Portland State
UNIVERSITY

External Review of Academic Programs

The External Review Panel

The external review process for an academic program must include a site visit or a virtual visit by a panel composed of two - three highly qualified individuals in the specific field/discipline of the program. Although scholars and professionals from Oregon may be included, the majority of the panel members should be selected from peer institutions outside the state.

The selection of the panel members shall be determined by the responsible academic dean, in consultation with the Unit chair or director, from a list of candidates provided by the program. The dean may also identify additional reviewers.

Site/Virtual Visit

Invitations to serve on the external review panel and to act as chair are extended by the program. The program will provide panel members with the self-assessment written by the program, the dean's response to the report (if available), and other supporting or contextual materials, as needed. A site- or virtual-visit schedule and itinerary, including all arrangements should be arranged with the panel. All costs associated with the external review will be borne by the responsible academic dean.

Report and Program's Response

On the basis of its visit, review of materials, and panel members' expertise, the panel will make a written report for which guidelines are provided. After receipt of the panel's report, the program must respond, in writing, to the panel's recommendations and assessments. The external review report, and the program response will be submitted to the dean for consideration.

External Review Panel Responsibility

The external review panel's primary task is to evaluate, not investigate. All data, information, documentation, and supporting material will be provided by the program, thus enabling the panel to focus its efforts on the review.

The panel is responsible for preparing a combined final report in a timely manner. The report will be based primarily on the full panel's evaluation of the self-assessment and the information gathered during the site or virtual visit, and will address areas set forth in these guidelines. Once completed, the chair will send the report to the unit chair or director.

Report Guidelines

The panel is asked to assess the program within the present and projected future contexts, addressing program elements, faculty, need, and resources.

1. Program

a. The program objectives and requirements; the mechanisms for program administration and assessment.

b. The program's alignment with PSU's mission and strategic objectives.

c. The depth and breadth of coverage in terms of faculty availability and expertise, regular course offerings and directed study, and access to and use of support resources within and external to the institution.

d. The relationship of this program to undergraduate and other graduate programs at PSU and other institutions in the state, if appropriate. Consider collaborative arrangements, partnerships, interdisciplinary programs, service functions, joint research projects, support programs, etc.

e. The program's major strengths and weaknesses.

2. Faculty

a. The quality of the faculty in terms of training, experience, research, scholarly contributions, ability to generate external support, stature in the field, and qualifications to serve as graduate faculty.

b. The faculty in terms of size, qualifications for area(s) of specialization offered, and the student body served. Include analysis of program sustainability in light of such factors as upcoming retirements, etc.

c. Areas of faculty strength and weakness.

d. Faculty workload, including availability for student advising, research oversight, mentoring, and teaching effectiveness.

e. The credentials, involvement of, and reliance upon support faculty from other departments within PSU, from other institutions, and/or adjunct faculty.

3. Resources

a. The adequacy of library, computer, laboratory, and other research facilities and equipment; offices; classrooms; support services for the program; and, if relevant, the program's utilization of resources outside the institution (e.g., field sites, laboratories, museums, libraries, and cooperative arrangements with other institutions).

b. The program's budget and any need for new resources to operate the program effectively. Where appropriate, review resources available to support graduate students (e.g., fellowships and other scholarships, teaching and research assistantships).

c. In terms of national standards, PSU's commitment to the program as demonstrated by the number of faculty relative to workload and student numbers, support for faculty by nonacademic personnel (e.g., support, staff, technicians), financial support for students, and funds for faculty research and professional activities (e.g., conferences, visiting lectures).

d. PSU leaders' commitment to this program in the long term.

e. PSU's ability to sustain the program in the foreseeable future along with its current and future projected commitments.