

Guidelines for External Reviews of Academic Departments and Programs

This document contains information for academic departments and programs conducting external reviews, including:

1. Guidelines for external reviews
2. Communication template from the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty to reviewers
3. Sample schedule for the site visit

Guidelines

Purpose

The primary purpose of regularly scheduled external reviews is to understand, evaluate, and improve the educational quality of the College's academic departments and programs. At the department and program level, the goals of periodic external reviews are to provide regular opportunities for information gathering, reflection, and evaluation of the educational effectiveness, thoroughness, and currency of the College's educational programs.

Selection of External Reviewers and Dates

After notification of an upcoming review, the department or program will submit a set of potential dates for the review. Ideally, the notification and submission of dates should take place during the academic year prior to the review. The proposed dates should encompass either a Sunday through Wednesday or a Wednesday through Saturday time frame. In addition, the department or program should submit an initial list of names and contact information for potential reviewers to the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty for consideration. Experience has shown that about seven names from people at small, liberal arts colleges, and about five names from people at larger research institutions are sufficient to field a full and diverse review team. The Provost and Dean of the Faculty, or his or her designee, will select and invite three reviewers using the list as guidance, but he/she may select reviewers of his or her own choosing. One of the external reviewers will be invited to serve as the chair of the external review committee. A concerted effort will be made to select a committee with gender balance.

Two of the three external reviewers will be selected from liberal arts institutions similar to Whitman, and one will be selected from a research university to which Whitman students are likely to aspire for graduate study. In their submission of a list of potential reviewers to the Provost's Office, departments and programs may find it helpful to include specialty areas of potential reviewers, as well as a list of any substantive areas that would be important to include among the areas represented by the reviewers.

External reviewers will be contacted well in advance of their visit to campus. They will be compensated for their work after receipt of the final report by the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty, and reviewers will be reimbursed for travel, lodging, and food expenses.

Role of the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty

The Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty will invite and make the initial contacts with the external reviewers. The Office will also coordinate logistical arrangements for the external review, including travel, accommodations and meals for the reviewers, and the detailed site visit itinerary.

The Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty will add a narrative about Whitman College to the department or program self-study. The Office will assist in the collection of department or program course syllabi, curriculum vitae, and budget information. The completed self-study will be posted on a CLEo site to which department/program members and the reviewers will have access.

After the reviewers have committed, subsequent correspondence will include the charge to the reviewers (including instructions for their report), contact information for the other reviewers on the team, logistical instructions, requests for accessibility or dietary needs, paperwork for the reviewers' stipend, travel and lodging arrangement information, the self-study and other review materials, and the site visit itinerary.

Department/Program Review Chair

When a department or program is selected to undergo an external review, its members will select a tenured (when possible) member of the department or program faculty to serve as the department/program review chair. The review chair is most often the Department Chair or Program Director.

The department/program review chair will be responsible for overseeing and coordinating the review process. The review chair will supervise the preparation of materials for the review process, and his or her responsibilities will include:

Ensuring that all materials for the departmental self-study are properly assembled and submitted by the due dates specified by the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty.

Ensuring that all department members are involved in the conceptualization and preparation of the department self-study.

Consulting with the Office of Institutional Research to arrange for the administration of an alumni survey.

Hosting the external reviewers' site visit, including securing a working room for the external review team in the academic building where the bulk of the participating faculty and staff are located, picking up reviewers at the airport and arranging for transportation between the hotel and campus.

Ensuring that the departmental response to the review report is submitted to the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty on time (see below).

Providing the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty with a list of 10-12 students in the program being reviewed. The Office of PDOF will invite a group of 4-6 of these students to have lunch with the reviewers.

Timeline

The following approximate timeline may help chairs and directors plan for how the external review fits into other work during the year:

Academic Year before visit: Departments and programs undergoing review in the next academic year are notified by the Office of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty

Six months before visit: Dates are chosen, names/contact information of potential reviewers are submitted to the Provost's Office

Four months before visit: Alumni survey questions are drafted in consultation with the Office of Institutional Research

Three - Five months before visit: Reviewers are confirmed and travel logistics are handled by the Provost's Office

Two months before visit: Department completes and submits self-study, including response to alumni survey results, to the Provost's Office

Six weeks before visit: Provost's Office formats and posts materials, gives relevant parties access. Review chair identifies eight or so students who could have lunch with reviewers and submits their names to the Provost's Office. Provost's Office contacts students and arranges for four or five to participate in the lunch with the reviewers.

