

Department/Program Periodic Review Process (Revised September 2019)

The Dean of the Faculty (DOF) and Committee on Academic Policy (CAP) support the periodic review of each department or academic program to help ensure its long-term strength and vitality. Each department/program normally conducts a review once every seven years to assess its strengths and weaknesses and to provide the opportunity for strategic long-term planning. The reports produced by this process will be used by the Dean and CAP for use in long-term planning, including in the allocation process and in facilities planning.

For ease of exposition the term department is used in the language that follows, but the process applies to all departments and programs.

External Periodic Review

The Dean of Faculty, in consultation with the CAP subcommittee and the department, conducts an external periodic review which includes a campus visit by a team of two or three external consultants to interview faculty, staff, and students, to address the questions posed by the department and DOF Office, to assess the College's facilities and other resources, and to inquire into the details of department goals and plans that may not be apparent in the written documents, and may include how the interaction among faculty and between faculty and students supports the department mission or whether department facilities and equipment are adequate to support the department mission. Reviews should also address how the department contributes to broader institutional curricular programs through participation in the Writing-Intensive, Quantitative and Symbolic Reasoning, Speaking-Intensive, First Year Course, and Experiential Learning programs.

Scheduling of department reviews. The office of the DOF and Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) meet to select departments for review in the following academic year. The selected departments are notified by the DOF office and provided with a summary of the process and a timeline for the review is established with the department.

Assembling the Review Team. Before the beginning of the semester before the review, the Dean of Faculty consults with the department chair on the composition of the external review team (usually three members) and reviews the planning process. For fall semester reviews, a list of 3–5 reviewers nominated by the department should be submitted to the DOF by the end of June; for spring semester reviews, a list of 3–5 reviewers nominated by the department should be submitted to the DOF by mid-August. The office of the Dean of Faculty invites reviewers, with at least one drawn from the department list, and sets the dates for the review. The CAP forms a subcommittee of two members to participate in the review. For continuity, CAP sub-committee members should not both be leaving CAP the same year as the review.

Preparing the Self Study. Six weeks before the scheduled visit by the review team, the

department submits a self-study report to the DOF office and the CAP subcommittee. Funding from the DOF is available to support department retreats and campus visits for the purpose of developing a long-term plan and the self-study for the review. In addition, the Registrar's Office and the OIRA can assist in some data gathering for the self-study. Department chairs should make sure to ask OIRA early for assistance, since late requests may not be able to be accommodated. OIRA has prepared links to relevant parts of the Planning Notebook (listed below) to assist in the preparation of the self-study. If additional information is needed, departments can be in touch with OIRA.

Enrollments: <https://my.hamilton.edu/offices/oir/notebook/enrollment>

Faculty & Staff: <https://my.hamilton.edu/offices/oir/notebook/faculty-and-staff>

Concentrations, Minors, and Outcomes:

<https://my.hamilton.edu/offices/oir/notebook/outcomes>

The departmental self-study should provide reviewers with in-depth background on the department's curriculum, faculty scholarship, departmental personnel and staffing, and facilities. The department, as warranted, should include discussion of any issues on which it would like the reviewers' advice. The self-study should include, but is not limited to, consideration of the following:

A. Curriculum

1. What is the department's curricular mission? How does each faculty and staff member contribute to that mission? How is that mission generally reflected in the curriculum?
2. Are recent changes in the discipline or field reflected in the department curriculum? If not, how will the department address these changes?
3. How does the present curriculum prepare concentrators and non-concentrators for life after graduation, in both the particular and in the general sense?
4. To what extent and how are issues of diversity and inclusion addressed in the curriculum (including co-curricular departmental activities such as student participation in faculty scholarship)?
5. Do enrollment trends raise questions that need to be addressed?
6. Are department courses sufficiently rigorous? How do department grade distributions fit into those of cognate fields and those of the College?
7. How will the department ascertain the success of its courses, the concentration, and its overall mission? A survey of department alumni and other forms of student input may be useful in addressing these questions among other methods.
8. How does the curriculum serve needs beyond the department?
 - a. In what ways does the department support the broader curricular goals of the College? What contributions does the department make specifically to programs in writing, quantitative and symbolic reasoning, oral presentations, first year courses, and experiential learning?
 - b. What role does off-campus study play in your curriculum?
 - c. How does the department faculty contribute to the education of non-concentrators?
 - d. What curricular connections does the department currently have through contributions to interdisciplinary programs and which connections or new interdisciplinary programs could the department contribute to in the future?

e. For interdisciplinary programs: does the program receive adequate support from relevant departments? How could support be improved?

B. Scholarship

1. What role does faculty scholarship have in the department?
 - a. How does each faculty and staff member contribute to the scholarship mission of the department?
 - b. Does faculty scholarship contribute to the curriculum?
 - c. As appropriate to the discipline, do students collaborate or otherwise participate in faculty scholarly projects?
 - d. How does student participation in faculty scholarship enhance their educational or career goals?
2. How is scholarship supported in the department at different career stages?
 - a. Are adequate facilities and resources provided to attract and retain new faculty?
 - b. Are junior faculty provided adequate support, mentoring and time to develop active scholarship programs?
 - c. Are senior faculty provided adequate support and time to maintain active scholarship programs?
 - d. What resources are provided to help faculty improve their scholarship or develop new areas of expertise?
3. Are the department's expectations for scholarly activity congruent with its mission?
 - a. Is the department's support for scholarly activity congruent with its mission?
 - b. How are scholarly activity and productivity measured with regard to tenure and promotion review?
4. Is scholarship appropriately balanced against other faculty duties?

