Union College Guidelines
Academic Program Review

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Guidelines for Academic Program Review at Union College

Purpose for Program Review

Academic Program Review at Union College is a collaborative process designed to enlist the judgment of respected colleagues in assessing and improving the quality of academic programs. The Program Review process involves:

1. Gathering information about a program;
2. Developing an evidence-based self-study organized in a manner to aid in the ongoing improvement of the program undergoing review;
3. Reviewing and analyzing the information by the Program Review Committee;
4. Synthesizing all available information and making judgments about overall program quality and recommendations for improvement; and
5. Following up to ensure that the unit is fully supported in its efforts to address the outcomes of the review.

Program Review at Union College places emphasis on the following elements:

1. Involvement of faculty and administrators from across the College;
2. Linkages between the program and the community it serves; and
3. Connections between the review and improvement, planning, decision-making, and resource allocation at departmental and campus levels.

These emphases ensure that the reviews contribute in a fundamentally important way to the attainment of the College mission and that warranted recommendations for improvement stemming from the reviews are carried out. An emphasis on internal improvements is the goal of Union College’s use of the program review process. This process also enhances the overall quality, reputation, and accountability of the College by strengthening its programs. This process increases the sense of shared purpose among its many diverse academic programs and reinforces the need for coordinated planning for the future. In doing so, the program review process intentionally involves a number of key stakeholders:

1. The involvement of faculty, staff, and other stakeholders in programs undergoing review provides an opportunity for those directly involved in the program to assess its strengths and areas for improvement;
2. The involvement of campus administrators in the reviews ensures that meaningful and effective follow-up for each review will occur;
3. The involvement of program faculty promotes an understanding of the contributions of the department to the mission of the institution; and

3
4. The involvement of community stakeholder who have an interest in the program emphasizes the importance of Union College's connections with the community it serves and at the same time furthers community understanding of the program and civic engagement.

**Responsibility for Program Review**

All academic units will be scheduled for review on a four-year cycle. If a department experiences periodic peer review by a professional or national accreditation body, the internal and external review processes and results may be substituted (upon request to the Program Review Committee and the Vice President of Academic Affairs) for the internal program review in order to minimize duplication of faculty time and effort.

The Chair of the Program Review Committee in conjunction with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness will develop and coordinate the overall review schedule and instruct academic departments in the use of Guidelines for Academic Program Review.

The Academic Program Review Committee consists of six-ten members, including at least three college faculty, appointed as follows: One member is nominated by the Vice President of Academic Affairs as the Chair. One member nominated by department faculty. One member assigned from the membership of the Assessment Committee. Nonacademic members include representatives from the student body and academic support units appointed by the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Other ex-officio members include the Vice President of Academic Affairs, Director of Institutional Research, and the Director of Institutional Effectiveness. Faculty, student, and staff representatives are appointed for a term of not more than three (3) years, but may be reappointed after an absence of one (1) three-year term.

The Chair of the Academic Program Review Committee and the Director Institutional Effectiveness will work with the department chair to plan the self-study and review. These individuals will serve in an advisory role in order to ensure the continuity and integrity of the review process and follow-up activities.

The program chair and representative faculty will prepare a self-study report beginning no later than two (2) months prior to the review using the format outlined below. The self-study will be reviewed by Program Review and Assessment Committee prior to official submission. The department responsible for the self-study is then expected to revise the self-study based on feedback received from this review.

Reviews will occur on a predetermined schedule developed by the Program Review Committee. Participation in the process by those who support the program, those who are part of the program, as well as those who benefit from its offerings are invited to observe the process in order to emphasize the openness and fairness of the review process.
Program Review Self-Study Development

The self-study is a key element of the Program Review process. It is intended to give program faculty and staff an opportunity to conduct a critical evaluation of their current activities, including identifying specific strengths and areas for improvement. Several campus offices, including Information Technology, Institutional Research, Institutional Effectiveness, and the University Library are available to assist faculty and staff of the program undergoing review assemble information required for the self-study. Each department may have additional information to include and may choose a different order for parts of the narrative.

