

McMaster University
**PROCEDURES FOR CYCLICAL UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM REVIEWS
SUMMARY**

All academic programs are to be reviewed on an eight-year cycle. Combined programs do not require review if their constituting programs are reviewed separately. Emphases, Options and Minors do not require review.

Departments can choose to review undergraduate and graduate programs jointly or separately. If the reviews are done jointly, there can be additional subsections within the report to address different situations that apply to each program. Program reviews can also be done jointly with accreditation reviews, at the discretion of the Chair, in consultation with the Dean.

REVIEW PROCESS

1. Self-Study: Internal Program Perspective

The *Self-Study* is the center of the review process. This study provides each program under review the opportunity to assess its strengths and weaknesses, obstacles it faces in achieving its goals, issues raised in student surveys, topics it would like the review team to address, an assessment of how the program is contributing to the current university academic plan, etc. Student participation is an essential component of the self-study. The outcome of the initial self-study process should be the preparation of documents for the review team.

The self-study includes:

- Program
- Admission Requirements
- Curriculum
- Teaching and Assessment
- Resources
- Quality Indicators
- Quality Enhancement
- Governance
- Previous concerns and recommendations
- Areas for Improvement
- Areas the Enhancement
- Academic Services
- Additional Input

Character/Nature of the Self-Study

The self-study is reflective, analytical, self-critical and evaluative, and assesses appropriateness, rather than being descriptive.

Treatment of the Curriculum

The curriculum is examined critically, with an eye to learning objectives, and to change and improvement. The curriculum is examined as it was in the previous Fall academic year. All changes in the current offering should be noted.

Learning Objectives

The self-study expresses learning objectives and how they relate to McMaster's Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations that operationally drive admission requirements, curriculum content, modes of delivery, bases of evaluation of student performance and commitment of resources.

Treatment of the Data

Data are analyzed e.g. used as the basis for performance indicators. Data analysis contributes to the assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the program. Institutional data will be provided to departments from central University sources wherever possible.

Approach

The self-study shows sensitivity to context, mission and objectives of the program, and where appropriate, the institution. The self-study shows that the members of the program are thinking about what they are doing.

Authorship

The self-study results from a participatory self-critical process, and documents the involvement of all faculty in the program, and of students in its preparation. Students are actively involved in the agenda-setting, the self-analysis, and the preparation of the self-study.

Student Surveys

The student surveys provide another valuable source of input to the self-study.

Relationship to External Reviewer Mandate

The self-study will outline all of the issues external reviewers are asked to review.

Schedule of Reviews

The list of programs that require review, and the schedule of such reviews, is maintained by the Associate Vice-President (Academic).

2. External Evaluation: External Perspective

While self-review, such as the self-study, is a guiding and ongoing principle at McMaster University, the use of external reviewers as a part of such reviews is a vital and valuable part of undergraduate program reviews. The Chair recommends the external and internal review team members to evaluate the program and the members are then selected by the Associate Vice-President (Academic) in consultation with the Dean.

The review team shall consist of:

- at least one (1) external reviewer for undergraduate programs, or two (2) external reviewers for concurrent reviews of undergraduate and graduate programs
- one (1) internal reviewer
- additional members may be added to the team if appropriate, such as when evaluating professional programs

External members of the review team normally shall be individuals in the same discipline as the program under review (or across disciplines for interdisciplinary programs) who are distinguished senior academics of broad experience, with an established commitment to higher education. They will be selected from a list of at least four (4) suggested individuals submitted by the

program/department under review, or six (6) for combined undergraduate/graduate program reviews. The list shall include, for each proposed external reviewer:

- name
- rank and position
- institution or company and current address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address, and URL if available
- details of any previous or current affiliation with the University, and any association with individual members of the program under review (e.g., co-author, previous student/supervisor, close relationship)

The internal member of the review team normally shall be a McMaster University faculty member in another discipline as the program under review. His/her role is to participate in the meetings and discussions, while providing information and local context to the review team. The internal member shall be selected from a list of two (2) suggested individuals.

The documentation (or relevant URLs) prepared for the review team should include the self-study and other relevant information.

It is required that all reviewers visit at the same time, normally for two days. As appropriate, the review team shall meet with the following:

- Chair or Director;
- Full-time faculty members (in groups);
- Part-time faculty members (in groups);
- Program students (units should encourage a broad cross section of students to participate in a meeting with the review team);
- Associate Dean;
- Dean;
- the Associate Vice-President (Academic);
- Provost and Vice-President (Academic), if available
- Additional meetings may be scheduled at the request of the external review team, Chair of the department or individuals.

