Academic Program Review Guidelines
rev. April 2016

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I. Academic Program Review Goals and Benefits

Academic Program Review (APR) at Albright College is a joint faculty-administrative process implemented by the Educational Policy Council and Academic Affairs. The goal of this assessment process is ongoing improvement of departments and programs in the context of (1) the college’s mission and strategic plan, (2) accepted disciplinary standards within the academy, and (3) the college’s resources. While review of academic programs takes place informally through the normal course of reflective college life, institutions of higher education have long recognized that maintaining desired levels of excellence requires that a more structured and systematic analysis be undertaken periodically. The review process at Albright follows a common model that includes three main parts: departmental self-review of the past five years, culminating in a self-study report; external review from peers outside the institution; and development of a departmental action plan based on its vision of the next five years. For drafting its self-study and action plan, departments are assigned internal readers as an initial audience representing faculty and administration. (See Appendix 1 for a more detailed process overview, including more detail on the external review.) The College recognizes the importance of flexibility in the scheduling of reviews, given the small size of many departments and the impact of sabbaticals and vacancies on the ability to undertake a full and useful review.

Program reviews benefit the College as a whole, particularly when performed with collegiality, commitment, and an open mind. Departments have reflective, productive internal discussions and engage peers inside and outside the college. Administrators and other faculty learn the program’s activities, strengths, weaknesses, and needs, some of which may not be readily apparent. Future goals and needs can be articulated in light of relevant data and discussions of mission, and the department gains a recognized forum for influencing budget and other decisions that can facilitate its goals. Most importantly, students benefit when programs and services are improved and better prepare them for current professions and graduate programs. For all these reasons, departments undertake an academic program review as part of the ongoing cycle of assessment at the College.

This document includes Guidelines for undertaking the self-study report and the action plan. Please see the document “Appendices for the APR Guidelines” for fuller information about the details and logistics of the review process as a whole.
II. Self-Study Guidelines

Please use these Guidelines as a template for your self-study report and respond fully to the topics specified, consulting with the EPC chair or dean as questions arise. There are eight main topics: Introduction, Mission/Vision, Educational Core, Student Learning and Outcomes, Faculty, Program Demand, Supporting Resources, and Finances. While these topics offer readers minimum and sufficient information, departments may decide that additional issues or information should be addressed in order to represent programs fully. At any given point, readers want to know how your programs support and advance both a liberal education and the expectations of the discipline(s) in which they participate, as well as what obstacles they face.

There are several activities and sources of information that contribute required information for the self-study:

1. Information from alumni and other stakeholders (with assistance from the Alumni Office and Institutional Research)
2. Data on teaching loads, enrollment, and finances (provided by Academic Affairs)
3. Consultation on library support (contact the Library Director)
4. Consultation on IT support (contact the Chief Technology Officer)
5. Consultation on assessment activities (contact the chair of the Assessment Committee)

Departments must plan ahead in order to have this information available for use when drafting the report. See Appendix 1, Process Overview, for more detail.

To write a successful self-study report, please keep in mind that you are addressing multiple audiences, and many readers will not be in your discipline; give full explanations and produce as professional and readable a document as you can. Because your task is not just to present facts but to analyze and interpret information, relegate substantial tables, charts, etc. to appendices. In any drafts and the final version, please indicate a revision date and include page numbers. Sample self-studies are available on the Academic Affairs website through the Faculty Resources links.

Please be sure to take advantage of the internal readers appointed to participate in your review. This team represents your peers and prepares a brief written response to any draft it receives for consideration by the department. At least one draft must be offered to the internal readers before a document is finalized.

Self-Study Reporting Topics

1. Introduction to the Document
What is this document and who are your department and its programs?
   a) briefly define the nature of the document and the timeframe it addresses
   b) briefly describe the department under review and name all major and minor degree programs
   c) discuss its primary collaborations with other departments and programs, including ADP if relevant
   d) summarize the noteworthy results of the previous program review and what progress has been made since then.
2. **Mission and Vision**
Please discuss the department’s mission and identity, making explicit reference to the College’s mission and strategic planning goals. (An important preparatory step may be internal discussion by the department of its mission and goals.) What changes, if any, would the department like to see in its mission, identity, or programs roughly five to ten years in the future, given your knowledge of the discipline and of its student and professional audiences (including graduate education)?

