

Academic Program Review Process: Policy Statement

I. Background and Rationale

This process is designed to meet requirements from the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC, next due fall 2013) and the Connecticut Department of Higher Education to have a formal system for reviewing programs.

Program reviews as described in this document are not intended or expected to provide justification for elimination of programs or departments. These program reviews are entirely separate in function and procedure from those described in section 5.18 of the current Connecticut State University American Association of University Professors-Board of Trustees for Connecticut State University System Collective Bargaining Agreement (hereafter "the contract"). Any effort to eliminate a program must follow procedures described in the contract then in effect.

There are three related and mutually reinforcing purposes for CCSU's formal review process of academic programs:

- To enhance student learning and student success;
- To improve the quality and effectiveness of curricula and instruction;
- To assist in the allocation of resources.

The system for program review relies primarily on currently available Department reports with subsections for each of their degree programs that are submitted annually and data that have been provided by OIRA to facilitate the process (enrollments, completions, faculty load, etc.). Data also are provided by the Center for International Education (CIE) for the purpose of reporting course abroad numbers. All degree programs in a department will be reviewed at the same time. Degree programs include bachelor's degrees, master's degrees, sixth-year certificates, and doctoral degrees; programs leading to other credentials are exempt from this process.

II. The Review Cycle

The review process will follow the cycle described below. The three methods for providing feedback to departments following their submission of their annual reports and review of their academic programs include a review by the Dean; a designated Review Body, consisting of the Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs, Associate Vice Presidents for Academic Affairs, Deans, and the Director of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA); and an external reviewer.*

The program review process will follow the cycle below, with exceptions determined by the Provost in collaboration with the appropriate Dean and Department.

- Every year – The appropriate Dean will review the annual report and appended assessment reports.
- Every five years – The Review Body will review the department's most recent annual report and appended assessment reports.
- In most instances, two years following this review, an external reviewer* will provide a program review that includes a 10 pp. summary for each program, accompanied by the five most recent annual reports and appended assessment reports.

* For programs accredited by a nationally recognized accreditor, the periodic accreditation review of the program(s) may substitute for the external review and preparation of the 10 pp. summary, even if the accreditation cycle is longer than 5 years.

Departments will receive feedback following each review and then have the opportunity to correct errors of fact and provide clarifications. Reviewers may make suggestions for improvement to departments for consideration and possible action through standard faculty procedures and shared governance.

External Reviewers

External reviewers may consist of faculty members at other institutions or may be chosen based on their significant professional qualifications comparable to experience and expertise of university faculty.

- A mutually acceptable external reviewer will be appointed upon consultation among the Department, appropriate Dean, and the Provost.
- Funding for the external reviewer will be provided by the Provost's Office.

III. Coordination of the Program Review Process

Coordination of the program review process will be managed by the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (the NEASC liaison officer) in conjunction with the Director of the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA). The Associate Vice President will coordinate the external review process and, in conjunction with appropriate Deans, ensure that Departments have submitted all appropriate materials. The OIRA Director will ensure that a common set of program metrics is provided to departments, archive and distribute reports and review materials, and evaluate the effectiveness of the program review process.

Reviewer Questions

The review process will focus on the following questions drawn from existing annual departmental and appended assessment reports:

1. Does the program have clear student learning outcomes? To what extent do program faculty gather and present data on student learning? To what extent do program faculty rely upon direct measures of student learning that are aligned with program outcomes?
2. To what extent are students meeting student learning outcomes as set by the faculty?
3. To what extent do program faculty use student learning outcome data to inform their curriculum and/or make adjustments? Is this use of information appropriate?
4. Do the program courses have sufficient enrollment? What contribution does the program make to the general education program? Do a sufficient number of students complete the program? Are students retained? Are they graduating in a timely fashion?
5. In what ways do program faculty engage students in curricular activities and those beyond the classroom that include undergraduate research, graduate research, community engagement, and international education?
6. Is the allocation of resources appropriate for each of the department's programs, i.e. sufficient number of faculty, revenue generated by number of credit hours, direct instructional expenditures, etc.? What resource allocations or reallocations appear necessary?
7. What future plans does the department report? Is there a solid rationale for those plans that aligns with the university's mission and strategic plan? What faculty, space, and financial resources would be needed?

External reviewers, only, will answer this question in addition to the seven listed above:

8. To what extent does overall faculty creative activity contribute to the discipline?

IV. Use of Findings

Findings from the program review process may be channeled through departments and appropriate senate committees for the purpose of informing deliberations about how to:

- Provide support for program improvement, development and other changes;
- Manage enrollment to deliver a high quality program;
- Allocate future resources for the program (faculty, monetary, space, etc.).