The review team will submit, to the Office of the Associate Vice-President (Academic), a joint report, including an Executive Summary, for the program(s) under review, normally within four weeks of the visit. The report will normally be written primarily by the external reviewer(s), with input from the internal reviewer. The review team's report should address the substance of both the self-study report and the evaluation criteria set out in the self-study. The intent of these reports is to be formative and constructive. The reports are intended to provide counsel rather than prescriptive courses of action.

The Office of the Associate Vice-President (Academic) will circulate the report to the appropriate Chair(s) and Dean(s)

The Chair shall be responsible for preparing the program's response to the review team's report and submitting it to the Dean.

The Dean's response to the review team's report and to the Chair's response constitutes the Implementation Plan and should include:

- any changes in organization, policy or governance that would be necessary to meet the

- recommendations
- a discussion of the ways in which proposed changes deal with problems identified in the review
- whether additional resources can be allocated to enhance the quality of the program
- a proposed timeline for the implementation of proposed changes

The Dean will be responsible for reviewing the recommendations and for providing resources necessary for those that will be implemented.

3. Institutional Perspective and Report

The self-study, the review team report and the Implementation Plan will be submitted to McMaster University's Quality Assurance Committee, a joint committee of Undergraduate and Graduate Councils. The self-study and the review team report will be treated as confidential. The Quality Assurance Committee will assess the documents and will submit a Final Assessment Report to Undergraduate Council that:

- identifies significant strengths of the program
- addresses the appropriateness of resources for the success of the program
- identifies opportunities for program improvement and enhancement
- identifies and prioritizes the recommendations
- provides an Executive Summary, exclusive of any confidential information and suitable for public dissemination
- includes the Implementation Plan
- may include a confidential section (e.g., where personnel issues may be addressed)
- may include additional recommendations or comments. Recommendations could include, for example, requiring a detailed 18-month report that will describe progress towards addressing major concerns or scheduling an additional cyclical review sooner than specified by the normal 8-year cycle

Undergraduate Council will receive the Final Assessment Report from the Quality Assurance Committee in open session, (confidential sections, if any, will be discussed in closed session), and will consider whether it will add its own recommendations or comments. These will be communicated to the Chair, the Dean and the Associate Vice-President (Academic).

The report from Undergraduate Council, along with any recommendations or comments, will be presented to the University Planning Committee, which will consider whether it will make additional recommendations or comments. These will be communicated to the Chair, the Dean and the Associate Vice-President (Academic).

Eighteen months after receiving the report from Undergraduate Council, the Dean will meet with the Chair for an update on the program. The Dean will submit a report to Undergraduate Council summarizing the status of any actions in the Implementation Plan. This report, along with any recommendations or comments from Undergraduate Council, will be presented to the University Planning Committee, which will consider whether it will make additional recommendations or comments. These will be communicated to the Dean and the Associate Vice-President (Academic).

4. Reporting Requirements

Once per year, the Associate Vice-President (Academic) will submit the report to the Quality

Council, of the Final Assessment Reports for all program reviews completed in that year.

Once per year, the Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee will present an Annual Report, consisting of a compilation of the Final Assessment Reports, to an open session of Senate (confidential sections, if any, will be discussed in closed session). The Deans will be invited to answer any questions that arise.

The Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee will be responsible for drafting a summary of highlights from the review which is suitable for posting on the Vice-President Academic section of the University's website. The Executive Summaries and the Implementation Plans of the Final Assessment Reports will be posted on the Vice-President Academic section of the University's website and copies of this information will be provided to the Quality Council and to the University's Board of Governors.

5. Use of Accreditation and other External Reviews in the Institutional Quality Assurance Process

Programs that periodically undergo accreditation reviews may use the associated documentation as a partial substitute for the self-study. The Associate Vice-President (Academic), in consultation with the Dean, will review the accreditation requirements to determine their suitability and identify any components of the cyclical review that are missing. An addendum to the accreditation documentation, containing any revised or missing components, will be prepared and appended to the accreditation documentation. A record of substitutions or additions, and the grounds on which they were made, will be eligible for audit by the Quality Council. The remaining steps in the cyclical review will then take place. When requested by the Dean and permitted by the accreditation authorities, the cyclical visit by the external reviewers may be performed at the same time or by the same people as the accreditation review, or it may be used to assess quality assurance issues not covered by the accreditation review.