Lewis & Clark College Guide to Preparing for a Departmental or Program Review

<u>Overview</u>:

A departmental or program review is scheduled periodically, approximately once a decade, for all departments and programs in Lewis & Clark's College of Arts and Sciences. The review consists of four components: (1) a departmental or program self-study, (2) a campus visit by a team of disciplinary experts, (3) a written report by the review team, and (4) a response from the department/program to the experts' review. In addition, relevant faculty committees, typically the Faculty Council and Curriculum Committee, review and respond to the report. The goal of every review is to engage the faculty of the department/program in reflection about their history, accomplishments, challenges, and future aspirations, and to provide advice to the department/program and College about how the department/program can be improved.

The CAS Dean's Office maintains records of which programs are due to undergo reviews and will notify the department or program chair in the academic year prior to that in which the review is scheduled in order to allow adequate time for preparation.

<u>The Self-Study[1]</u>:

The review process allows members of the department/program to receive advice from disciplinary experts on how best to sustain and strengthen the program. Thus, in preparing for a review, the members of the department/program should meet to discuss its situation and jointly prepare a written record of those discussions—the self-study. The self-study and supporting documents will be provided to the external reviewers about a month in advance of their visit to campus, to allow them to understand the department or program's situation and to identify the issues on which they will focus during their visit.

Given the variety of programs available at Lewis & Clark, a single format will not serve for all self-studies. However, all self-studies should include some common elements, including an explanation of the curriculum, information about the scholarly or creative accomplishments of the faculty, information about the accomplishments and post-graduation careers of students, and details of the resources available to support educational and scholarly endeavors. The information below, which is adapted with permission from guidelines prepared by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges accrediting agency, is intended to help you organize your self study, modifying these suggestions as appropriate for your department/program.

The self-study comprises evidence-based inquiry and analyses that are documented in a comprehensive report. The specific format and content of a self-study report may vary across departments or programs, but they usually share some core elements.

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[1] This section adapted with permission from a guide for departmental reviews by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

1. Introduction/Context

Begin with a section that provides a context for the review. In contrast to the rest of the self-study report, this portion is primarily descriptive and may include:
- The internal context – How does the department/program relate to others in the College? Does it contribute to (or draw from) others? How does it support the general education program? What concentrations are available to majors?
- The external context – How is the program responsive to the needs of the discipline?
- It may also include a brief history of the program or a description of changes made in the program since the last review (if relevant).

A key component in providing the context for the review is a description of the program's mission, goals, and outcomes.
- A mission statement is a general explanation of why your program exists and what it hopes to achieve in the future. It articulates the program's essential nature, its values and its work.
- Goals are general statements of what your program wants to achieve.
- Outcomes are the specific results that should be observed if the goals are being met.

Note that goals typically flow from the mission statement, and outcomes are aligned with goals. In addition, the program's mission, goals and outcomes should relate to the mission and goals of the College of Arts and Sciences and Lewis & Clark College as a whole.

2. Analysis of Evidence About Program Quality & Viability

Most of a self-study report consists of a presentation and analysis of evidence about the quality and viability/sustainability of a program. This portion of the report addresses the extent to which program goals are being met by using evidence to answer key questions related to those goals.

To ensure some consistency of self-studies across programs, it is suggested that departments and programs provide evidence to address the following questions in their self study. Program evidence falls into two broad categories:
- Evidence that addresses questions about program quality
- Evidence that addresses issues of program viability and sustainability

The office of Institutional Research is an invaluable resource in gathering the data needed for the review. Many data are gathered on their website in the "assessment toolkit" https://www.lclark.edu/offices/institutional_research/private/cas_assessment/tool_kit/ which requires you to log in using your LC credentials. While the data are not current as of this writing they do cover much of the prior decade. There is also a form to use to request additional data on the website; please allow plenty of time for IR to comply with your request.

2a. **Evidence of program quality** typically addresses questions about:

- **Students** – What is the profile of students in the program and how does the profile relate to or enhance the mission and goals of the program?
    - Data in this category might include students' gender, ethnicity, GPA, standardized test scores.
    - Note that the specific list of indicators in this category will depend on the goals of the program.

