

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT ALBANY
Office of Graduate Studies
Office of Undergraduate Studies

Procedure for Joint Review of Established Graduate and Undergraduate Programs

The review of all graduate and undergraduate programs is now mandated by the SUNY Central Administration, and these reviews are scheduled and coordinated on this campus by the Graduate Academic Council and the Undergraduate Academic Council, and their Committees for the Review of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs. The Deans of Undergraduate Studies and of Graduate Studies and members of their staffs provide administrative support for these reviews. It should be emphasized that the review of each program is a process and not an event. The goal of the process is self-improvement. Procedures have been established for the review of each program at SUNY Albany at regular intervals. These procedures include the submission of a Self-Study document, the selection of external scholar-reviewers, a visitation and written evaluation by the reviewers, an assessment of the program by the GAC and UAC, and recommendations to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the President.

I. Self-Study Document

Each program scheduled for review submits a Self-Study document which focuses both on the past 5 years and on plans to increase the quality of the program in the next 5 years. See Attachment A for a description of the format which each document should follow. For each program a self-study committee should be established containing representative faculty and undergraduate and graduate students which prepares the Self-Study document. Once the document is drafted by the committee it should be made available to faculty and students in the department and their comments solicited.

In addition, a report from the Library concerning the adequacy of available holdings in the field is requested.

II. Selection of External Scholar-Reviewers

The following are criteria for the selection of scholar-reviewers who are invited to give SUNYA a critical assessment of its programs:

1. The reviewer must have experience as a faculty member in a similar program in another institution.
2. Experienced reviewers with national reputations in their fields should be selected.
3. Ideally, each reviewer should have both a broad knowledge of the discipline as a whole and expertise in a specialization emphasized in the program at SUNYA.
4. Reviewers should strike a balance between being familiar with the SUNYA department and its faculty, and yet detached enough to give a critical review. We must avoid conflicts of interest (e.g., selecting reviewers who are co-authors or co-researchers with faculty members in the department being reviewed).

5. It is desirable but not mandatory that reviewers come from the Northeastern United States outside of New York State.

The department chair collects the names of potential scholar-reviewers from appropriate sources (including the professional association, the faculty, the Deans of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies, the Council of Graduate Schools, etc.). The department chair draws up vitae (from a standard reference work) for each name and, after consulting with the faculty and school deans, submits the names in order of preference to the Undergraduate and Graduate Deans. After a list of names is approved by the two Deans and the Committees for Review of Programs, two or more reviewers are contacted about their willingness to serve as consultants at a stipulated stipend for a two-day visit and subsequent report. After arrangements are agreed upon, a formal letter of invitation is sent to the prospective reviewers.

Questions about the number of reviewers (beyond two) and whether they operate independently or as a team can be handled differently for each program according to whatever seems desirable and practicable. Normally we prefer that the reviewers come as a team and submit a single report.

III. Visitation & Report

Prior to their visit, the reviewers are sent the various documents (the Self-Study, the Library report, an Undergraduate Bulletin, a Graduate Bulletin, a list of questions to be addressed, etc.). Reimbursement for expenses and the honorarium payment usually takes two months.

The host department is responsible for developing the visitor's itineraries and for making all accommodation and social arrangements. Financial as well as administrative responsibility for social events, luncheons, dinners, and evening meetings must be borne by the department or by the individuals involved. The University will reimburse the reviewers for any expenses they incur.

Most visitations will occupy the reviewers for a full two days. The exact schedule will vary according to the wishes of the reviewers and the department, but the following are normally included:

1. An evening arrival by the reviewers.
2. A meeting the first morning (9:00 to 10:00 a.m.) with the Deans of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies for a general orientation to the assignment, signing vouchers, etc.
3. A meeting with the Dean of the School.
4. Individual and group meetings in the Department: the department chair, the program director, faculty, and students.
5. Meeting with faculty in other departments with related programs.
6. Examination of appropriate support services and facilities such as Library, Computing Center, Communications Center, laboratories, and research equipment.
7. A meeting near the end of the visit with representatives of the Review Committees and the Offices of Undergraduate and of Graduate Studies.

8. A private meeting near the end of the visit with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the President.
9. A meeting of the reviewers alone to organize their impressions and discuss the contents of their report.

The reviewers submit to the Deans of Undergraduate and of Graduate Studies their report which evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the program, the faculty, and the students. Specifically, they are requested to address themselves to the questions in Attachment B.

IV. Evaluation & Recommendation

Normally the reviewers' report will be distributed to the Review Committees, the department chair and the school dean. The dean and department chair will be asked to give a response to the report and these responses are shared with the Review Committees. The Review Committees then analyze the report and responses and normally invite the school dean and representatives of the department to a meeting to discuss the recommendations and reports.

In rare cases if a report is judged to contain personal comments which would be damaging to the reputation of an individual faculty member, the Undergraduate and/or the Graduate Dean will at discretion either edit or curtail the distribution of the reviewers' report.