The common format approach permits departments to structure self-study documents in a similar manner for each internal program review, thereby providing an opportunity for program stakeholders to make comparisons from one self-study to another. This technique is especially useful for programs that do not have a discipline-specific accrediting agency, as it provides a comprehensive analysis of a program’s resources, processes, and outcomes. As such, this approach has widespread utility for the multitude of disciplines represented at Union College. The Elements that follow are meant to be suggestive rather than prescriptive and provide a common format for program reviews:

Program Review Standards

Standard 1: Purposes and Aspirations
Brief History of the Program

Indicators:
- Origin and significant events in its development

Standard 2: Mission and Goals
Statement of mission, including relationship to school and campus missions

Indicators:
- Specific goals in the areas of teaching and learning; research, scholarship, and creative activity; and civic engagement (attach planning documents and relevant policy statements).
- Evidence of external demand and internal (campus) needs for the program.

Standard 3: Resources:
Students (Data for the past 5 years)
Indicators:

a. Characteristics of students majoring in the program (e.g. number, SAT, GRE, GMAT, LSAT scores, GPA, TOEFL scores for international students and other relevant characteristics).
b. Description of recruitment practices and admissions criteria for both undergraduate and graduate students (if applicable) including how judgments are made.
c. Activities and resources that serve students who declare a major in the department but have not yet met the department’s entrance requirements.
d. Number of students who have declared a major in the department but failed to meet the department’s entrance guidelines.
e. Types and levels of financial assistance available
f. Numbers/percentages of women, minorities, international students in the population of majors.
g. Description of any special programs to recruit minority students.
h. Number of students in service learning courses and types of service learning courses offered or planned.
i.

Standard 4: Faculty
General description of faculty, including year hired, rank, teaching assignments.

Indicators:

a. Student-faculty ratios.
b. Faculty development opportunities available in past 5 years.
c. Evidence of faculty accomplishments, including participation in campus-wide student initiatives, and teaching evaluations obtained from students, graduates, and peers.
d. Description of criteria for evaluation/reward/recognition of faculty.
e. Curriculum vitae for each faculty member, including list of courses taught, description of advising/mentoring responsibilities, record of service, research interests, publications, and sources of external support.

Standard 5: Program Costs
Analysis of income and expenses associated with the program for the current or most recently completed academic/fiscal year.

Indicators:

a. At least two successive years of program income and expenses with budgetary implications of any planned or anticipated changes in the program.
b. Analysis of how graduate students (if applicable) are funded
c. Amount and sources for fellowships and fee scholarships for graduate students (if applicable).
d. Description of how the department is organized for participation in externally funded grants.
e. Description of travel funds for faculty and students to attend and make presentations at national or international meetings.
Standard 6: Library
Description of library holdings and an assessment of their adequacy as they pertain to the program under review.

Standard 7: Physical Facilities
Overview of the physical environment for the program, including instructional technologies, other equipment, and supplies.

Standard 8: Program Content
Distinctive characteristics of the program.

Indicators:

a. Structure, breadth, and depth of curriculum.
b. Interdisciplinary program offerings.
c. Requirements for minors taken by undergraduate and graduate students (if applicable).
d. The formats in which courses are delivered (traditional, hybrid, online, short-term, etc.).
e. How has the department curriculum responded to new directions in the discipline?
f. What is the philosophy that has driven the establishment of the core, elective, and minor (i.e., minors offered for students in other departments) curricula?

Standard 9: Student Support
Description of student course placement procedures, orientation, advising, tutoring, mentoring, monitoring of progress, out-of-class contact with faculty, involvement in research and independent study, internships/field experiences, professional organizations and clubs, and other out-of-class learning opportunities.

Indicators:

a. Evidence that remedial requirements by the department in mathematics, reading, and English are appropriate and increase the likelihood of student success in departmental courses.
b. Opportunities for student involvement in program planning and evaluation.
c. Description of efforts made to place graduates.
d. Description graduate placements.
e. Description of efforts to support entering students, including first-year seminars and learning communities.
f. Description of research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students (If applicable).
g. What opportunities are there for students and faculty to discuss their research either
formally or informally?

h. How are graduate students encouraged to attend national/international research meetings (if applicable)?

i. Description of how and when advisory committees are selected or assigned for graduate students (if applicable).

j. How and when are research advisors selected for graduate students (if applicable)?

k. Description of how graduate students are advised for placement (if applicable).

l. Description of special programs to advise international students (if applicable).

m. Do international students take additional recommended English courses?

n. Description of how and when graduate students select a thesis committee (if applicable).

o. Description of how the department monitors each graduate student’s progress (if applicable).

p. Description of how students are selected to be teaching assistants (if applicable).

