

PROGRAM REVIEW AT REED COLLEGE

Approved by CAPP September 22, 2014

The faculty of Reed College has a long tradition of systematic critical self-reflection. In keeping with this tradition, in 2004 the Committee on Academic Planning and Policy proposed a protocol for regular program evaluation, and in 2014 now proposes the following revised protocol. Under this protocol, every academic department is reviewed at least once in every ten-year period. Certain interdisciplinary programs – e.g., Humanities – are also reviewed decennially. Different departments are reviewed in different years, according to a pre-determined schedule. Each review consists of

- An exhaustive self-evaluation undertaken by the department or program itself,
- An evaluation visit by a committee of three colleagues from other institutions, and
- Preparation by the department or program of a final report for submission to CAPP.

The principal goal is to assess how successful the department or program is in providing students with an educational program of the very highest quality.

I. Categories of Evaluation

In pursuing this goal, each evaluation – including the final evaluation report – should be conceptualized and organized in terms of nine sections:

Section 1: The Departmental Curriculum.

What are the specific educational aims of the department – are there particular theoretical, conceptual, analytic, communicative, and methodological materials or skills that students are expected to master – and how well do the department's course offerings and major requirements address those aims?

Is there an appropriate and effective relationship between introductory and upper level coursework in the department?

Does the department agree on the goals and objectives of its different classes (including thesis)? Does the department regularly review these goals and objectives, and introduce new faculty to them?

How often do students feel it necessary to use transfer credits from another institution for completion of the degree, and to what extent do students generally complete the major in a reasonable time period?

Since all departments at Reed are small, field coverage is certain to be difficult or impossible. But does the department have truly serious curricular gaps, and how urgent would it be to fill those gaps?

Section 2: **The Departmental Curriculum within the College.**

Is the department's curriculum connected to and supported by course offerings in other departments and programs? What courses from outside the department are integral or important to the departmental curriculum? What other courses, not currently being offered, might be useful? What other ways are there in which you could utilize other departments?

How, if at all, is the department's curriculum supported or impeded by the college's group requirement structure? To what extent does Humanities 110 provide a foundation for departmental courses?

How does the departmental curriculum serve the needs of students who major in other fields? Are there other majors or fields (current, or under development) which you are interested in and able to support?

Section 3: **Junior Qualifying Examination and Thesis.**

How effective is the department's junior qualifying examination in assessing the preparedness of students for the senior year? To what extent does it serve as an effective diagnostic tool? How does the department ensure that the qualifying examination examines students against a consistent standard over time? Has the nature of the department's junior qualifying examination changed over time, and to what extent have those changes proved beneficial? Are members of the department satisfied with the overall performance of students on the qualifying examination?

To what extent do senior theses in the department reflect the kind of intellectual and disciplinary command and maturity that one expects to find in well-educated senior-level undergraduate students? How are thesis grades determined and how is equity in grading theses, within a cohort and across time, assured? Are students prepared for thesis by the coursework in the major? If there are gaps, how do you propose to address them?

Section 4: **Climate**

How positive is the department climate for students, faculty, and staff? Do students feel welcome, included, and well supported by the department? Do faculty find the department intellectually stimulating? Do faculty find their colleagues respectful, supportive, and helpful? Do staff members feel

appreciated for their contributions to the department? Do they have adequate feedback on their performance and adequate opportunities for professional development?

Section 5: **Staffing.**

Is the department adequately staffed, in terms of both faculty and administrative, tutorial and technical support? Answering this question requires some consideration of, inter alia, curricular breadth and depth, problems of over-enrollment, thesis loads, a sufficient range of intellectual perspectives, as well as questions of efficiency, safety, supervision, etc.

If the department is facing impending retirements in the proximate future, how does it plan to address the retirements in terms of fields to be covered, methodological or theoretical orientations, etc.? Would the department move into new fields, or maintain the present focuses? What are the options?

Are there areas of the curriculum that regularly show high or low enrollments? Assuming no additional faculty FTE, how best can any high enrollments be addressed? If enrollments are low, how does the department propose to build enthusiasm and support for the program?

Section 6: **Infrastructure.**

Is the department's program adequately supported in terms of equipment and instrumentation? Classrooms, offices, laboratories and related kinds of physical spaces? Library resources?

If improved support is required or desired, how would such support be prioritized? Which needs or desires are most urgent, and exactly how would satisfying those desires contribute to the quality of the academic program?

Section 7: **Faculty Development.**

Since excellent teaching at Reed presupposes serious scholarly engagement, it is important to know if members of the department have adequate opportunity to pursue scholarship in ways that contribute significantly to teaching effectiveness. Are faculty members able to pursue rewarding careers as scholar/teachers? Do faculty take sufficient advantage of appropriate opportunities to involve students in the research process? Do faculty have sufficient opportunities to move into new fields, involve themselves in new research areas, or reshape their academic emphases?

How do faculty make use of sabbatical fellowships, professional travel funds, faculty summer scholarships, Stillman Drake funds, or summer research fellowships? Do these serve the development needs of the faculty? How

successfully or productively have faculty connected with colleagues through the various consortia that Reed is part of, such as the NW5 or AALAC/Mellon 23?

