

HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES

Program Review Guidelines

Note: "Program" throughout this document, refers to either a department or program at the Colleges. We chose to use "program" for the sake of readability and because it is standard language within the fields of assessment and evaluation.

Overview

Hobart and William Smith Colleges conducts once-per-decade reviews of all academic departments and interdisciplinary programs to assess their contributions to the Colleges' mission. These reviews consider the ways in which programs further the success of the Colleges through their contributions to the curriculum, the scholarship conducted by faculty and students, and their engagement in the life of the institution.

Each review includes a self-study conducted by the members of the program, an external review conducted by a visiting committee comprised of two faculty from other institutions, and a response and plan developed by the program under review.

The schedule of reviews is established by Oafa in consultation with the Committee on Academic Affairs. The self-study and external review typically span three consecutive semesters; a recommended schedule is provided below. Following the completion of the external review report, the program submits to Oafa a written response to the report and a plan for improvement.

Program reviews provide a regular mechanism for in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness, progress, and status of a program. They create an occasion for programs to highlight their strengths and achievements, to identify areas in need of improvement, to develop long-range plans for meeting these needs, and to respond to emerging changes in the discipline or interdisciplinary field. The primary purpose of a review is to assist the program in meeting students' educational needs, supporting faculty scholarship and service, and planning for future opportunities and challenges. In addition, the review assists both the program and the Provost and Dean of Faculty in determining resource needs.

To place the review in context is to understand it as one piece of an overall institutional assessment plan that takes place at many levels, such as assessment of student learning in individual courses; reviews of academic support services; evaluation of student learning in relation to the curricular goals; and reviews for institutional accreditation.

The institutional responsibilities and steps of the review process are detailed in the pages that follow.

Assessment and Evaluation

Often “assessment” and “evaluation” are used interchangeably. As faculty, we typically think about assessing and/or evaluating students; however, when using these terms at an institutional level, they mean two different things. *Assessment* refers to the measurement of student learning in reference to student learning outcomes, goals, or other criteria. As faculty, we do this formally and informally all the time. Every assignment has a set of criteria upon which feedback is determined. Importantly, learning outcomes can be thought of on the level of the assignment, a unit, the course, a student’s experience in a major or minor, or at the level of the institution. Whereas, *evaluation* refers to the efforts of departments, programs, offices, or divisions to monitor, analyze, and reflect upon what they are doing well and to identify areas of concern or need.

Within the scope of Program Reviews at HWS, the overall process is one of evaluation. And within this process, there are specific sections of the self-study that focus on assessment of student learning outcomes. We attempt to maintain this distinction below.

The extent that your program relies on quantitative versus qualitative data and evidence is up to you, and will most likely reflect the types of evidence most often used in your discipline. You will receive quantitative data from the Office of Institutional Research. These data will include student enrollment and the number of majors and minors over time. The data will also be disaggregated by race/ethnicity and gender identity.

Any additional evidence that your program chooses to collect, analyze, and/or use is up to you. You might choose to focus on additional quantitative data (e.g., rubric scores from Capstone projects, course demand, advising loads, etc.). However, you may also choose to rely on qualitative data and evidence. Sources of qualitative data might include student interviews, focus groups, and qualitative surveys. If you have questions about your approach to assessment, we encourage you to talk to someone in Institutional Research or OAFA.

Responsibilities

Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs

As the Colleges’ chief academic officer, the Provost and Dean of Faculty has overall responsibility for program reviews. The Provost and Dean of Faculty and the appropriate Associate Provost consult with the Committee on the Faculty, and the Committee on Academic Affairs to determine the schedule of reviews. The Associate Provost meets with each program scheduled for review to discuss any features unique to that program, to confirm the timetable for the review, and to finalize any costs associated with the review. The Associate Provost will also be available to meet with the program during its preparation of the self-study report.

The Associate Provost is responsible for assembling and charging the external review team and mailing its members the self-study report materials in advance of their visit. OAFA will cover reasonable expenses associated with the external review team in consultation with the program. Any such expenses must be approved prior to being incurred.

To conclude the review process, OAFAs will meet with the program chair and program review chair to discuss the external reviewers' report and the program's response to the report.

Program Chair and Program Review Chair

The program will select a chair for the review (the program chair may serve in this capacity, but it is not necessary). The program review chair is responsible for overseeing the conduct and assembly of the self-study, assisting OAFAs in the selection of the external reviewers, and scheduling the agenda for the on-campus site visit of the external review team. The program review chair is responsible for ensuring that all members of the program are engaged, heard, and fairly represented throughout the review process. The program review chair and program chair (if different) meet with OAFAs to discuss the external reviewers' report and the program's response to the report. Finally, the program chair is responsible for the implementation of the action plan. The program review chair may designate some of these responsibilities to other members of the program, but ultimately remains responsible for their completion.