Two weeks before visit: Review chair makes appropriate campus room reservations and notifies Provost's Office; Provost's Office arranges detailed itinerary and sends to reviewers and all others involved

Site Visit: Review chair or designee arranges reviewers' transportation between hotel and campus, and works with the Provost's Office to ensure all arrangements are satisfactory and accessible

One month after site visit: Reviewers' report is due to the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty

Two months after report receipt: Review chair submits department/program response (2-5 pages)

Department Self-Study and Supporting Materials

Each program undergoing external review completes a self-study that provides the reviewers with information about the program. The primary focus of the self-study should be less about *description* and more about *analysis, appraisal, and assessment*. The review chair is responsible for coordinating the departmental self-study and for gathering the supporting materials (with assistance from the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty). These completed and compiled items should be submitted to the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty approximately two months before the site visit. The Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty will add general information about Whitman College to the self-study and will post all review materials on a CLEo site and provide access to the external reviewers. The self-study should include the following sections, which can be arranged in any order:

Goals

What are the learning goals of the department or program (e.g., "Students will be able to demonstrate proficiency in scientific written communication")? These can be copied and pasted from the college, department, or program website or from college catalog copy. Whenever possible, state goals in terms of student learning outcomes, that is, what students will be able to do as a result of their participation in the department or program. How do the goals align with the mission of Whitman College? Are the goals appropriate for the state of the discipline, and are they being achieved? Are there other goals of the program that are not direct student learning outcomes (e.g., "Faculty members aim to increase external grant applications")?

Assessment and Planning

What evidence does the department or program have that it is meeting its learning (and other) outcomes? If applicable, what indicators or benchmarks are used to assess whether goals are being met? Where in the curriculum are the goals incorporated? What improvements, if any, would the department or program like to see in terms of meeting its goals?

How well prepared are majors for graduate study? What do alumni report about their success or difficulty in their graduate studies? What are some common career paths taken by recent graduates? The responses to these questions may be included here or in the alumni survey section of the self-study.

How do the department's or program's assessment activities inform subsequent curricular and budgetary considerations? What changes have been made to the department or program over the past several years based on these assessments? What evidence is there that these changes have improved the educational program? These items may be based on recent periodic assessment reports.

Governance

Describe how the department or program is governed. How are administrative, advising, and other responsibilities allocated among individual faculty members? How are department or program decisions made? How often do the department or program faculty members meet, and what is the purpose and tenor of these meetings?

Curriculum

Describe the requirements and organization of the department or program major and minor requirements. This can be pasted from the most recent College catalog. What is the rationale for this organization?

List the ways in which students are evaluated throughout their major or minor course of study.

Describe the format, timeline, and procedures relating to the senior assessment in the major. How does the senior assessment help students integrate the information, concepts, and skills they have learned? How does it allow students to demonstrate the depth and breadth of their knowledge of the field? Are any courses in the curriculum team-taught and/or cross-listed with other departments or programs? Assess those relationships.

Staffing

Describe the staffing of courses in the department or program. To what extent are the teaching faculty (including any non-tenure track faculty) free to teach the courses they wish? Are they able to teach them in the ways they wish? How are course schedules determined within the department or program? Discuss the department's/program's contribution to General Studies, including Encounters. How is participation determined or allocated among the department/program faculty?

What substantive areas are covered among the teaching and research expertise of the faculty? Include a rationale for the inclusion of these substantive areas as a means for providing appropriate courses for students.

To what extent does the department or program make use of non-tenure track faculty? What is the primary role of these faculty members in the department or program? How are untenured faculty, in particular, mentored with respect to their teaching, scholarship/art /performance, and service? Are adjunct and/or visiting faculty generally satisfied with this role?

Teaching

In what ways does the department or program promote excellence in teaching? Describe what the department or program does to promote the development of its faculty members' teaching effectiveness.

Professional Activity

Describe faculty scholarly/artistic interests and aims. How does the faculty's professional activity advance the department or program's learning goals?

