



# COUNCIL ON UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH PROGRAM REVIEW GENERAL INFORMATION

## 1. Purpose of the Review

Reviews proceed most smoothly if all individuals involved (faculty members, department chair, dean, other administrators, and the visiting reviewers) understand the reason(s) for the review.

- a. At whose instigation is the review occurring?
- b. What information will be supplied to the reviewers?
- c. To whom will the written report of the review be addressed and delivered?
- d. Are there specific aspects of the program that should be reviewed?

Faculty members should understand that a review is part of regular faculty and departmental development, not a punitive exercise. Departments almost always benefit from such a review. Although outside evaluators usually do not reveal any problems about which the host institution is not already aware, the value of the review is often that new or different solutions to these problems are proposed.

## 2. Structure of the Review

Whereas the great majority of reviews include a site visit (the duration of which varies -primarily with size of department and institution), it is possible, but not recommended, for a paper review to be arranged. The latter involves the reviewer(s) receiving a lot of material which is then evaluated from afar. The former type of review is usually much more valuable to the host institution and more rewarding for all faculty members (both those at the host institution and those on the review team). Furthermore, the review team can see the facilities, equipment, and visit with students during such a site visit.

## 3. Size and Composition of the Review Team

We strongly recommend that at least two individuals serve as reviewers for any department, primarily to avoid the bias any single individual brings to bear on the review. We encourage some (usually larger) departments to think about three reviewers - one each in different areas of the discipline, so that the site visit (if one occurs) is not too extended and so that a combination of viewpoints can be blended in the review. The choice of number of reviewers and composition of the team, however, is up to the host institution. The standard operating procedure is for the Divisional Liaison to send several CV's of persons who match the host institution's criteria for reviewers - some institutions specify gender balance, geographic balance, type of institution, sub-disciplinary balance, and/or inclusion of reviewers with administrative experience.

The site visit usually encompasses about two full days on site, with some time reserved at the end for the review team to meet with one another so as to prepare an oral report of "preliminary findings/recommendations" to deliver to the hosts at the end of the visit. A written report is then prepared, usually finished in another 4-6 weeks.

## 4. Preparation

We usually ask the host department to gather materials and data about their department. Some departments or institutions mandate the set of data and materials to be included in the departmental self-study. For those which do not, we supply a suggested list of items (enclosed sheet entitled "Checklist"). Obtaining these materials may take some time (depending upon departmental organization), we recommend that reviewers receive these 3-4 weeks in advance of the site visit.



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### 5. Arranging for the Review

The usual sequence of events is as follows, but reviewers are often able to adapt the process to fit the specific needs of your department:

- a. The Program Review Committee proposes agendas/programs for various types of reviews. It devises report formats. It maintains a high-quality "stable" of reviewers. It reviews assessment surveys of both the reviewers and the institutional representative at the site of the review, for quality control and program improvement. A member of the Committee may also review individual review reports as appropriate for purposes of program improvement. The Committee ensures high quality of reviews through training of reviewers (sessions at CUR meetings as well as on-the-job training with senior reviewers). Finally, the Committee helps publicize the program by word-of-mouth outreach and distribution of print materials.
- b. An individual at the host institution interested in a Departmental or Divisional Review contacts the Program Review Committee chair through an online website, who then contacts an appropriate volunteer (usually a member of the Program Review Committee) for help/advice in contacting potential reviewers.
- c. Different liaisons then take different approaches to arranging the review. Most will call or email the contact person at the host institution to gather some details about the review. Some liaisons may send several CVs to the contact person at the host school, from which the host school chooses the reviewers. Liaisons tend to have on file CVs of individuals from different types of institutions (public vs. private vs. church-related; large vs. small enrollments; individual science departments vs. an integrated science division), with different rank and amount of administrative experience), from different geographic regions, different sub-disciplines, and with differing amounts of experience doing these types of reviews. Alternatively, the Liaison may send out a "Call for Reviewers" in the CUR Community in which the name and location of the institution desiring our services are specifically mentioned, and in which reviewers who are interested are asked to respond to the Liaison (usually this is accompanied by some range of dates so that the potential reviewers can partially assess their availability).
- d. After the host school has agreed to the reviewers and the general scope of the review is established between the reviewer and the host school, it is up to the "contact person" at the host school (a Dean, VPAA, department chair, or a designated faculty member) to set up the visit with the reviewers. At that time reviewers should be informed of any specific questions to be addressed, if the review is to be other than a general program review. The date(s) for the review should be confirmed. Each reviewer should be told the identity of the other(s) so that they can discuss who will be acting as lead reviewer and how to coordinate their visit.
- e. Once a date has been set, most correspondence occurs directly between the host school and the review team.