3. **Educational Core**
   a) How do the breadth, depth, and currency of curricula for the department’s programs appropriately represent the discipline in the Albright context? If there is an ADP program, discuss the relationship between its curriculum and that of the day program.
   b) What capstone or other culminating academic experience integrates the student’s experience in each program?
   c) To what degree is interdisciplinary study available or required as part of curricula?
   d) How do the curricula compare to similar programs at peer schools – give specific examples using College-designated peers on the course-unit system and additional peers if desired. Why should an incoming student consider our programs a desirable choice, and what changes if any should be considered to make them more so? (Consult with Institutional Research for peer lists.)
   e) To what degree does the department contribute to the general studies program of the College, and is that responsibility equitably distributed within the department?
   f) To what degree does the department foster independent student scholarship such as honors work, independent studies, and undergraduate research
   g) To what degree does the department foster experiential learning opportunities such as internships, service learning, community engagement, or study abroad?

All syllabi from the past two years shall be reviewed by the Curriculum Committee (only one year for courses taught both years). This is intended to ensure minimal standard expectations for College syllabi and reasonable consistency across multiple sections of a course. The department must request this review from the Committee, which will access syllabi from the shared drive and share its review findings with the department for its consideration, with a copy to EPC. As part of this process, departments are encouraged also to ensure that the current Catalog accurately reflects current program requirements and course content and, where necessary, should initiate changes through the standard Curriculum Committee process.

4. **Faculty**
Please discuss the department faculty’s qualifications and activities in terms of the following, including ADP faculty where relevant:
   a) levels and diversity of rank, including departmental reliance on part-time faculty
   b) credentials and currency of knowledge, including scholarship and professional activity
   c) approaches to teaching and contribution to innovative, collaborative, or experiential teaching (e.g., IDS, service learning, internships, study abroad courses, etc.)
   d) the quality and equitable distribution of advising, including alpha advising if relevant
   e) contributions to the quality functioning of the departmental unit (e.g., curriculum planning and scheduling, admission events and other service)
f) contributions to faculty governance and College administrative functioning (e.g., committee participation)

Refer to the data dashboard provided by Academic Affairs for information on teaching and advising load. Current faculty *curriculum vitae* should be included in the report’s appendix (Academic Affairs can usually assist with this).

**5. Student Learning and Outcomes**

a) State your department’s student learning goals for its major and co-major programs, including ADP if relevant. Contextualize these goals with reference to those of peer or aspirant programs and/or standards from relevant disciplinary organization(s).

b) Discuss your students’ success in meeting these learning goals and what assessment leads you to that conclusion. Describe actions you have taken or plan to take to improve student learning. (For example, did your department make curricular changes as a constructive response to demonstrated learning needs?) Include in your discussion a summary of your consultation with the Assessment Committee (if a written report is provided to you, include it as an appendix).

c) Discuss how the College and department recruit students who have a likelihood of being successful in your programs. How does the department participate in retention programs or academic support?

d) Are students, alumni, and other stakeholders satisfied with the program? What are the post-graduate outcomes of the students with regard to employment and graduate school? Consult with Institutional Research and use the results of your survey or other outreach to constituents (for more detail see Appendix 1, Process Overview).

**6. Program Demand**

a) How many students enroll in the department’s classes and in what capacities (general education, major courses, or classes serving both aims)? Use the data dashboard provided.

b) What is your analysis of past and future enrollment trends for the department’s programs and of the reasons – internal and external – for those trends? How has the department adapted to any changes in demand? For this question you may find helpful your relevant disciplinary organizations, the Career Center, and Institutional Research, who can assist if necessary in using general federal and state information on demographics and employment trends (National Center for Education Statistics (http://nces.ed.gov/); US Occupational Outlook Handbook (http://www.bls.gov/oco); Pennsylvania Department of Labor (http://www.paworkstats.state.pa.us/).