The UAC and GAC receive the Review Committee Report and all supporting documents. Basically, the Council recommends action which is implemented by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, the Dean of Graduate Studies, by the Dean of the School/College and by the department itself. The UAC and GAC forward the various reports to the President and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The following documents are kept on file in the Office of Undergraduate Studies and in the Office of Graduate Studies:

- (1) The Department Self-Study
- (2) The Library Report
- (3) The Reviewers' Report(s)
- (4) Responses to the Reviewers' Report by the Dean and Department Chair
- (5) The Review Committees' recommendations
- (6) The UAC and GAC recommendations.

ATTACHMENT A

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT ALBANY

Review of Established Programs

Outline for the Internal Evaluation of Self-Study Document

Because of the nature of and conditions governing undergraduate and graduate programs in some departments and schools, it is possible that this Outline might have to be modified to achieve its most useful state. Questions concerning necessary modification of either the Outline or the "Questions for the External Reviewer" should be addressed to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies and/or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

A. Nature of the Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

Purposes, objectives, functions.

Need for the programs in the university and the discipline.

Foci of emphasis.

Specific program and degree requirements including courses, examinations, residency, language and research skills, dissertation, etc.

Evaluative statement about the operation of the programs' student advisement, curriculum coordination, examinations, and placement.

B. Relation of the Programs to Other Programs

Relation to programs on this campus (programs of other departments, interdisciplinary programs, and multidisciplinary programs).

Relation to and comparison with programs at other SUNY units (in the Albany region & in the State).

Relation to and comparison with programs at private colleges and universities of the region and State.

Opportunities and plans for developing cooperative relations with other programs, departments, institutions, and agencies.

C. The Undergraduate and Graduate Students and Their Quality

This section should contain data about admissions actions, previous colleges attended and degrees received, test scores, enrollment trends (full-time, part-time, doctoral, master's, non-degree, bachelor's), internal and external assistantships/fellowships, internships, research, degrees awarded and completion time, dissertation topics, employment of those completing the program, professional, scientific and service contributions of students and graduates, etc.

Admission requirements and nature of the applicants.
Characteristics of those in the program.

Participation of graduate students in undergraduate instructional activity. Extent of supervision and guidance of such activity.
Opportunities for graduate students to develop teaching skills.
Departmental arrangements for student advisement and placement.
Graduates of the program and job placement in past, present, and future.

D. The Faculty and its Quality

An Appendix should include complete faculty vitae for the visiting reviewers. However, to avoid excessive length in the body of the report it is suggested that this section summarize each member's outstanding professional activities, courses taught, research interests, and dissertations directed.

Average Faculty Workload (teaching, research, service, consultant activities, committee assignments, etc.)
Tenure and Promotion-Policies and Problems.
Past and Future Staffing Changes and Program Impact.
Recruiting needs of department.
Salary Schedule by rank.

E. Support, Resources, and Facilities

Statement of Strengths and Weaknesses.

Three year budget summary. This should differentiate internal university support from external funds. If possible the budget should show expenditures by major categories (professional staff, non-professional staff, equipment, supply and expense, temporary service, graduate assistantships and fellowships, library acquisitions, etc.)

Instructional services to other programs including the size of the service load. } put under B

Evaluative statement about the library holdings in this field and available from nearby libraries.

An evaluative statement about the adequacy of facilities: teaching, research, offices, library, etc. What resources and facilities are needed to accommodate present and anticipated enrollments?

F. Conclusions

Summary of the strengths and weaknesses, achievements and remaining problems. Comments on the discrepancies between the "ideal" and the "real" -- on the programs as they were conceived and designed and as they actually are in operation. Outlook for the future.

ATTACHMENT B

QUESTIONS FOR THE EXTERNAL EVALUATORS

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the programs, the students, the faculty, and the facilities, especially compared to programs at other universities? What are the recommendations for improvement?
2. Do the programs have a philosophy which gives them direction and vitality? Are the general and specific goals of the programs valid? How are they being met?
3. Are the proposed directions of growth of the programs appropriate considering the aims of the faculty in the program, the nature of this University, and the goals of the program?
4. Are sufficient resources available to support the current programs and to permit any future planned growth? (Consider faculty-staff support, graduate fellowship or traineeship support, research facilities, and administrative commitment of the University.) Do the programs make appropriate use of existing resources of the University and provide opportunity for innovative and flexible programs to meet the varied needs of individual students and society? Are the Library resources adequate to support the programs?
5. Are the competencies of the faculty being appropriately utilized in terms of teaching obligations, research activities, direction of student research, student advisement, external activities such as consulting work, etc.? What is the quality of the instructional and research offerings of the program? Is the level of scholarship of the faculty suitable for this program? Does the program provide sufficient opportunities for continued growth in quality of scholarship and creativity?
6. Is there adequate need for the programs and their graduates? Consider local, state, and national needs and the appropriateness of the programs for this University community.
7. Is undergraduate and graduate student quality high enough and are appropriate selection criteria being used? Do the programs contain enough students? - too many? How do students and recent graduates of the programs perceive their quality? Are appropriate skills being required of students in the programs? Are these requirements adequate in terms of the level of competency required? Are the quality and importance of the students' projects, research projects, theses, dissertations, etc. adequate?