

ACADEMIC AND/OR TEACHING UNIT REVIEW

OVERVIEW

September 2010

The periodic review of an academic program provides an assessment of the unit's strengths, challenges, and opportunities. This assessment can contribute significantly to fostering academic excellence at all levels and to enhancing the unit's quality and progress. At American University, each academic and/or teaching unit participates in the review process at intervals of no more than seven years. The review process has three components as described below: the academic and/or teaching unit self-study, the external review, and the academic and/or teaching unit review results. In some cases, an accreditation review also can serve as the periodic review of an academic and/or teaching unit. In those instances, the accreditation review committee functions as the external review committee. The Office of the Provost administers the academic and/or teaching unit review process in consultation with the appropriate deans, chairs, and directors.

1. **The academic and/or teaching unit self-study:** This initial phase of the review includes the assemblage and analysis of relevant data in collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA). This part of the review is designed to elicit broad input from the unit's faculty, staff, and students. The self-study assesses how the unit is doing in the fulfillment of its academic mission and objectives, how it operates organizationally, and how it promotes an inclusive and supportive environment for all of its members. Benchmarking academic performance to peer programs is another part of the self-study, as is how the work of the unit intersects with that of other schools or departments. The self-study also should discuss the unit's strategic vision for the next five to seven years and identify opportunities and future directions. The self-study review should be no more than twenty-five pages, exclusive of appendices, and should follow the unit review self-study outline.
2. **The external review:** In consultation with the instructional and academic and/or teaching units, the Office of the Provost selects members of a committee that will be charged with the external review. The external review team normally consists of a minimum of two scholars or professionals of significant stature in the field who, in most cases, have had previous relevant academic administrative experience. They are charged with providing an objective and authoritative assessment of the academic and/or teaching unit. The external committee review includes assessment of the following components:
 - Organization and governance of the academic and/or teaching unit
 - All academic programs housed in the unit including curricula, admissions, progress to degree, and post-graduate placements
 - Quality of the faculty
 - Appropriate mentoring of junior faculty
 - Adequacy of facilities and staffing
 - The unit's role within the university

- Positioning within the academic field or discipline

The external reviewers examine the academic and/or teaching unit's strategic goals and objectives, and provide an assessment of future directions, while making appropriate recommendations. Following a campus visit that minimally includes meetings with a broad representation of the unit's constituents, the external review committee sends a final report to the Provost. In turn, the Office of the Provost distributes this report to the Dean and, if applicable, to the chair or director(s).

3. **Academic and/or teaching unit review results:** Once the Provost receives and reviews the external report, follow-up meetings are scheduled with the Dean and, if relevant, with the chair or director(s). The self-study and external review reports are discussed thoroughly with specific attention to strategic recommendations that will move the unit to higher levels of distinction. Recommendations will be followed through regular meetings with the Dean. The Dean or chair will make the report available to the unit's faculty.

