ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT PROGRAM REVIEW GUIDELINES

Each general education and degree program department will be reviewed approximately every five years through a self-study and external review process. The self-study and external review are intended to assist both the department and the Academic Vice President’s Office in determining the progress of a particular department toward meeting its goals, assessing the quality of the program, its faculty and curriculum, and in assessing the program’s contribution to the advancement of the Academy’s mission.

This process will fulfill the mandates of the Board of Higher Education and the New England Association Schools and Colleges accreditation requirement. In Standard Two of NEASC’s Standards for Accreditation (effective July 1, 2016), section 2.1 reads, “Planning and evaluation are systematic, comprehensive, broad-based, integrated, and appropriate to the institution. They involve the participation of individuals and groups responsible for the achievement of institutional purposes and include external perspectives.”

TIMELINE:

1. The individual who will have ownership over the self-study process for the department will be designated by the spring term preceding a self-study. The commitment to owning a self-study is substantial; any compensation will be agreed to prior to the year of review.

2. The department will conduct the self-study in the fall semester (i.e., the semester before an external reviewer is invited to campus) in accordance with applicable standards under NEASC. The self-study will be submitted to the Academic Vice President by 31 December.

3. The Department Chair will recommend to the Academic Vice President, a minimum of two external review candidates, one of whom will visit the campus no later than thirty calendar days after the start of the following semester. The Academic Vice President may add names to the reviewer list in consultation with the department chair. The individual will be selected by the Chair with the Academic Vice President’s approval.
4. The Department Chair will arrange the external review visit and the necessary contractual documents. The Academic Vice President, with the Department Chair, will outline the itinerary for the external review visit. A minimum of a one-day visit will include individual and/or group meetings with all department faculty, meetings with students, visitation to classes, and visits to departmental resources, such as offices, classrooms, laboratories, etc.

5. A report from the external reviewer is due thirty calendar days after the site visit and will be submitted to the Academic Vice President.

6. The Academic Vice President will share the review with the Department Chair and faculty who will have a chance to respond to the report.

7. Under the direction of the Chair, the department will prepare a Review Response Report, which will be due at the start of the fall semester. Any action items as a result of the review process should be addressed in the Review Response Report. Action items should also be addressed in the department’s next year end report for inclusion in the Academy’s strategic plan.
SELF-STUDY FORMAT:

- Executive summary/introduction
- Mission statement
  - State the mission of the department and describe how it aligns with the institutional mission
- Student learning outcomes and assessments
  - State the learning outcomes for the department and the assessments (i.e., measures) that have been established to monitor student progress towards achievement of outcomes. Describe the degree to which outcomes are being achieved. Describe any improvements and/or substantial accomplishments over the past five years that have helped to bolster student achievement of outcomes.
- Description of the academic program and curriculum
  - This section of the self-study should describe the academic program and curriculum associated with the department. Include a discussion of faculty assignments, workloads, professional development, and scholarly activity. In addition to discussing the faculty, describe any other departmental resources (e.g., budget, offices, facilities, technology, equipment).
- NEASC standards
  - Address NEASC standards four (the Academic Program) and six (Teaching, Learning, and Scholarship). Discuss how the unit/department meets the standards; include/reference any supporting evidence.
- SWOT analysis
  - Describe the main strengths and weaknesses of the department as well as the related key opportunities and threats. Strengths and weaknesses reflect internal factors (e.g., human resources, physical resources, financial resources) while opportunities and threats reflect external factors (e.g., future industry trends, governmental mandates, demographic changes).
  - Identify proposed strategies to capitalize on strengths, act on identified opportunities, and address possible weaknesses or threats over the next five years.
- Concluding statement
- Appendices:
  - Department faculty and résumés
  - Department course syllabi
EXTERNAL REVIEW GUIDELINES: The department may add to this list any specific evaluation interests it chooses.

The external reviewer will be provided copies of the self-study and asked to evaluate the self-study and address the following:

1. Describe the overall excellence of this department relative to other peers at similar colleges. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the department. Determine how well the department is reaching its goals and in what ways they are consistent with the academic mission of the Academy.

2. Profile the faculty of this department. Consider academic scholarship (scholarly activity, professional development), teaching effectiveness (innovations in teaching methods or course content, consideration of students’ capabilities and learning needs, and participation in learning outcomes assessment), and academic advising responsibilities.

3. Evaluate the curriculum of this department including types of courses, variety and availability of courses and whether or not the courses meet student needs and the missions of both the department and the Academy. Are the content and sequencing of the curriculum effective? Does the curriculum achieve an appropriate balance? How does the department assess the effectiveness of its courses and/or its major requirements? If the department provides a major, are the requirements of sufficient rigor to allow students to become competitive in the field?

4. Evaluate the resources available to the department. This would include staffing, (assignments and workloads) classrooms and/or labs (both structure and equipment), library collections, and instructional technology. Available resources also include space, technology, money and personnel to meet its mission and to ensure overall excellence.