Guidelines for Academic Program Review

York College
Office of Academic Affairs
EFFECTIVE DATE: Fall 2009

Introduction and Overview

An academic program can be any approved sequence of study leading to a degree or certificate that was created with specific educational goals and outcomes in mind. Review of academic programs is necessary in order to provide information on the quality of the program.

Program review provides an opportunity to take notice of the program's strengths and to identify areas in need of improvement within the context of the college mission and strategic directions. Academic Program Review (APR) is an important component of the institutional planning and decision making process at the department and college levels. It is also an opportunity for faculty to highlight program achievements, to identify needs, and to plan for improvements. {*Programs guided by external accrediting bodies (e.g., Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Teacher Education, etc.) conduct their self-studies in relation to professional standards and in lieu of the current APR guidelines.*}
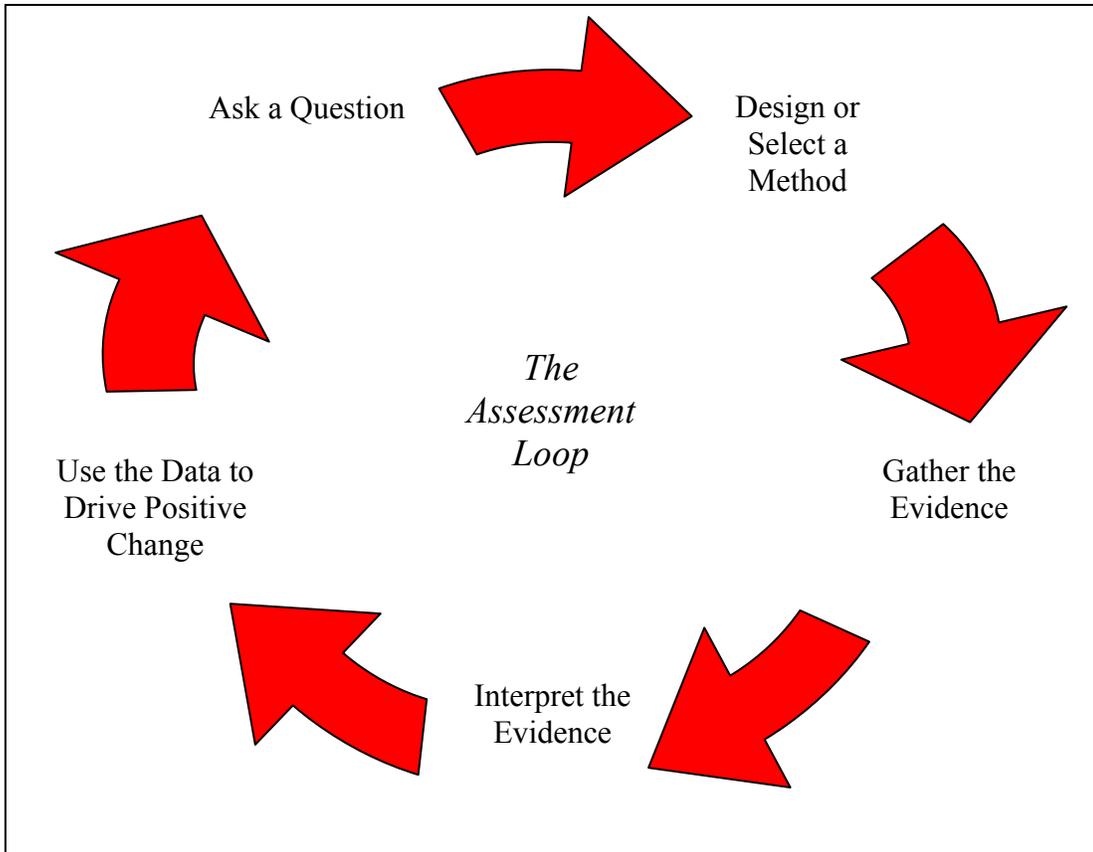
Apart from a mechanical exercise in "taking stock" of the content, internal and external requirements, needs etc. of a program, the APR ought to be regarded as an opportunity to reflect systematically on how a program's existing strengths can be built upon, how to adjust possible misalignments, and how suggestions from third parties may stimulate self-reflection. As such, we consider the review of an academic program not just a taxonomic enterprise of listing and describing a program's various elements and building blocks, but – equally important – as an opportunity for us to act as "reflective practitioners" (Donald Schön) engaging the epistemology of our practice.

