conversations with the Dean's Office about their progress, how the review is being used in the work of the department, and new directions and changes since the department review. Such discussions might occur in Dean assessment meetings or in other venues at the initiative of the department or Dean's Office. The department may also be requested to write a follow-up report on action items initiated subsequent to the completion of the review and submission of the action plan.

The following outline identifies some of the issues and data pertinent to the department review, but it does not present a specific format that must be followed. While each department review will be somewhat different, all departments should include attention to items I, II, III, and V.

I. Identification of Review Focus Questions (Required element)

- The self-study should begin with a description of crucial questions and issues the department has identified as the focus of the review.

II. Characteristics of the department (Required element)

Department as part of the institution (divisional alignment; majors, minors and interdisciplinary programs offered; distribution offerings; immersion courses; co- and extracurricular activities; etc.)

Current Faculty

- Basic description of areas, length of time at college
- Transitions and hiring since the last review and anticipated in the future
- Personnel questions (optional)

Students (much of this information can be obtained from the Department Dashboard.)

- Student profile (major, minor, non-majors)
- Learning needs (major, minor, non-major)
- Student numbers (major, minor, distribution, all-college)

III. Review (and revision) of departmental curriculum and student learning goals (Required)

- Review and discussion of department student learning goals, including how comprehensive exams evaluate these learning goals, and considered revision of either the goals or comprehensive exams
- Review and discussion of course level Student Learning Outcomes, including relationship to departmental student learning goals and outcomes across departmental offerings
- Review and discussion of how distribution courses demonstrate distribution learning outcomes

Possible resources include Academic Bulletin text and course syllabi, either in the body of the self-study or as appendices. *The department review self-study should document these discussions and, at a minimum, include an updated set of department student learning goals.* Depending on the nature of discussions, it may be helpful to offer revised course SLO documents.

IV. Practice

- Pedagogy (e.g. teaching and learning styles; consideration of belonging and inclusion; contribution to foreign language development, student writing, oral communication, and/or quantitative skills)
- Resources and infrastructure use and needs (including technology, library, etc.)
- Faculty development use and needs
- Central questions related to pedagogy, resources and infrastructure, and faculty development

V. Assessment: How We Assess Student Learning, Pedagogy, and Programs (some consideration of assessment data is a required review element)

- Department Student Learning Outcome Assessment Memos
- Institutional Tools (e.g. National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), College Senior Survey (CSS) etc.)

- Departmental data and assessment tools
- Ideas for future Program Assessment

VI. Questions and Issues: Moving Forward

- Consideration of review focus questions
- Identification of strategies being contemplated

VII. Appendices (Optional, included as deemed useful by department)

- Curriculum Vitae
- Course Syllabi
- Additional enrollment information or charts
- Curriculum Comparisons to other institutions and/or based on site visits
- Other