What are the department or program's expectations for faculty research/artistic creation/performance in terms of quality and quantity? How are these expectations communicated to department or program faculty? Here you may paste or include a link to the department's or program's Guidelines for Professional Activity.

Students

What opportunities exist for faculty/student collaboration in research, scholarship, and/or performance? What are the expected and desired outcomes for students and faculty from such collaboration? Does the department or program encourage activities such as internships, off-campus study, or community-based learning? If so, how are these integrated into the curriculum?

Do the students in the major or minor programs in the department or program reflect the diversity of the College as a whole? Are there ways to attract and retain a more diverse student population in the department or program?

Support

Are there adequate support staff and physical facilities (e.g., technology, library resources, laboratory equipment) for the department or program to realize its teaching goals?

How have new technologies affected the curriculum or the ways in which courses are taught? Are there new technologies or other innovations that the department or program would like to incorporate into existing or future courses?

Connections on Campus

Compile a list of other departments in which the department majors must take courses, or departments for which the department provides prerequisites, and a description of the interrelationships.

Discuss the department's/program's contributions to interdisciplinary studies and/or global studies and/or Individually Planned Majors (IPM's).

Enrollment

Include enrollment information for all courses taught in the past four years including details about the teaching loads for each member of the department/program, with courses listed for each department member for the past four years. Include number of graduating seniors in the major for the last four years. The Registrar's Office and the Office of Institutional Research can be valuable resources here.

Questions for the Reviewers

The department or program may, if they wish, include questions or specific issues they would like the reviewers to address.

Alumni Survey

Include a summary statement describing and commenting on the results of the department's or program's alumni survey, including the types or topics of questions asked of alums. Departments may wish to include the raw data, but identifying or contact information for respondents should be removed. The Office of Institutional Research can be of immense help in constructing and administering the survey.

Curriculum Vitae

Include curriculum vitae of each member of the department or program, including all temporary or part-time faculty members, as well as staff, if relevant.

Course Syllabi

Include course syllabi for all courses taught within the past four years. If a course is repeated multiple times with little change by the same faculty member, include only the most recent version of the syllabus.

Department/Program Budget

Include department/program budgets for the past four years, including any endowments or other relevant funds. These can be requested from the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty.

Format for Submission of the Self-Study to the Provost and Dean of the Faculty Office

Because the self-study is compiled by the Office of Provost and Dean of Faculty after electronic submission by the review chair, whenever possible, documents should be submitted as Word files without page numbers. Exceptions to this can include the last four items listed above: a copy of survey results, CVs, syllabi, and scanned images of budgets, which are usually pdf files, and which can be sent as separate files.

External Review Visit

The site visit will provide the external reviewers the opportunity to meet with all department faculty, individually and as a group; tour facilities; meet with the Provost and Dean of the Faculty, the Division Chair, any non-departmental faculty the program deems relevant, and students. Time will be built into the schedule for other interviews the reviewers may request and for their own discussion and writing. When creating a site visit schedule, it is important to allow breaks for the reviewers in between back-to-back meetings. It is also important to give colleagues enough notice to confirm their availability for meeting with the reviewers.

Because the purpose of the review is to evaluate and comment upon curricular and programmatic elements, external reviewers will not visit individual classes.

External Reviewers' Report

Within four weeks of the campus visit, the chair of the external review team will submit a written evaluative report to the Office of Provost and Dean of Faculty. The report should clearly and forthrightly comment on the quality of undergraduate education and provide an evaluative perspective of the program. The report should focus on the program as a whole and refrain from making judgments about individual faculty members.

The report should address, but not be limited to, the following items:

The range, depth, balance, and currency of the department's/program's curricular offerings compared to departments in similar colleges and to the current state of the discipline.

The adequacy of instructional resources for teaching and research in the department/program.

The interdependency of the department or program with other departments in which majors must take courses, or departments for which the department or program provides prerequisites.

Ways in which the department can continue to serve the college as a whole, including interdisciplinary studies and General Studies.

Changes the department/program could make in order to improve the quality of its program on a short (1-2 year) time-line.

Changes that the department/program could make in order to improve the quality of its program on a long (8 year) time-line.

Effectiveness and appropriateness of the department/program learning outcomes and goals, the assessment thereof, and planning for future activities.