Thus, apart from corrective action and improvements, the APR ought to be an opportunity to tease out and make explicit the often tacit assumptions, habits of thought and action underpinning established academic programs. In addition, reviews of academic programs offer a chance to become systematically more sensitive to how within an established framework the important phenomena of uncertainty, change, and uniqueness may be accommodated or even require flexible reactions and decisions – or, to put it differently, to foster a "growing awareness of … those dimensions of everyday practice which depend upon the spontaneous exercise of intuitive artistry" (Donald Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, New York: Basic Books 1983, 240). These evaluative dimensions may not be captured within the parameters we have established in these guidelines; nevertheless, we consider them an important spin-off from the data-collection and analysis exercises.

Curricular changes, faculty hiring, faculty development, re-allocation of resources, or new opportunities for student internships are some of the changes that might result from a program review. In order for the process to have merit, change must be implemented. As stated in the

College's Assessment Plan: implementing change based on the findings is the final step in the assessment process and is often described as the step which "closes the assessment loop."

The Assessment Loop

Ask a Question

Design or
Select a
Method

*The
Assessment
Loop*

Use the Data to
Drive Positive
Change

Gather the
Evidence

Interpret the
Evidence

The Four APR Phases

There are four phases to the APR: Initiation, Self-Study, External Review, and Action Plan. The entire process is expected to take one academic year, including summer.

Phase I: Initiating an Academic Program Review

- The APR cycle is five years. The Office of Academic Affairs maintains the department timelines for upcoming reviews.

- Department chairs are responsible for initiating the APR the Spring semester before the self-study is to be undertaken.

- The department chair should identify key faculty who will take responsibility for gathering data and writing the report. Whenever possible, full-time, tenured faculty should be given the lead roles as department representatives.

- The APR should include all disciplines in the department; thus, the faculty committee should be representative of those disciplines. The department chair should submit the names of its representatives to the appropriate Dean using the *Academic Program Review Initiation Form.*

- The department chair should meet with the Provost and respective Dean prior to initiating the review process to review the APR guidelines.

- The department chair should notify the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) of the timeline with upcoming dates for data requests.

Phase II: Self-Study

- The *Template for Academic Program Review* was created to facilitate the self-study process for chairs and faculty and to create consistency in program reviews across disciplines and departments. All APRs should follow this template.

- Faculty should consider spending two days in the summer to plan for the implementation of the self-study in the Fall semester.

- The Office of Academic Affairs and the OIRA are prepared to assist as needed.

- When complete, the self-study should be submitted to the Provost and Dean for review and comment.

- Once all parties agree to the final content, the Chair will forward the self-study to the external review panelists with copies sent to the Provost, Dean and the OIRA.

Phase III: External Review

- The department should recommend to the Provost and Dean individuals who will serve as external review panelists. Review panelists must be from peer or aspiration institutions, have scholarly standing in the discipline(s) under review as well as experience in assessment of student learning in the discipline. The Provost and/or Dean may seek

additional names for the panel. The panel will not exceed three members. The Provost will approve the final panel as well as make decisions about honorariums and travel expenses for the panelists.

- The Dean and department chair will handle scheduling, travel, and other arrangements with the panelists for a site visit. The schedule should include a tour of the facilities and meetings with faculty, staff, and students.

- The site visit will conclude with an exit meeting with the Provost and School Dean. A final report from the panel to the chair is expected within one month following the site visit outlining findings and recommendations.

- Once the final report is received, the Dean, chair and faculty should meet to discuss the complement of findings from the self-study and the external review. The meeting will form the basis of an Action Plan.

Sample Site Visit Schedule

Time	Activity	Location
8:00	Breakfast meeting with department chair	
9:00	Meeting with discipline coordinators/directors	
9:45	Meeting with Dean	
10:30	Tour of facilities and library	
12:00	Lunch break	
1:00	Meeting with students	
2:00	Meeting with faculty	
3:00	Review of course syllabi and student work	
5:00	Meeting with evening students	
5:30	Exit meeting with Provost and Dean	

Phase IV: Action Plan

- The self-study and the external review report will inform the department's action plan.

- Each department will identify areas for improvement, specific action steps for making those improvements, person(s) responsible for taking those steps, and timeline. The *action plan* is described in greater detail below.

- Progress on the action plan should be documented each year in the department's annual report such that the APR becomes a living document.

- The departmental chair and faculty should work together on the action plan. All issues that arose in the external report and the self-study should be addressed noting significant changes that will take place.

- The action plan should be submitted to the Provost and Dean within two months of receiving the panelist's report.