C. Personnel

1. Are retirements or other personnel changes anticipated within the next 4–6 years?
2. What are the implications and the opportunities of personnel changes for curricular offerings and faculty job descriptions, etc.?
3. How will curricular changes affect future allocation requests or job descriptions?
4. How are junior faculty mentored to tenure and promotion? (May not apply to interdisciplinary programs.)
5. What are the personnel barriers to long-term planning?
6. Does the culture of the department encourage the faculty to work together as a team?

D. Facilities and staffing (this information may be particularly helpful for the Advancement Office as it identifies fundraising opportunities).

1. What facilities changes, major equipment purchases, changes in library resources are or will be essential for the department to fulfill its goals in the coming five years?
2. What administrative and staff support is necessary to fulfill the department's goals now and in the next five years?

All materials for the review (including the self-study and supporting documents such as syllabi and curriculum vitae) will be available electronically to the department, the review team, the DOF office, and the CAP sub-committee members during the review

process. The CAP subcommittee and the DOF evaluate the department's self-study and collect any additional information they might require.

Task of the Reviewers. External reviewers are expected to conduct a rigorous review of the department's mission and plan. Questions that the review team might be asked to consider are listed below. In some circumstances the DOF may pose additional questions as outlined in a letter to the review team once the review materials have been assembled. It is particularly helpful for reviewers to summarize their findings with a specific set of actionable recommendations that take into consideration the College's broader goals and needs. The final report from reviewers submitted to the DOF is normally expected four weeks after the campus visit.

A. Curriculum

1. Are the department's mission and goals appropriate for the department, the concentrators, and for the mission of the College?
2. Are the goals consistent with the future direction of the field?
3. Does the department's plan set out reasonable steps to achieve its goals?
4. What are appropriate measures for determining the degree of success in achieving these goals?
5. Are the faculty contributions and roles in achieving the department's goals in balance?
6. Does the department make optimal use of its faculty resources to support its curriculum?
7. Does the department make appropriate contributions to College's goals/core programs (e.g., diversity, FYC, WI, QSR, SI, EL)?
8. How does the department consider diversity and inclusion in enhancing its curriculum and in informing their goals?

B. Scholarship

1. Is the department's scholarship activity appropriate to the department's mission and the mission of the College?
2. To what extent do faculty feel satisfied with the support for their scholarship? How can the department help faculty continue to improve their scholarship or develop new areas of expertise?
3. Are the department's expectations for scholarly activity congruent with its mission and appropriate to a liberal arts college?
 - a. To what extent do faculty feel the tenure and promotion criteria for scholarship are clearly communicated?
 - b. To what extent do junior faculty feel they receive adequate feedback and mentoring regarding their scholarship?
4. Are faculty workloads appropriately balanced to permit sustained scholarship?

C. Personnel

1. Are department faculty sufficiently aware of professional developments in their field?
2. Do they continue to participate in recent trends in scholarship?
3. Do they demonstrate a trajectory of continuing development?

4. What is the reputation of this department among professional colleagues?
5. What kind of long-term planning has the department engaged in?
6. Is the quality of interpersonal interaction among faculty, and between faculty and students, conducive to the fulfillment of the department's mission?
7. How has the department demonstrated its commitment and efforts to hire and retain a diverse faculty?

D. Facilities and other resources

1. Are the department's facilities and equipment adequate for what the College expects and for what the department itself hopes to achieve?
2. Is staffing adequate to support the department's mission and goals? What efficiencies could be realized to maximize achievement of the department's mission and goals?

The Campus Visit. The review team normally visits campus for two days over which time they meet with the department or program faculty, members of the CAP subcommittee, the Associate Dean and Dean of Faculty, and others with input on the review such as departmental support staff and faculty from affiliate departments. Exit interviews with the review team are held at the end of the visit for the department, the Dean, and the CAP subcommittee to hear the review team's initial observations and recommendations.

The Report, Recommendations, and Response. The external review team submits a written report to the DOF within four weeks of their visit. This is shared with the department and the CAP subcommittee. The department will prepare a draft written response to that report, within four weeks of academic session. The DOF office will then organize a meeting of the Dean, ADOF, the CAP subcommittee, and the faculty of the department to discuss the review team's report and the department's response. The meeting may also serve to gather additional information and to discuss implementation of a plan for moving forward with the recommendations of the review. Following the meeting, the department submits to the Dean and the CAP a final written response to the review and the CAP summary. In this response, the department should include a five-year plan that outlines implementation of objectives specified in the self-study and external review; if no final written report is received within four weeks of academic session] of the meeting with the Dean, ADOF, and CAP subcommittee, the written draft response is taken as final. In addition, the CAP subcommittee will prepare a summary of the discussion with the Dean and the department and submit that to the entire CAP.

The Dean of Faculty maintains an archive including the self-study, the external review report, any CAP subcommittee report, the departmental response, and the CAP subcommittee summary. These documents will be made available to CAP in making future allocation decisions.