Visiting speakers serve many functions, but one possible function is the professional development of the faculty. How well do visiting speakers serve the development needs of the faculty (as well as the educational needs of the students)? Could there be ways to structure visits that would be more productive for faculty development? How much do faculty gain from the speakers brought in by other departments or programs?

Section 8: **Student Outcomes.**

While the quality of the educational program and of student performance is evaluated largely in Sections 1-3, each department should also consider the longer-term benefits of its program for students. Do departmental majors graduate from Reed reasonably well prepared for the world of professions, careers, and community engagement? Do our students have adequate opportunities to pursue post-secondary education? Are they able eventually to secure rewarding jobs? How does Reed's educational program improve the prospects of our students as they pursue life after Reed? How could it improve those prospects further?

What kinds of attrition among under-class or upper-class students does the department experience? Can causes of such attrition be identified, and, if so, how can they be addressed within the bounds of our mission?

Section 9: **Miscellaneous Issues.**

Are there any problems, opportunities, concerns or ambitions that are somehow peculiar to the department and its program and that are not adequately captured by the previous sections?

II. Evaluation Process

The evaluation process will typically take two years.

1. Year One:

- CAPP invites departments/programs to begin the evaluation process. Invitations will be based on a set rota, but some consideration will be paid to timing.
- CAPP solicits from the entire faculty thoughts and suggestions regarding issues, recommendations, concerns, etc. that might be especially important in reviewing the departments or programs in question. CAPP meets with the

department/program early in the process, and certainly prior to the completion of the self-evaluation to communicate this information, to present any particular questions to the department/program that it would like it to address.

- Each department selected for review undertakes and completes a self-evaluation. This involves preparing a Preliminary Report, organized in terms of the nine sections described above. The report should be supplemented by documentary evidence including, though not necessarily limited to, course syllabuses and related teaching materials, copies of recent junior qualifying examinations, senior thesis titles, relevant statements of departmental policy, departmental handbooks, and faculty CVs, and the like. (The Dean of the Faculty's office, the Office of Institutional Research, and the institution in general will help to provide, here and throughout, the logistical, administrative and technical support necessary for a successful review.)
- The department recommends a three-person committee of external evaluators, one of whom would be asked to serve as chair, as well as several alternates. Such a committee could include colleagues from similar institutions as well as large research institutions, and might include one—but no more than one—alumnus of Reed. In all cases, external committee members would be selected primarily in virtue of their capacity to evaluate a high-quality program of serious undergraduate education in the liberal arts and sciences. CAPP selects the committee, on the basis of this recommendation, consultation with the Dean of Faculty, and any further consultation with the department that might be necessary,
- In consultation with the department and the alumni office, the Director of Institutional Research would undertake a survey of all alumni who graduated from the department during the previous ten years. These former students would be asked about their current activities and the degree to which they feel their experience at Reed in general and in the department in particular prepared them for post-baccalaureate life. While the survey would be carefully distinguished from a personnel evaluation process—that is, the goal would not be to elicit comments about the performance of individual faculty members—alumni would nonetheless be asked to assess the overall effectiveness of the departmental program, from the perspective of hindsight.

2. Year Two

- The department and college hosts the committee of external evaluators for a visit of, roughly, two days. Prior to the visit, evaluators would each have received, in a timely fashion, a copy of the Preliminary Report, including supplementary materials and a summary of the alumni survey results. Among those supplementary materials should be a representative sample of five senior theses. The evaluators would also have received from the Dean of

the Faculty a copy of this policy, as well as more general information about the college including the college catalogue, Faculty Code, Faculty Constitution, other policy statements, where relevant, and the questions, if any, that CAPP communicated to the department/program.

- During the on-campus visit itself, members of the external committee would meet with departmental faculty as well as faculty from other departments, representative students or groups of students, the Dean of the Faculty, CAPP, and the President. Department members are encouraged to propose activities, such as in-class visits, that would give the evaluators a better feel for the nature of the program. The particular configuration of events (e.g., one-on-one meetings, group meetings, etc.), along with the overall itinerary of the visit, is coordinated by the Dean of Faculty's office. Ideally this visit occurs in the fall.
- The external evaluation committee submits a report, once again organized in terms of the nine sections described above.
- The department prepares a Final Report for CAPP. In some cases, this report would consist of the Preliminary Report, the external committee's report, and any responses to the external committee's report that the department might choose to make, perhaps in the form of an addendum. Alternatively, the department might choose to revise the Preliminary Report itself in light of the external committee's recommendations, and submit the revision itself as the Final Report. In any case, the Final Report should include some substantial effort by the department to engage and respond to the comment of the external evaluators.
- CAPP discusses the Final Report both with and without the presence of departmental representatives and considers any recommendations that the report contains in the context of other institutional priorities. The Final Report remains part of the permanent record of the Faculty, and may be referred to in other evaluative contexts, e.g., in the preparation of reaccreditation documents.