Academic Program Review Initiation Form

York College
Office of Academic Affairs

Department Initiating Review   _____

Department Chair   _____

Disciplines Being Reviewed   _____

_____

_____

_____

Date of Initiation   _____

Expected Date of Completion   _____

Expected Date of Site Visit   _____

Expected Date of Action Plan   _____

Faculty Committee

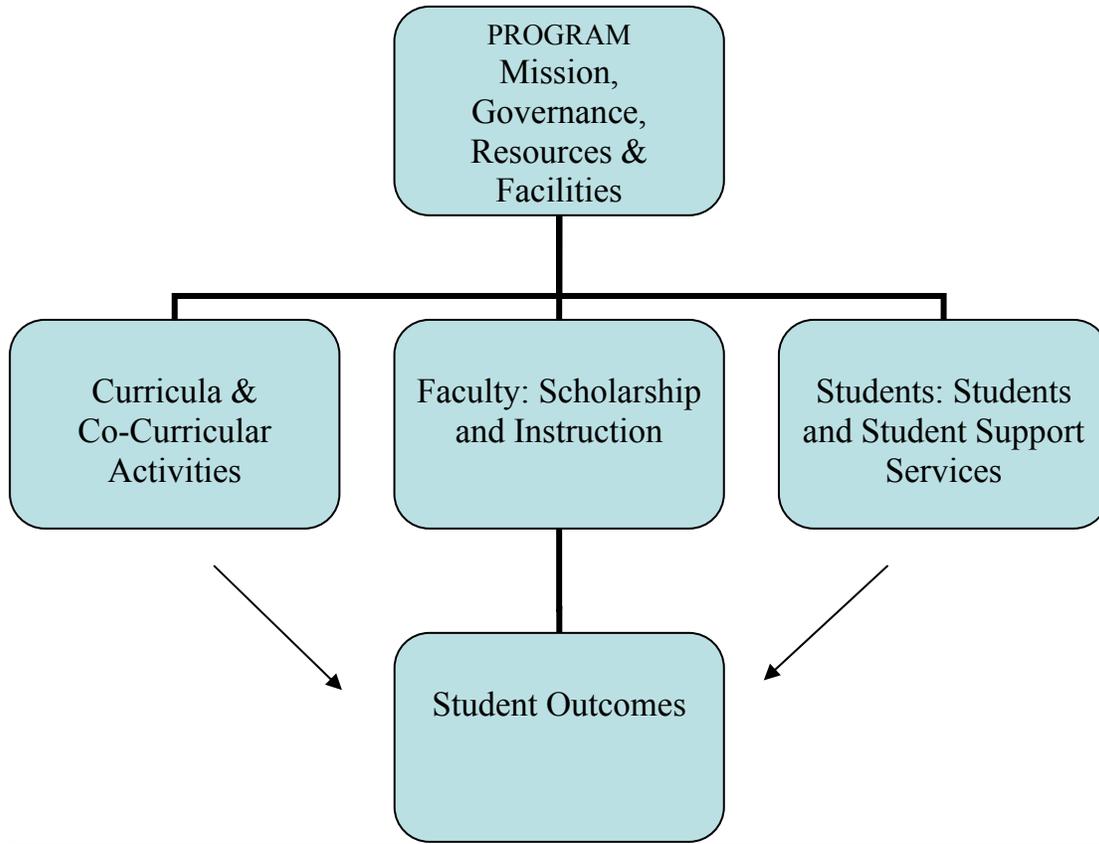| Name	Rank	Discipline

Approved by _____   _____
           Provost   Date Signed

PHASE TWO
Template for Academic Program Review

Components of Program Review

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │    PROGRAM      │
                    │    Mission,     │
                    │   Governance,   │
                    │   Resources &   │
                    │    Facilities   │
                    └─────────────────┘
          ┌──────────────────┼──────────────────┐
┌─────────────────┐ ┌─────────────────┐ ┌─────────────────┐
│   Curricula &   │ │Faculty: Scholarship│ │Students: Students│
│  Co-Curricular  │ │  and Instruction  │ │and Student Support│
│   Activities    │ │                  │ │    Services      │
└─────────────────┘ └─────────────────┘ └─────────────────┘
           \              │               /
            ┌─────────────────┐
            │ Student Outcomes │
            └─────────────────┘
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I. Narrative and Evaluation

Narrative	Evaluation	**Examples** of Supporting Evidence[1]
Program		
State the mission and goals of your department and/or its component disciplines.	Explain how this mission fits into the overall mission of the College. Detail how new faculty and students are oriented to this mission.	Materials that proclaim this mission (web pages, brochures, student handbooks, etc.)
Describe the governance structure of your department, including	Describe how and whether the governance of the department is adequate to support the ongoing	Bylaws; an organizational chart of the department, lists of committee members and their responsibilities

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[1] The examples here are guides. Feel free to add any other types of evidence that support the main objectives of the review process.