- **The Curriculum and Learning Environment** – How current is the program's curriculum? Does it offer sufficient breadth and depth of learning for a BA in the discipline? How well does the structure of the curriculum align with the department/program's learning outcomes? Are the courses well sequenced and reliably available for all majors in the correct sequence? Has the program been reviewed by external stakeholders, such as professional societies that recommend particular curricula (e.g., the American Chemical Society's Committee on Professional Training)?
    - Evidence in this category might include
        - A curriculum flow chart and description of how the curriculum addresses the learning outcomes of the program (i.e., a curriculum map)
        - A comparison of the program's curriculum with curricula from selected liberal arts colleges and with disciplinary standards
        - Measures of teaching effectiveness (e.g., course evaluations, peer evaluations of teaching, faculty scholarship on issues of teaching and learning, formative discussions of pedagogy among faculty)
        - A description of other learning experiences that are relevant to program goals (e.g., internships, research experiences, study abroad or other international experiences, community-based learning, etc), as well as how many students participate in those experiences
        - A narrative about how the faculty's pedagogy responds to various learning modalities, student learning preferences, and trends in the discipline.

- **Student Learning and Success** – Are students achieving the desired learning outcomes for the program? Are they achieving those outcomes at the expected level of learning, and how is the expected level determined? Are they being retained and graduating in a timely fashion? Are they prepared for advanced study or the world of work?
    - Evidence in this category might include:
        - Annual results of direct and indirect assessments of student learning in the program (which could be a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures), including the degree to which students achieve the program's desired standards
        - Ongoing efforts by the department to "close the loop" by responding to assessment results
        - Student retention and graduation rate trends (disaggregated by different demographic categories, if possible)

- Placement of graduates into graduate or professional schools
- Job placements
- Graduating student satisfaction surveys (and/or alumni satisfaction surveys)
- Employer critiques of student performance or employer survey satisfaction results
- Disciplinary ratings of the program by disciplinary societies, if appropriate
- Student/Alumni achievements (e.g., community service, research and publications, awards and recognition, professional accomplishments, etc.)

- **Faculty** – What are the qualifications and achievements of the faculty in the program in relation to the program mission and goals? How do faculty members' background, expertise, research and other professional work contribute to the quality of the program?
  - Evidence in this category might include:
    - Proportion of faculty with terminal degree
    - Institutions from which faculty earned terminal degrees
    - List of faculty specialties within discipline (and how those specialties align with the program curriculum)
    - Teaching quality (e.g., peer evaluations, faculty self-review)
    - Record of scholarship for each faculty member
    - Faculty participation in development opportunities related to teaching, learning and/or assessment
    - External funding awarded to faculty
    - Service for each faculty member
    - Distribution of faculty across ranks (or years at institution)
    - Diversity of faculty
    - Awards and recognition received by the program's faculty for scholarship and/or teaching.

    [The specific list of indicators in this category will again depend on the goals of a particular program/department.]

2b. **Evidence of program viability and sustainability** typically addresses questions about the level of student demand for the program and the degree to which resources are allocated appropriately and are sufficient in amount to maintain program quality:

- **Demand for the program**
  - What are the trends in numbers of student enrollments in courses and numbers of graduating majors and minors reflected over a 5-8 year period?
  - What is happening within the discipline (or society more generally) that identifies an anticipated need or changes in demand for this program in the future?

- **Allocation of Resources**:
  - o **Faculty** – Are there sufficient numbers of faculty to maintain program quality? Do program faculty have the support they need to do their work?
    - Number of full-time faculty (ratio of full-time faculty to part-time faculty)
    - Student-faculty ratio
    - Faculty workload, including course enrollments, service responsibilities, etc.
    - Extent to which the program relies on adjunct faculty
    - Faculty review and evaluation processes
    - Mentoring processes/program
    - Professional development opportunities/resources (including travel and research funds)
    - Availability of sufficient time for course development, research, etc

  - o **Student support**
    - Academic and career advising programs and resources
    - Tutoring and supplemental instruction
    - Basic skill remediation if necessary
    - Support for connecting general learning requirements to discipline requirements
    - Orientation and transition programs
    - Financial support (scholarships, work study, etc)
    - Support for engagement in the campus community
    - Support for non-cognitive variables of success, including emotional, psychological, and physical interventions if necessary
    - Support for research or for engagement in the community beyond campus, such as fieldwork or internships

