



# **Program Review Guidelines for External Reviewers**

**Prepared by the Office of the Provost**

## Pre-Site Visit Preparation

Approximately one month prior to the site visit, the Dean of the College or the Department Chair/Program Director will provide the external reviewer with a copy of the program's self-study report and all supporting documents. External reviewers are expected to familiarize themselves with the self-study by carefully reviewing the narrative as well as all relevant appendices, to understand the program's goals and objectives, curriculum, assessments, description of program viability, faculty information, student success outcomes, and overall summary.

External reviewers should also familiarize themselves with the University's and the College's mission, vision, strategic direction, and policies. Additionally, the reviewer should attempt to understand the broader context in which the program operates.

Ultimately, the self-study will provide the foundation for the site visit. However, the review of the self-study may result in additional questions to be clarified or explored during the site visit.

All external reviewers should have relevant expertise covering the disciplinary area(s) of the program. They should be "arm's length" evaluators and any conflicts or ongoing relationship to the program being reviewed or Western New England University should be made known to the Dean before any selection is finalized.

## Program Review Site Visit

The College Dean or their designee will schedule the site visit to the program at a mutually agreed upon time, either in-person or virtually, as deemed appropriate. During the visit, which is generally 1-2 days long, the external reviewer will meet with relevant stakeholders, including students, faculty, academic support staff, the department chair or program director, and the Dean of the College and/or other administrators.

During the meeting with students, the reviewer is encouraged to gather the students' perspectives on the program, curriculum, and academic support services. Meetings with faculty members allow the reviewer the opportunity to discuss the curriculum, teaching methods, learning objectives, program assessments, advising, opportunities for student research, and other relevant aspects of the program. Consultations with the department chair or program director can help the reviewer understand their leadership and vision for the future of the program. Finally, while meeting with the College Dean and/or other designated administrators, the reviewer can discuss the program alignment with the College's mission and goals, as well as the program's broader implications within the institution.

During this process, the reviewer is encouraged to verify the content of the self-study and supplement it, if appropriate. This may include, for example, asking for additional supporting documents, surveys, enrollment statistics, or student achievement data. The site visit provides the external reviewer the chance to assess and evaluate the quality of the program, keeping in mind the purpose of the program review process as a catalyst for continuous improvement,

## External Reviewer's Report

### 3.1 Report Structure: Objective analysis

- Begin with an executive summary.

The emphasis in the report should be on perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program, with the articulation of some specific recommendations in the spirit of continuous improvement.

- Present an overview of the program's strengths and weaknesses.
- Include specific recommendations for improvement.

### 3.2 Strengths Assessment:

- Highlight the program's notable strengths and achievements.
- Include evidence of success, such as student accomplishments, innovative practices, or community engagement.

### 3.3 Weaknesses Assessment:

- Identify weaknesses or areas in need of improvement.
- Explain the impact of these weaknesses on the program's overall quality.

### 3.4 Recommendations:

- Provide actionable and constructive recommendations for improvement.
- Prioritize recommendations based on their potential impact and feasibility.
- Ensure recommendations align with the program's goals and the institution's mission.

### 3.5 Alignment with Institutional Goals:

- Assess the program's alignment with the college's mission, vision, and strategic goals.
- Highlight any areas where alignment could be strengthened.

### 3.6 Student Perspective:

- Include feedback from students on their experiences and suggestions for enhancement.

### 3.7 Summary and Conclusion:

- Summarize the key findings and recommendations. Emphasize the importance of the review process as a catalyst for continuous improvement, encouraging the program to act on recommendations and measure progress over time.

- Conclude with a clear statement of the program's overall status, including its strengths and areas for improvement.

### Timeline

Submit the program review report within one month of completing the review.

### Follow-Up

Maintain the confidentiality of all sensitive information gathered during the review process and adhere to ethical standards in conducting the review.

Be prepared to engage in a dialogue with the program and institution after submitting the report to clarify recommendations or to answer any questions.

These guidelines are intended to ensure a thorough and comprehensive program review, with a focus on providing meaningful feedback and guidance for continuous improvement. The external reviewer plays a crucial role in supporting the program's ongoing success and its alignment with the institution's mission and goals.