the names of chairs, deputy chairs and coordinators, their terms in office, and the composition of department committees.	development of its program(s).	
Explain how resources are utilized by the department. This description should include the use of space, including offices and labs.	Evaluate the adequacy of the resources and facilities allocated to the department for faculty, staff, and students.	Departmental budget, floor plan
Curricula & Co-Curricula Activities		
List the majors, minors, certificates and degrees awarded by your department. Note which courses are taught online.	Evaluate patterns of demand for courses within the program, including scheduling and course availability.	Enrollment data (including distribution across lower and upper division courses; day, evening and weekend sections, and online sections)
For each major, include the curriculum sequence (prerequisite structure). Document that the curriculum is achievable in 120 credits and in 4-years of FT study.	Describe how the curriculum sequence prepares students for upper-level coursework.	Four-year curriculum planners; grade distributions in lower- and upper-division courses.
Describe any special programs and/or co-curricular activities such as honors societies, internships, journals, clubs, or opportunities for study abroad.	Explain how the department creates a culture that fosters student learning and enrichment.	Lists of clubs, honors societies, awards, journals, students participating in the York College Honors Program
Describe the course offerings and any upcoming curriculum changes.	Explain how your curriculum reflects the changing demands and practices of the field. All syllabi should provide clear learning objectives and methods of assessment.	Syllabi, Chancellor's reports
Faculty: Scholarship and Instruction		
List all faculty members along with their rank, tenure status, date of employment, degree, and area of expertise.	Explain how the needs of the department are balanced and served by its existing faculty.	FT/PT/Student Ratios

Describe existing or anticipated searches.		
List all publications for each faculty member over the past five years.	Describe the department's or program's expectations with respect to scholarship and how the faculty members are meeting these expectations.	Publications, curricula vitae, faculty productivity
Describe the teaching assignments of department faculty members over the past five years.	Tell how teaching loads and assignments are administered.	Course catalogues; procedural memos
Explain how the department supports effective teaching and learning, including what opportunities for faculty development are offered. Describe any special mode(s) of instruction and/or experimental pedagogy being pioneered by your department.	Detail the evidence of effective instruction and the means of assessment and/or change in cases where instruction is less than effective.	Department summaries of evaluations of teaching effectiveness; faculty observations; grant awards; recognition of faculty accomplishments in teaching and/or service; # of faculty who attended a CETL or other professional development event
Students and Student Support Services		
Describe the demographics of the students in the program over a 3-5 year period.	Evaluate any shifts in the demographics of the student population.	Demographic trend data
Describe the types of support services offered by the department and/or how the department utilizes the support services of the college.	Where possible, evaluate the effectiveness of support services (including advisement) for academic achievement, retention and graduation.	Academic advisement and faculty office hours; retention and graduation rates before and after a new intervention; student satisfaction survey data
Describe any admissions and/or retention policies of the department and how students are informed of such policies or changes to policies.	Describe if/how student retention and graduation rates have changed with the introduction of new policies, and provide any evidence to support causality.	Handbooks or other materials where policies are stated

Student Learning		
Describe the program's system for assessing student learning or ensuring that student learning is achieved.	Evaluate course syllabi for how well the assessment practices are transparent and fair, and whether student receive "timely and ample" feedback in order to improve learning.	Course syllabi; learning outcomes matrix[2]
	Evaluate student outcomes to ensure that student learning is aligned with program and course objectives, and that assessment is rigorous enough to ensure that students are academically prepared to proceed from lower to upper level courses.	Student outcome data such as, exams, research papers, portfolios, capstone projects, samples of student work, surveys (remember only aggregate data should be provided and student names should not be included)
Describe changes in the program that have occurred as a result of assessment data.	Evaluate the effectiveness or results of changes made, if applicable, and provide any evidence to support causality.	Before/after materials, data, etc.

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[2] This is required of all academic program reviews.

Area for Improvement	Specific Action Step	Person(s) Responsible	Expected Date of Completion
Program: Mission, Governance, Resources, Facilities			
Curriculum: Majors, Minors, Online Courses, Prerequisite Structure, Syllabi, Objectives			
Faculty: Scholarship and Instruction			
Students: Students and Student Support Services			
Student Learning			

Program Review/Accreditation-Cycle based on New Guidelines

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
School of Arts & Sciences	Mathematics & Computer Studies	Foreign Languages	Earth & Physical Science	Biology	
	Chemistry	English		Performing and Fine Arts	History and Philosophy
School of Health & Behavioral Sciences		Medical Technology	Occupational Therapy	Behavioral Sciences	
	Health Education, K-12		Teacher Education (Physical Education, K-12)	Nursing	Health, Phys. Ed., & Gerontological Studies
			Physician Assistant		
				Social Work	Social Sciences
School of Business & Information Systems		Accounting and Finance	Business and Economics		Information Systems Management
OAA				Library	

Note: Departments or programs shaded in light gray are currently undergoing or have undergone an APR