  - o **Information and technology resources**
    - Library print and electronic holdings in the teaching and research areas of the program
    - Information literacy outcomes for graduates
    - Technology resources available to support the pedagogy and research in the program
    - Technology resources available to support students' needs

  - o **Facilities**
    - Classroom space
    - Instructional laboratories
    - Research laboratories
    - Studio or rehearsal spaces
    - Office space
    - Student study spaces
    - Access to classrooms suited for instructional technology
    - Access to classrooms designed for alternative learning styles/universal design

- **Staff**
  - Clerical and technical staff FTE supporting program/departmental operations

- **Financial resources**
  - Operating budget and expenditures and trends over a 3-5 year period

3. <u>Summary Reflections</u>

This portion of the self-study report typically interprets the significance of the findings in the above analysis of program evidence. It is the opportunity for faculty to assess the program's strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

Reviewers are likely to ask the following kinds of questions, which departments and programs can anticipate and address in the self study. In each case, provide the evidence on which you base your answers (e.g., how do you know program goals are being achieved?)
- Are the curriculum, practices, processes, and resources properly aligned with the goals of the program?
- Are department/program goals aligned with the goals of the constituents that the program serves, such as potential employers or graduate programs?
- Is the level of program quality consistent with the college's expectations?
- Are program goals being achieved?
- Are student learning outcomes being achieved at the expected level?

4. <u>Future Goals and Planning for Improvement</u>

Self-study reports conclude with a section devoted to future planning and improvement. Formulating a plan for the future and for improvement is the main purpose of a periodic review—allowing the department or program to reflect on and articulate its future goals and to use disciplinary experts to provide commentary and guidance about them. Findings from all prior sections of the report serve as a foundation for building an evidence-based plan for strengthening the program.

This section might address such questions as:
- What are the program's goals for the next few years?
- In order to achieve these goals:
  - How will the program specifically address any weaknesses identified in the self-study?
  - How will the program build on existing strengths?
  - What internal improvements are possible with existing resources (through reallocation)?
  - What improvements can only be addressed through additional resources?
  - Where can the formation of collaborations within the College or with other colleges in the region (such as the Northwest Five Consortium) improve program quality?

The Campus Visit:

- Selecting reviewers.
    - The Dean's Office will ask departments for recommendations for potential external reviewers, and may also confer with the Faculty Council to identify suitable candidates. Normally the review team will consist of two faculty members from liberal arts colleges comparable to Lewis & Clark. In cases where the department/program under review is large and complex, a third reviewer might be engaged; if the department/program seeks advice about how well its curriculum prepares students for postgraduate education, a reviewer from a research university with a strong graduate program in the field can be included. Reviewers are invited by the Associate Dean for Faculty Development, and the department should not contact them directly.
    - In order to assure that they have adequate time to read and review the self-study, reviewers should receive the self-study document a month in advance of their visit to campus. Thus reviewers should be selected early in the review process, several months before the scheduled campus visit. Early identification of reviewers also makes it easier to schedule the visit.

- Planning for the campus visit.
    - The Dean's Office will work with the department to schedule the visit of the review team, taking account of the availability of department members, the Dean of the College, and the reviewers themselves.
    - On-campus reviews are normally scheduled for two days. Reviewers may be asked to arrive in Portland the evening before the review begins and, if possible, the review will end by mid-afternoon of the second day to allow reviewers to return home that evening. However, reviewers can be accommodated for an additional night in Portland if that is more convenient for them. Ordinarily reviews take place on a Monday/Tuesday with reviewers traveling to Portland on Sunday and returning Tuesday or Wednesday; or on Thursday/Friday, with reviewers arriving on Wednesday and returning on Friday or Saturday.
    - The Dean's Office will make travel arrangements for the reviewers and will pay for their travel, meals, lodging, and honorarium expenses. Departments or programs are not responsible for any of the costs of the review.

- Reviewers' Time on Campus

    - The department/program chair and administrative assistant are primarily responsible for scheduling the team during their campus visit. The schedule should account for the following meetings. Unless the department/program is too large to permit it, reviewers should meet as a team with those listed below, rather than being split up to meet separately with different individuals or groups.
        - The reviewers should meet first with the Dean of the College, either for dinner the evening before the review if their travel schedule permits, or for breakfast on the first day of the review.

