

Appendix 4
California State University, Stanislaus
Office of Academic Programs

External Reviewer for Academic Program Review
Description of Process for Hiring and Conduct of Work

Overview

In accordance with academic program review policy and procedures, external program review for non-accredited programs may occur during or after the self-study phase. The purpose for the external review is to assist faculty in improving program quality by providing a new comparative and broader perspective on the program and student learning. The external evaluators will be individuals of significant professional reputation in the field.

During Self Study Phase: For non-accredited programs, the use of an external program review as part of the self study is strongly encouraged for both baccalaureate and graduate programs. The department chair or the college dean may request that the program be subject to an external independent evaluation as part of the self-study phase of the academic program review. External reviewer(s) may be approved to review the self-study, conduct interviews, and employ other strategies to evaluate program effectiveness. The external reviewers' summary of findings and recommendations becomes part of the materials submitted to each level of review.

Following Completion of the Academic Program Review: In addition to the normal academic program review procedures, programs may be subject to an independent evaluation by at least two external evaluators. External program review occurs only in those instances where a thorough review of a program's self-study has been completed and the department, college dean, or provost indicates the efficacy of an external review. One of the evaluators normally will be from a CSU campus, while the other evaluator may be from a non-CSU institution, preferably within California. The external evaluators' report becomes part of the permanent academic program review file.

To accomplish this purpose, an external reviewer is provided a copy of the self-study and other relevant documents. The external reviewer then visits the campus for 1-2 days to meet with faculty, students, staff, community members, and administrators. The external reviewer conducts an exit interview and submits a written report within two weeks of the campus visit to the department chair and the college dean. The external evaluators' report becomes part of the permanent academic program review file.

Qualifications

External reviewers' qualifications include the following:

1. The highest degree in the relevant discipline
2. Rank of associate professor or professor
3. Distinguished record in related teaching, research and scholarly activity, and service
4. Holds faculty rank in the same or similar programs on their respective campuses
5. No conflict of interest
6. Ability to complete a site visit and submission of report within the prescribed timeline

Responsibilities

The external reviewer's primary responsibility is to provide an honest, unbiased professional judgment of program quality and student learning outcomes. The external reviewer performs the following responsibilities:

1. Reviews the draft self-study document.
2. Focuses on assessment findings, the quality of student learning, and the ability of the program to foster student learning; reviews sample student work from courses (introductory to culminating), as appropriate and with student and faculty identification removed from documents.
3. Conducts selected interviews with department chair, program faculty, staff, students, faculty members outside the department but associated with the program, the college dean, community groups, advisory groups, or other community members as appropriate to the program.
4. Employs other strategies appropriate to the discipline.
5. Conducts an exit meeting with department chair, program/departmental faculty, and college dean.
6. Writes summary of findings of strengths and areas for improvement for each of the criteria identified in the university's academic program review and other issues specific to the program as identified by the department chair and college dean. This review is to be forward-looking and yet realistic in terms of actions that can be accomplished by the department within existing resources, as well as actions that may require additional investment in the program. This document becomes part of the academic review process and is submitted to each level of review.

Nominations for External Evaluators

The college dean is responsible for the overall coordination of the external review. Nominations for evaluator(s) are solicited from the chair of the department of the program being reviewed and from other institutions, higher education associations, and professional organizations. The nominees are reviewed by the departmental faculty, who may reject any of the nominees for cause. The evaluators are selected from the remaining nominees by the college dean.

Materials Provided to the External Reviewer

The department chair coordinates the review schedule. Prior to the campus visit, the department chair provides to the external reviewer a copy of the visitation schedule, self study, and supporting documentation. Additional materials (e.g., course syllabi) should be available in the department office for review during the campus visit. It is essential that examples of student work are available for review as consistent with accreditation standards for direct assessment of student work and are completed in accordance with the university's *Principles for the Assessment of Student Learning*.

Honorarium and Expenses

The department chair works with the college dean to select the external reviewer(s). The department chair coordinates the travel arrangements with the external reviewer, in accordance with university travel policy. A consultant contract is issued to the external reviewer (normally \$250 per day), plus transportation and one-night lodging, as required. The honorarium and refunds are processed upon receipt of the written report from the external reviewer and documented accommodation and travel costs, as previously approved. Funds are provided by the college dean and supported, when possible, from the university-wide assessment account.