Academic Program Review Guidelines

Overview of Academic Program Review and the Self-Study Process

Academic Program Review is a seven-year cycle in which departments and programs implement and assess changes to improve outcomes. It is one way in which Queens College participates in regular cycles of evaluation, assessment, and continuous improvement to fulfill expectations from our institutional accreditation.

A department undergoes a Self-Study Process during the last two years (Year 6 and Year 7) of their seven-year Academic Program Review cycle. This is an opportunity to reflect on your department's journey and progress during the APR cycle that is concluding and develop forward-looking plans for the next APR cycle.

The Self-Study Timeline

Phase 1: The Self-Study Report

In the Fall of Year 6, the department collects and reflects upon the appropriate evidence as specified by the Self-Study Outline below. In the Spring of Year 6, the department compiles this evidence into a 15–20 page Departmental Self-Study Report.

Phase 2: Engaging External Reviewers

By May 1 of Year 6, External Reviewers are identified. In the Fall of Year 7, the department hosts a visit (which is virtual in most cases) and receives feedback from the External Reviewers.

Phase 3: Use of Results and Planning

In the Spring of Year 7, and in consultation with the Dean, the feedback from the External Reviewers is used to suggest focus areas for improvement and to develop an Implementation Plan for the next Academic Program Review cycle.

Phase 1: The Self-Study Report

Overview of Phase 1

The Self-Study Report is a reflective document about the past six years and the anticipated future of the department with a focus on your strengths, your areas for improvement, opportunities, and challenges. The audience is mainly your external reviewers but also your current and future departmental colleagues, Dean, and Provost.

Your Self-Study Report will address the following topics, described below in more detail.

1. Context for the Self-Study
2. Mission Statement
3. Resources
4. Curriculum and Instruction
5. Assessment of Learning Outcomes
6. Student Enrollment, Support, and Engagement
7. Community and Climate
8. External Relationships
9. Reflection and Analysis

The final document will be approximately 15-20 pages with supporting evidence provided as appendices or external links as appropriate. The guidance provided below includes:

- A short summary of the goal of the section
- Information that needs to be included
- A collection of reflective prompts that you may choose to use to guide your narrative. You are not required to address all (or any) of these prompts as long as your narrative addresses the goal of the section.
- An approximate page length for each section.

In accordance with the Queens College Strategic Plan, your narrative should incorporate a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) lens, reflective of the incredibly diverse nature of Queens College students, staff, and faculty.

A final draft of this document along with a list of potential external reviewers should be presented to your Dean by April 1. The Dean will provide feedback by May 1, for you to incorporate into a final version that is sent off to your external reviewers six weeks before their virtual or in-person visit.

1. Context

Briefly summarize significant changes in the department/program since the last academic program review, highlighting actions taken under your previous Seven-Year Plan as well as steps that were not enacted (and why these could not be completed). Identify any other issues that have arisen since the last APR that should be considered.

2. Mission Statement

Include your mission statement. Explain how it aligns with the mission, vision, and goals of Queens College and the City University of New York. Indicate how the mission has been revised or reaffirmed since the last self-study report.

(If you do not have a mission statement, work with your Dean to draft and approve one.)

3. Resources

This section provides an opportunity to reflect on what human and material resources are available to meet the program's goals and objectives and how these resources are used effectively to serve the mission of the department and Queens College, especially in terms of student outcomes.

Available Resources

- **Monetary resources:** Discuss sources of funding, including tax-levy, non-tax-levy, individual grants, institutional grants, and external fundraising.
- **Human resources:** Discuss the members of your department, including full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and administrative staff
- **Material resources:** List the equipment, facilities, software, etc. currently used by the academic program, noting any specialized features.
- **Other resources:** Include any other relevant available departmental resources.

Resource Allocation

Make sure to situate your answers to the following in the context of the mission of your department and the mission of Queens College.

- How does the department allocate its monetary resources towards its initiatives, to support student outcomes, for faculty development, and to ensure maintenance of material resources? Who decides on these allocations?
- How does your department ensure that faculty are teaching classes at or near capacity to ensure optimal allocation of faculty effort?
- How does the department prioritize allocation of faculty reassigned time for advising, administrative assignments, and other initiatives?
- Discuss variations in faculty scholarly productivity, including number of faculty who have not reported scholarly/creative output on scholarly activity reports over the previous five years.

- Discuss the faculty's outside teaching obligations and service activities, including teaching in other departments, interdisciplinary programs, or at the Graduate Center or other institutions.
- Are the material resources being used to their full capacity? Are there any alternatives that might be more economical, efficient, and/or effective?
- Discuss equipment needs that have not been met, as well as long-term space requirements and any need for proximity to other departments.