External Review Team

The external reviewers are responsible for reading the self-study; meeting with students, faculty, and administrators during their site visit; and touring the facilities and other physical resources of the program. Based on the self-study report and the visit, the external reviewers submit a written External Review Report to OAFAs by the agreed-upon deadline. OAFAs will be responsible for submitting the External Review Report to the program review chair. The external reviewers are also responsible for presenting a preliminary oral summary to the program and to OAFAs before the conclusion of their site visit.

Key Steps in the Review of a Program

Step	Timeline/Deadline	Focus
1	February-March	Review and Discuss Program Progress Since Last Review
2	April	Select Program Review Chair and Identify Key Issues
3	May-June	Meet with OAFA to Review Plan for Self-Study
4	Summer	Review and Update Program Website
5	October 15 th	Identify Members of the External Review Committees
6	September – February	Conduct and Write Program Self-Study
7	January 30 th	Submit Self-Study to OAFA for Review
8	February 15 th	OAFA Sends Self-Study to External Review Committee
9	Mid-March	Host External Review Committee
10	April 15 th	Receive External Review Committee Report
11	May 30 th	Submit Report Response and 5-10 Plan to OAFA
12	5 years following	Submit a Five-Year Progress Report to OAFA

Program Review

Step 1: Review and Discuss Program Progress Since Last Review and (February-March)

Most program reviews occur 8-10 years apart. The program should read and discuss the following documents: a) the self-study, b) the external review committee's report, and c) the program's response. It is important to keep in mind that new members of the program may not have participated in the prior review. Therefore, they may need time and assistance to understand both the products and the process of prior reviews. Dedicating at least an entire program meeting to this discussion is important. The focus should remain on understanding the key points of the review and progress made since that time. Chairs should encourage the program to not discuss plans for the upcoming review, which many often find to be tempting.

Step 2: Select Program Review Chair and Identify Key Issues (April)

The program should select a chair for the review (the program chair may serve in this capacity, but it is not necessary). At this time, the program faculty should develop a list of Key Self-Study Issues they plan to address during the review. A written list of those issues is then submitted via email to OAFA.

Step 3: Meet with OAFA to Review Timeline for Self-Study (May-June)

The program chair and/or program review chair will meet with the Associate Provost to discuss the review timeline and any questions. The program review chair should understand what needs to occur between this meeting and when the program begins to conduct and write the self-study.

Step 4: Review and Update Program Website (Summer)

Programs under review should update their webpages prior to the review, as the External Committee will likely consult the website for information about the program before visiting. The courses and curriculum section will be of greatest interest. Requests can be sent to the Office of Communications. Please allow 4-6 weeks for updates.

Step 5: Identify Members of the External Review Committees (October 15th)

The process of selecting external reviewers begins with the program, which provides the Provost and Dean of Faculty with the names of at least six colleagues in the discipline or interdisciplinary field whom they deem most qualified. Potential reviewers should come from institutions that are known to have strong programs in the discipline or interdisciplinary area under review. Reviewers typically come from primarily undergraduate institutions considered to be peers of HWS or to represent a model to which the program aspires.

The list of potential reviewers should include the names, titles, addresses, and contact information of all six nominees along with a description of their expertise and standing within the discipline/interdisciplinary field, and a statement of any potential conflicts of interest with program members. OAFAs select and invites two external reviewers to participate in the review. Understanding that some fields are particularly small and that overlap in some cases may be unavoidable, OAFAs and the program should make every effort to minimize the potential of influencing the external reviewers outside of the formal review process. OAFAs will inform the program upon identifying two external reviewers, normally by the end of the fall semester.

Step 6: Conduct and Write Program Self-Study (September – February)

At the beginning of the review process, the program under review conducts a self-study during which it:

- Reviews and considers new directions or innovations within the discipline or interdisciplinary field
- Reviews and considers its curriculum
- Collects, analyzes, and considers data and evidence pertinent to the program and its operation, including, but not limited to, enrollment data, a curriculum map, results from an alumni survey, capstone assessment(s), and other relevant institutional data
- Uses those data to assess and reflect upon the program's effectiveness in furthering its goals and objectives, advancing the mission of the Colleges, identifying strengths and challenges, and highlighting key issues it wishes to address moving forward
- Develops a preliminary plan for the subsequent five to ten years
- Creates a document that presents the results of the self-study

A self-study document will include the following sections:

- Overview of the Program and Curriculum
- Evaluation of Enrollment Data
- Assessment of Student Learning in the Major(s) and/or Minor(s)
- Assessment of the Capstone Experience and Project

- Assessment of General Education
- The Role of Scholarship
- The Program and the Colleges
- Highlights and Strengths
- Issues and Concerns
- Long-Range Plan
- Appendices

A critical examination of the curriculum and student learning should form the basis of a self-study. It not only measures the program's effectiveness in meeting its educational goals, but it also informs other questions, including workload and resources. Understanding why we teach the courses that we teach, at what level, and with what goals for student learning, is at the heart of a robust self-study.

