

Memorandum of Understanding to Guide the Academic Review of _____

Academic program review consists of on-going, high quality peer reviews of all the University's academic units and programs offering graduate degrees. The purpose of program review is to foster academic excellence at all levels, to determine how to raise quality to a higher level, and to provide guidance for administrative decisions in support of continual future improvement.

Program reviews at USC have the following characteristics:

1. Reviews provide a concise, honest appraisal of an academic unit's strengths and weaknesses.
2. Reviews are forward looking. While assessment of a program's current status is important, priorities for continual future improvement are of greatest concern.
3. Reviews are evaluative, not just descriptive. Plans for improvement require academic judgments about the quality of the faculty, academic program(s), students, curricula, resources and future directions.
4. Reviews incorporate expert assessment provided by reviewers from other institutions of high quality.

Each program review must include consideration of the issues described in the Guidelines for Academic Review. These are set forth in Appendix I, II, and III of the Guidelines. In particular, Appendix I provides an outline for the unit's self-study, and Appendix III includes the topics for the Review Committee, consisting of internal and external members, to assess. The latter specifies:

The Review Committee should thoroughly and candidly evaluate:

1. The mission and intellectual profile of the program, with particular regard to doctoral programs.
2. The reputation of the program among peers in the discipline, including national rankings, and the extent to which the program is regarded as a leader in the field.
3. The likelihood that the program can become pre-eminent in the field. Review Committees should recommend the priorities and strategies that are needed to achieve the University's goal of academic excellence and eminence.
4. The stature and diversity of the faculty, and whether specific faculty members have been duly recognized in their field or by their peers for their accomplishments and promise.
5. The extent to which the unit under review contributes (or could contribute in the future) to interdisciplinary research and teaching, and whether there are interdisciplinary ties that currently are underdeveloped.
6. Improvements that are possible without the need for massive infusions of University resources.
7. Improvements that are possible only with additional resources.

8. Whether there are entrenched or irreconcilable issues within the unit that constrain its effectiveness, and whether there might be more effective ways of working together.

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sets forth additional issues that the Provost, the Dean, and the school or unit have identified as questions of particular importance for the unit under review. Please be aware that the additional issues are in addition to, and must not supplant, the eight specific areas for evaluation listed above. Both the school or unit, in its self-study, and the Review Committee should provide their analyses of these issues during the review process. We note that the review itself may raise additional issues during the process of assessing a unit's strengths and weaknesses.

The additional questions identified as important to address during this review are the following:

The MOU also outlines the general composition of the Review Committee, including its size, and the range of disciplines and/or sub-disciplines to be represented. The following provides guidance with regard to the composition of the Review Committee:

The following are collaborating units, centers, or groups of faculty that might be included in the site visit and/or particular groups within the unit which should meet separately with the review committee:

The self-study should be completed no later than _____. If the unit needs any information that is gathered centrally for use in its self-study, it should contact the Provost's Office or the Dean's Office for that information. During this time, the Provost's Office will work with the UCAR Chair and members to select the appropriate internal reviewer(s) and to invite external consultants to participate in the site visit.

Signed:

Beth Meyerowitz
Vice Provost Faculty and Programmatic Development
Provost's Designee

Dean

Chair of the Department or Program, if applicable

cc: Elizabeth Garrett
Michael Quick
Larry Gross
Mark Todd
Donna Garcia