Evaluation Procedures

- Describe departmental procedures for the evaluation of faculty for reappointment, tenure, and promotion.
- Describe how the department regularly evaluates the quality of scholarly or creative work, teaching, and other professional service for all faculty.
- How are adjunct faculty supervised and evaluated?
- In what ways have these processes been intentionally structured to be objective and equity-minded, reducing the risk of implicit bias?
- How does the unit regularly evaluate the effectiveness of its organization?

Recruitment

- How do you use data to determine your hiring priorities for full-time faculty?
- In what ways does your department ensure the broadest pool of candidates in full-time searches?
- How do you ensure that your recruitment and hiring processes align with the mission of Queens College?
- How are adjunct faculty recruited and selected?
- How are departmental staff recruited and selected?

4. Curriculum and Instruction *(2-3 pages)*

This section asks you to reflect on your department's curriculum in theory and in practice, including how it is structured, evaluated, revised, and delivered to students. It is worth remembering that a curriculum can have aspects that are both formal (degrees, courses, pedagogy, …) and informal (enrichment opportunities, internships, …).

Formal Curriculum

- Share one or more links to the department webpage where the department's degree requirements and the program learning outcomes for each program are stated.
- Discuss how the department engages in a systematic process for reviewing and revising curriculum. Share an example of how external changes or innovations have impacted the discipline in recent years and how the department addressed these changes in their curriculum.

Pedagogy and Instruction

- In what ways has your department integrated high-impact pedagogical practices into your classroom? (Examples of these include active learning, culturally responsive pedagogy, universal design for learning, ...)
- How has the department incorporated diverse perspectives into the curriculum and the classroom?
- How has the department incorporated high-impact, integrated learning (IL) practices into its curriculum? (Examples of these include capstone courses, learning communities, service learning, research activities, internships, ...)

Curriculum in Practice

- Discuss the extent to which the department incorporates student demand and student progress towards degree completion into: (a) The frequency of weekday, weekend, winter, and summer courses and (b) instruction modality (in-person, online, hybrid).
- Discuss the distribution of instruction modality in courses offered, including how the distribution has changed over time and the data used to determine these changes.

Informal Curriculum

- How does the department sponsor opportunities for student enrichment outside of the classroom? Comment on how these events are chosen and supervised, their alignment with department goals, and the student participation in these events.
- Discuss any special opportunities available for high-achieving students in the unit's programs, how students are encouraged to participate, and what percentage of students participate.

5. Assessment of Learning Outcomes *(2-3 pages)*

This section asks you to reflect on the improvements you have made to improve student learning outcomes as exhibited through the development, implementation, review, and discussion of assessment plans.

If at any time you need guidance related to aspects of this section, please reach out to the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness or your School's Assessment Coordinator.

Departmental Assessment Documents

Collect and reflect upon your department's Assessment Plans from the past six years. Attach these plans in an appendix.

(Note: If you do not have or have limited Assessment Plan documents, include evidence of how you have changed your curriculum or the services you provide and the rationale for those changes.)

Processes for Assessment

- Describe how the department communicates its programmatic learning outcomes to students.

- Discuss how the department has created curriculum maps or reviewed existing curriculum maps to identify appropriate courses in which program learning outcomes are to be assessed.
- How does your department ensure that all learning outcomes are eventually assessed?
- Describe how you assess a program learning outcome among multiple sections of a course particularly when taught by multiple faculty members.
- How do you ensure consistency in student learning outcomes across modalities?

Student Learning Outcomes

- Provide specific examples of ways in which students in your program can demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes.
- Indicate how you are measuring and addressing learning disparities between different populations of interest.

Closing the Loop: Use of Assessment for Program Improvement

- How are assessment results shared and discussed?
- How has the program used assessment evidence to improve student learning since the last review?
- If curricular, pedagogical, or other changes have been made by the program in order to improve student learning, what evidence does the program have in terms of whether the changes have been successful?

6. Students: Enrollments, Support, and Engagement   *(2 pages)*

This section examines the student experience provided by the department from recruitment through graduation. Use excerpts of data from both the QC and CUNY Tableau dashboards to support your conclusions. As applicable, address undergraduate and graduate programs separately. When analyzing student data, pay special attention to racial equity: identify patterns found when disaggregating student data by race/ethnicity, first generation to college, gender, and adult students.