**7. Supporting Resources**

a) Library and IT: Discuss the following aspects of support for teaching, learning, and scholarship in your department from the Library or IT as appropriate, drawing upon your consultations with both units (if a written report was provided to you, include it as an appendix):

   i. *Library collections* – acquisition activity and holdings regarding books, journals, electronic resources, or other resources particular to your disciplines, including reference materials. Distinguish between support for department curriculum and teaching needs and support for faculty research and professional development.
ii. *Instruction, including Information Literacy* – availability, use, and usefulness of library instruction for faculty and for students at different levels on bibliographic, reference, research, or information literacy methods or resources.

iii. *Instructional technology* – how has the department taken advantage of technology to enhance student learning? Are the technology, web resources, software, and support available to the program sufficient, in terms of currency, availability, and support?

b) **Facilities:** To what extent are faculty offices, teaching spaces, student working spaces, and other facilities sufficient to support a quality learning experience for your students?

**8. Finances**

a) Based on financial information in the data dashboard provided, how would you describe the relative instructional costs – personnel and operating – for the department? Does the department have sources of revenue other than the College operating budget (e.g., grants, endowments, ticket sales, consulting, etc.)? – if so please add them to the data dashboard if not already included.

b) Discuss the financial resources available to the department, how well it has operated within those limits, and any new resources you think are required to maintain and improve the program.
III. Action Plan Guidelines

The action plan is the final major step in the program review process, undertaken after the department has received the report from the external reviewers. It is based on input and reflection involving the self-study report, the outside review report, internal responses, and discussions with the provost. The plan should be created with explicit reference to the College’s mission and strategic plans. By clearly attaching needs and priorities to the College’s goals, departments give themselves the best opportunity to garner support to meet their needs.

As with the self-study, the action plan should be developed in consultation with the appointed internal readers. When finalized, it is submitted by the department to the EPC for review. The purpose of EPC review is for other faculty to consider the action plan in light of the overall academic mission of Albright College. The department should get on the EPC calendar well in advance. At least one representative of the department attends this meeting (all full-time members and the internal readers are invited). EPC will vote to recommend the plan, recommend it with reservations, or not recommend it, for reasons to be reflected in the minutes. The EPC will have access to the self-study and supporting documents and external review report if members desire to review them.

After this input from EPC and any further revisions, the provost reviews the plan to ensure it is consistent with college policies, mission, and resources. Any subsequent changes to the plan by the department must be reported back to EPC. Once approved by the provost, the provost reports on the overall program review to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees; the department chair or designee is invited to attend the meeting at which this occurs.

One year after EPC review, there is a follow-up meeting with the provost to review whether implementation of the plan, from both the departmental and administrative sides, is on track and needs to be adjusted. Progress on the plan should be discussed in each year-end departmental report.

The prescribed format of this planning document is described below.

1. Mission and Vision Statement
   In order to provide readers with a context for your plan, begin with an introduction to the document and updated mission and vision statements, revising as needed the version given in the self-study to include further reflection and input from the review process.

2. SWOT Analysis
   Based on the overall input and analysis from the review process, summarize separately and in turn your department’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

3. Plan Objectives
   Provide a concise narrative overview of the actions the department plans to implement in the next five years to strengthen departmental programs and student learning. Be mindful of identifying objectives that are realistic in terms of departmental abilities and resources and are congruent with the College’s missions and strategic plan. Clearly, objectives and timelines are not set in stone and may be revised; such revisions should be justified during annual budget and reporting processes.
### 4. Planning Table
Prepare a table that summarizes your action plan by year, with timelines and approximate costs, according to the following format (three hypothetical actions are included in the example below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20xx</td>
<td>Use ETS Major Field Test in senior seminar</td>
<td>Assess content mastery of majors to find curricular strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td>Spring 20xx</td>
<td>Annual purchase of 17 tests and benchmarked score reports @ $37 = $629/yr.</td>
<td>Scores on sub-skills identified in test will yield information to be considered in analysis of curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20xx</td>
<td>Add junior “gateway” course for majors</td>
<td>Better prepare majors for upper-level work</td>
<td>Fall 20xx</td>
<td>Either reduce 200-level electives to free up staffing (no cost) or add adjunct ($2400)</td>
<td>Performance in upper-level courses, esp. senior seminar; assessed on specific skills to be determined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20xx</td>
<td>Provide student access to Yoda database tool</td>
<td>Industry-standard tool expected by employers</td>
<td>Fall 20xx</td>
<td>Annual subscription of $2700</td>
<td>Senior seminar will require and track use of Yoda tools</td>
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