Responses to the specific questions posed by the department/program being reviewed.

The report should reflect the collective judgment of the external reviewers. However, if a consensus opinion is not possible, the report should present the individual members' judgments with justifications.

Post Review Procedure:

Following the external review, several steps will be followed to ensure that information from the review is used effectively by both the department or program and the College:

1. After the external reviewers' report is received by the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty, honoraria are sent to the reviewers.
2. The Provost and Dean of the Faculty, along with the Committee of Division Chairs, reviews the reviewers' report, and the Office of the Provost and Dean of the Faculty sends it to the department/program for consideration and response.
3. The department/program will have eight weeks to send to the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty a 2-5 page written response to the external reviewers' report that provides the department's or program's reaction to the report and describes short-term and long-term goals and a time-line for the changes it plans to implement. This response will be shared with the Committee of Division Chairs.

4. The Provost and Dean of the Faculty and/or his/her designee will schedule a meeting with the department/program to discuss the review and its ramifications for the department/program moving forward.

Templates of External Communications Sent by Provost's Office

Letter to potential External Review Chair:

Dear Professor [last name],

On behalf of Whitman College, and Provost and Dean of the Faculty Alzada Tipton, I am writing to invite you to serve as chairperson of a three-person evaluation team, which will conduct an external review of Whitman College's xxx program, on [dates]. The College has embarked on a plan for external reviews of all its academic and administrative departments, and we welcome your contribution to that ongoing process.

I would appreciate it if you would respond to this invitation as soon as convenient (preferably before [date]) to indicate whether you will participate in the review. If you accept the invitation, Ruth Ladderud, Administrative Assistant in the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty, will help make your travel arrangements to and from Walla Walla. You may contact Ruth at ladderra@whitman.edu or 509-527-5789.

Team members will arrive in Walla Walla on Wednesday, [date]; they will spend Thursday and Friday ([dates]) on campus in individual and group interviews; they will have dinner with members of the xxx department; they will have an introductory meeting and final debriefing with Provost and Dean of the Faculty, Alzada Tipton, and me; they will have time to work privately as a team; and finally, they will depart Walla Walla on Saturday, [date]. Specifics of the visit beyond this, including the itinerary to meet with department members and other interested parties, will be finalized in the weeks leading up to the visit.

Additionally, about one month before the visit, the College will send you materials from the xxx program, including a self-study, the results of an alumni survey, curricular information, and guiding questions for the review. Other materials will be available upon request.

As chair of the review team, you would be responsible for submission of the evaluation team's report within a month after the visit. The College will reimburse you for all visit-related expenses and will pay you a stipend of \$2,000 after receipt of the report.

Thank you for your assistance in helping Whitman College maintain the excellence of its academic programs and initiatives. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ruth Ladderud or me. If you decide to accept our invitation, I would be happy to provide a copy of this letter on Whitman College letterhead for your records.

Sincerely,

Representative of the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty (e.g. Assoc. Dean for Acad. Affairs – ADAA)

Letter to potential External Review Team Members:

Dear Professor [last name],

On behalf of Whitman College, and Provost and Dean of the Faculty Alzada Tipton, I am writing to invite you to serve on a three-person evaluation team to conduct an external review of Whitman College's xxx program, on [dates]. The College has embarked on a plan for external reviews of all its academic and administrative departments, and we welcome your contribution to that ongoing process.

I would appreciate it if you would respond to this invitation as soon as convenient (preferably before [date]) to indicate whether you will participate in the review. If you accept the invitation, Ruth Ladderud, Administrative Assistant in the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty, will help make your travel arrangements to and from Walla Walla. You may contact Ruth at ladderra@whitman.edu or 509-527-5789.

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Additionally, about one month before the campus visit, the College will send you materials from the xxx program, including a self-study, the results of an alumni survey, budget information, curricular information, and guiding questions for the review. Other materials will be available upon request.

The College will reimburse you for all visit-related expenses and will pay you a stipend of \$1,500 after receipt of the evaluation team's report.

Thank you for your assistance in helping Whitman College maintain the excellence of its academic programs. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Ruth Ladderud or me. If you decide to accept our invitation, I would be happy to provide a copy of this invitation on letterhead for your records.