Recruitment

- What steps do you take to recruit students? What resources do you allocate to recruitment? How do faculty participate in recruitment efforts?
- Where do your students come from before enrolling in your program? What do they cite as the main reasons why they choose your program?

Enrollment

- Who are the students served by the department/program? Present salient demographic characteristics (race/ethnicity; gender; age, full-time/part-time, started college at Queens/transferred) and note changes over time (e.g., "students are getting younger").
- How have you modified your program to address changing student or societal needs? Share any work you have done to address the specific needs of a demographic segment.

Student Performance and Program Completion

- Examine data on GPA, retention, rate of completion, and time to degree for your students, comparing these metrics to data from other programs in your Academic School; explain any significant differences using supporting data
- Are there particular areas in which students are struggling, such as courses with DFIW rates? Describe the actions your department has taken to address these areas.
- What data do you have about students who leave your program before completion? Does this occur at certain points of their student career? Do they cite certain challenges (for example: scheduling)?

Advising and Support

- Discuss and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of departmental advising of students from recruitment through graduation and beyond.
- How are students engaged in departmental advising and faculty mentoring?
- How are advisors selected, trained, and evaluated?
- How does the department identify students having academic difficulty and connect them with college resources, such as the Learning Commons and the Writing Center?

Career Readiness

- Discuss any actions or initiatives taken by the department related to career planning or preparation for students.
- Discuss feedback that recent graduates of the program provide with respect to how prepared they are for their current positions. How does the department use this feedback to inform its functions?

7. Community and Climate   *(1-2 pages)*

Describe efforts taken to foster overall program diversity, a climate of respect and inclusion, and a sense of community.

Climate of Respect and Inclusion

- Discuss how the department intentionally fosters a welcoming classroom environment for students of all backgrounds.
- Describe how the program illustrates its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through its vision, leadership, messaging, events and activities, etc.
- How has the department built diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into its hiring, mentoring, and promotion processes for faculty?
- How does the department distribute the opportunities/burdens of teaching courses of different sizes or at different levels with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion?

Building Community

- How does the department work to welcome, orient, and retain new students?
- How does the department work to welcome, orient, and retain new faculty?

- Discuss efforts to ensure that all faculty are fully integrated into the department, no matter their title (professorial, lecturer, adjunct) nor background.
- How has the department worked to support adjuncts (e.g., orientation, professional development, or other initiatives in line with the college's strategic plan)?
- How do faculty participate in school-or college-level mentoring opportunities?

8. External Relationships   *(1-2 pages)*

Use this section to highlight and describe interdisciplinary and external collaborations.

Campus Collaborations

- Describe any interdisciplinary collaborations involving your department and other departments on campus; how have these benefitted the groups involved?
- Which other departments require courses in your department? How are those departments' faculty included in decisions relative to courses and programming?
- Describe and reflect upon any additional connections your department has with other campus offices including non-credit programs and student support areas.

Connections to the Community

- Discuss courses that include activities outside of the classroom, such as field trips or assignments that involve the local community.
- How does the department interact with and integrate with the greater community outside of Queens College? What are the impacts of this community engagement?
- Describe current procedures used to monitor changes in the job market or industry needs; how does the department then revise program curricula to respond to such changes?
- Discuss how your department integrates feedback from:
  - An advisory board or corporations/agencies;
  - Relevant professional associations/organizations;
  - Other populations (students, alumni, community members).

9. Reflection and Analysis   *(2-3 pages)*

After having collected and synthesized the information in the previous sections, use this section to complete an analysis of your department's internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and barriers. Include in this section some proposals about what changes your department might decide to implement in the next APR cycle.

Your discussion should keep in mind the College Strategic Plan and your department's Mission Statement as guiding principles.

SWOT Analysis:

- **Strengths: (Internal)** What does your department do well? What would others see as your main strengths? What could you boast about your operation?
- **Weaknesses: (Internal)** What about your department can be improved? What can be done more effectively and efficiently? What is the program not doing that it should not be doing?
- **Opportunities: (External)** What are the opportunities facing the department? What are some current trends that could have a positive impact on the program?
- **Threats: (External)** What are some current trends that could have a negative impact on the department? How are changing resources, technology, or external required specifications affecting the department?

Future of the Department:

- Discuss any future plans, even if they are only big ideas at this point, for innovation, experimental programs, or faculty aspirations.
- Include specific questions, suggestions, and input sought from external evaluators in planning for the future.
- Discuss any significant factors, if any, not addressed elsewhere in the Self-Study Report that the department faculty identify as significant to the future direction of the department.

These plans will be discussed with your Dean, who can help prioritize and determine the feasibility of proposed initiatives.