1. Overview of the Program and Curriculum

This is a narrative that should describe the program and curriculum in a manner that expands upon the program's significance, mission, and objectives. The program description need not replicate everything that is on the website or available via other sources. The goal is to provide a broader context for OAFA and the external reviewers.

2. Evaluation of Enrollment Data

OAFA and the Office of Institutional Research will provide enrollment data to programs so they can analyze and discuss these data at the *beginning* of the self-study process. These data will include: course enrollments, numbers of majors and minors, the number of faculty and staff associated with the program, and workload information. Programs are encouraged to include data from corresponding programs at other institutions as well as other HWS programs, if relevant. Programs may analyze enrollment trends over time, introductory courses vs. advanced courses, over-enrollments and under-enrollments, and whether the current course offerings meet program learning goals, among other questions.

Whenever possible, the program should provide context or explanation for enrollment areas that are problematic. If program faculty are uncertain of the kind of information data analysis can provide, they may confer with OAFA.

3. Assessment of Student Learning

The program should use available data or generate new data to measure student learning, for major(s) and/or minor(s), as well as non-majors. Assessment efforts should be focused primarily on stated learning goals and objectives. The outcomes assessed can include knowledge, methods and theories of inquiry, intellectual or academic skills, use of technology, or integrated/ interdisciplinary learning.

Below are examples of strategies for assessing selected student learning outcomes at

the program level:

- A program may develop an alumni survey asking about a variety of outcomes from career-related information to retrospective evaluation of learning while in the major. Alumni surveys are most useful when programs ask about strengths *and* weaknesses of the program.
- A program might assess writing proficiency in seniors by cross-reading and collectively evaluating capstone projects using a grading system or rubric.
- A program might use a standardized disciplinary measure of reasoning, competency, and skills from the field.
- The languages might assess oral proficiency through senior presentations or portfolio defenses.
- A program could use senior poster presentations to evaluate the degree to which students have demonstrated mastery of research design and basic statistics.
- Faculty could evaluate student products during the senior show or performance using a standardized form or set of evaluation criteria.
- A program could use a standardized test of critical thinking to compare their seniors to national norms for college students.

OAFAs and the Office of Institutional Research can provide resources and support in an effort to assist with program-level assessment of outcomes. OAFAs encourage programs to begin assessment activities well in advance of the review.

4. Assessment of the Capstone Experience and Project

The assessment of a capstone experience or project is often considered the cornerstone of a program review. The overarching goal is to determine the extent to which graduates demonstrate competency within each one of the learning objectives for the program. The methods employed for doing so can be qualitative in nature, quantitative, or some combination of the two. Most often, faculty develop a rubric that can be used to evaluate the extent to which student projects, papers, or experiences demonstrate specific learning goals. The results of this assessment can then be used to assess the effectiveness of these senior experiences. This in turn should lead to conversations as to how the curriculum and capstone may be modified in order to enhance student experiences so that they better realize the stated goals.

5. Assessment of General Education

The program should discuss its role in the General Education program (this might include courses for non-majors, first-year seminars, and courses that contribute to other programs) and the effectiveness of student learning in General Education courses. Programs may describe the number or percentage of courses that contribute to General Education, the approach to the goal requirements for nonmajors, and how faculty find successes and challenges in providing General Education opportunities.

6. The Role of Scholarship

The program should discuss the role of faculty and student scholarship and/or artistic production. Describe the successes of and challenges to a program culture of scholarship.

7. The Program and the Colleges.

The program should reflect upon and assess:

- a. Program climate, collegiality, and sense of identity and community among students and faculty,
- b. The relationship of the program outcomes to the priorities and goals within the Strategic Diversity Plan (see sections on Teaching and Learning and/or Student Relations),
- c. The role of the program in interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship,
- d. The role of the program in the co-curricular life of the Colleges (special events, arts events, collaborations, community engagement, etc.), and
- e. The role of the program in relation to co-curricular and academic centers.