Sincerely,

Representative of the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty (e.g. ADAA)

Letter sent to Review Team Members after acceptance (with Department Chair/Program Director cc'd):

Dear Professors [X, Y, and Z],

On behalf of the Office of Provost and Dean of the Faculty and the [XXX] department (Jane Smith, chair), I want to thank you again for your willingness to participate in the upcoming [XXX] external review, scheduled for [dates]. I hope that your travel arrangements are in place. If not, or if there are any questions or concerns about travel, please notify our administrative assistant in the Provost's office, Ruth Ladderud (ladderrl@whitman.edu, [509-527-5789](tel:509-527-5789)).

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to each other:

[Name], Chair of review team (institution)

[Name] (institution)

[Name] (institution)

If you wouldn't mind, would each of you either send an electronic copy or link to your current CV to 'reply all?' That way, you can all have a general feel for the others' areas of expertise and perspectives. In addition, that will allow me and our Provost and Dean of the Faculty, Alzada Tipton, to know you a bit better before your arrival on campus. Thank you in advance for this.

In [time frame – about 4-5 weeks prior to visit dates], you will be given access to a set of documents that will guide you in the review process. It will include the [XXX] department selfstudy, alumni survey results about the program, curricular information, and other materials. Closer to the actual visit, you will be sent a detailed itinerary. For now, let us know if you have any special dietary, travel, mobility or other needs. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. Also, feel free to communicate electronically with each other as you wish.

We participate in external reviews in order to seek ways to maintain and improve our high quality programs. Thank you for your help in this process, and I look forward to meeting and working with you.

Best wishes,

Representative from PDOF office (e.g. ADAA)

Template for Letter from Administrative Assistant in the PDOF Office to Individual Reviewers after acceptance (with Department/Program Chair and ADAA cc'd):

Dear Professor [last name],

By way of introduction, I'm [name] and I'll be your Whitman contact for logistics related to your upcoming visit to Whitman College. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any needs, requests or questions.

Travel:

As you are probably aware, Walla Walla is a beautiful, friendly town and Whitman is a jewel in our small city that has a convenient local airport (ALW) with direct flight service to Sea-Tac. You may book your own travel or book through our travel agent. If you book your own, please forward a copy of your itinerary to me so I can coordinate the short ground transportation between the airport and the hotel/Whitman, as well as take care of reimbursements. Our travel agent is [name – currently Teri Owens] of Travel Leaders and is best reached via email at [e-mail address – currently teri@travelleaders247.com]. She will direct bill Whitman and let me know your schedule. I have copied her on this email so she will be better prepared to assist you if you wish. If driving makes more sense than flying, let me know so I can plan to either reimburse your mileage or rental car expenses.

You should plan to arrive [day and date], for dinner and depart the morning of [day and date].

Lodging:

You have reservations for the three nights at the Marcus Whitman Hotel. They will direct bill us for your rooms. <http://marcuswhitmanhotel.com/>

In addition to keeping me advised of your travel plans, please let me know if you have any dietary or other requests.

Other questions about the Review can be directed to [name], Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (509-xxx-xxxx or xxxxxx@whitman.edu) or [name, XXXX Chair, (509-xxx-xxxx or xxxxxxxx@whitman.edu).

Best,
[name]

Sample Schedule for External Reviewers' Visit to Campus (although highly dependent on the department and individuals involved)

Wednesday

Afternoon Arrival of external review team

Early

Evening Dinner for external reviewers to get acquainted

Thursday

9:00 a.m. Meeting with Provost and Dean of the Faculty to receive charge and discuss institutional context.

10:00-11:00 Meeting with Review Chair

11:00-11:45 Meeting with Division Chair, perhaps with tour of Division/Department facilities.

11:45-1:00 Lunch with students.

Afternoon Tour of campus and/or meetings with faculty and staff members.

Evening Dinner with faculty members of program being reviewed

Friday

8:00 a.m. Reviewers have breakfast as a group.

9:30-12:00 Follow-up meetings with faculty members, staff, or administrators as necessary.

12:00 Lunch with faculty or just Committee

1:00-3:00 Additional meetings or work time (allow plenty of breaks)

3:00-4:00 Debriefing session with Provost and Dean of the Faculty

Evening Committee meets to work on report

Saturday

Morning Reviewers depart (Written report due within one month.)