

Program Review: External Reviewer

In order to provide an independent, discipline-based perspective on the present quality and future potential of the academic program or group of similar programs being reviewed, an external reviewer will be identified.

Responsibilities of the External Reviewer

The external reviewer will receive a copy of the self study at least two weeks prior to a campus visit. It will be most useful if that self study includes a draft SWOT section, to focus the reviewer's attention on those aspects of the program. The external reviewer should also be given general background information on the institution (e.g., key websites), the link to the Guidelines for Program Review, which includes the program review criteria, and other material relevant to the review that is not included in the self study and supporting documentation.

The reviewer will conduct an in-depth review of the self study and then will visit campus in order to conduct interviews with the program faculty, students, dean and other stakeholders, and to review evidence of student learning as well as other evidence with respect to program quality. The reviewer will then prepare a final report that summarizes his or her observations relative to program quality and future potential, as well as other specific reactions to the self study or findings from the campus interviews. The report should also include a rating with the scale below and be submitted to the responsible dean who will immediately provide a copy to the department chair or program director for interdisciplinary programs.

1=Exceptional Quality	Program quality is truly exceptional, constituting one of the top programs among comparator programs
2=High Quality	Program is of high quality and needs few if any improvements
3=Needs Improvement	Program is a solid program, but needs significant improvement in one or more areas
4=Low Quality Program	Program is of marginal or low quality

Procedure for Selecting Reviewer

An external reviewer will be selected by the dean from a list of three or more individuals provided by the department chair or interdisciplinary program director. Typically, there will be just one reviewer. In some instances, given the complexity of the department (e.g., multiple programs with important distinctions), challenges facing the program(s) (e.g., seeking major reorientation), or other unusual instances, more than one external reviewer may be used. Potential reviewers should be recognized leaders in their disciplines, with recent experience in higher education institutions, preferably from CMU's benchmarking institutions--or if more appropriate--strong programs at other institutions.¹ Typically, individuals with CMU degrees, a real or potential conflict of interest, or who have close professional or personal relationships with CMU personnel or students would not be appropriate external reviewers.

A list of potential reviewers and a brief rationale for nomination and a statement regarding any potential conflicts of interest or CMU connections for each of the candidates should be forwarded by the department chair to the dean no later than October 30 in the academic year during which the program review is being conducted. Along with the list should be biographical information about the proposed reviewer, including documentation of each of the potential reviewers' national reputation and scholarly accomplishments. A recent curriculum vitae would typically be sufficient documentation of reputation and scholarship.

A plan for the substance and timing of the visit should be developed jointly by the program faculty and the responsible dean. Except in unusual circumstances, the visits should occur between November 1 and March 30 in the year of the review. Since the dean is the one with contracting authority, the dean's office should be the one to make the final arrangements with the selected reviewer outlining the agreement surrounding dates, times, activities, dates for report submission, other expectations, and documentation of expenses and payments.

¹ See Office of Institutional Research for list of CMU's benchmarking institutions.

Expenses Surrounding External Review

The provost will cover the reasonable expenses and honoraria of external reviewers. The dean will be responsible for negotiating a reasonable rate. Typically, there will be just one reviewer. In some instances, given the complexity of the department (e.g., multiple programs with important distinctions), challenges facing the program(s) (e.g., seeking major reorientation), or other unusual instances, more than one external reviewer may be used. When it is anticipated that more than one external reviewer is needed, a special request for such should come from the department chair or program director, be endorsed by the dean, and sent to the provost by October 15 in the academic year in which the review is being conducted. For further information please contact the Vice Provost.