8. Discussion

a. Strengths

This section is an opportunity for the program to reflect on what it does well. The program should highlight things that are unique about the student experience, the areas in which the program should continue to invest time and resources, and any areas where the program is meeting or exceeding expectations, especially in reference to student learning and outcomes.

b. Issues and Concerns

The discussion of issues and concerns should address the Key Self-Study Issues developed at the outset of the review (in Step 1), but can also include other issues that emerge as the program conducts its self-study. It is understood that the allocation of personnel and financial resources is often a central theme of self-study reports. However, programs, and the Colleges as a whole, derive more benefit from reviews if program faculty think deeply about the educational goals of their work rather than focus solely on developing a wish list for faculty net additions and requests for increased space and financial resources.

c. Long-Range Plan

The program should articulate a plan for the next ten years, which will provide the External Review Team an opportunity to evaluate the program in reference to short and long-term goals.

9. Appendices. The Self-Study should include the following appendices:

- a. Course Catalogue Curriculum for the program
- b. Five-Year Summary of Faculty and Staff Contributing to the Program
- c. Faculty Vitae: Curricula vitae of all faculty members currently teaching in the

- program
- d. Staff Resumes: Resumes of all staff members currently contributing to the program
 - e. Course Syllabi: Syllabi of courses offered in the last two years and others that are critical to the program curriculum (interdisciplinary programs may include the syllabi of courses central to the major)
 - f. Program Enrollment Data: These data are typically provided to the program by the Office of Institutional Research and will include a standardized report of the following over the past 10 years:
 - i. Course Enrollments
 - ii. Program Size (majors, minors)
 - iii. Program Graduates (majors, minors)
 - iv. Graduates by Gender
 - v. Graduates by Race/Ethnicity

These data will be generated at the end of the spring semester prior to the self-study.
 - g. Facilities and Equipment: Information about the facilities and equipment utilized by the program. The relevance of this appendix might vary considerably, depending on the nature and needs of the program (e.g., sciences, arts, technology)
 - h. Information on the current annual operating budget of the program. This is provided to the program under review by OAFA.
 - i. If available, please include a summary of program graduates' educational and career outcomes during the five most recent years. OAFA is working with Career Services to standardize the data and information available. Programs often obtain names and addresses from Alumni House and conduct their own surveys of alums when preparing this report. OAFA recognizes that the availability of this information may vary considerably from program to program.

Step 7: Submit Self-Study to OAFA for Review (January 30th)

The program submits copies of the self-study report (with all accompanying appendices and materials) to OAFA. *Please compile this into a single PDF document.*

Step 8: OAFA Sends Self-Study to External Review Committee (February 15th)

The Office of Academic and Faculty Affairs is responsible for submitting copies of the self-study report to the external reviewers along with a letter detailing the external review committee's charge.

Step 9: Host External Review Committee (Mid-March)

It is important that the reviewers feel free to arrive at an independent assessment of the program, but suggested questions and formats for the report are included as an appendix. In addition to describing the responsibilities of the external reviewers, the charge letter will also detail focal points that the program and/or Provost and Dean of Faculty agree warrant particular emphasis.

As part of their site visit, the external reviewers will have the opportunity to:

- have an entry and exit meeting with OAFA,
- meet with all available program faculty and with students, including majors and minors,
- discuss the self-study report,
- observe classes and campus facilities,
- meet with faculty members in related programs, and
- meet with the program prior to departure to discuss their preliminary findings.

Site visits normally last two full days and are typically conducted during a regular academic semester. The program review chair is normally tasked with finalizing the schedule for the duration of the visit. Travel, meals, lodging, and honoraria are covered by OAFA and should be coordinated with the office before expenses are incurred.

The external reviewers are responsible for writing one report, which should be submitted within a month of the site visit. For ease of distribution, the report should include an executive summary of its findings and recommendations. If there is no consensus on a particular issue, all the differing opinions should be stated. The report should respond to the charge letter and the self-study report, identifying strengths, making concrete and constructive suggestions for improvement, and finally, addressing any other issues the reviewers consider important that might have been overlooked in the self-study. The text of the report should preserve the anonymity of individuals within the program.

Step 10: Receive External Review Team Report (April 15th)

When completed, the report is submitted to OAFA. OAFA shares the final report with the program review chair who then shares it with the program.

Step 11: Submit Report Response and 10-Year Plan to OAFA (May 30th)

After the completion of the site visit and receipt of the written report, the program is required to provide a written reaction to the report and action plan to the Provost and Dean of Faculty no later than June 15th for Spring visits and January 15th for Fall visits. The program chair, the program review chair, and OAFA meet to discuss the external review report and the program's response. The outcome of this meeting is to prioritize any agreed-upon action steps. The report and the program response may subsequently be shared with the Committee on the Faculty and the Committee on Academic Affairs.

Step 12: Submit a Five-Year Progress Report to OAFA (5 years after the end of review)

The Provost and Dean of Faculty will initiate a formal check-in on the action items the program has identified. The program will prepare a one-page report summarizing progress and initiatives underway to address issues identified in the review, and the Provost and Dean of Faculty will meet with the program chair to discuss their plans.