- The reviewers should meet with each tenure line member of the department/program individually. Depending on the number of faculty involved, meetings can be scheduled for between 45 minutes and an hour.
- When possible, the chair should be the first individual to meet with the reviewers to provide an overview of the department/program and answer questions about the self-study.
- Some reviewers may wish to meet the department/program as a whole early in their visit. It may be possible to accommodate this with a breakfast meeting (if the Dean has met them the previous evening) followed by a meeting with the chair.
- If the department/program has long-serving non-tenure line faculty members (e.g., faculty with term), they should also meet the reviewers for at least 30 minutes. Whether they meet individually or jointly (if there are more than one) will depend on the time available in the reviewers' schedule.
- Reviewers should meet with the heads of other departments/programs whose activities are affected by the department/program under review. For example, if that department/program regularly contributes to interdisciplinary programs (e.g., East Asian Studies, Gender Studies, etc.) or the Core (E&D), heads of those programs should meet reviewers. Again, whether these meetings are individual or joint will depend on the time available in the reviewers' schedule.
- If the department/program has professional staff whose activities are essential to its operations (e.g., technical support personnel), they should also be given the opportunity to meet the reviewers for 30 minutes.
- Reviewers should have lunch with 8-10 students, chosen by the department/program, on the first day of their campus visit. The Dean's Office will cover the cost of the lunch, but the department/program is responsible for securing a room for it and arranging food service.
- Arrange a lunch for reviewers alone on the second day of their campus visit to allow them to confer and generate a preliminary report.
- When facilities are an important part of the department/program's curriculum (e.g., theatre, art, music, science departments with laboratory courses, etc.), a tour of the facilities should be included. A faculty member can take the reviewers on the tour as part of his/her interview time with them to use time efficiently.
- The final two items in the reviewers' schedule (which take place on the afternoon of the second day) are (1) an exit meeting (one hour) with the department at which the reviewers can give preliminary feedback and receive answers to any remaining questions they may have, followed by (2) a 60-90 minute exit interview with the Dean of the College, who may be joined by members of the Faculty Council, if available, or Associate Deans. Again the purpose is both to preview the tenor of their written report and to allow for clarification of

any questions that remain.

- Be sure to allow several short breaks (15 minutes) in the review schedule to allow the reviewers to confer, use rest rooms, etc.
- The Dean's Office relies on the department/program chair and administrative assistant to arrange the schedule of the review, but please provide the Dean and Associate Dean for Faculty Development a draft schedule <u>before</u> it is finalized and sent to reviewers, who may themselves suggest modifications in the schedule. You should reserve a room (e.g., a conference room) for the reviewers to use throughout the review, and ask faculty and staff to meet with them there (except for the exit interview with the Dean, which takes place in Albany 201). This optimizes the reviewers' time on campus because they do not lose time traveling between offices. Provide them with beverages and fruit and/or other snacks. Be sure to allow some time between meetings for them to stretch their legs, and schedule 15 minute breaks every couple of hours to allow them to confer with one another. Be willing to be flexible if reviewers ask for changes to the schedule while on campus to accommodate needs or questions that arise during the visit.

The Reviewers' Report:

Reviewers as given a charge (developed jointly by the department/program and Faculty Council) that asks them to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the department/program under review, to evaluate the appropriateness of the curriculum and student outcomes, and to recommend to the department/program and Dean ways in which it can be strengthened. Reviewers are asked to provide a written report of their assessment and recommendations within 30 days of the campus visit, although it often takes longer to receive it. The report is sent to the Dean's Office, which then distributes it to the department/program and Faculty Council and/or Curriculum Committee, depending on the nature of the recommendations. Often the report contains both recommendations for the department/program (regarding curriculum, operating procedures, etc.) and the administration (regarding resources available to the department, etc.), and planning for the future will require consultation between these entities.

The Departmental Response:

College policy as described in the Faculty Handbook is that the department/program has 45 instructional days (roughly a semester) to provide a written response to the external review. However, it is desirable if the response can be expedited so that the Dean, relevant committees, and the department/program can jointly formulate a plan to address the reviewers' recommendations.