**Standard 10: Outcomes:**

The program identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each

**Indicators:**

a. Evidence of student demand for entry/transfer into the program.

b. Evidence of quality of applicant pool (e.g. GPA, SAT, GRE, MCAT, GMAT, LSAT scores, other relevant characteristics)

c. Evidence of student retention in the program.

d. Number of graduates.

e. Desired learning outcomes for students.

f. Evidence of student achievement of specified learning outcomes in the major.

g. Evidence of comparable student achievement regardless of the format in which courses are delivered (i.e., if students have the option of taking courses online, in short-term format, or via other alternative modes of delivery, is their achievement comparable to that of students taking traditional courses?).

h. Evidence of student learning in service courses offered by the department.

i. Evidence of placement of graduates in employment in the field or in further education.

j. Evidence of the placement of graduate students. List graduates by current position, title, and employing institution and identify mentor for graduate work (if applicable).

k. Evidence of program quality derived from surveys/interviews of current students, graduates, employers, community members or agencies.

l. External recognition of students, faculty, or graduates including awards or honors and research awards.

m. Evidence that honors students benefit from honors initiatives sponsored by the department (if applicable).

n. List of publications by students in the program.
The Follow-Up Process

Within six weeks of the date of the review, reviewers will collaborate to produce a single written report summarizing the strengths of the program and recommending changes. Within six months following receipt of the reviewers' report, the program faculty will draft and submit written response to the reviewers' report including factual errors and the actions to be taken to address each recommendation for which action is warranted.

The Vice President of Academic Affairs will call a follow-up meeting within six weeks of the date of the receipt of the written response for the purpose of discussing the program faculty's response to the reviewers' report. All appropriate stakeholders, campus administration, and department representatives will be invited to this meeting in order to bring to bear all the necessary resources that are needed to assist the department in making essential improvements. In subsequent years, the program's progress in each targeted improvement area should be addressed in its annual report. During the third year following the review, the Program Review Committee will schedule a meeting with the department chair for discussion of the longer-term outcomes of the review and what should be included in the upcoming review.

Data Provided by IE for Program Review

1. Characteristics of students majoring in the program (e.g. number, SAT, GRE, GMAT, LSAT scores, GPA, TOEFL scores for international students and other relevant characteristics).
2. Numbers/percentages of women, minorities, international students in the population of majors.
3. Number of students in service courses
4. Two successive years of program income and expenses
5. Clearing House Placements
6. Degrees Awarded
7. Budgetary Information
Appendix: A

Sample Rubric for Evaluating Elements of the Self-Study

Note: a scale of 1-5 is used in this evaluation with 5 being the strongest response.

Stated goals and outcomes for the program:

_____ Program has developed a set of specific goals that are clearly identified
_____ Program has developed a set of measureable outcomes that are linked to program goals
_____ Program has explained the purpose/significance and the linkages between goals and outcomes
_____ Program has described the processes used for establishing its goals and outcomes

Comments:

Explicit connection between the program and Union College’s mission, vision, values, and diversity statements

_____ Program has specific mission, vision, and values statements
_____ Program has explained its commitment to diversity and inclusion
_____ Program indicates how its mission, vision, values, and diversity/inclusion efforts are both derived from and aligned with those of the school and campus

Comments:

Evidence of program effectiveness, with a particular emphasis on assessment of student learning outcomes

_____ Program identifies specific learning outcomes for students
_____ Program has a documented process for assessing learning outcomes
_____ Program provides evidence of its effectiveness, including student learning outcomes, using
a variety of measures (relevant, direct, indirect, quantitative, and qualitative)

Program incorporates findings from its assessment process in ongoing continuous improvement efforts

Comments:

Critical questions to which the program is seeking answers or guidance from its program reviewers

Program has developed specific questions for its program reviewers
Program explains how these questions will facilitate improvement and planning efforts
Program questions are related to and draw from information contained in the self-study document
Program questions are written in a manner that can be understood and answered by members of the program review team

Comments:

Overall assessment of the program’s strengths, areas for improvement, and plans for the future

Program identifies and describes its strengths.
Program identifies and describes its areas for improvement.
Program identifies and describes its plans for the future.
Program establishes a linkage between information contained in the self-study document and its strengths, areas for improvement, and plans for the future.

Comments:

Evidence-based information organized in a logical, well-written manner

Program provides appropriate evidence to substantiate claims made in the self-study
Program uses appropriate evidence in describing activities and accomplishments
Program self-study is organized in a logical manner
Program self-study is written in a manner free from major spelling, grammar, and organization errors

Comments: